

Planning Committee

30 May 2019

Reference:
DPP3/19/00035

Area Team:
**Development
Management Team**

Case Officer:
Mr B Bechka

Ward:
Heswall

Location:
Proposal:

Heswall Primary School, WHITFIELD LANE, HESWALL, CH60 7SD
Erection of single-storey side extension to form extended lobby. Erection of single-storey rear extension to form 2 no. classrooms. Other works include both internal and external alterations to school.

Applicant: Wirral Council
Agent : Wirral Council

Qualifying Petition: No

Site Plan:



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Development Plan designation:

Green Belt

Planning History:

Location: Heswall Primary School, WHITFIELD LANE, HESWALL, CH60 7SD
Application Type: Work for Council by Council
Proposal: New gate in front entrance with a ramp to the school yard and additional palisade fencing
Application No: DPP3/15/00858
Decision Date: 28/08/2015
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Heswall Primary School, WHITFIELD LANE, HESWALL, CH60 7SD
Application Type: Work for Council by Council
Proposal: Single storey extension to school building
Application No: DPP3/11/00120
Decision Date: 15/04/2011
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Heswall County Primary, School, Whitfield Lane, Heswall, Wirral, CH60 7SD,
Application Type: Work for Council by Council
Proposal: Erection of a single storey classroom extension to the front elevation.
Application No: APP/99/06734
Decision Date: 09/11/1999
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Whitfield County Junior School, Whitfield Lane, Heswall, CH60 7SD
Application Type: Deemed
Proposal: Erection of additional teaching accommodation.
Application No: DPP/78/11499
Decision Date: 04/01/1979
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Whitfield County Primary School, Whitfield Lane, Heswall L60 7SD
Application Type: Deemed
Proposal: Single storey extension
Application No: DPP/82/20349
Decision Date: 26/05/1982
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Heswall Primary School, Whitfield Lane, Heswall, Wirral, CH60 7SD
Application Type: Full Planning Permission
Proposal: Erection of single storey extension
Application No: APP/04/06812
Decision Date: 22/10/2004
Decision Type: Approve

Summary Of Representations and Consultations Received:

1.0 WARD MEMBER COMMENTS

1.1 No comments received.

2.0 SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

A site notice was posted. No neighbour notifications were sent out given the application site has no immediately adjoining neighbours.

REPRESENTATIONS

None received

CONSULTATIONS

Highways - No objections

3.0 Reason for referral to Planning Committee

3.0.1 The application represents a departure from policy within the Wirral Unitary Development Plan. Given this departure and that the application is classed as a Major application, requires that the application be referred to the Planning Committee.

3.1 Site and Surroundings

3.1.1 The application site relates to Heswall Primary School situated to the north-eastern side of Whitfield Lane in Heswall. The school site comprises a brick built school building varying between single-storey and single-storey and a half in height. Its roof design comprises dual-pitched and mono-pitched elements. The school building has had a number of extensions to it over the years. The ground level application site drops steeply in level from that of the street level, as such the school building sits significantly below the other properties within the street.

3.1.2 Sited immediately to the front of the school building is the staff and visitor car park with vehicular access to and from the school onto Whitfield Lane. Immediately to its north-western side and rear (north-east) are tarmacked playgrounds, whilst taking up the majority of the application site to the north, is the school playing field. The application site is located within a designated area of Green Belt land, on the edge of a primarily residential area to its south and west.

3.2 Proposed Development

3.2.1 Planning permission is sought for the erection of two single-storey infill extensions. The first being sited to the south-western corner of the school building to form an extended lobby entrance area, whilst the second extension would be located to the northern corner of the school building to form a new classroom and Intervention room. The existing internal layout will be reconfigured as part of the proposed development, whilst a new door and window will be introduced to the rear elevation of Classroom (Year 6).

3.2.2 The proposed extensions are intended to further accommodate existing pupils and provide a more secure entrance and would therefore not result in an increase in pupil and staff numbers.

3.2.3 The proposed extensions would have a dual pitched roof design, whilst being constructed using matching materials to that of the existing school building.

3.3 Development Plan

3.3.1 Policy GB2 – Guidelines for Development in the Green Belt
Policy HS15 - Non-Residential Uses in Primarily Residential Areas
PolicyTR9 - Requirements for Off-street Parking

3.4 Other Material Planning Considerations

3.4.1 DCLG published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in February. The NPPF will be referred to as appropriate within this report.

3.5 Assessment

3.5.1 The main issues pertinent in the assessment of the proposal are;

- Principle of development;
- Design;
- Highways;
- Ecology; and
- Amenity

3.6 Principle of Development:

3.6.1 The application site is situated within a designated Green Belt area and as such needs to be considered against Policy GB2 of Wirral's UDP and relevant policies within the NPPF,

relating to the Green Belt.

- 3.6.2 Green Belt Impact Assessment:
The application site is located within the Green Belt, the policies for which include a general presumption against *'inappropriate development [which is], by definition, harmful to the Greenbelt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.'* (Paragraph 143 NPPF)
- 3.6.3 Paragraph 133 of the NPPF states that 'the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open'.
- 3.6.4 Paragraph 144 of the NPPF further states 'that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations'.
- 3.6.5 Policy GB2 of Wirral's UDP considers extensions to anything other than a dwelling an inappropriate form of development and unless very special circumstances are demonstrated, will not be approved. As such the application proposal would be a departure from Policy GB2, unless very special circumstances were demonstrated.
- 3.6.6 However, Paragraph 145 of the NPPF is not so prescriptive in relation to extensions to existing buildings, expanding this to cover all 'buildings' rather than just 'dwellings'. Specifically, paragraph 145 states that 'a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt', with one of the exceptions being 'the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.' The NPPF, being more up-to-date than Wirral's UDP, is considered by the Case Officer in this instance to hold more material weight. Because the extended school building does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original school building, the proposed extensions to the school can be considered an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt and very special circumstances do not, therefore, need to be demonstrated in this case.
- 3.6.7 The school represents an established development sited within and to the southern extent of an area of Green Belt land and immediately adjoining a built-up residential area to its south. Having already been extended previously under planning permissions DDP3/11/00120 and APP/04/06812, the proposed extensions, single-storey infill extensions, are considered to be of a similar scale to that of the existing school building and would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original school building.
- 3.6.8 It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not appear visually intrusive to the character of the surrounding properties..
- 3.6.9 The NPPF states that great importance is attached to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities, advising that local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement. It also states that local planning authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools.
- 3.6.10 The proposed extension would improve the teaching facilities at the school and consequently the principle of the proposed development is supported by national policy, subject to the impact on visual and residential amenity and to the local highway network.
- 3.7 Design:
- 3.7.1 The proposed extension forming the extended entrance lobby would infill the area to the front of the existing lobby, projecting 2.2m to the side of the existing reception area. The proposed extension forming the new classroom space would project approximately 5.8m to the rear of the existing school building to sit flush to the rear of Classroom (Year 6) .
- 3.7.2 The dual pitched roof design of the extensions would be in keeping with the varying roof designs of existing school, whilst the proposed matching materials comprising of facing

brickwork, Marley roof tiles and powder coated aluminium openings would match that of the existing school. It is recommended that a condition be attached to any permission requiring details of materials to be submitted.

- 3.7.3 The siting and single-storey scale of the proposed development are considered appropriate and the extensions would not look out of place within such a large site or against the existing primary school building.
- 3.7.4 Whilst there would be views onto the proposed development from within the street scene, from both Whitfield Lane and Downham Road North, the school building itself is set down considerably from the street level, due to a change in ground levels. The proposed single-storey scale extensions, which would not extend any further to the side or rear than the existing school would appear no more prominent within the street scene than the existing school and would not result in any adverse impact on visual amenity of the surrounding area.
- 3.7.5 The proposed extensions whilst being constructed on existing hard surfaced areas, these areas do not form part of the existing playground areas. The proposed development would therefore ensure that sufficient amounts of hard and soft landscaped play areas would remain and that there would be no harm to the amenity of existing and future pupils.
- 3.7.6 It is considered that the proposed development seeks to reflect the character of the existing school and surrounding area in terms of its design, materials and scale and street scene and as such is in accordance with policy HS15 of Wirral's UDP.
- 3.8 Highways:
- 3.8.1 The applicant has confirmed that the proposed extensions and reconfiguration of the internal layout are not part of a school expansion scheme and would not result in an increase in the number of staff or pupils. As such, it is unlikely that the proposal would have a harmful impact on the local highway network. The Local Highway Authority has been consulted on this application and has raised no objections.
- 3.9 Ecology:
- 3.9.1 There are no Environmental/Sustainability issues relating to these proposals.
- 3.10 Amenity:
- 3.10.1 HS15 of Wirral's UDP states that for proposals for small-scale built development will only be permitted for development that does not cause nuisance to neighbouring uses, particularly in respect of noise and disturbance.
- 3.10.2 The existing school building is set within spacious grounds. The closest residential properties being located to the opposite side of Whitfield Road, approximately 20m to the south and to the opposite side of Downham Road North, approximately 40m to the west. Given the drop in site levels, the school building is set considerably lower down from the street levels to Whitfield Road and Downham Road North.
- 3.10.3 Given its siting in relation to surrounding properties, the single-storey scale of the extensions and that the proposal would not result in any increase in staff or pupil numbers, it is therefore unlikely that the proposal would unduly impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties in terms of noise and disturbance, overlooking or loss of privacy, or appearing visually intrusive or overbearing.

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 policy advice. In reaching this decision the Local Planning Authority has considered the following:-

Whilst representing a departure from Policy GB2 of Wirral's Unitary Development Plan, the proposed development accords with the relevant policies of the National Planning Policy Framework relating to Green Belt, in that it is considered an appropriate form of

development within Green Belt land because the proposal is an extension to an existing building which would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The development seeks to reflect the character of the existing school and the surrounding area, in terms of its scale, design, materials and external appearance and would not unduly impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents. The application is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy HS15 of Wirral's Unitary Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Recommended Decision: **Approve**

Recommended Conditions and Reasons:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

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

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans received by the local planning authority on 23rd January 2019 and listed as follows:

B03279-01, received 23rd January 2019;
B03279-05, received 23rd January 2019; and
B03279-06, received 23rd January 2019.

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

3. Prior to any above ground works taking place, samples of the materials (roof tiles, brickwork, and openings) to be used in the external construction of this development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved materials shall then be used in the construction of the development.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development in the interests of visual amenity and to comply with Policy HS15 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

Further Notes for Committee:

Last Comments By: 30/05/2019
Expiry Date: 24/04/2019