

MC/17/3863

Date Received: 8 November, 2017

Location: Halling Primary School, Howlsmere Close, Halling, Rochester, ME2 1ER

Proposal: Provisions of 4no new classrooms and administrative support areas within 2no new modular buildings; extension to main hall area together with associated internal alterations and adaptation of existing car parking provisions and revisions to pedestrian and service access to playground area

Applicant: Medway Council

Agent: Mr P Cross The Fulker Consultancy Ltd Windmill House 129-130 Windmill Street Gravesend DA12 1BL

Ward Cuxton and Halling

Case Officer Alison Webster

Contact Number 01634 331700

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 14 March 2018.

Recommendation - Approval with Conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Drawing numbers: 001 rev A received 10 November 2017, 001 rev B received 14 November 2017, XX20 received 21 November 2017, 0010 rev P03, 007 rev P03, 006 rev P03 004 rev P02, 0005 rev P03, 0011 rev P01 and 00-12, 006 rev P03 received 27 November 2017.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 3 No development above slab level shall take place until details and samples of all materials to be used externally have been submitted to and approved in

writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory and without prejudice to conditions of visual amenity in the locality, in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 4 Within six months of the first occupation of the extensions hereby approved an updated School Travel Plan, to include surveys of existing travel behaviour and measures to promote sustainable travel, shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. The approved measures shall be implemented at all times thereafter, as updated by any subsequent reviews of the Plan.

Reason: To ensure that sustainable means of transport are promoted at a time when the school is expanding in accordance with Policy T14 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 5 In this Condition "retained tree" means an existing tree which is to be retained in accordance with the approved plans and particulars; and paragraphs a) and b) below shall have effect until the expiration of 5 years from the date of occupation of the building for its permitted use.

a) No retained tree shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be pruned other than in accordance with the approved plans and particulars, without the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. Any pruning approved shall be carried out in accordance with British Standard 3998 (Tree Work).

b) If any retained tree is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree shall be planted at the same place and that tree shall be of such size and species, and shall be planted at such time as may be specified in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

c) The erection of fencing for the protection of any retained tree shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved plans and particulars before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought on to the site for the purposes of the development, and shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed in any area fenced in accordance with this Condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made without the written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Pursuant to condition 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality, in accordance with Policy BNE1 and BNE6 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 6 Prior to any works commencing a bat scoping survey, recommended emergence surveys and mitigation measures shall be submitted for written

approval by the Local Planning Authority. An experienced licensed bat worker must carry out the survey. Any mitigation detailed within the approved plan must be implemented as detailed within the submitted document.

Reason: To safeguard protected habitats in accordance with Policy BNE37 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 7 No works shall commence until a mitigation and enhancement strategy for all species recorded on site must be submitted for written approval by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted information must include the following:

- Current phase 1 plan – clearly setting out the habitats to be impacted by the works.
- Vegetation clearance methodology to avoid impact on amphibians and reptiles during construction.
- Works to enhance the site for amphibians and reptiles to be incorporated in to wider site – clearly shown on site plan where they will be located
- Timing of proposed works.

The works must be carried out as detailed within the approved plan.

Reason: To safeguard protected habitats in accordance with Policy BNE37 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

Proposal

Provisions of 4no new classrooms and administrative support areas within 2no new modular buildings; extension to main hall area together with associated internal alterations and adaptation of existing car parking provisions and revisions to pedestrian and service access to playground area.

To the northern side of the school building would be a link extension which would project approx. 8.8m and will be approx. 13.4m deep. This is proposed to provide the head teachers office, administration offices, and meeting room and reception area. This area is linked via a small corridor extension to the main school building.

To the western side of the school building would also be a link extension that measures 12m in depth (at its deepest point) and approx. 32.8m in length. This extension would be linked to the main building via a covered walk way and will contain two of the new classrooms, a small hall along side existing main hall and new bin store with the existing store converted to PE store room.

To the north east of the main school building site, a detached modular building measuring approx. 23m in length and 11.8m deep would be erected on existing green space adjacent to the play area. This detached building would provide two new classrooms with associated facilities.

The extensions and standalone buildings have been designed as low scale single storey buildings that sit sympathetically alongside the existing built form and the materials would consist mainly of 'timber cladding and flat panels'.

The additional classrooms and office area is required to meet the demand for primary school places in the area and would increase the number of pupils from 300 to 420.

Relevant Planning History

MC/10/4283	Variation of condition 1 of non-material application MC/10/3595 to allow for minor material amendments to MC/09/1665 (Alterations to existing store and construction of conservatory extension) to allow for the elevations to be in traditional brickwork and roof tiling in lieu of originally proposed conservatory Decision Approval With Conditions Decided 21 January, 2011
MC/10/3595	Application for a non-material amendment following the grant of planning permission MC/09/1665 to incorporate plan numbers within original planning consent to allow for a minor material amendment application to be submitted Decision Approval With Conditions Decided 8 November, 2010
MC/09/1665	Alterations to existing store and construction of conservatory extension Decision Approval With Conditions Decided 26 March, 2010
MC/04/2684	Application under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country General Planning Regulations 1992 for construction of enclosure over existing swimming pool Decision Regulation 3 Approval Decided 10 January, 2005
MC/03/2320	Application under Regulation 3 of The Town and Country General Planning Regulations 1992 for a covered play area Decision Regulation 3 Approval Decided 22 December, 2003

Representations

The application has been advertised on site by display of a site notice and by neighbour notification letters to nearby residential properties.

Halling Parish Council has been notified and no response received at the time of writing.

Three letters have been received raising concerns to the impact of the increase in school pupils on existing already congested parking and traffic movement in the area.

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan). The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and are considered to conform.

Planning Appraisal

Principle

The school is located just outside the village boundary and within the countryside designation. The proposal is for expansion to an existing educational facility and Policy C6 supports the expansion of primary schools. Paragraph 72 of the NPPF states that the government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education, and should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools.

On the basis of the above, the proposed expansion of the Halling Primary school is supported by policy and as such, is considered to be acceptable in principle.

In terms of the proposed expansion to the pupil intake, it is proposed that the extensions to the west and the standalone building would provide 4 new classrooms for the primary school. This would result in the increase in pupil intake by 120 (from 300 to 420). There will also be uplift in staff number to meet the need of the pupils.

The need for the additional places is required to meet the anticipated demand for school places in the area based on new housing developments coming forward in the vicinity of the school site. In the context of these new housing developments and others in the vicinity the need to increase the pupil places available at Halling Primary School is apparent and urgent, although when these new spaces would be required to meet this anticipated demand has not been provided.

On balance, the proposed expansion of the school to increase pupil intake by 120 is supported by policy and as such is considered to be acceptable.

Design

The proposed extensions and standalone buildings have been designed as low scale single storey buildings that sit sympathetically alongside the existing built form but without an attempt to disguise that the new buildings are an addition to the existing. As such, the proposed development would be of a subservient appearance, scale and form to the host main school building and would not have a negative impact on the character or appearance of the building or site.

The only extension that will be moderately visible from the street will be that which is to the north of the school building adjacent to the car park. The design and choice of materials will aid in making the entrance to the building more visible to visitors and would have no adverse impact on the appearance of the streetscene.

The materials to be used on the extensions and detached building would consist mainly of timber cladding and flat panels, this will provide a cost effective weathering to the structure.

The proposed extensions would therefore accord with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and paragraph 56 of the NPPF.

Amenity

The school site is located to the southern side of Howlsmere Close and the residential properties are mainly on the opposite of the road, to the north, as such proposed extensions and standalone building would be in excess of 50 metres away from the nearest residential dwelling and therefore will have no impact in terms of outlook, privacy, sunlight or daylight on any these dwellings.

The proposal is to expand the school and pupil intake, this is likely to result in additional noise and disturbance. However, the distance of the school building to the nearest residential property and position of the proposed extensions would help to mitigate any adverse impact from noise or disturbance to the occupiers of the nearby dwellings. The new classrooms would only be occupied during current school time and the outdoor play area would be staggered as per existing school arrangement for outdoor playtime.

The proposal therefore accords with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Trees

There are a number of trees on the site however none are protected. An Arboricultural Report prepared by Sylvan Arb has been submitted on behalf of the applicant. The report surmises that the affected trees are of moderate value and recommends tree protection measures for the trees that would be remained.

Ecology

The majority of the proposed development will be located on hard standing which has limited potential to support great crested newt and reptiles. In contrast, the existing buildings on site will be directly impacted and no information has been provided detailing how the ecologist has come to the conclusion that the buildings are not suitable for roosting bats.

From looking at aerial photos the potential for them to contain bat roosts is relatively low but it can not be ruled out. A condition is therefore recommended that an updated bat scoping survey be carried out.

The surveys have confirmed that slow worms, common lizards and smooth newts have been recorded within the site and made recommendations for mitigation to minimise the potential for the species to be impacted by the construction works.

However the erection of fencing is excessive when the majority of works are being carried out on hard standing – instead the impact could be avoided by the use of precautionary mitigation. A condition is recommended to ensure a species mitigation and enhancement strategy is submitted as a condition of planning permission. It must demonstrate that the impact on reptiles, amphibians and bats (if identified as present in the above survey) is avoided and the site is enhanced to benefit these species.

Highways

There are currently 51 parking spaces of which 20 are reserved for visitors during school hours including by parents and carers during drop-off and pick up times. The remainder of the car parking spaces (31) are used by staff members.

Although there is a reduction in car parking spaces, by 9, as part of the proposal the existing facility exceeds the requirement during school hours and it is in the intention of the school to discourage vehicles from entering the site unless necessary during drop off and pick up times and to positively encourage walking, buses and cycling use. The applicant proposes to produce an updated Travel Plan prior to completion and occupation of the proposed new areas.

The proposed works at the school will result in an additional 9 parking spaces within the site area. These are to be formed by an additional strip of land and the reorganisation of the existing parking areas.

The parking requirement for a primary school is a maximum of one space per member of staff + 10% casual parking + drop off area. There will be 41 members of staff and 41 parking spaces. This is approx. 4 spaces short of the standard however the parking standards are a maximum and the site could accommodate more parking if required. The objections received mainly relate to on street parking and indiscriminate parking by the visitors to the school. It is possible to encourage the school to inform visitors to the school to be more respectful of the local residents subject to the staff taking this on voluntarily, it would be unreasonable to refuse the application on the behaviour of some of the visitors to the school.

Policy T14 requires a Travel Plan for new or expanded educational facilities. The applicant proposes to produce an updated Travel Plan prior to completion and occupation of the proposed new areas, therefore a condition is recommended that this should be submitted prior to development commencing.

The proposed development therefore accords with Policies T1, T13 and T14 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Local Finance Considerations

None relevant.

Conclusions and Reasons for Approval

The proposal for the expansion of the school is acceptable in principle, the proposed extensions will have no detrimental impact on the streetscene, neighbouring amenities

or highway safety and therefore accord with Policies C6, BNE1, BNE2, T1, T13 and T14 of Medway Local Plan, and Paragraphs 56 and 72 of the NPPF, and is recommended for approval.

This proposal would normally fall to be determined under delegated powers but is being reported to Planning Committee for determination due to the number of representation received expressing views contrary to Officers' recommendation.

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>