

**WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL**  
**PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE**  
**8<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2003**  
**REPORT OF THE CHIEF PLANNING &**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER**

**PCB 08.05.03**  
**PART 1**  
**ITEM NO**  
**FOR DECISION**  
**CPEHO**

**S6/2003/319/FP**  
**ERECTION OF AN INDOOR SWIMMING POOL BUILDING**  
**QUEENSWOOD SCHOOL, SHEPHERDS WAY, BROOKMANS PARK, HATFIELD**

**APPLICANT: QUEENSWOOD ENTERPRISES LTD**

(Brookmans Park &  
Little Heath)

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.0 Queenswood School is located in the Green Belt on the southern side of Shepherds Way. The campus comprises of the school buildings and tennis centre which are surrounded by farmland and a large area of woodland which is the subject of an area TPO. The school also has playing fields on the northern side of Shepherds Way.

1.2 The school is designated as a Major Developed Site in the adopted district plan.

**2.0 THE PROPOSAL**

2.1 This application seeks permission for a new indoor swimming pool to be located at the eastern side of the main group of school buildings and close to the main car park. The current MDS boundary is tight around the existing group of buildings and so the proposed building would straddle this boundary. The school has an existing indoor pool to the west of the proposed building. However, it has many structural problems and so the School proposes to renovate this building and adapt it for their new Art, Design and Technology Department.

2.2 The proposed building has an overall footprint of 31m x 18.5m and is designed with a curved roof, the high point of which is over the centre of the pool. It would have a maximum height of 7.5m. The building would be clad with terracotta tiles and incorporate large areas of glass. The roof would be formed from lead covered steel panels. The building would accommodate a 25m pool with changing and plant rooms and a viewing gallery.

### **3.0 MAIN RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES**

#### 3.1 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Alterations No.1, 1998

Policy GB3 – Development in the Metropolitan Green Belt

Policy GB7 – Major developed Sites in the Green Belt

### **4.0 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED**

4.1 This application was publicized by the posting of a site notice. No observations have been received as a result.

4.2 North Mymms Parish Council raise no objection to this proposal.

4.3 North Mymms District Green Belt Society object to the proposal on the grounds that the building would be outside of the Major Developed Site boundary and so would be contrary to the development plan. If this boundary is revised to accommodate this building, then the objection would be withdrawn.

4.4 The comments of the Environment Agency and Thames Water will be reported verbally to Members.

### **5.0 DISCUSSION**

5.1 Queenswood School is designated in the adopted district plan as a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt. Policy GB7 of the plan states that limited infilling of this site may be permitted providing that it does not prejudice the openness of the Green Belt. Such proposals should be put forward as part of a comprehensive treatment of the site, set in the context of a master planning brief. Queenswood School has now submitted such a brief which is currently the subject of public consultation. This new document shows the MDS boundary amended to incorporate the proposed swimming pool building.

5.2 While the School has an existing indoor pool, it is now out-of-date and is in poor condition, as is the associated plant. Chemical action has also affected the timber and brickwork of this older building. Therefore, I am satisfied that the School has demonstrated a need for this new facility. The School also intends to repair and convert the existing pool building to provide additional teaching space and this re-use of buildings is also encouraged in the Green Belt.

5.3 The proposed building would be sited at the north eastern corner of the main group of school buildings, immediately to the east of the existing swimming pool, and would be bounded by two teaching blocks. With a maximum height of 7.5m, the building would be lower than those surrounding it and I am satisfied that the contemporary design and external materials will integrate well with the existing group of buildings.

5.4 The proposed building would be set back some considerable distance from the northern boundary of the school site with Shepherds Way and would be screened by

extensive mature trees which are covered by an area TPO. It would be located on an open landscaped area and would not result in the loss of any significant trees. Therefore, I am satisfied that the building will have no significant visual impact on the wider area and so will not prejudice the openness of the green Belt.

- 5.5 The swimming pool is principally for the use of the school although may occasionally be made available for local groups. The building is located close to the main car park which provides considerable parking facilities which I consider is acceptable.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The site of the proposed pool will straddle the existing MDS boundary. However, I am satisfied that the new pool building is both required and can be accommodated on the site without any significant encroachment on the open space surrounding the school. Therefore, I have put forward a revision to the MDS boundary as a pre-inquiry change to the Deposit District Plan and the draft master plan submitted by the School also reflects this change.

- 6.2 While I support the principle of this development, the proposal is currently contrary to policy GB7 of the adopted district plan and so, must be considered as a departure and referred to the Government Office for the Eastern Region.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 I recommend that planning permission be granted in respect of application reference no. S6/2003/319/FP, subject to the referral of the scheme to the Government Office for the Eastern Region, and subject to the following conditions:

1. SC01 Time limit full permission
2. SC19 Materials – details to be approved
3. SC09 Landscaping – full permission

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Application file no. S6/2003/319/FP

Queenswood School Draft Master Planning Brief

