

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

10th August 2016

CONSULTATION ON A PLANNING APPLICATION (COUNTY MATTER)

Holyoakes School, Off Cookridge Close, Brockhill, Redditch

Submission of Information in respect of the planning application

Application Ref: 16/000007/REG
Applicant: Worcestershire County Council
Proposal: Construction of New 2 Form Entry First School and Associated Works
Location: Land off Cookridge Close, Brockhill, Redditch

Purpose of Report

To advise Members of the above County Matters planning application.

This report sets out the background, the location of the application (Site Plan attached for information), the main elements forming the application and the main planning issues arising from the application in order to inform Members.

The views of Members on the scheme are thus invited for submission to Worcestershire County Council for consideration in the determination of the application.

Introduction/Background to the Scheme

Worcestershire Country Council had commissioned a study back in 2015 in regard to the feasibility of a replacement /new school premises at the site in Brockhill East to replace the existing Holyoakes School, Bridge Street, Redditch.

The background to this survey has come about due to the site constraints for expansion and the condition of Holyoakes School in Bridge Street, Redditch. The present Holyoakes School is no longer considered suitable due to the current condition and ongoing issues with the fabric of the main school buildings on site. Furthermore the school has capacity issues as there is no further space for expansion to accommodate larger intakes. Pupil admission numbers (PAN) need to increase from the current 48 to allow for growth up to 60.

The areas of Brockhill East have been and are currently subject to development for housing and form part of a wider strategic housing land site. The relocation would then enable a new modern school which will be 'fit for purpose' and this school will be re-located in its entirety to the central part of the new community at Brockhill.

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The Site and Surroundings

The site which is subject to this particular application is located to the north of Redditch Town Centre. The site forms part of the area known as Brockhill East. The site would be located to form part of the proposed District Centre. Currently the land is characterised by land which is currently partially developed (housing) and from this point the land slopes quite steeply up towards Lowans Hill Farm which is towards the top of this slope. Lowans Hill Farm will form part of the southern boundary of the proposed site. The former farmstead appears as a heritage asset and has archaeological value. In terms of this form and the wider area which has been subject to Iron Age workings and later WW2 development in the form of marl pits. The A441 is located to the east with further expansion for housing located to the north and extends out to the A441 which will be subject to separate improvements.

The land is currently Green Belt in the adopted Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3 (BORLP3). However, it is allocated in the emerging Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 (BORLP4) as part of a strategic housing site, which on a wider level, encompasses both areas of Redditch and Bromsgrove District. Provision of a school capable of use as a community facility is one of the development criteria of the emerging policy.

Proposal

This County Consultation is to seek views on the development of a new 2 form entry First school at the site. The site replaces the former Holyoakes Field First School which is limited in terms of its location to allow further expansion to take place.

The extent of the submission covers

- A new school building of 1990m² (gross internal)
- Nursery playroom
- 2 reception classes
- 4 x key stage 1 classes
- 4 x key stage 2 classes (*all classes with stores, cloaks practical areas and toilets*)
- Learning centre /resource room
- Multi-purpose hall and store (including new community store)
- Catering kitchen and store
- Admin area with Heads room and offices and staff accommodation
- Plant room – boiler and sprinklers

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The school will be accessed from a new section of one of the residential estate roads (adjacent to Cookridge Close).

There will be a dedicated vehicular access and a separate pedestrian access.

Policies

- BORLP3 - Policies:- CS1, CS2, CS5, CS7, CS8, S1, B(BE)11, B(BE)13, B(NE)3, B(RA)3, L2, C(CF) 1, C(T)12
- Emerging BORLP4 – Policies:- 1, 2, 3, 5, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 28, 36, 37, 39, 40, 46
- NPPF
- NPPG

Consideration

There are a number of issues that were considered as part of this proposed development and these include the following topics which form part of this consultation information provided by the County Council.

Green Belt

The site is within Green Belt and as such the development as proposed would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt as it does not appear as part of the list in paragraph 89 of the NPPF under development that is considered appropriate. Inappropriate development is by definition harmful so the County Council's agent has provided 'very special circumstances' to overcome the harm the proposal may cause.

Whilst the site is currently in Green Belt, the land in question forms part of a wider area identified in the Emerging BORLP4 as land set aside to meet strategic housing land objectives and a local centre (Policy 46). BORLP4 is at an advanced stage with the Plan already being subject to an Examination and Main Modifications consultation commencing 27 July 2016, prior to adoption. There are no proposed Modifications to amend this policy. It is considered that given the advanced stage of the Local Plan, set against the opportunity to create a dedicated first school as a central part of the new proposed housing development of Brockhill and the lack of suitability of the present school site to provide for growth and future needs and the conditions of the premises, the new school would prove a benefit to the wider area, be located in the heart of the local community and be of a greater benefit to the newer residents of Brockhill, which could overcome the harm the development would cause by coming forward a little earlier than the plans envisage and would represent very special circumstances in this instance.

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Design and Appearance (school and Environs)

The school building reflects to some extent the courtyard style layout of the adjacent Lowan Hill Farm and will be a modern building constructed with brick and cladding detailing. The windows and louvres will be aluminium with zinc standing seam roof. The link building proposed is flat and will have a sedum (green) roof.

The building will have a basic form of linked pavilions containing classrooms which run around the contour line of the hill to which it is located. Hall spaces, kitchen and stores are located at the lower levels. Playing pitches /open spaces are located near the Green Belt boundary to blend the development into the landscape.

The building will meet targets for BREEAM and the principles of sustainability are established throughout the development including increased insulation, energy efficient heating, natural ventilation and the considered approach to materials being used along with a SUD's drainage pond to capture run off and create wildlife habitats and educational opportunity through 'Forest School initiative'

Access and Transport Issues

A full transport statement has been provided with the submission.

Access to the school will be from Cookridge Close by extending the current route. Surveys and modelling has taken place at the new site to project the levels of traffic in the local and wider vicinity.

A school of 326 pupils will generate certain levels of traffic in the morning and afternoon peak period. The results of this show the impact on the local and wider highway networks will not be adversely impacted and there will be an adequate level of car parking for staff only along with cycle parking and storage areas for staff and pupils alike. Pedestrian routes will be encouraged.

The school will also encourage a travel plan in order to advocate both walking and cycling.

Ecology

An ecological appraisal has been undertaken. The site is not a statutory or non statutory wildlife site. There is some grassland and parts of hedgerow, neither have significant ecological value. There is only one oak tree that has a potential for bat roosting however no roosting bats were found and the potential was considered low to moderate. The remit of the school will improve the ecological value of the site and provide educational opportunities for the pupils. Apart from the location of a significant Oak and associate trees which could provide foraging bats the site is note

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considered to have any adverse ecological issues which could be adversely impacted by the development. Improvements to the ecological value are embodied into the design and layout of the new school which will increase the potential for biodiversity.

Archaeology and Historic Environment

The site is adjacent to Lowans Hill Farmstead which is an 18/19th century farm complex with the buildings set around a courtyard. The new school picks up on design themes of the farm with 'book end' style buildings and a link block between.

Brockhill East development has been identified as having potential for Iron Age remains based on the development at Phase 1. The Historic Environment Advisor has considered that a survey prior to redevelopment does not need to take place as it is unlikely that any remains of significance are expected which would not in this instance hinder the determination of the application.

Flood Risk

The site is within flood zone 1 as identified and as such there will be a negligible risk of flooding in 1:1000 (0.1%) and therefore subject to the correct assessments the potential for flooding can be dealt with by the various drainage authorities and can be subject to appropriate conditions.

Other Issues

- **Design and Crime:** The school has incorporated a design to avoid entry to the roof and local environs of the school with added design features of recessed down water pipes and square pipes to avoid climbing. Fencing will be around the open areas of the school.

Storage and bin stores will be in locked secure areas and lighting to the car park areas and security lights on the building around the premises along with intruder alarms.

- **Health and Wellbeing:** the location of Holyoakes school encompasses 'Forest School' initiatives including ecological enhancements and teaching possibilities. The kitchen will prepare and cook food for the pupils at the school.
- **Community Facility:** Within the design of the buildings and outdoor areas it is envisaged that the school and its grounds will provide a useful community facility and hub for the local area which can be used outside of school times and terms.

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- Local Employment: the school will help encourage local job opportunities for the new school.

Conclusions

The issues members may wish to consider therefore are:-

- The impact of the sue on the Greenbelt and the very special circumstances put forward
- The impact on the local highway network and wider highway network.
- Design appearance of the proposed new school in relation to its surroundings
- Any wider impacts on the environment (flooding) and also including ecology and biodiversity
- Any associated impacts on the neighbouring Lowan's Hill Farm as a heritage asset.

Members may also wish to consider recommending conditions if the County Council are mindful to approve the application

The recommendation made by members will form the relevant representation from Redditch Borough Council for consideration in any determination of the application.

Case officer

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