

**WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL**  
**PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE**  
**16<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2002**  
**REPORT TO THE CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER**

**PCC 16.01.03**  
**PART 1**  
**ITEM NO**  
**FOR DECISION**  
**CPO**

**S6/2002/1459/FP**  
**PROPOSED EARLY YEARS CLASSROOM AND RELOCATION**  
**OF PLAYGROUND, NORTHAW CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY**  
**SCHOOL, VINEYARDS ROAD, NORTHAW**

**APPLICANT: CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE**

(Northaw)

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The site comprises school buildings, a car park, and playing fields. The school buildings all congregate towards the front of the site near the highway, are generally single storied and have been added to at various times over the years. The car park is situated to the east of the buildings adjacent the site's eastern boundary, with a playground wrapping round the buildings to the north and east. The land slopes away from the road. All of the site is located within the Metropolitan Greenbelt, and is bounded on most sides by woodland, a designated wildlife site. Dwellings of Northaw Village are strung out along Vineyards Road opposite the site. The site of the proposed new classroom is currently a playground.

**2.0 THE PROPOSAL**

2.1 This application proposes the construction of a new classroom, to the immediate west of existing buildings. It will be single storied, will measure 14.3 in width, 7.6m in depth and 6m in height (to the ridge). It will have a floorspace of 108m<sup>2</sup>, and will accommodate a classroom, toilets and ancillary space. It will be set off the boundary with the woodland 1.3m at its closest, and will be separated from the existing school building by 1.8m. A small landscaped strip will be formed to the front of the building. A covered shelter will also be built to the rear of the classroom, measuring 9.3m in width and 4.6m in depth. The classroom will be used by 12 nursery year students, all currently tutored elsewhere on site. The proposal will not result in any net increase of students taught at this school. The application states:

*Without the proper facilities at present Northaw school is not able to provide a full nursery year for all the pupils who require it...this lack of provision is likely to result in a declining school population here in future.*

*...The resulting reorganisation of the school would improve the educational arrangements tremendously...our need to improve the conditions for the youngest pupils was identified by Ofsted Inspectors...*

- 2.2 The applicant proposes to stagger the starting time of the children using this classroom (15 minutes after the rest of the school), to avoid exacerbating existing congestion during school starting and finishing.
- 2.3 The existing playground on which the new classroom will be built will be relocated towards the rear of the site.

### **3.0 RELEVANT SITE HISTORY**

S6/1994/706/FP      Formation of additional car parking spaces  
Granted, 21.11.94

S6/1995/184/FP      Extension of school library  
Granted, 1.5.95

### **4.0 PLANNING POLICY**

- GB4                      Development in settlements within the Greenbelt
- Gen Criteria 1        Design and siting of buildings
- Gen Criteria 3        Impact on amenities of residential properties
- Appendix A            Car parking standards
- Appendix A            Access and design for people with disabilities

### **5.0 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED**

- 5.1 The Welwyn Hatfield Access Group request that any permission granted be subject to compliance with Access Criteria. The Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council do not object to the application.
- 5.2 One objection was received from the owners at No. 12 Vineyards Road, a property opposite the subject site. They object on the grounds that it will contribute to existing parking and safety problems, experienced during school starting and finishing times, and during previous construction. Loss of view and outlook is the second reason this application is opposed.

### **6.0 DISCUSSION**

- 6.1 I believe the objector has identified the two main issues surrounding this application, impact on car parking and exacerbation of existing congestion, and effect on outlook and impact on the greenbelt.
- 6.2 It is considered that the objector's concerns regarding traffic congestion cannot be upheld, primarily because it is not proposed to increase the numbers of students at this school. This classroom will accommodate students already taught elsewhere in the school – the new classroom will merely better enable the school to deliver education to these children. Therefore there will be no extra requirement for car parking and no greater numbers of parents dropping off or picking up their children. Rather than exacerbating the situation it is considered the proposal will

improve it, in that the new classroom will allow a group of children to start school later taking some pressure off the early morning rush.

- 6.3 With regards to loss of outlook and impact on the Green Belt, I am primarily guided by policy GB4, Development in Settlements in the Green Belt. This policy states that development will not be permitted apart from (amongst other things) that which is considered to meet the local facilities and service needs of the Northaw settlement. It is acknowledged that this proposal will result in a loss of outlook for adjoining residential properties (particularly the objector's property) and will increase the mass and scale of buildings at this part of the Green Belt. However on balance in my opinion these adverse impacts are outweighed by the proposal's benefits and contribution to the community. As stated in evidence supporting the application the new classroom will allow an improved environment for learning at this school, and will help maintain the school as an important element in this community.
- 6.4 The impact of the new building is also mitigated by the proposed use of materials to match the existing, the relatively low height of the building when viewed from the road, and the reference the building finds in existing school buildings.
- 6.5 The proposed classroom complies in all respects with the District Plan criteria for access and design for people with disabilities.
- 6.6 In conclusion, while it is recognised that this proposal represents a departure from Green Belt policy, it is considered that the development is sufficiently exceptional to warrant approval.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 I recommend that planning application S6/2002/1459/FP be approved subject to the following conditions:
- SCO1 TIME LIMIT FULL PERMISSION
  - SC19 MATERIALS – DETAILS TO BE SUBMITTED

## **8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Welwyn Hatfield District Local Plan Alterations No. 1 1998
- Planning Application S6/2002/1459/FP



**WELWYN  
HATFIELD  
COUNCIL**

# NORTHAW C OF E SCHOOL

SCALE: 1:2500 DRAWN BY: LIZA WREN DATE 16th December 2002 Drawing No. 2002/1458

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