

Planning Committee

31 October 2013

Reference:
APP/13/01185

Area Team:
North Team

Case Officer:
Mrs S Day

Ward:
Upton

Location:

Vacant Land, NEW HEY ROAD, WOODCHURCH, CH49 5LE

Proposal:

Erection of a single storey school with car parking and landscaping

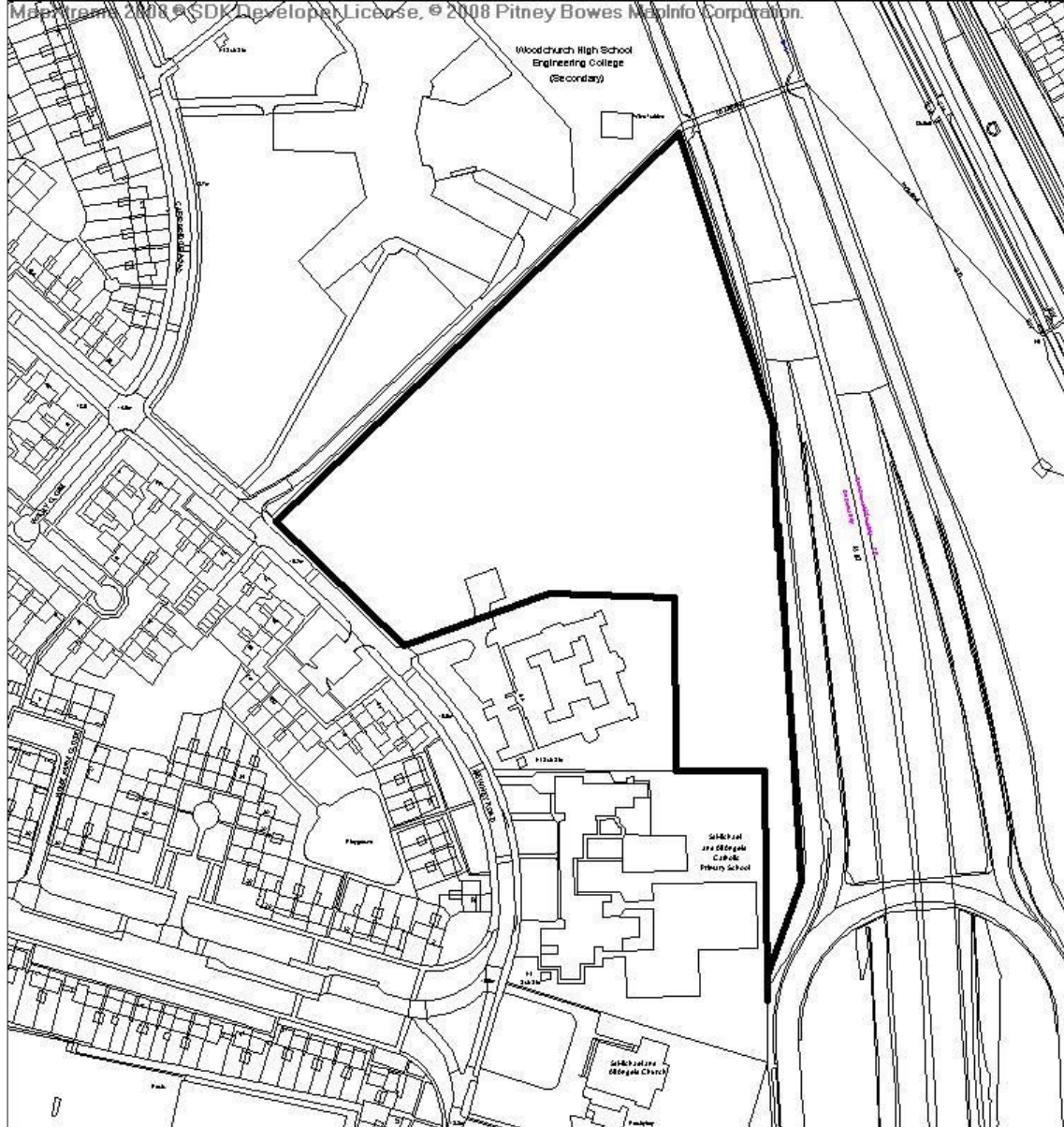
Applicant:

Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd.

Agent :

Aedas Architects Ltd.

Site Plan:



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Development Plan allocation and policies:

Green Belt

Primarily Residential Area

Road Corridor subject to Environmental Improvement

Planning History:

Location: Woodchurch High School, Carr Bridge Road, Woodchurch, Wirral, CH49 7NQ
Application Type: Full Planning Permission
Proposal: Erection of temporary site accommodation and associated site parking
Application No: APP/08/06678
Decision Date: 13/03/2009
Decision Type: Approve

Summary Of Representations and Consultations Received:

REPRESENTATIONS

In line with the Council's policy for publicity of Planning applications, letters were sent to 14 neighbouring properties. In addition a notice was displayed on site and an advertisement placed in the press. No objections or representations have been received.

CONSULTATIONS

Environment Agency - No objections subject to conditions.

Director's Comments

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

The application is a major development which is also a departure from the development plan and is therefore required to be considered by Planning Committee under the provisions of the Council's adopted Scheme of Delegation for Determining Planning Applications.

INTRODUCTION

The proposed development is for a single storey school building to replace an existing facility elsewhere in the Borough. The proposals include car parking to the south of the building and sports pitches to the rear.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The application site lies within the adopted green belt and as such the proposals must be considered primarily against Unitary Development Plan policies GB1 and GB2. The proposal constitutes inappropriate development, which can be acceptable if very special circumstances can be demonstrated. The proposals must also be considered against Policy RE13 -Criteria for Sports Facilities in the Green Belt. The proposals represent a departure to the UDP. Given the scale of the development, under the Referrals Direction 2009, the proposals will need to be referred to the Secretary of State before planning permission is granted if the Council be minded to approve the application.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application site consists of an open piece of land measuring 3.7 ha which is bounded by the M53 to the east. The site is generally level with trees and landscaping to the motorway boundary and the remainder of the site grassed. Immediately to the north of the site is the recently built Woodchurch High School, with houses to the south and a nursing home to the south east.

POLICY CONTEXT

The application must be considered against advice given in NPPF in relation to development within the green belt. The relevant Unitary development plan policies are; GB1 - Amendments to the green belt boundary and GB2 - Guidelines for Development in the Green Belt

Policy GB1 specifically relates to the inclusion of the M53 corridor in the adopted green belt. Whilst recognising that visually this may not be a particularly high quality landscape, its function of separating townships in the centre of the borough was considered relevant.

Policy GB2 specifies which types of development are appropriate in the green belt and advises that where proposals are inappropriate, very special circumstances must be demonstrated which would overcome the presumption against approval. This approach is reiterated in the NPPF.

Policy RE13 - Criteria for Sports facilities in the Green Belt sets out the criteria for assessing these proposals. Proposals for outdoor sport and recreation will be permitted where:-

- Adequate on site provision is made for access and parking.
- Existing road network can accommodate any increase in traffic.
- Proposals are not obtrusive and do not harm openness of the green belt.
- Proposals do not result in an unacceptable level of noise.

Whilst the use of the site is primarily for school use the impact of wider community use must also be assessed.

GREEN BELT, APPEARANCE AND AMENITY ISSUES

The proposed building is a predominantly single storey school building with a higher sports hall located within the centre of the building footprint. The new school would replace the existing Foxfield SEN school, which is located in Moreton and caters for pupils of secondary school age who have severe, complex and profound learning needs. The new school would provide the opportunity to create a purpose built, state of the art specialist facilities to cater for the needs of pupils. Due to the nature of the school it attracts pupils from a borough-wide catchment area. As such, the proposed site represents a more centralised sustainable location to the whole of Wirral with the space to provide a more effective facility.

The building itself is flat roofed contemporary design which would be finished in a combination of brick, cladding and render. The design of the footprint reflects the design of the adjacent Woodchurch High School with a central hub with wings projecting from it. The low height and massing of the building will help it settle into the landscape and thus minimise its visual intrusion. The school will be located to the front of the site retaining open space for pitches to the rear. The existing landscaped buffer adjoining the motorway will be retained and supplemented whilst landscaping is proposed along the New Hey Road frontage to soften the impact of the building.

Whilst the application site is within the adopted green belt, it is in position between existing developments, particularly the built up frontage of New Hey Road,. The rear half of the site, adjoining the motorway links with adjoining strips of open land and fulfills this function more effectively.

The applicant has stated that co- location of the SEN school with a mainstream secondary school which offers the facilities of Woodchurch High School, is important. This relationship provides unique opportunities integration and for curriculum and social interaction with shared use of facilities. Prior to choosing this site, an options appraisal looked at other sites across the borough. The application site is the only available site which provides sufficient space to build the school with the integration opportunities that proximity to Woodchurch High School offers. This together with the retention of open space along the M53 provides the case for very special circumstances.

Whilst the current use of the site is open land, the planning approval for Woodchurch High School conditioned the use of this land as sports pitches. This was to replace the pitches lost through the new High school building and to satisfy the requirements of Sport England. The proposed development would use a significant amount of the land set aside for pitches but proposes an alternative scheme on remaining land to the rear of the building. The proposals have been submitted following pre-application discussions with Sport England to resolve this matter. Sport England have advised that alternative provision may be acceptable if it meets the exception test. The new proposals include 3, five a side pitches, 1 seven a side pitch, 2 hard surfaced courts and a cycle track. In addition to the primary use by the school, the facilities will be available for wider community use, similar to the sport facilities at Woodchurch High School. The applicant has submitted supporting statements from local groups identifying a need for these particular activities.

The site is located within flood zone 1 where schools are considered appropriate. The development will incorporate a sustainable drainage system (SuDS).

The proposals represent a departure to The UDP and the NPPF. Given the scale of the development, under the Referrals Direction 2009, the proposals will need to be referred to the National Planning Casework Unit should the Council be minded to approve the proposal.

SEPARATION DISTANCES

The nearest residential properties are located on the opposite side of New Hey Road minimum distance of 30m from the proposed single storey school. The nursing home to the south of the proposed school is over 25m away. There will be no loss of privacy as a result of these distances

HIGHWAY/TRAFFIC IMPLICATIONS

The proposals will create two new vehicular access points off New Hey Road. One will serve the minibus car park and one the staff car park. As many of the pupils will arrive by minibus together with other pupils, It is not anticipated that the additional traffic will put a significantly greater burden on the highway network.

ENVIRONMENTAL/SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

There are no Environmental/Sustainability issues relating to these proposals.

HEALTH ISSUES

There are no health implications relating to this application.

CONCLUSION

The proposed school will provide a purpose built facility that, together with the opportunities available from linking with the existing High School will represent an important improvement to educational facilities in the Borough. This together with the minimal visual impact of the building and the retention of a buffer of green belt constitute the very special circumstances necessary to support this inappropriate development. The proposals therefore meet the requirements of NPPF and UDP policies GB1 and GB2.

Summary of Decision:

Having regards to the individual merits of this application the decision to grant Planning Permission has been taken having regards to the relevant Policies and Proposals in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (Adopted February 2000) and all relevant material considerations including national and regional policy advice. In reaching this decision the Local Planning Authority has considered the following:-

The proposed school will provide a purpose built facility which, together with the opportunities available from linking with the existing High School will represent an important improvement to educational facilities in the Borough. This together with the minimal visual impact of the building and the retention of a buffer of green belt constitute the very special circumstances necessary to support this inappropriate development. The proposals therefore meet the requirements of NPPF and UDP policies GB1 and GB2.

**Recommended
Decision:**

**Approve, subject to comments arising from referral to the Secretary of
State**

Recommended Conditions and Reasons:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 (as amended) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. NO DEVELOPMENT (including any demolition, earthworks or vegetation clearance) SHALL TAKE PLACE BEFORE a scheme of landscaping, phased in relation to any phasing of the development, which shall include details of both hard and soft landscaping works and earthworks, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme as approved shall be carried out in the first planting season following the completion of each development phase. Any trees, shrubs or plants that die within a period of five years from the completion of the development, or are

removed and/or become seriously damaged or diseased in that period, shall be replaced (and if necessary continue to be replaced) in the first available planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives prior written permission for any variation.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory landscape treatment of the site which will enhance the character and appearance of the site and the area, and to comply with Policy GB2 and GR5 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

3. NO DEVELOPMENT SHALL COMMENCE UNTIL full details of materials for all external work, including samples, have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development which does not prejudice the amenity of the locality.

4. DEVELOPMENT SHALL NOT BE COMMENCED until a Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The provisions of the Travel Plan shall be implemented and operated in accordance with the timetable contained therein unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework

5. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans received by the local planning authority on 16th September 2013 and listed as follows: FF_L_001, 002, 007, 008, 009, 010, 011 and FF_A_001, 002, 002a, 002b, 003, 004, 005 and 020.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to define the permission.

6. NO DEVELOPMENT SHALL TAKE PLACE until a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP), confirming how demolition and construction waste will be recovered and re-used on the site or at other sites, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved SWMP shall be implemented in full unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development would include the re-use of limited resources, and to ensure that the amount of waste for landfill is reduced to accord with Policy WM8 of the Joint Waste Local Plan.

7. The development permitted by this planning permission shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) September 2013/326809.WTD.MCH.002.A.06/Mott MacDonald and the following mitigation measures detailed within the FRA:

1. Location of special educational needs school development solely within Flood Zone 1 (low risk).

2. Limiting the discharge of surface water from the proposed development to the equivalent 'greenfield' run-off rate, based on current site usage, to 11.6 litres/per second (QBAR).

3. Estimated provision of 670 cubic metres of attenuated storage based on a 30-year design standard.

4. An additional estimated 320 cubic metres of attenuated storage based on a 100-year 20% design standard.

The mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority.

Reason To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface

water from the site and to reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development and future occupants.

8. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a surface water regulation scheme has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.
The scheme shall be fully implemented and subsequently maintained, in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority.

Reason To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site and to reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development and future users.

9. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a scheme to acceptably deal with overland flood flow routing (from exceedence events) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The scheme shall be fully implemented and subsequently maintained, in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority.

Reason: To reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development and future users.

Last Comments By: 03/11/2013 08:47:37

Expiry Date: 16/12/2013