

The application is for planning permission for the erection of two extensions and the refurbishment and remodelling of the existing building.

The application site lies within the Newcastle Urban Area on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The 8 week period for the determination of this application expired on the 27th September 2016. The applicant previously agreed to extend the statutory determination period to the 14th October 2016 but no further extension of time has been agreed with the applicant.

A decision on the application was deferred at the meeting dated 11th October so that Members could visit the site. The site visit is to take place on the 5th November.

RECOMMENDATION

PERMIT subject to conditions relating to the following:-

- 1. Approved drawings.**
- 2. Time Limit.**
- 3. Prior approval of all external facing materials.**
- 4. Prior approval and implementation of a Construction Method Statement.**
- 5. The works are completed in accordance with the arboricultural information required which shall include the wider drainage installation works.**
- 6. The prior approval and implementation of an Arboricultural Method Statement.**
- 7. Trees shown as retained shall be retained and protected throughout the construction period.**
- 8. Prior approval of details of mechanical ventilation.**
- 9. Construction activity is kept to reasonable hours.**
- 10. That no community use is granted (for the avoidance of any doubt).**

Reason for Recommendation

The scale and appearance of the sports hall and classroom extensions are not considered to be harmful to the character of the area provided that the external facing materials are agreed by condition. In addition it is also considered that the scale and appearance of the extensions would not adversely affect the living conditions within neighbouring properties. There is to be no community use of the proposed facilities and no increase in staff or pupil numbers and as such it is not anticipated that there would be any significant impact on highway safety arising from the proposal itself. Visually significant boundary trees close to the classroom extension and further afield lining neighbouring boundaries can be adequately safeguarded by planning condition.

As Sport England have withdrawn their objection to the application it is no longer necessary to consult the Secretary of State in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009 if minded to permit

Statement as to how the Local Planning Authority has worked in a positive and proactive manner in dealing with the planning application

The proposal is considered to be a sustainable form of development in compliance with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and subject to conditions no amendments are considered necessary.

Key Issues

The application is for planning permission to erect two extensions as follows:

- To provide a multifunctional sports hall measuring 19.1 metres by 10.9 metres by 8.2 metres in overall height sited on the south elevation of the building adjoining the sports field.
- To provide additional teaching space measuring 21.5 metres by 33.8 metres in maximum width and length and 4 metres in maximum roof height sited on the east side of the building .

The refurbishment and remodelling of the existing building is also proposed. No increase in staff or pupil numbers would arise from the development.

There are no policy objections, in principle, to extending existing schools and as such it is considered that the key issues in the determination of the application are:-

1. Is the loss of existing sports field acceptable?
2. Is the design of the extensions and the impact on the character of the area acceptable?
3. Can visually significant trees be adequately safeguarded?
4. Is the impact on the living conditions of surrounding occupiers acceptable?
5. Are there any significant highway safety concerns?
6. An overall conclusion of the merits of the proposal.

1. Loss of sports field

The proposed sports hall extension marginally encroaches onto the school sports field resulting in the loss of about 180m² of the total area of about 4,350 m² (about 4% of the total).

In light of their policy to oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or prejudice the use of, all/part of a playing field, unless certain exceptions apply Sport England initially objected to the application. However such objections have now been withdrawn following consideration of further detailed information regarding the function of existing and proposed sports spaces available to pupils of the school (which is set out in the Appendix to this report under the heading 'Applicant's/Agent's submission').

Taking into consideration the limited loss involved, and noting the current position of Sport England, it is considered that there are no objections to the loss of sports field as a result of the proposed sports hall extension.

2. Is the design of the extensions and the impact on the character of the area acceptable?

Paragraph 56 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Paragraph 64 states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

CSS Policy CSP1 states that new development should be well designed to respect the character, identity and context of Newcastle's unique townscape and landscape and in particular, the built heritage, its historic environment, its rural setting and the settlement pattern created by the hierarchy of centres. It states that new development should protect important and longer distance views of historic landmarks and rural vistas and contribute positively to an area's identity and heritage (both natural and built) in terms of scale, density, layout, use of appropriate vernacular materials for buildings and surfaces and access. The policy is consistent with the Framework.

The Council's Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document provides further detailed advice as to how design should be assessed to complement to Policy CSP1.

Following receipt of amended plans it is now proposed that the sports hall extension is to be constructed in brown bricks for the lower sections, matching the existing school, and the upper section is to be clad in smooth light grey cladding panels (having initially been shown to be a dark grey colour). The other extension is to be constructed, predominantly, in brown facing bricks. Such

materials are considered to be appropriate to the design and function of the proposed extensions within the context of the appearance of the existing school.

The amended plans received also reduce the height of the sports hall extension, by around 0.8m from approximately 9m to 8.2m. That extension still remains considerably taller than the existing parts of the school which range between about 4m and 7.4m in height (the upper height being the ridge height of the roof on the taller elements of the existing buildings). Given such dimensions and its flat roof design the new sports hall will be a prominent addition to the existing school building. However, notwithstanding the objections that have been received, it is considered that the height of the sports hall extension is acceptable and would not appear incongruous in this location. Any further reduction in height would mean that the sports hall does not have a scale that would accord with guidance for multifunctional sports spaces appropriate for schools produced by Sport England.

The classroom additions proposed, which are situated on the eastern boundary of the school shared with the cemetery, are not as tall replicating the scale and architecture of the existing school building and as such would not be as prominent in the local area.

Overall subject to a planning condition controlling the precise details of external facing materials the impact on the character of the area is considered to be acceptable.

3. Can visually significant trees be adequately safeguarded?

Saved Local Plan policy N12 states that the Council will resist development that would involve the removal of any visually significant tree, shrub, or hedge, whether mature or not, unless the need for the development is sufficient to warrant tree loss and the loss cannot be avoided by appropriate siting or design. Where exceptionally, permission can be given and trees are to be lost through development, replacement planting will be required on an appropriate scale and in accordance with a landscaping scheme. Where appropriate developers will be expected to set out what measures will be taken during the development to protect trees from damage.

The proposal does not involve the loss of any mature and visually significant trees, that have been identified as Category A and B trees (those of high and moderate quality and value) and in recognition of this the Landscape Development Section has no objections to the proposal subject to the imposition of tree protection conditions. It is noted that additional concerns have been raised by residents in relation to the installation of new drainage on surrounding trees but that can also be addressed against by an appropriately worded planning condition and the advice received is that this would not result in the loss of trees.

4. Is the impact on the living conditions of surrounding residents acceptable?

SPG (Space Around Dwelling) provides guidance on privacy, daylight standards and environmental considerations. The sports hall extensions is the closest to the rear of residential properties on Abbots Way but at a distance of approximately 54m or more from the rear elevations of such properties and about 35m or more from the rear boundary it is considered that the extension would not have any adverse impact on daylight or result in an overbearing impact. There are no windows on the elevation facing towards the rear of such properties that would affect amenity.

The relationship between the proposed development and other neighbouring dwellings is therefore compliant with the advice of the SPG. In conclusion there is no significant adverse impact to neighbouring living conditions.

5. Are there any significant highway safety concerns?

Local residents have highlighted existing car parking and vehicle circulation problems along Abbots Way and within the school grounds which coincide with morning and evening drop off and pick up times. The access road leading down to the school from Abbots Way is narrow and the number of vehicles using the entrance alongside pupils requiring assistance when being dropped off results in traffic circulation problems on Abbots Way.

Those local concerns have been taken into account by the Highway Authority. But as no increase in staff or pupil numbers are proposed as a result of the extensions applied for there are no significant highway safety issues arising from the proposal.

Concerns have also been raised in relation to the possibility of the sports hall being used for community evening uses which would have a local highways impact. The school have now confirmed the proposal will not be used in that capacity. Taking into account the specific nature of the development applied for significant highway safety detriment cannot be justified.

APPENDIX

Policies and proposals in the approved development plan relevant to this decision:-

Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) 2006-2026

Policy ASP6: Rural Area Spatial Policy
Policy CSP1: Design Quality
Policy CSP3: Sustainability and Climate Change

Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan (NLP) 2011

Policy T16: Development – General Parking Requirements
Policy N17: Landscape Character – General Considerations
Policy N12: Development and the Protection of Trees

Other Material Considerations include:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)
National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2014)

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document (2010)

Relevant Planning History

05/01212/CPO	New car park, relocation of existing garage from the rear of the site, new classroom extension, staffroom extension and new access ramp at entrance	Permitted in 2006
00/00040/CPO	Erection of garage	Permitted in 2000
93/00740/CPO	Double classroom mobile unit	Permitted in 1993
92/00373/FUL	Extension to classroom	Permitted in 1992
N6238	New headmasters office	Permitted in 1978
N7477	The erection of a garage	Permitted in 1979

Views of Consultees

Sport England following consideration of additional information, now have no objections to the application.

Landscape Development Section comment that they have no objections to the proposal subject to conditions requiring:-

1. The works are completed in accordance with the arboricultural information required.
2. The prior approval and implementation of an Arboricultural Method Statement.
3. Trees shown as retained shall be retained and protected throughout the construction period.

The **Environmental Health Division** has no objections.

The **Highway Authority** has no objections to the development subject to conditions requiring:-

1. The submission, agreement and implementation of a Construction Method Statement.

They also comment that their advice is based on the following:-

- Pupils and staff numbers not increasing.
- The existing car park will not be affected by the development.
- The proposed sports hall is to be used solely by the school and the facility will not be available to be used by the local community.

Representations

The neighbour notification period expires on the 27th September.

A total of 46 objections, including a letter from **Paul Farrelly MP** and from **Cllr Mark Holland**, have been received raising the following concerns:-

- Aggravation of existing traffic problems in the area.
- The visual impact of the development is considered harmful due to its disproportionate height, scale and materials compared to the existing school building. Such impact will not be lessened by the mature trees on the boundary as they are deciduous species.
- The design basis for the proposal is questionable and allows for the height of the sports hall to be reduced.
- The extension works will harm visually important trees in the vicinity.
- The proposal could be used for evening community use which would cause parking and traffic problems and other disruption to local amenity.
- There is already an oversupply of community sports facilities in the Newcastle under Lyme area as evidenced by Sport England.
- The reduction of outdoor sports field space is unacceptable (as supported by Sport England).
- Consultation with residents has not been carried out and a decision should be undertaken with transparency.
- Construction times and landscaping provision are secured by planning condition.

Applicant's/Agent's submission

The application is supported by a Phase 1 Site Appraisal (desk study) to identify potential ground engineering and contamination issues and an Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Method Statement. In addition the applicant, in response to concerns expressed, in particular those made by Sport England, has provided the following additional information:-

- The Coppice Academy is a 100 place Special Educational Needs school offering education from age 12 - 18. In 2015 a basic needs assessment was undertaken, the assessment concluded that the school accommodation is approximately 40% smaller than the current standard requirements. Funding for the construction of additional accommodation has been awarded to this school as a result. Basic accommodation requirements have been identified and the layout of the existing site interrogated to determine the most appropriate proposal to accommodate the required facilities:-
 1. Sports Hall
 2. Music classrooms
 3. Small group rooms
 4. Standard size ICT classroom
 5. Associated ancillary support spacesThe proposed extensions allow the greatest operational benefits to the school, maximising use and accessibility.
- The existing playing field is currently used by the school for the following activities (weather permitting): athletics (using a non-standard size 4/6 lane running track); football; softball; rounders; tag rugby and orienteering.
- The school also have use of hard play courts on site which can accommodate: basketball; 5-a-side; volley ball; quick cricket; netball; and field hockey.
- The remaining playing field provision post building the extension will continue to accommodate all of the above and it can be laid out formally to provide: a 7 v 7 mini soccer pitch (55m x 43m); two. 5 v 5 mini soccer pitches (43m x 33m); a non-standard running track (4 lane, 40m straight, 15m radius) (smaller radius than existing but longer straight); as well as the existing full size football pitch (measuring around 80m x 40m).
- The number of extra sports activities the school could provide within the sports hall during the school day and throughout the year far outweighs the marginal loss of playing field of which use and purpose is dependent on the weather.
- Often the playing fields are used informally by small groups due to the range in ability of the pupils across different age groups. Using the playing field for two smaller

pitches is just as valuable to the school as its use as a single larger pitch, the fields are used in this way already.

- External play equipment is currently stored in the garage at the far end of the car park, at the northern boundary of the site. The proposed sports hall design includes an external store adjacent to the playing fields. The benefit of this proximity means pupils can be involved in collecting and setting up equipment and will contribute to longer lesson times.
- The school believes the new sports hall will enable them to deliver a specialist curriculum that best supports their student's needs.

The application documents are available for inspection at the Guildhall and via the following link <http://publicaccess.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/online-applications/PLAN/16/00626/FUL>

Background papers

Planning files referred to

Planning Documents referred to

Date report prepared

27th September 2016.