

Item No.

SCHEDULE C

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/09/05223/FULL
LOCATION	Totternhoe Lower School, Church Road, Totternhoe, Dunstable, LU6 1RE
PROPOSAL	Installation of a Pre-school temporary unit and car parking spaces
PARISH	Totternhoe
WARD	South West Bedfordshire
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllr Ken Janes and Cllr Marion Mustoe
CASE OFFICER	Gill Claxton
DATE REGISTERED	10 July 2009
EXPIRY DATE	04 September 2009
APPLICANT	Totternhoe Lower School
AGENT	Mouchel
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE RECOMMENDED DECISION	The land is owned by Central Bedfordshire Council Grant Planning Permission

Site Location

Totternhoe Lower School is located on the western side of Church Road, in the southern part of the village and occupies a large, irregular-shaped site. The school building is set back from the road on top of a small incline and comprises a long single storey structure stretching away westwards from the road frontage. It is constructed in a light red coloured facing brick with white painted weatherboarding above the windows. The building dates from the early 1950s with an extension in the late 1960s. A computer suite, library and resources room have been added since 2002.

There is a single vehicular access point which serves an informal car park, located behind the frontage hedgerow. The highway frontage comprises a low wall surmounted by an open fence with a substantial hedge behind. Beyond the school building is a surfaced playground and a large playing field. The southern boundary, is composed of a mix of hedges and fencing and adjoins private gardens. Part of the northern boundary adjoins the grounds of The Old Farm Inn public house.

The school site is bounded to the north and south by residential development. There are also dwellings on the opposite side of Church Road and to the east, the farm buildings at Lockington Farm. To the west lie open fields.

The site lies within the Green Belt and the Totternhoe Conservation Area. It is also within an area of archaeological significance.

The Application

The application site itself comprises four small parcels of land: two areas next to the access road, a large rectangle taken from the playing field behind the school and a

strip of land adjacent to the school's southern boundary.

Planning permission is sought for the installation of a temporary building to provide a Pre-School facility with the creation of 9 parking spaces. The building would be sited to the south west of the main school complex, adjacent to the dedicated outdoor play area for those children following the Foundation Stage curriculum. The building would measure 12m x 8.6m, giving a gross floor area of 103 square metres. It would have a shallow pitch roof to an overall height of 3.1m and would have a green coated plywood exterior. There would be a ramped access on the southern and northern sides, together with a new fence and path to allow independent access from the school's main access road. Internally it would comprise a classroom (for up to 24 children), wet-play area, kitchen, store, toilets (including an easy access toilet) and staff room/office.

The unit would accommodate a maximum of 24 pre-school children at each session, aged 2 - 4 years old and 3 full-time staff. It would operate during normal school hours from Monday to Friday. In support of the application the Design and Access Statement states:

- Totternhoe Pre-School presently operates from the Memorial Hall, Castle Hill Road - 1km away but this accommodation is not available to the extent required for children aged 2 to 4 and does not fulfil the Central Government requirements for entitlement for children aged 3 to 4 years old. Specifically at the location the Pre-School operates Monday to Thursday mornings only. This does not meet the choice of sessions recommended by Central Government. In addition, the children are unable to freely access the outdoor area which means that the Pre-School are finding difficulty in delivering the full Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.
- No other suitable site could be found in the locality and developing this site would provide continuity for the children, as they could be on the same site from 2 - 9 years of age.
- The maximum number of pupils accommodated would be 24 at any one session. During the last school year there were 21 pupils on the Pre-School roll and sessions catered for between 15 and 19 children. From September the average number of attendees per session would be 9.
- Having this facility would also help to secure the future of the Totternhoe Lower School. The plan is for children who attend the 4+/Reception class on a part time basis in the morning to have the opportunity to attend Pre-School in the afternoon. With a lunch facility available this provides a degree of wrap-around care for working parents/carers that covers the school day. Some parents/carers have not taken up a 4+/Reception place at the Lower School due to difficulties in securing childcare for pupils finishing at lunch time. The pupil roll at the Lower School is currently 86 but the school has capacity to accommodate 145 pupils across five year groups.
- The Pre-School would help to reduce the number of journeys that parents/carers would have to make as dropping off/collection could be combined with that of older siblings.
- The position of the building on the site has been carefully chosen to make as little impact as possible on the overall scale and appearance of the site.
- It would be sited on an area of grassed open space which is not used as sports pitches.
- The design and external appearance of the unit would blend in well with the locality.

It is also proposed to increase on-site car parking facilities by adding 9 new spaces, in two locations, at the front of the school, behind the hedgerow on the Church Road. A new pedestrian path would be created along the southern boundary of the site linking in with the existing pedestrian footpath. A new fence would be provided on the northern edge of this footpath, so that the Pre-School building could be accessed independently of the main school complex.

The application includes a draft Travel Plan which comprises survey information and intentions/aspirations.

RELEVANT POLICIES

National Policies (PPG & PPS)

PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development

PPG2 - Green Belts

PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

PPG13 - Transport

PPG15 - Planning and the Historic Environment

PPG16 – Archaeology and Planning

PPG17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport & Recreation

Regional Spatial Strategy

East of England Plan (May 2008)

ENV6 - The Historic Environment

ENV7 - Quality in the Built Environment

T2 - Changing Travel Behaviour

T8 - Local Roads

T9 - Walking, Cycling and other Non-Motorised Transport

Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy

South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review

BE8 - Design Considerations

T10 - Parking - New Development

R12 - Recreation Open Space

R13 - Rural Recreational Open Space

Planning History

SB/TP/07/0577

Permission for a covered area.

SB/TP/08/0054

Permission for a timber pavilion and hard play area to replace disused swimming pool and associated buildings.

Representations (Parish & Neighbours)

Totternhoe Parish
Council

No response received.

Neighbours

The application was publicised by the direct notification of adjoining occupiers and the display of a site notice. No

responses received at the time of writing the report.

Consultations/Publicity responses

Highways Officer	No objection, subject to conditions requiring the submission of a Travel Plan and a revised car parking layout to allow for a greater manoeuvring distance between the car parking spaces and the internal footpath.
Conservation & Design Officer	No objection, subject to permission being for a temporary period only.
Tree and Landscape Officer	Sycamore tree on the boundary with public house would be affected by parking spaces and path. Recommends conditions to obtain Tree Protection Plan and Method Statement.
Sport England	No objection.
Environmental Health Officer	No objection.
Environment Agency	No objection, advises consultation with the Beds and River Ouzel Internal Drainage Board.
Archaeologist	No objection.
Beds and River Ouzel Internal Drainage Board	Response awaited.

Determining Issues

The main considerations in the determination of the application are:

1. The principle of the development with regard to the Green Belt location of the site
2. Design and visual impact on the character and appearance of the Green Belt, Conservation Area and locality generally.
3. Impact on amount of available playing field space
4. Highways, access, parking and sustainable travel considerations
5. Impact on residential amenity
6. Other matters

Considerations

1. The principle of the development with regard to the Green Belt location of the site

The proposal would, by definition, be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and 'very special circumstances' (VSCs) must be demonstrated to justify the grant of planning permission.

The Supporting statement puts forward a case for VSCs, which can be

summarised as follows:

- The proposed development would have discernible benefits to the local community and would be a continuation of a facility already in the village.
- The current location of the Pre-School at the Memorial Hall and the number of sessions on offer means it is not able to deliver the full Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum required by Central Government.
- A location next to the lower school in the centre of the village has logic as it would provide continuity on site for the education of children aged 2 to 9.
- The chosen location on the site would not be visually intrusive or harmful to the openness of the Green Belt.
- It would reduce travelling requirements; and,
- Would help secure the long-term future of the lower school.

These arguments are accepted and it is considered that the benefits to the school, children, parents/carers and the wider community outweigh the potential harm to the openness of the Green Belt of allowing an additional building. It is considered that a case for very special circumstances has been made and that the scheme should not fail on Green Belt grounds.

The proposal does not need to be referred to the Government Office for the East of England under the Town and Country Planning (Green Belt) Direction 2005 (Circular 11/2005) as the floor space proposed is significantly below the 1,000 sq.m threshold and the development by reason of its scale, nature and location would not have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

2. Design and visual impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and locality generally.

The new building is located so as not to be read with the main structure, thus disaggregating the bulk of buildings and helping reduce any harm to openness and minimise visual impact in the Green Belt.

In addition, the building would be located so as to be furthest from the public highway in Church Road and would be mainly seen either against or through trees. Its low profile and use of dark external colours would ensure that there would be no unacceptable visual impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and locality generally.

At the front of the school grounds, the car parking scheme has been designed to avoid damage to the Sycamore tree on the boundary with the The Old Farm public house, by providing sufficient clearance. The recommended conditions for the submission of a Tree Protection Plan, a Root Protection Area and no-dig zones would provide appropriate protection for the Sycamore tree. The visual impact of the introduction of new hard surfaces would be minimal and would be offset by the regularisation in on-site parking provision.

It is therefore, considered that the visual character and appearance of the Green Belt, Conservation Area and locality generally would not be harmed. The proposal would thereby comply with national guidance and Policy BE8 of the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review.

3. Impact on the amount of available playing field space

The area where the temporary building would be located would be on the field to the rear of the main school building, while the car parking spaces and new pedestrian footpath would be situated on incidental areas of grass to the front of the building. In total, only 0.04ha would be taken from about 0.60ha of available playing space. No dedicated playing pitches would be lost to accommodate the development.

Sport England have considered the application against their policy 'A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England' (1997). The aim of this policy is to ensure that there is no further reduction in the supply of conveniently located, quality playing fields to satisfy the current and likely future demand. Sport England would normally oppose development that would lead to the loss of, or prejudice the use of, all or part of a playing field, without meeting at least one of the specific exception criteria identified in the policy. Sport England consider that the site of the proposed pre-school temporary unit is not capable of being used for marking out playing pitches or part thereof. Moreover, the incidental areas of open space to be used for car parking and the pedestrian footpath are not large enough to be used for marking out playing pitches. Therefore, as all the areas affected by the application are incapable of being used for marked out sports pitches, Sport England are satisfied that the development meets one of the specific exception criteria to their policy and accordingly is raising no objections to the proposals.

Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would have no adverse impact upon the amount of available playing field space at the lower school.

4. Highways access, parking and sustainable travel considerations

It is acknowledged that there is traffic congestion at school drop-off and collection times in the morning and afternoon. However, many of those attending Pre-School will be going to the site or being collected along with siblings at the Lower School, so not all Pre-School pupils will be generating additional trips at the morning and afternoon peak. The proposed location of all education facilities for children aged between 2 and 9 on one site would reduce the number of journeys made. The present situation has education being split between the lower school site and the Memorial Hall which leads to additional trip generation. Children aged 4+ would have the opportunity to attend the Reception class in the morning and Pre-School in the afternoons, which would reduce traffic movements at lunchtime. Congestion at school drop off and collection is an inevitable feature of the area surrounding schools, is of a relatively short duration and not of itself a reason to withhold planning permission.

The Highway Officer raises no objections to the proposals. There is a recommended condition for the submission of a Travel Plan as a consequence of this application. Among other things, the Travel Plan could encourage staff to cycle or car share and resurrect the walking bus, whereby a group of children are walked to and from the school from various locations in the vicinity, accompanied by parent volunteers. With a further requirement to annually monitor, review and update it, this should lead to a reduction in car-borne traffic attending the school.

There is little formal parking at present and the new parking arrangements are seeking to remedy the current ad hoc arrangements. Only staff vehicles are permitted to park on school premises. An additional 3 staff would be employed at the Pre-School facility and the new car parking layout would be used by staff and the Pre and Lower Schools. The Highway Engineer has some reservations about the practicalities of the layout, in particular the depth of the manoeuvring distance between the seven spaces close to the boundary with the Old Farm Inn. He recommends that this can be addressed by condition which will provide the appropriate manoeuvring distance and safeguard the Sycamore tree on that boundary.

5. Impact upon residential amenity

The main disruption to existing residents probably occurs during school drop-off and collection at the morning and afternoon peak. It is not considered that the additional Pre-School trip generation to this site would result in an unacceptable increase in car borne trip-generation giving rise to unacceptable noise and disturbance to justify a refusal of permission.

The transfer of up to an additional 24 children at any one Pre-School Session to the site would not have an adverse material impact on the amenities of local residential properties in terms of noise and disturbance. The new path would be close to garden boundaries but these are enclosed by a 3m high hedgerow which would mitigate any potential noise and disturbance.

6. Other matters

The comments of the Beds and River Ouzel IDB are awaited. However, a condition requiring drainage details to be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority is recommended.

The Archaeologist has considered the application as the site lies within an area of archaeological significance and advised that there are no objections to the proposal.

Reasons for Granting

Very special circumstances have been demonstrated to justify an exception being made to the normal presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The proposed development complies with national guidance and Policy BE8 of the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review in respect of the visual impact of the siting, design and external appearance of the development on the character and appearance of the locality generally, the setting of the Conservation Area and the openness of the Green Belt, the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and highway/parking considerations.

Recommendation

That Planning Permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The permission hereby granted shall be limited to a temporary period expiring on 31/08/2014 after which the temporary Pre-School classroom unit shall be removed from site and the land re-instated to its former condition within a period of 6 months, to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To enable the Local Planning Authority to review the uses, buildings and structures when the permission expires.
(Policy BE8 S.B.L.P.R).

- 2 Before development commences details of the colour to be applied to the exterior of the building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the approved details and retained thereafter.

REASON: To safeguard the character of the area and Totternhoe Conservation Area.
(Policy BE8 S.B.L.P.R).

- 3 Before development commences a Tree Protection Plan and Method Statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Tree Protection Plan

The Tree Protection Plan shall show the position and nature of protective fencing around the Sycamore tree located on the northern boundary of the site. The purpose of the protective fencing shall safeguard a sufficient area of rooting medium that will sustain the health of the tree known as the Root Protection Area. The fencing shall be erected before development commences and shall remain in place throughout the whole construction process of the car park until the no-dig pathway is completed. All operations potentially damaging to the tree shall be excluded from the area thus fenced (the Construction Exclusion Zone) including excavation, changes to levels, temporary access, vehicle parking, vehicle movement, fires and storage, disposal or mixing of materials and chemicals.

The Method Statement

The Method Statement shall describe the special pathway construction within the Construction Exclusion Zone and be based on a 'no-dig' cellular confinement system. The pathway shall be constructed only in exact conformity with the approved Statement.

The development shall thereafter be carried out and completed in accordance with the approved Tree Protection Plan and Method Statement.

REASON: To protect an important Sycamore tree in the Conservation Area.

(Policy BE8 S.B.L.P.R).

- 4 Before development begins, details of the proposed method of surface water drainage for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage works as approved shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details before the development is first occupied or brought into use.

REASON: To ensure satisfactory drainage of the site.

- 5 Notwithstanding any details submitted with the application, before development begins, a scheme for the parking of vehicles on the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall comply with the standards of the Local Planning Authority and shall be fully implemented before the development is first occupied or brought into use and thereafter

retained for this purpose.

REASON: To ensure provision for car parking clear of the highway and to safeguard the Sycamore tree on the boundary of the site. (Policy T10 S.B.L.P.R).

- 6 Before the Pre-School building is first brought into use a Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Travel Plan shall be implemented in full within 6 months of the building being occupied. Thereafter, the Travel Plan shall be monitored and reviewed annually, with a written report to be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority which updates the plan and monitors the progress in meeting the agreed targets for reducing car journeys
REASON: In the interests of highway safety, to reduce congestion and to promote the use of sustainable modes of transport.
- 7 This permission relates only to the details shown on Drawing No. 3001 Rev.A received 20/07/09 or to any subsequent appropriately endorsed revised plan.
REASON: To identify the approved drawing and to avoid doubt.

Notes to Applicant

1. In accordance with Article 22 of the Town & Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (as Amended), the Council hereby certify that the proposal as hereby approved conforms with the relevant policies of the Development Plan comprising of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (the East of England Plan and the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy), Bedfordshire Structure Plan 2011 and the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review and material considerations do not indicate otherwise. The policies which refer are as follows:

Regional Spatial Strategy

T2 - Changing travel behaviour

T8 - Local roads

T9 - Walking, cycling and other non-motorised transport

ENV6 - The Historic Environment

ENV7 - Quality in the built environment

South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review

BE8 - Design and environmental considerations

T10 - Controlling parking in new developments

R12 - Protection of recreational open space

2. In accordance with Article 22 of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (as Amended), the reason for any condition above relates to the Policies as referred to in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), Bedfordshire Structure Plan 2011 (BSP) and the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review (SBLPR).
3. This permission relates only to that required under the Town & Country Planning Acts and does not include any consent or approval under any other

enactment or under the Building Regulations. Any other consent or approval which is necessary must be obtained from the appropriate authority.

4. Further to Condition 3 above, the following additional information is provided to guide the preparation of the Tree Protection Plan.
- the fencing should be positioned at a minimum distance of 6.36m from the trunk of the tree,
 - the fencing should consist of a scaffold framework comprising vertical uprights spaced at a maximum interval of 3m, driven approximately 0.6m into the ground and leaving 2.3m height above ground level. Weldmesh panels should be securely fixed with wire or scaffold clamps (Weldmesh panels on rubber or concrete feet are not resistant to impact and should not be used. Fig 2 of BS 5837:2005 shows an illustration of a suitable protective fencing layout and construction specification,
 - all material that would contaminate the soil, such as concrete mixings, diesel oil and vehicle washings, shall not be discharged within 10m of the tree stem,
 - no fire shall be lit in a position where their flames can extend to within 5m of foliage, branches or trunk of the tree,
 - notice boards, telephone cables or other services shall not be attached to any part of the tree.

In respect of the Method Statement the chosen methodology should demonstrate that the pathway will be carefully constructed after the main car park construction is complete so that the fencing can be moved back to accommodate the path without risk of damage to tree roots from other building works.

For further advice and information, please contact the Council's Tree and Landscape Officer, Development Management, Sustainable Communities, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5QU - Tel: 0300 300 5161.

5. In connection with Condition 6 above, The Travel Plan shall contain details of some or all of the following:
- plans for the establishment of a working group involving the School, the Pre-School, parents and representatives of the local community;
 - pupil travel patterns and barriers to sustainable travel;
 - measures to reduce car use; and
 - an action plan detailing targets and a timetable for implementing appropriate measures and plans for annual monitoring and review.

For further advice and guidance on the preparation of the Travel Plan, please contact the Sustainable Transport Team, Planning & Development Strategy, Sustainable Communities, Central Bedfordshire Council, Borough Hall, Bedford, MK42 9AP - Tel: 01234 276329.

DECISION

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