

9 DCCW2004/1004/O - CONSTRUCTION OF A REPLACEMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL INCORPORATING A VILLAGE HALL AND THE PROVISION OF 15 RESIDENTIAL HOUSES AT SCHOOL FIELD OPPOSITE EXISTING PRIMARY SCHOOL, SUTTON ST. NICHOLAS, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR1 3AZ

For: Herefordshire Council, Education Directorate per Property Services Manager, Herefordshire Council, Franklin House, 4 Commercial Road, Hereford, HR1 2BB

Date Received: 19th March, 2004 Ward: Sutton Walls Grid Ref: 53481, 45738

Expiry Date: 14th May, 2004

Local Member: Councillor J.G.S. Guthrie

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site consists of 2.74 hectares of land located on the northeastern edge of the village of Sutton St. Nicholas adjoining the C1125 road which bisects the village and forms the site's western boundary. It is directly opposite the existing primary school site and adjoins residential development on its southern and southwestern boundaries. The site's northwestern boundary adjoins existing arable farmland.
- 1.2 This proposal seeks outline planning permission for the erection of a new replacement primary school incorporating a village hall and the provision of 15 new dwellings. With the exception of means of access all other matters are reserved for future consideration which includes siting, design, landscaping and external appearance.
- 1.3 As submitted, 15 dwellings are proposed, 35% (5) of which would be affordable housing to meet local affordable housing needs.

2. Policies

2.1 Planning Policy Guidance:

- PPG1 - General Policy and Principles (1997)
- PPG3 - Housing (2000)
- PPG7 - The Countryside (1997)
- PPG13 - Transport (2002)
- PPG17 - Sport and Recreation
- PPG24 - Planning and Noise (1994)

2.2 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan (1993):

- Policy A1 - Development on Agricultural Land

2.3 South Herefordshire District Local Plan (1999):

Policy GD1	-	General Development Criteria
Policy C1	-	Development Within Open Countryside
Policy C11	-	Protection of Best Agricultural Land
Policy SH14	-	Siting and Design of Buildings
Policy SH15	-	Criteria for New Housing Schemes
Policy CF1	-	Retention and Provision of New Community Facilities

2.4 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft):

Policy CF5	-	New Community Facilities
Policy CF8	-	School Proposals
Policy DR13	-	Noise
Policy DR14	-	Lighting
Policy H4	-	Main Villages – Settlement Boundaries
Policy H5	-	Main Villages – Housing Land Allocations
Policy H13	-	Sustainable Residential Design
Policy H15	-	Density
Policy H16	-	Car Parking
Policy S11	-	Community Facilities and Services
Policy LA3	-	Setting of Settlements
Policy LA5	-	Protection of Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
Policy LA6	-	Landscaping Schemes
Policy NC1	-	Nature Conservation and Development

3. Planning History

- 3.1 There is no record of any planning applications previously submitted on the application site.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 Welsh Water (revised comments dated the 24th May 2004) - following discussions with the agent we would allow foul water flows from the proposed primary school to connect to the public sewer system. However, in relation to the residential part of the proposed development we understand it is intended to facilitate the foul flows by way of a private treatment plant until improvements have been undertaken in the public sewer system. In light of this information, we would request our previous objection to the proposed primary school are removed and that conditions be attached with advisory notes to any planning permission granted.
- 4.2 Environment Agency - comments awaited.
- 4.3 Sport England (West Midlands) - Sport England would support this application which offers the opportunity to provide new sports facilities for the school and community. The benefits of sport and physical activity to health and the well being are recognised and set out in the planning objectives of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 Sport and Recreation. Sport England would hope that the uses proposed meet the identified local need and make further comments on the sizes of pitches and suitability of mains services etc.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.4 Head of Engineering and Transportation - it is noted that the redevelopment of the existing school site is proposed and that site has no vehicular access which is considered to be potentially problematic in traffic and highway terms. The proposed site offers many benefits, namely the provision of on-site parking/turning, footways adjacent and a crossing facility for pedestrians, and potentially cyclists. It is considered that adequate visibility can be achieved at the proposed site access junction and consequently there are no "in principle" objections in traffic and highway terms.

Vehicle speeds on the C1125 are high. Consideration will need to be given to the provision of a 20mph zone adjacent to the school. Regarding the proposed site layout, concerns would be expressed on the indicative layout shown and residential access roads will need to meet Herefordshire Council's adoptable standards given the number of units proposed.

- 4.5 Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards - no objections.

5. Representations

- 5.1 Sutton St. Nicholas Parish Council - we agree broadly with the proposal. We have concerns with the close proximity of new houses to the existing properties and the lack of privacy afforded to each. Car parking - on previous occasions we have indicated that we wish for 50 car parking spaces to be accommodated at the school and new community facilities. Fifteen are indicated, we have made a point on numerous occasions, we would wish for more direct access for minibuses for the elderly to the community hall.
- 5.2 Nine private letters have been submitted on the proposal, some of which object to the development and others which make mixed comments on the scheme. Letters have been received from Mr. & Mrs. M. Lewis, 25 St. Ethelbert's Close, Sutton St. Nicholas; Mrs. Greenhalf, 40 Fieldway, Sutton St. Nicholas; J.A. & S. Smith, Elmstone, Churchway, Sutton St. Nicholas; T.W. Mills, The Willows, Sutton St. Nicholas; Mr. D. & Mrs. M. Parsons, "Glenside", 8 Churchway, Sutton St. Nicholas; M.E. and C.A. Caulfield, 6 Churchway, Sutton St. Nicholas; The Governors of Sutton Community Primary School; J. Icke, 9 Churchway, Sutton St. Nicholas and a second letter from J. Smith, Elmstone, Churchway, Sutton St. Nicholas.

The objections raised can be summarised as follows:

- The development of this greenfield site would be detrimental to the village and adjoining residents.
- Objections are made on the basis of nature conservation and the impact that the proposed development would have on wildlife and ecology.
- Issues of noise and disturbance for adjoining local residents are raised as a concern as is potential for light intrusion to adjoining residents.
- Concerns are raised about pedestrian and general highway safety issues associated with the scheme.

- To use a large productive agricultural field to achieve a significant increase in the builtup area of the village is of concern which will cause light, visual and noise pollution. Concerns are also raised about the potential proximity of new housing to existing dwellings and this should be taken into account by the Local Authority.
- Concerns are raised about drainage issues and the steep sided ditch on the southeastern boundary of the site which frequently floods and fills with deep pools of water. This would be particularly dangerous for children.
- Comments are made about the reduction in child numbers in the village whether this justified the erection of a new school.

5.3 In support of the application, a number of letters comment that there are no objections to the replacement of the primary school, it is accepted that the existing facility is in a poor condition with inadequate access. The Governors of Sutton Community Primary School also state they support the principle of the outline plan for the construction of a replacement primary school incorporating a village hall and provision of 15 new houses.

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

6. Officers Appraisal

- 6.1 The key considerations in determining this outline application are the principle of the proposed development and the means of access to the site. It should be noted that the indicative layout suggested is not for consideration at this time but simply identifies the uses which are proposed with the application. A detailed supporting planning statement is also part of the application covering issues of biodiversity, landscape and visual effects and drainage. A full transportation assessment has also been provided with the scheme.
- 6.2 The need for a replacement primary school at Sutton St. Nicholas was an issue raised in the South Herefordshire District Local Plan. Land opposite the existing school has been identified in the emerging Unitary Development Plan for a replacement primary school and community facilities including playing fields. This is also reflected in the Council's own Development Brief for the site dated November 2003.
- 6.3 The site itself comprises of agricultural land currently under arable production and bounded by hedgerows on all sides with narrow grassed headlands alongside the hedgerows. There are a number of mature trees along the southern boundary of the site as well as a ditch delineating the southeastern edge. The land is currently in private ownership. The site is relatively flat in the southwest corner adjacent to (Willows) residential property. To the east of the site the land rises and continues to rise to the northeast toward Sutton Hill and the disused quarry. There are no public rights of way or footpaths crossing or bordering the site on the definitive footpaths map.
- 6.4 Given the site's inclusion in the revised deposit draft of the Unitary Development Plan (May 2004), it is considered that more weight can now be attached to the allocation in the Plan. It should be noted however that following the recent completion of the consultation at revised deposit stage, a small number of objections to the allocation have been submitted. It is understood that this includes one from the existing landowner.

- 6.5 In view of the fact that the site has not been formally adopted through the Development Plan processes one should consider any other material considerations that are also relevant to determining this scheme. It is clear that the existing primary school is extremely constrained with no suitable vehicular access point, substandard accommodation and amenity areas. In this respect the provision of a new facility directly opposite this site will enable significant improvements in the education provision and must carry some weight. Furthermore, the wider benefits of the proposed development for the community of Sutton St. Nicholas including a new village hall and recreation and playing field facilities add further weight and support to this outline application. Officers consider that in light of the significant education and community benefits offered by this scheme that the principle of development is acceptable at this time notwithstanding that formal adoption of the Unitary Development Plan has not been completed.
- 6.6 On the access and transportation issues associated with the scheme, as noted above a full transportation assessment has been submitted at this outline stage. There is no in principle objection to the detail of the transportation assessment which again can offer significant improvements in highway safety to the existing school site. Detailed discussions are however required with regard to parking provision, particularly in light of the Parish Council's comments for both the school building and the community elements and this should be reflected in any application for reserved matters approval at a later date.
- 6.7 The detailed planning statement with the application also covers a number of detailed site-specific ecology, landscape and drainage issues. Conclusions clearly indicate that a number of technical matters will need to be addressed at the reserved matters stage, however there are no issues which would justify refusal on these specific issues.
- 6.8 In conclusion, it is considered the proposal is on balance acceptable subject to the detailed conditions awaited from the Head of Engineering and Transportation.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the receipt of detailed highways conditions that Officers named in the Scheme of Delegation to Officers be authorised to grant outline planning permission subject to conditions considered necessary by Officers.

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.