

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No:	S6/2007/1107/FP
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NOTATION:

The site lies within the Northaw in the Metropolitan Green Belt as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The application site accommodates a primary school and is within the Northaw Common Parkland Landscape character area. The site has had many additions and extensions that are both freestanding and attached to the original building. The original building has some single storey flat roofed extensions to the front elevation. The front boundary of the site is enclosed by railings and a gate. The land level of the site falls to the rear. Beyond the boundary to the east is a residential plot. To the north and west of the site is open Green Belt land.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

The proposed development would be a single storey addition to the front elevation of the school. The proposal would measure a maximum 12.3m in width by 5.1m in depth with a gable sided roof with a ridge height of 5.0m.

PLANNING HISTORY:

S6/1459/2002/FP – Proposed early years classroom and re-location of playground – Approved

S6/0184/95/FP – Extension of school library – Approved

S6/0706/94/FP – Proposed formation of 8 No. additional car parking spaces – Approved

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991 – 2011:

Policy 5: Green Belt

Policy 13: Education and Training

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:

SD1 - Sustainable Development

GBSP1 - Definition of Green Belt

RA1 - Development in the Green Belt

R3 - Energy Efficiency

M14 - Parking standards for new developments

D1 - Quality of design

D2 - Character and context

D5 - Design for movement

D9 - Access and Design for people with disabilities

CLT8 - New and Extended Educational Facilities

CONSULTATIONS

NORTHAW PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

No objection.

REPRESENTATIONS

Period expired 29/08/2007.

Welwyn Hatfield Access Group – Comments were received stating that the development should comply with the relevant access policies of the district plan.

DISCUSSION:

The main issues are:

- 1. The proposal's impact upon the character and appearance of the locality.**
- 2. The proposal's impact upon the openness of the Metropolitan Green Belt.**
- 3. The proposed developments impact upon the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers.**
- 4. Other material planning considerations**

1. The proposed development has been designed to reflect the character of the original building. Although the proposal would have a design that would be in keeping with the original character of the school building, it would be sited very close to the front boundary adjacent to the public footpath (1.0m away). The proposal's close proximity to the footpath would make it appear particularly prominent within the street scene. The original school building and surrounding residential properties are set back from their front boundaries. Although the school has existing front extensions, they are single storey with a discrete flat roof design and maintain an acceptable distance from the front boundary. The proposed addition would appear overly dominant and incongruous within the street scene, this would be to the detriment of the character and appearance of the locality.

The proposed development has failed to comply with Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

2. The application site has have several additions and been extended far beyond the original school building. Prior to the amendments of PPG2 in 2001 there was an allowance for extensions to schools within the Green Belt. This is evident at the application site where there has previously been flexibility in the amount of extensions that have been previously added.

Both district and national policy does not have an allowance for significant and prominent extensions to school facilities within the Green Belt and development should not have an impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. The proposed development would be gable ended with a maximum height of 5m and would be sited forward of all of the existing built development on the site and within the surrounding street scene. The existing extensions to the school have mostly been sited and

designed to be set back from the front elevation of the main building and appear subordinate, which has prevented the existing buildings from appearing particularly prominent so they do not have an adverse impact upon the street scene. The proposed extension would appear particularly large and overly dominant. Due to the proposal's height, mass, bulk and siting, it would have an unacceptable impact upon the open character of the Metropolitan Green Belt. Furthermore, when considered with the existing development on the application site, the proposal would cumulatively have an excessive impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.

The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy RA1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

3. The application site adjoins a residential plot to the east and residential plots face the proposed development to the south. The proposal would be sited a sufficient distance from these properties to ensure that the occupants would not suffer an adverse loss of amenity. The proposed development would be single storey and would not result in a loss of light, overbearing impact, or overlooking to the neighbouring dwellings. Although the proposed development would be visible from the properties across the road, the visual impact of the proposal would be to the street scene rather than the general outlook if these neighbours.

4. The agent has submitted a letter attempting to justify the application. Although the comments within the letter have been taken into account, there are no very special circumstances to allow this inappropriate development within the Green Belt. The agent has commented on previous extensions but not addressed the fact that they do not appear as prominent as the proposal or have an adverse impact upon the street scene and Green Belt.

The application does not indicate how the proposal contributes to sustainable development or energy efficiency.

The proposed development would make provisions for disabled access to the building and to toilet facilities.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed development would have an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the street scene and the open character of the Metropolitan Green Belt.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL AND REASONS

The proposed extension would form an overly prominent addition to the street scene and have an incongruous appearance. This would be to the detriment of visual amenities of the street scene and the character and appearance of the locality. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

The proposed development would have an adverse impact upon the open character of the Metropolitan Green Belt, due to the bulk, siting and prominence of the proposed extension. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policy RA1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

INFORMATIVES:

None.

DRAWING NUMBERS:

Plans as existing 02/16/02 & Plans as proposed 02/16-1 and date stamped 23 July 2007.

Signature of author..... Date.....