



JOINT AREA COMMITTEES IN SOUTH SOMERSET
Officer Report On Planning Application:
No. 09/03391/R3C

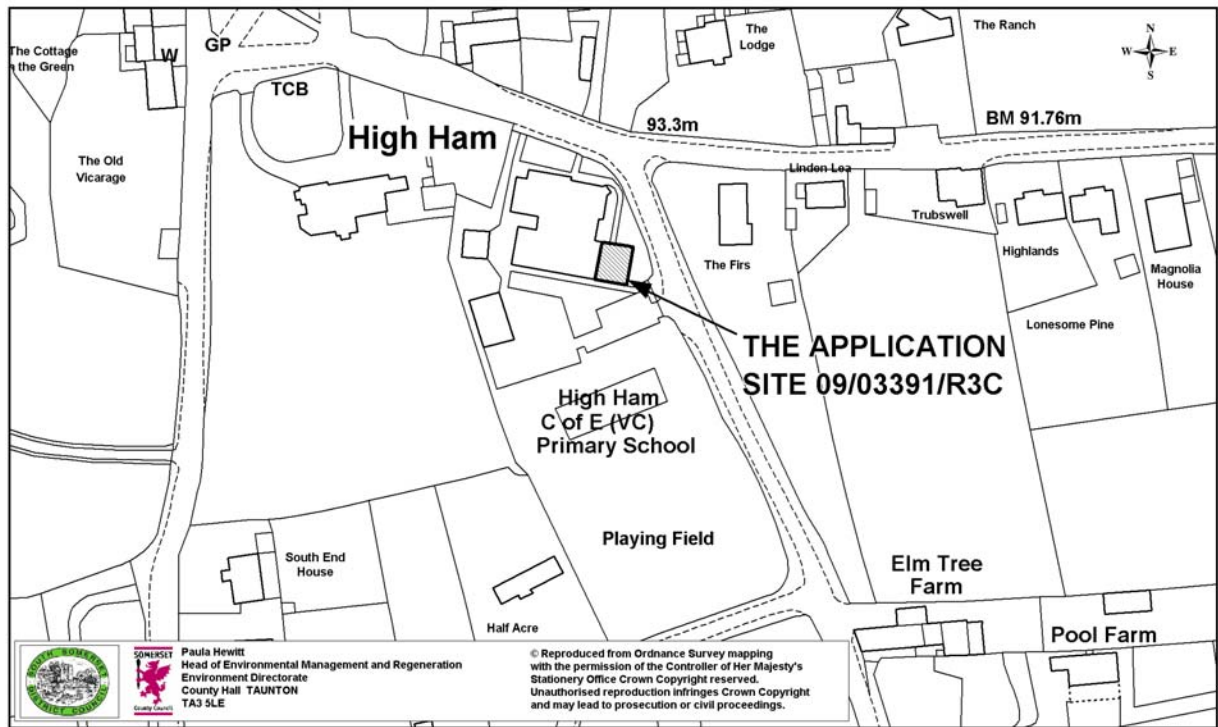




Proposal:	Erection of a single storey extension to the existing school building for use as a community room, on land at High Ham Primary School.
Site Address:	High Ham Primary School, High Ham, Langport, Somerset, TA10 9BY
Parish:	High Ham
Ward/(SSDC Member):	TURN HILL Rupert Cox (Cllr)
Division/(SCC Member):	LANGPORT Derek Yeomans (Cllr)
Recommending Case Officer:	Tessa Bond 01823 356024 tbond@somerset.gov.uk
Date registered:	28.08.2009
Target date:	12.10.2009
Applicant:	Director – CYPD Somerset County Council
Application Type:	Regulation 3

REASON (S) FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

This application is being reported to the committee for determination due to the objection that has been received from a nearby local resident, and concerns that have been raised by the Parish Council and Ward Member Cllr Cox. The detail of their objection and concerns has been discussed below.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL





 Paula Hewitt
 Head of Environmental Management and Regeneration
 Environment Directorate
 County Hall TAUNTON
 TA3 5LE

© Reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office Crown Copyright reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Site description

High Ham is a village located approximately 3 miles to the north of Langport.

The proposed extension would be located on land at High Ham Primary School. The proposed site is located within the centre of the village, which is within the defined development area outlined by the South Somerset District Local Plan. This area of the village comprises of residential housing. The application site area is within the High Ham Conservation Area.

The existing school building is of a single storey, pitched roof design and has been constructed from grey reconstituted stone blocks, similar in appearance to Blue Lias Stone, which is a building material characteristic of the local area.

The application site is located within the east central area of the school site. The application site is located on an amenity grassed area.

To the north of the application site is a further grassed amenity area. The School's northern boundary is located approximately 16 m from the edge of the application site.

To the east of the application site is a small grassed amenity strip. The School's eastern boundary is located approximately 10 m from the edge of the application site. On the other side of the boundary is Long Street. A residential property is located approximately 27 m from the edge of the application site.

To the south of the application site is the school car park and beyond that, the school playing field is located approximately 20 m from the edge of the application site. The school's southern boundary is located approximately 100 m from the edge of the application site.

To the west of the application site is the existing school building. The school's western boundary is located approximately 40 m from the edge of the application site.

The proposal

Planning permission is being sought for the erection of a single storey extension to the existing school building to be used by the School during the day as a space for special educational needs work, music lessons, and space for small groups of pupils to work. After core school hours, it is proposed that the room be used from 15:30h to 17:00h as an extended school room, offering childcare services. It is proposed that in the evening, the room would be used for Governor's meetings and available for community hire. The applicant has provided that the hire of the village hall is not a practical option when only a small space is required for a small number of people attending a meeting. The applicant has provided that the room would be suitable for approximately 16 adults.

The proposed extension is of a single storey design, measuring 8.6 m (metres) in length, 7.0 m in width and 5.9 m in height (which is at a lower height than the adjoining school classroom) creating a floor space area of 60.2 m².

The proposed extension is of a rectangular shape. The proposed eastern external wall is shorter in length than the School's existing eastern external wall, and the proposed extension is at a lower height than the adjoining school classroom and so the eaves and roofline of the existing building will still be visible. Consequently, the proposed development would appear visually as well as functionally subservient to the main School building.

The proposed northern elevation includes a doorway and two windows, the proposed western elevation adjoins the existing building, the proposed southern elevation includes a doorway and two large windows which would rise from ground level to eaves height and the eastern elevation has a small window located approximately 4.2 m from ground level.

The proposed materials for the extension are reconstituted stone blocks to match the existing adjoining building. Matching roof materials and windows are also proposed.

HISTORY:

- 01/02785/R3C: Proposed erection of temporary classroom: - Conditionally permitted 21/12/2001.
- 02/02483/R3C: Construction of timber pergola to provide shade for school children: - Conditionally permitted 06/11/2002.
- 04/03275/R3C: Construction of a replacement sustainable single classroom to replace a temporary classroom: - Conditionally permitted 05/01/2005.
- 07/00408/R3C: Renewal of planning permission for temporary classroom E676: - Conditionally permitted 19/03/2007.
- 09/01268/R3C: Erection of a new 3 Bay Elliott building for use as a pre – school: - Conditionally permitted 29/05/2009.

POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 repeats the duty imposed under S54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and requires that decision must be made in accordance with relevant Development Plan Documents unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Relevant Development Plan documents:

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South West (RPG10) (adopted September 2001):

Policy SS 19 - Rural Areas – In accordance: - The proposed development is small in scale and takes place within the existing settlement.

Policy EN 4 – Quality in the Built Environment – In accordance: - The proposed building is of a good design, and is of a size and scale which is compatible with the character of the area.

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan (adopted April 2000):

STR1 – Sustainable Development – In accordance: - The proposed development is of good design; will be accessible to people with disabilities; and, ensures continued access to services.

STR3 – Rural Centres and Villages – In accordance: - High Ham is identified as a village in the saved policies of the South Somerset District Local Plan; where the principle of development is appropriate.

STR5 – Development in Rural Centres and Villages – In accordance: - The proposed development will sustain the role of the village; and, will be proportionate to the size, accessibility, character and physical identity of the village.

Policy 9 – The Built Historic Environment – In accordance: - The proposed development preserves the character of the Conservation Area as the proposed development is considered to conform to the existing historical pattern of development, use appropriate materials, and is of a compatible design with its surroundings.

Policy 19 – Employment and Community Provision in Rural Areas – In accordance: - The proposed development enhances local community facilities as the space will be available for small groups within the community, providing decent, quality accommodation.

Policy 49 – Transport Requirements of new Developments – In accordance: - The proposal is consistent with the existing highway infrastructure, as no changes will be needed to accommodate the proposed development.

The Saved Policies of the South Somerset Local Plan (adopted April 2006) (Saved policies April 2009):

ST2 – Villages – In accordance: - Policy ST2 identifies High Ham as a village, within which the principle of development is appropriate.

ST5 – General Principles of Development – In accordance: - The proposed development satisfies the criteria outlined in Policy ST5. Notably, the proposed development makes efficient use of land from within the school site and respects the form, character and setting of the main School building and wider locality.

ST6 – Quality of Development – In accordance: - The proposed development satisfies the criteria outlined in Policy ST6. Notably, the proposed development respects the form, character and setting of the settlement, does not cause unavoidable harm to the built environment and does not unacceptably harm the residential amenity of occupiers of adjacent properties.

EH1 – Conservation Areas – In accordance: - The proposed development site is within the High Ham Conservation Area. The proposed development is considered to conform to the existing historical pattern of development, use appropriate materials, and is of a compatible design with its surroundings.

Policy-related Material Considerations

Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West (Proposed Changes June 2008):

Development Policy C – Development in small towns and villages – In accordance: - The proposed development supports small-scale economic activity; ensures the continued access of services; does not significantly increase traffic on local roads; and, strengthens local communities.

Development Policy E – High Quality Design – In accordance: - The proposed development is considered to be compatible with the rural area due to its size, scale, and positioning within the school site.

PPS's/PPG's

Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development – In accordance: - The proposed development ensures continued access to services and will be accessible to all. The development is considered to be sustainable.

Planning Policy Guidance 13 – Transport – In accordance: - The proposed development would allow for a range of transport services and is considered to be sustainable.

Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas – In accordance: - The proposed development is suitable for the rural area as it is of an appropriate design and use and has taken issues of sustainability into account.

Planning Policy Guidance 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment – In accordance: - The proposed development meets the objective of preserving the character of the Conservation Area as the proposed development is considered to conform to the existing historical pattern of development, use appropriate materials, and is of a compatible design with its surroundings.

South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy

The proposed development is in accordance with the South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy and is notably prevalent in concurring with the goals to achieve strong social networks in communities, and enabling access to community facilities for everyone.

CONSULTATIONS

South Somerset District Council: South Somerset District Council raised no objection to the proposed development subject to conditions being attached referring to the statutory time limit for the commencement of development and that the extension be constructed from materials which match those of the existing School building.

High Ham Parish Council: High Ham Parish Council has raised concern over the proposed development. The Parish Council raised concern regarding parking, noise and disruption caused to local residents.

The Local Highway Authority: The Local Highway Authority advised that the proposed development is unlikely to result in a significant increase in vehicular movements to and from the site and therefore raised no objection. The Local Highway Authority has been asked for further information, and this is being awaited. An oral update will be provided at the Committee meeting.

The Historic Environment Service: At the time of writing this report, no response had been received from the Conservation Officer.

Somerset County Council's acoustic advisor: Somerset County Council's acoustic advisor noted that the room may be used for individual and group music sessions and as such, he would expect that musical noise be audible in the nearby residential garden when the community room windows are open. However, he would not expect that the frequency of these occasions would be sufficient to require noise control measures to be specified as planning conditions. He has raised no objection. Further detail of his response will be discussed below.

Somerset County Council’s landscape advisor: Somerset County Council’s landscape advisor raised no objection to the proposed development but did suggest that if planning permission were to be granted, a condition requiring the protection of trees and vegetation should be attached.

Disabled Network: At the time of writing this report, the comments from the Disabled Network were being awaited.

Avon and Somerset Police Constabulary: At the time of writing this report, the comments from the Police Architectural Liaison Officer were being awaited.

REPRESENTATIONS

One letter of representation has been received objecting to the proposed development. The objector made the following comments:

- No provision has been made for increased parking facilities.
- The provision of a community room could have an adverse impact on the viability of the village hall, which has sufficient parking spaces.
- The hiring of the proposed hall could extend a current parking problem of inconsiderate parking along adjoining roads beyond the School day into the evenings and possibly weekends.

CONSIDERATIONS

It is considered that the main planning considerations with regard to this proposed development are:

- Whether the proposal accords with the development plan.
- Whether the proposed development is considered to be sustainable and of good design.
- Transport impact.
- Impact on the High Ham Conservation Area.
- Noise.

Whether the proposal accords with the development plan

The proposed development accords with the relevant development plan policies, as set out above and below.

Whether the proposed development is considered to be sustainable and of good design

Structure Plan Policy (SP) STR1 sets out that sustainable development will be of high quality, good design, minimises the use of non-renewable resources, ensures access to services and enables access for people with disabilities. Local Plan Policy (LP) ST5 details the general principles of development, notably, that development should promote a pattern of land use and transport which reduces the need to travel, minimises the length of journeys, provides a choice of means of transport, makes efficient use of the land, conserves biodiversity and environmental assets, respects the setting of the locality, and makes provision for the infrastructure necessary to service the development. The South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy details a strong focus on development that will achieve strong social networks within communities and enable

access to community facilities for everyone. The proposed development achieves these goals.

I am satisfied that the proposed development is of high quality and good design. The building is of a size and scale which is compatible with the existing buildings within the school site; the location and size of the building ensures that adjoining residential properties are not adversely affected by a reduction in natural light; the small scale extension does not create a substantial percentage reduction on the grassed amenity area; and the external detailed design reflects the existing character, detail and proportions of the existing building.

The proposed development would also ensure access to community services. The space would be utilised during school hours, as a space for children with special educational needs, and for pupil music lessons, and group work. The additional space would improve existing school facilities and would also improve the services offered to children with special educational needs. The applicant has proposed that the room be used as an extended schools room between 15:30h and 17:00h. In 2003, the Government published a green paper titled – “Every Child Matters”. From this developed the “Extended Schools” initiative; an extended school works with the local authority, local providers and other schools to provide access to a range of integrated services. The School already operates an “extended Schools” programme, called “Bizzy Kids”. However, the school is keen to find a set location to hold the after school group. The proposed extension will enable the school to offer after school care in good accommodation, in conjunction with the Government’s Extended Schools Programme.

The building has been designed to the latest standards to fully comply with the Government’s Ofsted and registration requirements and is compliant with DDA legislation.

Another component of sustainable development is that the proposed development should not increase the need to travel. As the transport impact of the proposed development is considered to be an issue in determining the planning application, the issue of travel will be discussed separately below.

Transport impact

As detailed above, a local resident and the Parish Council raised concerns over the parking provision at the school and also a possible increase in traffic generated by additional trips when the community hall is privately hired out.

SP Policy 49 indicates that development should be compatible with the existing transport infrastructure or provision made for improvements to infrastructure to enable development to proceed. Developments should also provide access for pedestrians, people with disabilities and public transport. Development should have safe access to roads of adequate standard.

It is considered that the proposed development would not lead to a significant increase in travel. During the day the room would be used by existing school staff and pupils; no increase in these numbers are anticipated.

As noted above, the room would be used between the hours of 1530 to 1700 Monday to Friday as an extended schools room, offering childcare facilities. This could have the effect that the traffic impact experienced at the end of the school day is reduced, as pick up times will be staggered.

It is not envisaged that there will be a significant increase in traffic if the community hall were to be hired out. As detailed in the application, the room would only be able to accommodate approximately 16 adults.

The planning agent has confirmed that when the school requires a larger area in order to accommodate more than 16 people, then it is likely that the Village Hall would be used.

The Local Highway Authority raised no objection to the proposed development. The Highway Officer provided that the proposal is unlikely to result in a significant increase in vehicular movements to and from the site, and that to raise an objection on highway grounds may be unreasonable.

Further advice has been sought from the Local Highway Authority regarding the after – school use of the site and the potential impact that this could serve on the local area. Final comments from the Local Highway Authority are being awaited, and so an oral update will be provided at the Joint Area Committee meeting.

Impact on the High Ham Conservation Area

The application site is located within the High Ham Conservation Area.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a special duty on the planning authority to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

This statutory provision is then further reinforced through the planning system by relevant development plan policies that relate to Conservation Areas. SP Policy 9 provides that the character or appearance of Conservation Areas should be preserved or enhanced. LP Policy EH1 provides that proposed development which is located within a Conservation Area should preserve or enhance the character of the area by; conforming with the historical pattern of development; using landscape design as an active element in the overall design; using materials for buildings, surfaces and enclosures which are appropriate to the buildings function and compatible with its surroundings; and, provide buildings and spaces which make a positive contribution to the character, setting and appearance of the area.

The proposed development would extend from the original school building, the development is small in size and scale and is therefore considered to fit in well with the design of the existing building; due to it's design the building is considered to complement the existing building rather than providing a new and distinct feature. This approach is considered to be the most suitable development of this type within this location of the Conservation Area.

No significant trees are proposed to be removed as part of the planning application. However, the landscape has been taken into account by the submission of a tree survey. The development has been located so as to make best use of the existing vegetation; utilizing the vegetation to ensure that the visual impact of the development is softened by the presence of vegetative screening.

The materials proposed for the development are to match the existing building. This approach is to ensure that the extension sits sympathetically within the context of the existing surrounding area.

In conclusion, the proposed building has taken into account the existing features that are considered to be important characteristics of the local area and included this within the design to ensure that the building preserves the character of the Conservation Area.

Noise

The Parish Council has raised concern that the proposed use of the development could inconvenience local residents with regards to an increase in noise.

As detailed above, the school would use the extension during the school day for a number of uses, one of which would be for individual and group music sessions.

LP Policy EP2 provides that applications for potentially noise generating uses will be permitted only where they would not be detrimental to the amenity of noise sensitive developments in the vicinity. The closest noise sensitive development to the development site would be a residential property that is located approximately 27 m from the edge of the application site.

Somerset County Council's acoustic advisor has commented that with regards to the proposed development he does not consider noise to be a significant planning issue. He acknowledged that the room may be used for individual and group music sessions and as such, he would expect that musical noise would be audible in the nearby residential garden when the windows from the proposed extension would be open. However, he did not expect the frequency of these occasions to be sufficient to require noise control limits to be specified as planning conditions.

The acoustic advisor has acknowledged that issues may arise if a particularly noisy activity took place in the evenings on a regular basis; however, he has added that he would hope that responsible school management of the facility would take steps to avoid inappropriate use. It is therefore considered necessary that if planning permission were to be granted, a condition should be attached to the planning permission, requiring the School to formalize a scheme for the noise management of the facility, which would include complaint logging, actions and preventative measures.

It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not be detrimental to the amenity of noise sensitive developments in the vicinity, and as such, accords with LP Policy EP2.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposed development is of sustainable and good design, and therefore accords with SP Policy STR1 and LP Policy ST5.

I acknowledge that High Ham Primary School has an existing traffic problem associated with the school. However, the School has confirmed that they will not be increasing their pupil or staff numbers as a result of this development, and during the evening, if the room were to be hired out, it would only be a suitable space for a maximum of 16 adults and the school car parking area would be made available. As detailed in the report above, final comments are being awaited from the Local Highway Authority regarding the use of the room during the after – school hours period.

The proposed design of the development has taken into account the sensitivity of the Conservation Area, and it is considered that the proposed development preserves the character of the Conservation Area, it is therefore concluded that the proposed development accords with SP Policy 9 and LP policy EH1.

The proposed development is not considered to be detrimental to the amenity of noise sensitive developments in the vicinity and therefore accords with LP Policy EP2. If planning permission were to be granted, to ensure that the School takes the use and frequency of the building into account, a condition would be attached to the permission, requiring the School to submit a noise management scheme, the approved scheme would be implemented in full before the room hereby permitted is occupied, and be carried out for the duration of the use.

In all other respects the proposal is in accordance with the relevant policies of the development plan.

Overall, there are no other relevant material considerations that would indicate a refusal and my recommendation is that the decision should be made in accordance with the development plan, hence I recommend approval.

SECTION 106 PLANNING OBLIGATION/UNILATERAL UNDERTAKING

Not applicable

RECOMMENDATION

- a. Grant permission

SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:

Pre-commencement

- 1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: Pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

- 2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved specifications and plan drawing number PL-01, and with any scheme, working programme or other details submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority in pursuance of any condition attached to this permission, unless (in either case) prior written approval is obtained from the County Planning Authority to any variation.

Reason: To enable the County Planning Authority to promptly deal with any development not in accordance with the approved plans.

- 3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Reason: In the interests of achieving good design.

Pre-occupation/use

- 1. For the duration of the works, trees 2680, 2681 and 2682 and shrub groups 2683 and 2684 as identified in the Arboricultural Report dated 22 September 2009 shall be protected from damage as detailed in that Report. All other trees and shrubs

immediately adjoining the application site and any related storage or access areas will be preserved undamaged. No vegetation shall be felled, lopped, topped or removed without the prior written consent of the County Planning Authority. Any such vegetation removed without consent, being severely damaged or dying shall be replaced with plants of such size and species as may be agreed with the County Planning Authority, in the first available planting season following any such occurrences.

Reason: In the interests of continuity of amenity and wildlife conservation.

2. Prior to the development first being brought into use, a noise management scheme, including details of how complaints would be dealt with and logged, actions and preventative measures, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented in full before the room hereby permitted is occupied, and be carried out for the duration of the use.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity.

INFORMATIVE NOTES

1. Your attention is drawn to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Part M of Building Regulations, which may assist you in ensuring fair access to all.