

HERTSMERE BOROUGH

**PROPOSED RETENTION OF SINGLE MOBILE CLASSROOM AT
SUMMERSWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL, FURZEHILL ROAD,
BOREHAMWOOD, HERTS**

Report of the Director of Environment

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1. Purpose of Report

To consider planning application ref. 0/0474-03 for the retention of a single storey mobile classroom at Summerswood Primary School, Furzehill Road, Borehamwood, Herts.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This is an application for the retention of a single storey mobile classroom of 77.4m² for a further period of five years. The classroom is used as a teaching facility for up to ten children with emotional and behavioural difficulties from the Borehamwood area.
- 2.2 Planning permission was initially granted under ref: 0/334-98 in 1998 for the erection of the temporary mobile classroom unit for a period of five years.
- 2.3 The school currently has 200-210 pupils on roll in 7 classes in the 7 classrooms within the main school building.
- 2.4 Hertsmere Borough Council and Elstree and Borehamwood Town Council have raised objections to the proposal and recommend that if planning permission is granted it should be limited to two years.

3. Conclusion

The report concludes that subject to no new issues being raised, the Director of Environment should be authorised to grant permission for the retention of the mobile classroom for a further period of two years.

1. Description of the site and proposed development

- 1.1 This application is for the retention of a single mobile classroom unit of 77.4m² for a further period of five years at Summerswood Primary School, Borehamwood.
- 1.2 Temporary planning permission was initially granted in 1998 under reference 0/334-98 in 1998 for the erection of this mobile classroom on the site for a period of five years.
- 1.3 The school currently has 200-210 pupils on roll in 7 classes in the 7 classrooms within the main school building and outdoor play areas. The classroom is used as a teaching facility for up to ten children with emotional and behavioural difficulties from the Borehamwood area.
- 1.4 The single mobile classroom is located in the southern part of the school boundary alongside the main school building. Walls are of green textured paint with a roof of mineralised roof felt.
- 1.5 The mobile classroom unit is partly screened by willow trees during the summer months. A hawthorn hedge on the school boundary at this point provides good screening of the school site from the nearest neighbouring properties on Arundel Drive.
- 1.6 The mobile classroom appears to be in good condition with no apparent need for any repairs.

2. Consultations

- 2.1 Hertsmere Borough Council – raise two objections to the proposal. Firstly, that the mobile classroom unit is located within the designated urban open land area and the proposal therefore conflicts with Policy L3 (Urban Open Land Areas) of the adopted Hertsmere Local Plan 2003.

Secondly, the Council considers that the mobile classroom unit would become a semi-permanent structure if the renewal of planning permission were to be given for a further five-year period. Reference is made to paragraphs 109-112 of Circular 11/95 that advises against second temporary permissions. The proposal is considered to conflict with policies L3 (Urban Open Land Areas) and S5 (Extensions to Existing Schools or Colleges) of the adopted Hertsmere Local Plan 2003 as the mobile classroom's 'utilitarian appearance and siting would harm the visual amenities of the Urban Open Land Area'.

Notwithstanding the objection to the proposal, the Council advises that should the County Council be minded to approve the application, a period of a maximum of two years should be given. The Council suggests that within this two year period, a long-term plan for the school should be drawn up to take account of projections in pupil

numbers and other uses, such as the pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

- 2.2 Elstree and Borehamwood Town Council – considers that there is plenty of space in which a new and permanent extension could be added to the main school building. The Town Council considers that the retention of the mobile classroom should be restricted to two years during which time a proper permanent classroom building should be built. The Town Council considers that the school should be brought up to a proper standard stating that the County Council had promised this at the time of the closure of the middle schools in Borehamwood. This would alleviate the need for the use of mobile classrooms.
- 2.3 Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority – do not wish to restrict the grant of planning permission.
- 2.4 A total of 7 properties were consulted on the application, with no letters objecting to the application and no letters of support being received.

3. Planning Considerations

- 3.1 The principal issues to be taken into account in determining this application are:
 - the mobile classroom is located in an Urban Open Land Area detailed in the Local Plan;
 - permission for a further five year retention would mean that the mobile classroom is a semi-permanent structure;
- 3.2 The mobile classroom unit is identified as being in an Urban Open Land Area in the Hertsmere Local Plan, adopted 2003. The overall aim of Policy L3 is to retain the essentially open character of the site and retain an overall stock of open space within the Borough. At the time of determining the original temporary application in 1998, the site was identified as being an Open Land Area under Policy 65 of the Hertsmere District Plan First Review 1991.
- 3.3 With reference to policy L3 criterion (i) of the adopted Hertsmere Local Plan 2003 to which this development relates, this mobile classroom provides a ‘small scale complementary facility’ for the school. Being 77.4m² in size it is considered to be ‘both limited in extent and volume’ on the school site and therefore does not significantly conflict with preserving the openness of the area.
- 3.4 It is considered that there is minimal visual impact of the mobile classroom in its current position given the screening on the school boundary. With this in mind, however, it is not considered to be unreasonable for there to be an opportunity for a permanent structure of similar proportions in close proximity to the main school building which features as an ‘Area excluded from Open Land Areas’ in the Local Plan.

3.5 Should permission be granted for a further five-year period, the mobile would have been on site for ten years. In effect, this could suggest that the building is regarded as semi-permanent over this period of time. A more permanent teaching facility would be beneficial to the children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, incorporating them into the main school teaching environment. Retention of this mobile classroom for a further two years would give the school time in which to make more permanent arrangements such as an extension to the main school building.

4. Conclusions

4.1 The application seeks retention of the single mobile classroom for a further period of five years, however, it is recommended that permission be granted for a lesser period of time but enough for arrangements to be made for the provision of more permanent teaching accommodation.

4.2 The report concludes that the continued use of the mobile classroom for pupils from the Borehamwood area with emotional and behavioural difficulties demonstrates the need for this classroom facility on the school site. There are currently no known forthcoming plans for an extension to the main school building to provide adequate facilities for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

4.3 Subject to no new issues being raised, the Director of Environment should be authorised to grant permission for the retention of the mobile classroom for a further two year period, subject to an appropriate condition relating to the preparation of a school travel plan and an informative to state that a further renewal would now be unlikely.

5. Financial implications

5.1 There are no financial implications for this committee.

Background information used by the author in compiling this report

Planning application reference 0/0474-03;
Consultation responses and representations received in response to planning application ref. 0/0474-03;
Hertfordshire County Structure Plan Review 1991-2011, adopted April 1998
Policy 13 (Education and Training);
Hertsmere Local Plan, adopted 19 May 2003 – Policy L3 (Urban Open Land Areas) & Policy S5 (Extensions to Existing Schools or Colleges).