

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2001 AT 10.30 AM**

**Agenda No.**

**2**

**EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT  
PROPOSED NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY  
WOBURN AVENUE, BISHOPS STORTFORD**

Local Member : B C Engel

Adjoining Member: G L Francis

Report of the Director of Environment

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**1. Purpose of Report**

To consider the amended planning application for a new primary school and nursery at the end of Woburn Avenue, Bishops Stortford (reference 3/1139-00).

**2. Summary**

2.1 Reports on two previous schemes for the development of a primary school on the reserve site in Woburn Avenue, Bishops Stortford, have been prepared for this Committee. At its last meeting on 21 November 2000, Members were sympathetic to the applicant's sketch proposals for a third different layout, but at that stage a full set of drawings had not yet been produced and there had been no opportunity for consultation or public comment. Amended drawings were received a week before Christmas, when consultations and publicity were duly initiated for response by 19 January 2001.

2.2 The Highway Authority has no objections to the amended layout, but recommends a number of conditions and advice to be appended to any planning permission granted. East Hertfordshire District Council will be formally considering the amended plans on 7 February 2001, and the officer recommendation is that no objection be raised. At the time of writing this report, all other consultation responses are still outstanding. By 19 January 2001 fourteen individually written letters and objection slips from a further sixty addresses had been received. Most objections are still to the new school in principle on access and traffic grounds, and amongst the many detailed objections made by the Residents Association are concerns about the potential impact of the northern part of the development (the nursery, its play area and the pond feature) on the adjoining residents. The issue of light pollution has also been raised.

**3. Conclusions**

3.1 The latest amended layout is considered to be a significant improvement on the two previous submissions in terms of the location of the building, its internal layout and the vehicular access and parking arrangements within the site. However, full details

are still needed on certain aspects and safeguards are needed to ensure that the final development is acceptable in planning terms.

- 3.2 The report concludes that the Director of the Environment should be authorised to grant planning permission subject to conditions including the prior approval of a detailed scheme for hard and soft landscaping including fencing, cycle storage facilities, parking provision, maintenance of the facility for parents to drive into the site to set down and pick up, vehicular access to the hard play area for overspill parking, a programme for the provision of the cycleway/footpath, arrangements for construction working (measures to prevent the deposit of mud on the public highway, hours and no contractors vehicles or storage of materials taking place on the public highway), the preparation of a school transport plan, drainage and lighting. Advice would also be needed about the routing of vehicles to the site and the roofing material, as well as the advice required by both the Environment Agency and BGTransco.

## 1. **Description of the site and proposed development**

- 1.1 Background - A report on the application as originally submitted (scheme 1) was first prepared for the meeting of the Development Control Committee on 12 September 2000. However, it was withdrawn from the agenda and never considered by the Committee. This was to enable the applicant to bring forward an amended layout in response to some of the points raised by those objecting to the proposed new school.
- 1.2 Drawings relating to the amended layout (scheme 2) were submitted in October 2000, and consultations and publicity were duly undertaken. A report on the second scheme was then prepared for the following meeting of the Committee on 21 November 2000. However, shortly before the Committee met a sketch plan indicating a third different layout was produced and presented to the Committee by the applicant. The Committee resolved that subject to further consultation with the District Council and the residents of the nearest properties to the site and subject also to no new issues being raised on the revised plans, then the Director of the Environment, in consultation with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, opposition spokesman on the Committee and the local Member, should be authorised to grant planning permission subject to a number of conditions. The Committee also resolved that, whilst it had no objections to the application for a one-form entry primary school and nursery on the site, on present evidence it would be unlikely to support a proposal for the development of a two-form entry school on the site.
- 1.3 The application as now amended (scheme 3) - a full set of amended drawings was received on 18 December 2000. The layout now shows the school building orientated north-south along the eastern boundary of the site. The accompanying memorandum from the applicant refers to the building having an area of 1,610 square metres and its being “consistent in size with the County Council’s brief for a one-form entry primary school and nursery”. The nursery, with its outside play area and the reception class, would be at the northern end of the building, and the main entrance into the building, hall, dining room and kitchen would be at the southern end. The classrooms for years one to six would all be on the western side of the building and ancillary facilities including library, food technology and computer room on the opposite side. The ridge height of most of the building would be 6.2 metres, except for the hall at the southern end, which would be 7.8 metres high. The materials (samples previously supplied) would be unchanged i.e. red-brown facing brickwork walls with aluminium blue panels beneath the windows, grey concrete tiled roofs and white gutters and fascias. (A model of the building will be available for Members to view at the Committee). The main hard play area would be centrally located within the site and the grass play area at its northern end.
- 1.4 The 5.5 metres wide access roadway from Woburn Avenue, incorporating two speed tables and a 3 metres wide drop off/coach parking lay-by over 40 metres in length, would run along the western edge of the site past a roundabout turning area to a 39-space car park at the site’s southern end. A 3.5 metres wide pathway beside the roadway but separated from it by a fence/hedge would lead to the hard play area and to the main reception area. There would also be a narrower 2.4 metres wide path from a pedestrian gate at the southern end of the site running between the car park and the boundary hedge/fence to the building. A cycle storage facility is indicated near the

southern end of the building, but the drawing has no details of its size or design. Kitchen and other delivery vehicles would reverse up to the building from the roundabout turning area. The proposals are unchanged for a 4 metres wide cycle track outside the school site, but running immediately adjacent to its western boundary for its full length to link with the existing pathway from Woodpecker Close in the southern part of the Bishops Park estate.

- 1.5 The outline landscaping scheme indicates a band of tree and shrub planting along the northern edge of the site and a pond feature in the extreme northeastern corner, with other tree planting along the pathways in the central part of the site and part of the car park, and along parts of the school's eastern and western boundaries. The scheme also indicates some shrub planting around the building and a hedge along the pathway beside the playing field. The earth bund within the application site, but outside the school site and to the west of the cycle track would remain.

## 2. Consultations and publicity

- 2.1 These were initiated before Christmas, on the day immediately following receipt of the amended drawings. Consultations were carried out with East Hertfordshire District Council, Bishops Stortford Town Council, the Water Authorities and the Highway Authority. As well as those living in properties immediately adjoining the application site, everyone who had previously written a letter or signed an objection slip in relation to either the original application or the first amendment were also notified and their views requested by 19 January 2001. The applicant also leafleted all the houses in the northern part of the estate and those in Woodpecker Close to the south
- 2.2 The County Council as Highway Authority does not object in principle to the amended application, but recommends that any planning permission granted should include conditions requiring (i) the installation of wheel washing facilities for the construction phase of the development, (ii) the provision of a temporary cycleway/footpath at the start of the development, (iii) no occupation until completion of the cycleway/footpath in accordance with approved details *and* before a school transport plan is in place with clear objectives and targets and provision for its monitoring for at least seven years, and (iv) a properly surfaced footpath/cycleway link between the school and the southern housing area within twenty-four months of the school's opening. The response also included informatives to the applicant, particularly in relation to the routing of construction and school traffic and the adoption procedures involved for the extension of Woburn Avenue at the site entrance.
- 2.3 East Hertfordshire District Council will not be formally considering the amended application until the day after this Committee meets ie on 7 February 2001. However, with the concurrence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the relevant Sub-Committee of the District Council, the Director has written to say that the officer recommendation is for no objection to be raised. This recommendation is subject to the County Council reaffirming that the school is intended for one form of entry only; the provision of satisfactory landscape measures, "no waiting" restrictions, cycleway/footway, lighting, a pedestrian crossing at an appropriate location on the west side of Woburn Avenue and a Travel Plan; and a condition or school policy regarding the management of traffic to and from the site.

2.4 All other consultation responses are still outstanding at the time of writing this report.

2.5 Public representations - by 19 January 2001 fourteen individually written letters and objection slips from a further sixty addresses have been received. The objection slips and most of the letters maintain people's basic objection to a proposed new school on the application site on the grounds of its access being through a residential estate and the traffic generation involved. A letter setting out more detailed comments was received from the Residents Association and a copy is attached as appendix A to this report. The main concerns about the amended layout relate to the potential impact of the northern part of the development (the nursery, its play area and the pond) on the adjoining residents. For the first time the issue of light pollution has also been raised.

### 3. **Planning considerations**

3.1 This report deals only with specific issues arising from the amended site layout as proposed in the latest drawings submitted in December 2000. Members have already considered the Development Plan context for the determination of this application and general issues relating to the design of the building, the amount of car parking, traffic generation and its impact on the northern part of the Bishops Park estate, access for pedestrians and cyclists from the southern part of the estate, possible future enlargement of the school, alternative locations and departure considerations. These are set out in paragraphs 3.1-3.4, 3.8 [first two sentences] and 3.11-3.33 of the report to the November 2000 meeting of the Committee attached to this report as appendix B. It should be noted in respect of the outstanding matters referred to in paragraphs 3.17 and 3.19 of Appendix B, that a letter had been received from the School's Headteacher confirming the Governors' acceptance of parents driving into the site to drop off and pick up their children and the applicant had agreed to make £5,000 available to pay for any traffic management measures within the estate which may become necessary.

3.2 The building is still essentially linear in shape, but it has been moved further from the site's northern boundary with the adjoining houses and is aligned more closely with the eastern boundary. There has also been a major rearrangement of its internal layout. At its nearest point the end of the single storey building would be over thirty metres from the site boundary with the nearest two storey house over twenty metres from the nursery play area. This is a significant improvement on the previous layout in which the hall with its higher roof level would have been just under twenty metres from the nearest residential boundary. Other improvements to the internal layout mean that the main entrance and reception area are at the front of the building and the kitchen at the rear (it was previously the other way round). These facilities are also now furthest from the adjoining houses.

3.3 The site layout and vehicular access - the latest layout would take internal site traffic further from the nearest houses. The drop-off zone would be some sixty-five metres into the site with the turning circle beyond that and the car park at the extreme southern end. This layout should make it more straightforward for parents to drive into the site and turn round there, rather than stopping and waiting outside the site, causing congestion and nuisance for local residents. It would, however, be important that this was secured by condition, with a requirement that there be no locking of the school gates to prevent vehicular access to the site between stated times covering either end of the school day.

- 3.4 Car parking - the number of car parking spaces now to be provided would be only one less than was proposed in the previous layout, which was accepted as more than adequate for staff and normal visitor parking for the school (paragraph 3.8 of the previous report).
- 3.5 However, as submitted, the layout makes no provision for vehicular access to the hard play area so that it could be used to accommodate overspill parking at times of major events. As well as school events, there is also the possibility of out-of-hours community use of the school, the building having been designed to enable this with the hall and kitchen located close to the main reception area. Although the lay-by could accommodate six or seven cars in addition to the thirty-nine spaces in the car park, any other opportunities for on-site informal parking are limited. This would then mean other cars having to park outside the site on the public highway at such times, which would not be satisfactory. The layout, therefore, needs to be amended to enable access to the hard play area for overspill parking, and this could be secured by condition.
- 3.6 Landscaping - Although acceptable in principle as providing a suitable setting and appropriate screening for the new school, the submitted landscaping scheme is only indicative. It lacks any specific planting details as well as details of finished ground levels, surface treatment and fencing. Particular attention needs to be paid to the treatment of all the site boundaries to ensure adequate planting provision both along the northern edge adjacent to the houses and along the outer boundaries with the countryside beyond. A fully detailed scheme for hard and soft landscaping, with at least as much planting as that indicated in the outline scheme, needs to be submitted and approved prior to commencement of the development.
- 3.7 Pedestrian and cycle access - the amended layout includes two points of pedestrian and cycle access, one from the eastern side of Woburn Avenue and the other in the southern corner of the site. The path from the latter point, however, is only 2.4 metres wide, which suggests that cyclists would need to dismount within the site in order to avoid potential conflict with pedestrians. At the northern end some amendments still need to be made to the access details in respect of the position of the gateposts and the design of the bollards. Further consideration also needs to be given to the feasibility of the proposed external speed table.
- 3.8 The drawings contain no details of the cycle storage facility. A condition is needed requiring approval of the design and specifying the level of provision to be made. A minimum of ten spaces at the outset and a minimum of sixteen spaces once the school roll reaches 150 pupils would ensure that, when the school is fully operational, the provision meets the Highway Authority's latest adopted standards.
- 3.9 It should be noted that the route outside the western boundary of the school site is referred to in this report and in the submitted drawings as a cycleway. It is the applicant's intention that this should be adopted with the status of a bridleway, which would then include the right for people to cycle along it. However, it will be important that its surface is of a type suitable for pedestrians and cyclists as well as horseriders.
- 3.10 Any other new issues - the only other new issue not previously raised is that of potential light pollution. Any school requires a minimum amount of lighting for

security purposes, but no details of the proposed lighting have been included with the application. To ensure that it is not unduly intrusive, therefore, and although structures less than four metres high do not require planning permission, it would be appropriate that these details are submitted with hard and soft landscaping scheme. Whilst low level lighting might be adequate for the car parking area, higher level lighting might well be needed elsewhere around the building and along the roadway. To limit its impact a condition could be imposed requiring that there to be no permanent lighting within the school site after midnight. Outside the school site, however, the Highway Authority is likely to require proper lighting of the peripheral cycle track between the two parts of the estate.

#### 4. **Financial implications**

There are none for this Committee.

#### 5. **Conclusions**

- 5.1 The latest amended layout is considered to be a significant improvement on the two previous submissions. However, conditions are still needed to ensure the approval before the commencement of the development of certain detailed aspects including the hard and soft landscaping, fencing, lighting and cycle storage facility. Other conditions are needed to ensure the permanent availability of the drop off areas for parents' use at either end of the school day, vehicular access to the hard play area for overspill parking, arrangements for construction working (measures to prevent the deposit of mud on the public highway, hours and no contractors vehicles or storage of materials taking place on the public highway), the provision of cycleway/footpath access, car parking provision, the amount of cycle storage provision and lighting. The need for a drainage condition in accordance with the requirements of the Environment Agency was also identified in previous reports.
- 5.2 Advice previously identified as needing to be appended to any planning permission granted included the routing of vehicles to the site (construction traffic, school contract vehicles and parents from outside the northern part of the estate), consideration of the use of reconstituted slate tiles, advice from the Environment Agency about foul drainage and from BG Transco in relation plant in the vicinity of the site.

#### *Background material used by the author in compiling this report*

Latest six relevant drawings i.e. 117/PA/202/A, 117/A/101, 117/PL/202/F, 117/PL/300/F, 117/PL/400/F and 117/L/903;

Consultation responses and representations received:

Reports to Development Control Committee 12 September 2000 (item 3) and 21 November 2000 (item 2).