

SECTION '2' – Applications meriting special consideration

Application No : 10/01764/FULL1

Ward:
West Wickham

Address : St Davids College Beckenham Road
West Wickham BR4 0QS

OS Grid Ref: E: 537909 N: 166748

Applicant : Mrs Ann Wagstaff

Objections : YES

Description of Development:

Erection of a single storey timber framed building for use as classroom.

Key designations:

Proposal

The site is located at the junction of Beckenham Road and St David's Close within the grounds of St David's College, an independent one form entry primary school accommodating approx. 160 children.

There are 3 main buildings on the site, Justin Hall the oldest building on the site built in approx. 1926, fronting Beckenham road, 'Little School' which was granted permission to change its use to a classroom in 1967 and a further detached classroom building granted permission in 2004 both these buildings are situated on St David's Close. The school buildings are linked by a tarmac footpath.

The site is within an area of Urban Open Space and is covered by a blanket TPO. To the west the site opens up to a large playing field. The ground levels vary considerably and there is a limited amount of level ground on which to erect any further buildings within the site. It is therefore proposed to erect the timber framed classroom building within the wooded area directly behind an existing cycle store.

The proposal indicates that 9 trees would be felled to make way for the proposal.

The timber framed building would measure 8m in width x 3m in height x 9m in depth incorporating a 1.5m deep veranda to the front and a pitched roof. The proposed classroom would not require concrete foundations and instead would be slightly elevated above ground level on a timber base.

The applicant has stated that the classroom building is needed to alleviate a chronic shortage of teaching space across the school as a whole. Particularly for small groups and one-to-one sessions which currently occur within a corridor, the staffroom or in the hall if it is available. Having regard for the changes in ground level on the site. The applicant in choosing the site for the new classroom has aimed to cause the least environmental impact possible while being easily accessible from both Justin Hall and Little School'.

Comments from Local Residents

One letter of objection has been received, expressing concerns on the grounds of negative impact on parking and free flow of traffic. However they presume the proposal will incorporate an increase in pupil numbers, the school has indicated that this is not the case.

Comments from Consultees

Highways – The site is located on the corner of St David's Close and Beckenham Road (A214) a London Distributor Road. The site is in an area of low Public Transport Accessibility.

The applicant states that no additional parking spaces would be provided; nevertheless there is no additional parking spaces would be provided, nevertheless there is no increase in number of pupils and teaching staff therefore no objections are raised in principle. However, it is recommended that a Travel Plan be prepared to encourage the staff and pupils to use public transport.

Trees – the site is within an area of Urban Open Space and is covered by a blanket TPO made in 1995. the survey shows 14 trees and indicates that 9 trees will be felled and 4 retained. However, from the area that was marked out on site it is considered that it will be necessary to fell 16 sycamore trees to allow the construction of the building. The trees to be removed are not in good condition and are all relatively young. Individually they are of little merit but together they do form an integral part of the wooded area to the north west of the main school building (Justin Hall). The proposed building will create a permanent gap in the woodland and will be likely to lead to requests for more trees to be felled to allow light to the building and to minimise risks of trees falling and putting pupil safety at risk.

In view of the above a reason for refusal would be supported on the basis of loss of protected trees.

Planning Considerations

In considering the application the main policies are NE7, G8, BE1, T3 and C7 of the Unitary Development Plan. These concern development and trees, Urban Open Space, design of new development, parking and educational / pre-school facilities.

Policy G8 concerns proposals for built development in areas defined as Urban Open Space (UOS). The Council will weigh any benefits being offered to the community against any loss of open space. Such proposals should not unduly impair the open nature of the site and will only be permitted if:

- (i) the development is related to the existing use
- (ii) the development is small scale and supports outdoor recreational uses
- (iii) any replacement buildings do not exceed the site coverage of the existing development on site

Policy NE7 concerns Development and Trees proposals for new development will be required to take particular account of existing trees on the site which are considered desirable to retain.

Planning History

The site has an extensive planning history mainly relating to the renewal of temporary permissions for the 2 main portable classrooms. In addition planning permission was granted in 1999 for a single storey side extension to Justin Hall and an appeal was allowed for the retention of a timber climbing frame.

More recently in 2003 an appeal was dismissed for the retention of a portable building on the basis of the impact on neighbouring residential amenity. In 2004 under planning ref. 04/02623 planning permission was granted for a detached building for music room and classroom.

Conclusions

The main issues in this instance are whether the benefits of this proposal i.e. "the enhancement of the ability of the school to improve educational provision by providing a flexible, multi-functional teaching space." outweigh the impact upon the protected woodland as a result of the loss of trees and the appropriateness of development on land designated as UOS.

The undulating nature of the ground level indeed means that there are no readily identifiable alternative locations close to the main school building which could accommodate the proposed classroom. The loss of trees would at an estimated 16 be quite significant in a location already eroded by the existing cycle storage shelter. In addition the applicant would also need to indicate a footpath access to the proposed building which could result in the loss of yet further trees.

If Members consider the benefits of this proposal to be significant then one way forward could be to consider the following:

- a woodland management plan
- provision of replacement trees elsewhere on the site
- temporary permission of the classroom building requiring land to be reinstated to its former condition

Background papers referred to during production of this report comprise all correspondence on files refs. 08/00033 and 10/01764, excluding exempt information.

RECOMMENDATION: MEMBERS' VIEWS ARE REQUESTED

- 0 D00002 If Members are minded to grant planning permission the following conditions are suggested:
- 1 The detached single storey timber framed classroom building hereby permitted shall be removed and the land reinstated to its former condition on or before 31.10.2015.

Reason: In order that the situation can be considered in the light of the circumstances at that time in the interests of the amenities of the area and in order to comply with Policies NE7 and G8 of the Unitary Development Plan.

- 2 The detached single storey timber framed classroom building hereby permitted shall be used as an ancillary classroom in direct association with the main school on the site and for no other purpose.

Reason: In order to prevent an overdevelopment or overintensive use of the site and in the interests of the amenities of adjacent properties and in order to comply with Policy BE1 of the Unitary Development Plan.

- 3 Details of the location, extent and method of construction of the pedestrian access path to the proposed classroom building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the construction of the pedestrian access shall be carried out in accordance with approved details.

Reason: In order to comply with Policy N7 of the Unitary Development Plan to ensure works are carried out according to good arboricultural practice and in the interests of the health and visual amenities of the trees to be retained.

- 4 ACB02 Trees - protective fencing
ACB02R Reason B02
- 5 ACB03 Trees - no bonfires
ACB03R Reason B03
- 6 ACB04 Trees - no trenches, pipelines or drains
ACB04R Reason B04
- 7 ACB12 Tree - details of excav. for foundations
ACB12R Reason B12
- 8 ACB20 Woodland Management Plan the Woodland Area at St David's College
ACB20R Reason B20
- 9 AJ02B Justification UNIQUE reason OTHER apps

Policies (UDP)

- NE7 Development and Trees
G8 Urban Open Space
BE1 Design of New Development
T3 Parking
C7 Educational and Pre-School Facilities

D00003 If Members are minded to refuse planning permission the following grounds are suggested:

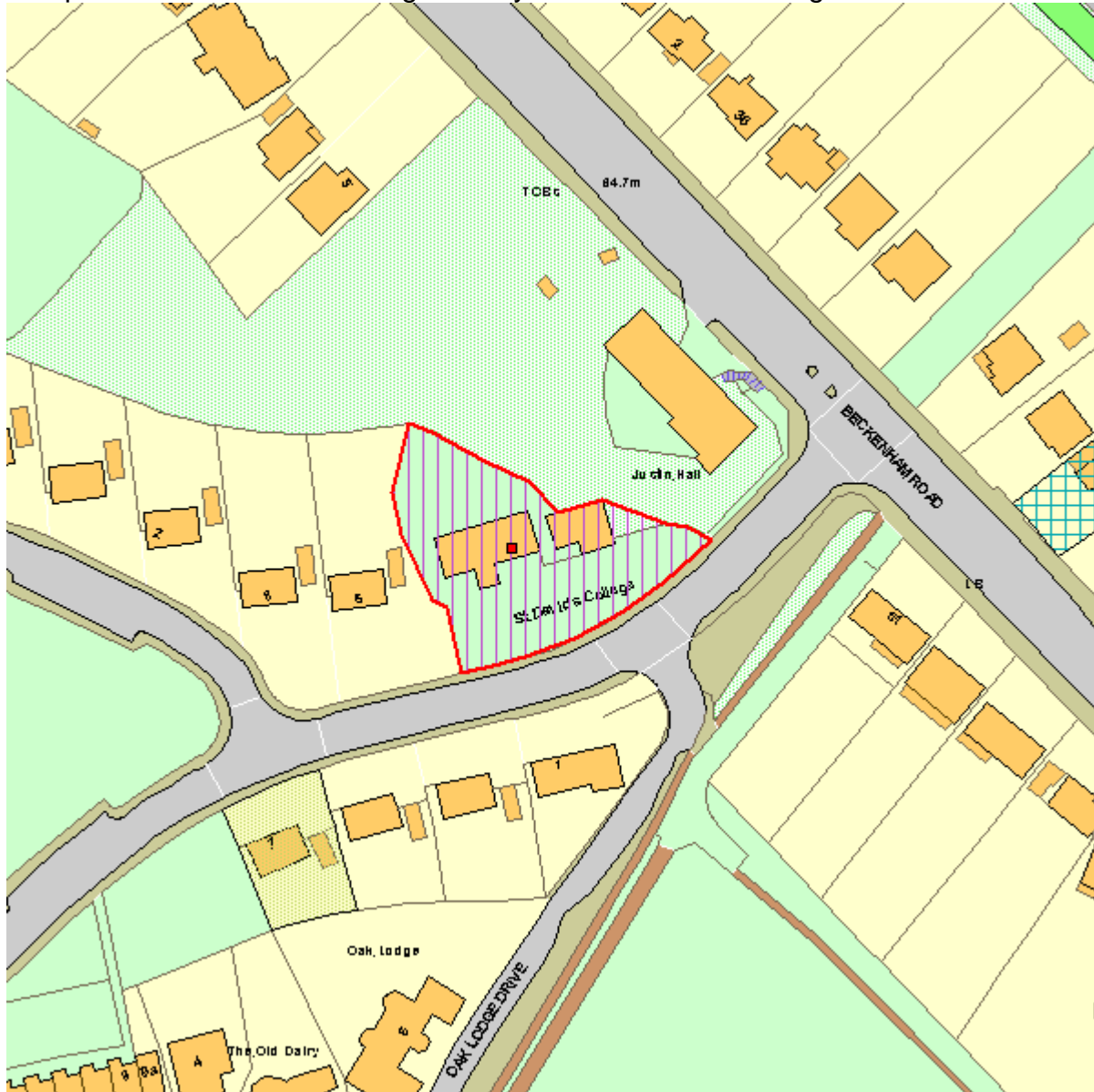
- 1 The proposal concerns land that forms part of an area of Urban Open Space and the proposal would when added to previous development on the site result in an overdevelopment of the site thereby affecting its open character there contrary to Policy G8 of the Unitary Development Plan.

- 2 The proposed development would result in the undesirable loss of a significant number of trees which form an integral part of a protected woodland area and which also collectively make a significant contribution to the visual amenities of the area thereby contrary to Policy NE7 of the Unitary Development Plan.

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