

DCNW2004/1194/F - INSTALLATION OF 2 NO. MOBILE CLASSROOMS AND CAR PARKING AREA AT WEOBLEY HIGH SCHOOL, WEOBLEY, HEREFORD, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR4 8ST

**For: Herefordshire Council per Property Services,
Herefordshire Council, Franklin House. 4 Commercial Road, Hereford HR1 2BB**

Date Received:
2nd April 2004

Ward:
Golden Cross with
Weobley

Grid Ref:
40670, 51102

Expiry Date:
28th May 2004

Local Member: Councillor J. Goodwin

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 This application seeks to provide two new mobile classrooms and an extension to the parking facilities at Weobley High School. It is intended to utilise the existing hard play area to the west of the main school buildings to accommodate this new development.
- 1.2 The application site lies within the settlement boundary and the Weobley Conservation Area. Residential properties are found to the north and west of the school site, with open countryside to the east and south.
- 1.3 The proposal involves the introduction of two mobile classrooms, one to act as a music block, the other history. The music block is the smaller of the two, with a length of 12 metres and a width of 8.4 metres. This building will provide a classroom, two practice rooms and a store. The history block has a width of 7.2 metres, with a somewhat larger length, 21 metres. Both blocks have a height of 3.2 metres. In addition, the northern section of this hard play area is to be developed into a new parking area, providing 27 additional spaces.

2. Policies

2.1 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

CTC 15 - Preservation, Enhancement and Extension of Conservation Areas

2.2 Leominster District Local Plan

A1 - Managing the District's Assets and Resources
A2(B) - Settlement Hierarchy
A13 - Pollution Control
A21 - Development within Conservation Areas
A24 - Scale and Character of Development
A61 - Community, Social and Recreational Facilities

2.3 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft)

S1 - Sustainable Development
S2 - Development Requirements
S11 - Community Facilities and Services
DR1 - Design
DR2 - Land Use and Activity
DR13 - Noise
HBA6 - New Development within Conservation Areas
CF5 - New Community Facilities

3. Planning History

NW04/1194/F - Single Storey Extensions
Approved 17/3/04

NW02/1582/F - Sports Hall and Changing rooms
Approved 20/11/02

NW00/1639/F - Double Mobile Classroom
Approved for six years 28/9/00

4. Consultation SummaryStatutory Consultations

- 4.1 Weobley Parish Council: "No objection, but the Parish Council is aware of concerns expressed by residents of Castle Mead about the close proximity of the proposed classrooms to their boundaries - the main concern being noise pollution, especially from the music facility. In addition, the Parish Council understands that work has already started on preparing the foundations prior to planning permission being granted."

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Head of Engineering and Transportation, response from Transportation Manager: Amended plans are acceptable.
- 4.3 Historic Buildings Officer: No objections, subject to materials and colouring details and details of fencing for parking facilities.

5. Representations

- 5.1 Three letters of objection have been received from the following sources:

- R.E. Best, The Old School House, Weobley
- B.E. Reed, 15, Castlemead, Weobley
- Mr & Mrs Green, 11, Castlemead, Weobley

The objections can be summarised as follows:-

1. Overbearing impact
2. Noise
3. Choice of siting

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Northern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford, and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officers Appraisal

Principle

- 6.1 The principle of the enhancement of educational facilities is accepted in principle. Notwithstanding this, a proposal such as this must be acceptable in relation to other policy criteria, specifically in this instance issues such as design and scale, residential and visual amenity, transportation, impact upon existing school facilities and implications upon the Weobley Conservation Area.

Design and Scale

- 6.2 Mobile classrooms are designed to meet a temporary functional requirement. Notwithstanding this, it is important, particularly in a Conservation Area, for all new development to be visually acceptable. In this instance, although the buildings are in raised and relatively prominent positions, the wider views of these structures will actually be quite limited by virtue of the positioning of the neighbouring buildings and the general site screening. It is therefore suggested that the design limitations of these buildings is not problematic. The buildings are not permanent and are inoffensive in character and appearance. The sizes are not excessive and the colouring will be controlled through condition.

In relation to the proposed car parking, it is suggested that the impact of a physical change from hard play to car parking will be relatively limited; the obvious difference, however, will clearly be the presence of cars and their impact upon the visual amenities of the locality. The issue of impact upon visual amenities will be considered in more detail in the report.

Residential Amenity

- 6.3 It is suggested that the principal issue for consideration in relation to this proposal is the impact of this development upon neighbouring residential properties. The two considerations in this instance are the physical impact of the buildings and the noise pollution generated by the use of these structures.

Turning first to the physical impact of these buildings, the proposed siting has been altered from that of the original submission, with the buildings now in closer proximity to the main school complex. Although the buildings are raised from the ground level of the main complex, the buildings do not have an imposing height. At the closest point, these buildings are 21 metres from the rear of the nearest dwelling house. This is considered ample in consideration of the c.3.2 metre height. It is considered that the physical impact of these structures upon the neighbouring residential properties is wholly within acceptable limits.

The noise generated by these proposals has also been raised as a concern. The car parking will clearly have noise associated with its use. It is suggested, however, that the noise generated by this use will not be unacceptable, particularly in consideration of the general levels of vehicle movement associated with a school of this size.

In relation to the proposed classrooms, it is recognised that classrooms generate noise and the use of one classroom for music is clearly a cause for concern locally. The

existing use of this area – namely hard play – is, in itself, noise generating. Of further consideration is the fact that the music building is to be sound-proofed and that the buildings are as far removed from the residential neighbours as is practicable. The music room, it should be stressed, is now no closer to the residential properties to the west than other elements of the school which could, if so wished, be used for music. The site selection for these buildings has principally influenced the sports hall development and the essential need to protect playing fields from development. The sites chosen are considered appropriate and the positioning of the buildings is considered sympathetic to the amenities of the nearby residents. On balance, it is considered that the noise generated by these buildings is not unreasonable or unacceptable and will not harm the amenities of nearby residential properties to a degree that can be considered unacceptable in this situation.

Visual Amenity

- 6.4 It is considered that, although this area of the wider site is raised from the roadway, the boundary landscaping sufficiently compensates for this. As noted previously, the wider views of these structures will actually be quite limited by virtue of the positioning of the neighbouring buildings and the general site screening. It is considered that no significant harm to the landscape will result from this development. The impact upon visual amenity is therefore considered acceptable.

Transportation

- 6.5 The original proposal raised concern in relation to pedestrian/vehicle conflict. These concerns have been overcome by virtue of a revised layout that includes the creation of a new pedestrian access, the introduction of a Zebra Crossing and the control of entry and exit to the site. On the basis of these revisions, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to transportation issues.

Impact upon Existing School Facilities

- 6.6 The existing site for this proposal is currently an area of hard play. The required provision of hard play area for this school, worked on the basis of pupil numbers, is 2746 metres square. There is no requirement for the provision of any single area of hard play at any set size or use. Weobley High School currently has 3290 metres square of available hard play. The two buildings remove 252 metres square. The school therefore maintains an excess of hard play and is able to meet the required provision. No objection is raised, therefore, to the loss of area to the proposed buildings.

Conservation Area

- 6.7 No objections to the design of these buildings have been raised and it has already been concluded that the impact upon visual amenities will be within acceptable limits. It is therefore considered that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will not be unacceptably harmed as a result of this proposal.

RECOMMENDATION:

That planning permission be approved, subject to the following conditions:-

- 1. A06 (Development in accordance with approved plans)**

Reason: To ensure adherence to the approved plans in the interests of a satisfactory form of development.

- 2. The mobile classrooms shall not be installed on site until details of the materials to be used externally on the walls and roofs have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 3. This permission shall expire on 16th Jun, 2009 . Unless further permission is granted in writing by the local planning authority prior to the end of that period, the use hereby approved shall permanently cease.

Reason: To enable the local planning authority to give further consideration of the acceptability of the proposed use after the temporary period has expired.

- 4. The buildings hereby permitted shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition on or before 16th June, 2009 in accordance with a scheme of work submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that the land is restroed to an acceptable condition to safeguard th amenities of the locality.

- 5. Prior to the commencement of the use of the area designated as car parking, details of the proposed new fence shown on plan 6KAT/JHB/03/01/A shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The fence shall not be erected until the written confirmation of acceptability has been received from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the materials harmonise with the surroundings.

- 6. Prior to the commencement of the use of the area designated as car parking, the new pedestrian access point and footpath, Zebra Crossing and signage associated with the entry and exit points shown on approved plan 6KAT/JHB/03/01/A shall be completed in their entirety and retained at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure the free flow of traffic using the adjoining highway.

Informatives

- 1. N03 - Adjoining property rights
- 2. N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.