

HERTSMERE BOROUGH

**PROPOSED ERECTION OF NEW SIX-BAY MOBILE CLASSROOM AT
BUSHEY MANOR JUNIOR SCHOOL, GRANGE ROAD, BUSHEY,
WATFORD**

Report of the Director of Environment

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Local Member:- M Colne

1. Purpose of Report

To consider planning application ref. 0/1375-02 for the erection of a new six-bay double mobile classroom at Bushey Manor Junior School, Grange Road, Bushey, Watford.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This application is for a proposed six-bay mobile building in order to provide additional teaching floorspace at the existing school. This would address overcrowding and teaching issues currently experienced at the school. There are no proposals to increase pupil numbers or staffing levels as a result of the extension.
- 2.2 The applicant states that the option of extending the main school has been investigated, however, the design layout presents too many constraints to achieving a practical solution to the school's problems mainly due to the difficulty in changing circulation routes without major structural re-design.
- 2.3 The proposed mobile building would have a brown exterior finish that would compliment the appearance of the window walling in the existing school building. As the proposed site is secluded the mobile building would not be immediately visible to neighbouring properties. A recently erected security fence around the school building complex would have to be realigned slightly to accommodate the proposed building.

3. Conclusion

The report concludes that the Director of Environment should be authorised to grant planning permission ref. 0/1375-02 subject to conditions to include:

- i) permission being granted for a temporary 5 year period;
- ii) prior details to be submitted, including cross-sections, showing how the proposed building is to be set into the ground to reduce its visual impact, and;
- iii) protection of existing trees on site;

1. Description of the site and proposed development

- 1.1 This application is for a proposed six-bay mobile building in order to provide additional teaching floorspace at the existing school. This would address overcrowding and teaching issues currently experienced at the school. There are no proposals to increase pupil numbers or staffing levels as a result of the extension.
- 1.2 The applicant states that the option of extending the main school has been investigated, however, the design layout presents too many constraints to achieving a practical solution to the school's problems mainly due to the difficulty in changing circulation routes without major structural re-design.
- 1.3 The proposed mobile building would have a brown exterior finish that would compliment the appearance of the window walling in the existing school building. As the proposed site is secluded the mobile building would not be immediately visible to neighbouring properties. A recently erected security fence around the school building complex would have to be realigned slightly to accommodate the proposed building.

2. Consultations

- 2.1 Hertsmere Borough Council – Although it is accepted that very special circumstances exist to override the fact that the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt and an objection is lodged on the following grounds:
 - whilst the building proposed would be of a pre fabricated structure there is no indication that this is required for a temporary period, and should therefore be considered as a permanent building;
 - the new building would be positioned on the most open side of the school where ground levels change in the area. It is not clear whether the building would be cut into the raised land and it is recommended that appropriate cross-sections should be obtained to clarify this matter so that harm to the openness of the Green Belt will be minimised;
 - concern regarding the proximity of adjacent trees;
 - recommend that consideration be given to locating the classroom on the London Road side of the site on the existing or extending hard surface. Alternatively the building could be set down at the lower site level in the proposed location in order to protect the openness of the site.
- 2.2 Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority –does not wish to restrict the grant of permission.
- 2.3 Environment Agency, Transco, and Thames Water – have no comments on the application.

- 2.4 A total of 8 properties were consulted on the application. No correspondence has been received regarding the application.

3. Planning Considerations

- 3.1 The principal issues to be taken into account in determining this application are whether there are any alternative locations for the classroom, measures to minimise the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt and the permanence of the development.
- 3.2 Alternative location for the classroom – Hertsmere Borough Council have suggested that the classroom would be better located on the London Road side of the site rather than the playing field side of the school building site. This suggested location is also in the Green Belt. The applicant has subsequently investigated the option of building on the side of the school currently used as a playground. However, they state that this would cause considerable management difficulties for the school, particularly in regard to the supervision of children during the playtime periods. In light of this it is considered that the location of the proposed building is appropriate.
- 3.3 Measures to minimise the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt – Although the proposal is inappropriate development within the Green Belt the circumstances at the school in relation to overcrowding result in very special circumstances to justify the development to proceed. However any development should be designed to minimise the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt. As the proposed location of the classroom is on a slight bank it would be preferable to “cut” in the base of the building as opposed to propping it up and increasing its overall height. As cross-sections have not been provided showing how the building would sit on the land then prior to any consent being granted these should be provided to show a the building at the lowest position feasible.
- 3.4 Permanence of the development –The pre fabricated building would not be appropriate as a permanent structure in this Green Belt location. It is therefore considered that any permission should be for a limited 5 year period. This will allow for a long term development plan for the school to be developed.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 It is concluded that although the proposal is inappropriate development within the Green Belt there are very special circumstances arising that justify consent being allowed. The location of the building is appropriate to the site and any harm to the openness of the Green Belt can be achieved by “cutting in” the base of building to reduce its height.

The design of the building is such that it is not appropriate as a permanent building and therefore it is recommended that a temporary permission be granted for five years.

5. Financial implications

5.1 There are none for this Committee.

Background information used by the author in compiling this report

Planning application reference 0/1375-02

Consultation responses and representations received in response to planning application ref. 0/1375-02

Hertfordshire County Structure Plan Review 1991-2011, adopted April 1998

Hertsmere Local Plan, adopted 1996