

**DACORUM BOROUGH**

**APPLICATION FOR TWO STOREY CLASSROOM EXTENSION, REPLACEMENT  
HARD PLAY AREA AND CARPARKING AT HEMEL HEMPSTEAD SCHOOL,  
HEATH LANE, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD.**

Report of the Director of Environment

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Local Member:- David Lloyd

**1. Purpose of Report**

To consider planning application ref. 4/1677-03 for a two storey classroom extension, replacement hard play area and over-flow car parking area at Hemel Hempstead School, Heath Lane, Hemel Hempstead.

**2. Summary**

2.1 The application is for construction of a new school building and consequent relocation of a hard play/over-flow car parking area at Hemel Hempstead School.

2.2 The proposed extension is a 2 storey brick built building joined to the main school building by a link corridor. The main school building is a neoclassical two storey building with a central clock tower. There are number of other extensions to the school that have a mix of architectural styles.

2.3 The proposal also includes the relocation of the hard play area and over-flow parking that is on the site of the proposed extension. The proposed hard play area/over-flow car parking would be relocated to the south of the school between a hard play area and a school building.

**3. Conclusion**

The report concludes that the Director of Environment should be authorised to grant planning permission subject to conditions relating to building materials, low level lighting for the hard play area and access road, fencing of the hard play area, hours of working for construction and restriction of use of hard play area for over-flow parking to that associated with school functions.

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

- 1.1 Hemel Hempstead School is located off Anchor Lane, Hemel Hempstead. The School is located on a sloping site with most of the buildings in the north and east corner of the site. The playing fields slope gently to the south. The school site is bordered on all sides by built development.
- 1.2 The school buildings comprise a mixture of styles and construction, with the main school building being neo-classical in design. The façade has a clock tower with columns and two storey brick built wings on either side, with multi-paned windows. Additions to the school include curtain walled annexes with a variety of finishes, and brick built extensions.
- 1.3 The proposal is to build a new two storey building that would be linked to the west wing of the main building via a two storey corridor. The building would provide space for the sixth form students with teaching areas on the ground floor and study areas on the second floor. The link corridor would be set back from the façade of the main school building and extension and would incorporate a lift to give access for disabled students, providing access to both the proposed sixth form accommodation and the upper floor of the main school building.
- 1.4 It is proposed that the building be constructed of brick to match the existing neo-classical main school building. The roof would be flat, matching the existing building. The original proposed design has been amended following comments from Dacorum Borough Council. The changes are to the window detail of the building, which would now be square with multi-panes. Soldier coursing would be used above and below the windows.
- 1.5 The proposed extension would be built over an existing hard play area that is also used for over-flow car parking during school functions. It is proposed to relocate this hard play area to the south of the main school buildings and alongside the western boundary of the site. The play area would be between an existing tarmac hard play area and existing school buildings. This was the site of the high jump and run up which is now disused. A roadway would provide a link to the area to enable it to be used as over-flow car parking.

## **2. Consultations**

- 2.1 Dacorum Borough Council originally objected to the application on the grounds that the proposed extension had 'poor fenestration' and was not acceptable as an extension to a neo classical building. This objection has been withdrawn following the amendments to the design.
- 2.2 Dacorum Borough Council have also objected to the siting of the new hard play area on the grounds that it fails to maintain the open character of the area and relates poorly to existing buildings on the site. The have submitted revised comments following a site meeting but although they state they understand the need to separate cars from areas used by students they still maintain their objection to this aspect of the proposal.

- 2.3 Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority do not wish to restrict the grant of permission
- 2.4 Sport England comment that the area of the proposed hard play/over-flow car parking could not be reasonably be used for playing pitch use and therefore the proposal does not adversely affect existing pitch provision at the school.
- 2.5 BEAMS – have advised that the amendments to the proposed design of the building provide a solution that is sympathetic to the main school building.
- 2.6 The Environment Agency, Thames Water, and Transco do not object to the proposal
- 2.7 A total of 46 properties were consulted on the application. 4 letters of representation have been received, including one letter of support. The main issues relate to:
- the provision of over-flow parking;
  - the provision of fencing to reduce vehicle noise and glare from vehicle headlamps;
  - limitation of construction works i.e. no Sunday working and Saturday working to start at 8:30am and be limited to the morning;
  - low level lighting to be provided in the over-flow car park;
  - use of over-flow car park should be restricted by a planning condition with time constraints to ensure that it does not become permanent parking;
  - car parking should be provided elsewhere on the site.

### **3. Planning Considerations**

3.1 The relevant development plan policies are Policy 105 of the Dacorum Local Plan and Policy 110 in the Local Plan Review (Open Land in towns and large villages). The site is designated as open land in Policy 7 of the adopted local plan.

#### **3.2 Design of the proposed extension**

The main school is a good example of neoclassical institutional architecture. However there have been many new buildings erected at the school since its original construction and the style of these buildings uses varied construction methods typical of the time that they were built. As a consequence, the school comprises a collection of different buildings of very different architectural styles.

3.3 The proposed design reflects elements of the neoclassical main building but does not seek to reproduce this style exactly. The use of the link corridor, which is set back from the façade, provides a transition zone between the

elevations of the main school building and the proposed extension and separates the main school building and extension visually. This allows the balanced design of the existing main school building to be maintained. In addition, this view of the proposed new building is partially obscured by a modern, boarded building.

- 3.4 The proposed design of the building has been modified by changing the windows to reflect more closely the style of the main school building. The existing building has tall, multi-paned sash type windows with detail brickwork surrounds, with a row of vertical bricks above the windows and stone ledges below. The proposed building now has square windows with multi-panes, albeit that the pane size is larger than that in the main building. This would complement the windows in the existing building but would not seek to reproduce this feature exactly. It is also proposed to provide the vertical brick course above and below the windows.
- 3.5 It is proposed to use bricks that would match those of the existing main building. This sympathetic approach echoing the features and elements of the main school building means that the proposed building in itself provides a transition between this and the differing architectural styles that are elsewhere on the site.
- 3.6 Location of the hard play area and over-flow car parking.

As a result of the construction of the proposed building there would be a loss of the existing hard play area and over-flow car parking that would need to be located elsewhere on the site. The existing access to the site and car parking seeks to separate students and traffic. The location for the proposed new hard play area and over-flow car parking continues this idea. The proposed area of the hard play area and car parking over-flow is already hard surfaced being a former 'run-up' area for a high jump which is no longer used. The proposed area of the hard play area and car park over-flow is a small terrace that links the existing school buildings and a hard play area.

- 3.7 The use of this hard play area for over-flow car parking would be during school functions only. As the area is close to a boundary with residential properties this could mean that noise and car lights could impact upon these properties. Close boarded fencing has already been used in the adjoining car park, and this fencing would be extended along the boundary adjoining the proposed new hard play and over-flow car parking area. Additional to this, low-level lighting should be used for this area and the access road. A condition could be imposed to restrict the use of the hard play area for over-flow car parking for use during school functions only.
- 3.8 A letter of representation suggests that the additional car parking should be provided elsewhere. One suggestion is adjoining the main entrance off Anchor Lane, in front of the main school building, and adjoining the proposed roadway. The area suggested by the main school entrance is under the canopy of a large tree and provision of parking spaces would affect the health of this tree. Another suggestion is car parking in front of the main school

building; however, this could give rise to safety concerns by removing the separation of students and vehicles and would also have an impact upon this important building elevation. A further suggestion is the provision of parking spaces alongside the proposed roadway. However, this would only provide two parking spaces, which would not meet the needs of the school. Additional to this, the hard surface area is intended also to provide a hard play area as a resource for the school.

#### **4. Conclusions**

- 4.1 The amended design provides a more sympathetic extension to the school building and is considered to be acceptable. Whilst the relocated play and parking area is closer to residential properties, conditions could be imposed to minimise and mitigate any adverse effects. On balance it is considered that planning permission should be granted subject to conditions relating to building materials, low level lighting for the hard play area and access road, fencing of the hard play area, limited hours of working for construction and restriction of use of hard play area for over-flow parking to that associated with school functions.

#### **5. Financial implications**

- 5.1 There are none for this Committee.

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

Planning application reference

Consultation responses and representations received in response to planning application ref. 4/1677-03

Dacorum Local Plan 1995-2001, adopted 1995

Dacorum Local Plan Review 1991 – 2011 Deposit Draft 1998