

SECTION '1' – Applications submitted by the London Borough of Bromley

**Application No :** 11/00459/DEEM3

**Ward:**  
**Hayes And Coney Hall**

**Address :** Wickham Common Primary School  
Gates Green Road West Wickham BR4  
9DG

**OS Grid Ref:** E: 540127 N: 164832

**Applicant :** London Borough Of Bromley

**Objections : YES**

**Description of Development:**

Single storey side extensions to North West and South East elevations

Key designations:

Special Advertisement Control Area  
Green Belt

**Proposal**

The application can be divided into two elements:

1) Single storey side extension on the outermost north western flank wall

The existing classrooms (1-5) and hallway are proposed to be extended by 6.3m to the side which shall be approximately 35.5m in length and 3.4m in height, with a flat roof and shall be located 6m from the boundary with No. 100.

2) Single storey side extension on the eastern facing flank wall

Classrooms 7 & 8 are proposed to be extended to the side by 2m which shall be approximately 12.4m in length and shall be 3.4m in height with a flat roof.

**Location**

The application site is occupied by the Wickham Common Primary School, which comprises a large scale single storey detached building located to the south of Gates Green Road and is within the Green Belt. Properties in the area though varying somewhat in terms of their architectural style are primarily semi-detached two storey single family dwelling houses of a similar scale.

## Comments from Local Residents

Concerns were raised by the local residents in relation to the following:

- concerns as to why the proposed extension was to be constructed on the only section of the school's extensive grounds that come close to a neighbour's property.
- the proposed side extension is located within the green belt where there has already been considerable expansion to the buildings footprint and potential internal alterations to provide more classroom space were felt to be preferable to additional extensions on green belt land.
- there will be a potential increase in noise pollution caused by the closer proximity of classrooms to No. 100 and should planning permission be granted a condition should be attached requiring the proposed extension to be properly soundproofed.
- concerns were raised as to the requirement for larger classrooms as it was felt there was no genuine need for the proposed extension.
- there are under-utilised areas within the curtilage of the school which could act as alternative locations for the proposed extensions which are not as intrusive on the neighbouring properties.
- there is an existing cycle shed on site which was built with no prior warning and rarely used by the schoolchildren.
- the most recent plans bear little relation to the plans originally shown to No. 100 last summer. The size of the proposed extension facing No. 100 has increased dramatically and now comes much too close to No. 100 and was considered that this was deliberately designed to deceive neighbours so that objections would not be received (Note from planning officer: There has been no increase in the dimensions of the proposed floor plans from 10/02622/DEEM3 rather there was an error in terms of the proposed front and rear elevations which was rectified during the course of the previous application which neighbours were made aware of from the onset).
- the school ground is located than a higher ground level than the house and garden at No. 100 and were the application permitted the classrooms would have an unacceptable and unrestricted view of the bedroom window of No. 100 and the positioning of the proposal in an alternative location would allow for greater privacy or the occupant(s) of No. 100.
- concerns the number of students attending the school would increase were permission granted which would result in an increase in traffic congestion and disruption for Gates Green Road.
- there is no need for the teacher's car park and it could be considered as an alternative location for the proposal.
- concerns as the money spent on the proposed could be better utilised on hospitals, care homes, youth centres and libraries which are facing cuts at present.
- the existing strip of green land between the school and No. 100 acts as a buffer to distance the two properties.
- concerns as there has been limited consultation with the school and the process has not been open and the school "does not seem to want

consultation with anyone who may oppose the plans". In addition not all neighbours affected by the proposal have been consulted.

- the proposed extension is excessive, intrusive and a disproportionate extension the length of the North West wing.
- The current appearance of the view of the extension from No. 100 is preferable to a flat-roofed, square box extension, along the wing and is approximately 8m closer to the boundary.
- concerns the proposal is in close proximity to a 2m drop which may lead to an accident for a child.
- concerns that the existing plan had not changed substantially from the previously refused plan.
- concerns as to why the vast area to the south of the site cannot be utilised for the proposed extension where this will be no conflict with neighbours.
- concerns as to the current parking and traffic congestion in the area resulting from the school at present.
- concerns as the school seems unwilling to consider alternatives, to consult local residents and to compromise their plans to accommodate local resident concerns.
- concerns as to why the quadrangle area could not be utilised or the hard playground re-sited to the vast area of grassed playfields to make room for the proposed extension.
- concerns as to the impact of surface water drainage on No. 100 due to the scale of the proposed extension.

A number of letters of support were also received which stated:

- the size of the classrooms in question are limited in terms of space, light and services and children are very cramped inside which is not conducive to children's education.
- the classrooms and corridor need to be extended to provide wheelchair access for any disabled person.
- the proposal would improve the exterior appearance of the building which is good for the area in general.
- the extension needs to be carried out on the area adjacent to No. 100 as this area is a grassy area which is not used on a daily basis and where the children rarely play because of lack of supervision.
- the proposal would allow the school to extend the Key Stage 2 classroom so that they meet minimum size requirements to benefit students.
- if the extension were to be built in the quadrangle area this would reduce an already small playground area for the children and would emotive to those who knew the pupil and teacher who recently died as there are memorials to both in these locations.
- an extension in the quadrangle would incur extra cost as an extension would necessitate additional building work on both sides of the building to resolve the disability access and health and safety issues regarding the undersized classroom doorways.
- the children have limited space to run and exercise freely as there is limited space for play areas.

- the proposal would enable the school to extend without impacting on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt as this piece of land is very narrow and is on the furthest edge of the site, it cannot be easily seen from outside.
- the proposals have taken into account both the pupils of Wickham Common and also consideration has been given to local residents, whilst maintaining the visual appearance of the Green Belt requirements.
- the proposal will have a minimal impact on local residents and will be in keeping with the rest of the building ensuring that the view from the kerbside remains positive.
- the school has taken the time to consider all of the alternative options and the current plan is the only viable alternative to meet the needs of the pupils across the school, takes into account the memorial to former pupils/teachers and the already limited play areas for the numbers of pupil attending the school.
- the proposal will also reduce noise pollution from the area intended for development and use of noise insulation and glazing to minimise ongoing noise.
- the proposal will have advantages to the children of the community now and in the future.
- the proposal was recommended for approval by Bromley's Planning Department.
- the proposed hardstanding (not included in the current application) would not impact on play/educational space for children, is not used by the school, would be a safer area to pick up children and would not be an eye sore and spoil the appearance of the green belt.
- to build on the school car park would only increase issues at pick up time with too many cars around.
- it is very difficult for children and teachers to move around the classroom and to accommodate equipment.
- the access corridor outside the classroom is very narrow, especially as accommodates coats, lunchboxes and school bags as there is no room to store these in the classrooms.

### **Comments from Consultees**

A tree report was submitted as part of the previous application which included hardstanding to the front of the property. From a trees perspective, it was found that the only potential impact between the proposed developments and trees is in relation to a box elder at the western end of the existing buildings which is graded C and does have some importance to the local landscape. To ensure it is not harmed a condition prohibiting excavation works beneath the canopy of this tree is advised, were permission to be granted.

From a highways point of view the site is on the south side of Gates Green Road. The development is located in an area with a low PTAL rate of 1a (on a scale of 1 – 6, where 6 is the most accessible). The development will not result in an increased number of children and staff members, hence, will not have an impact on the parking demand and traffic generation within the local road network. Therefore,

no objections were raised from a highways perspective. However, were permission to be granted the applicant is advised to promote and encourage parents and teaching staff to use alternative modes of transport to the car and provide a school Travel Plan for the employees.

The Council's Highways Drainage Section and Thames Water were consulted in relation to the previous application and raised no objections to the proposal.

### **Planning Considerations**

BE1 Design of New Development  
G1 The Green Belt  
C7 Educational and Pre-school Facilities  
PPG2 Green Belts

### **Planning History**

The most recent planning history relating to the application site is outlined below:

In 2011 under planning ref. 10/02622/DEEM3 for single storey side extensions and hardstanding area was refused by Plans Sub Committee 3 on 28th January 2011 on the following grounds:

1. In the absence of information to the contrary regarding the possible alternative locations of the extensions the proposal would be refused as it is inappropriate development in the Green Belt contrary to Policy G1 of the Unitary Development Plan.
2. The proposed hardstanding would be by the amount of the site coverage out of character with the area and detrimental to the amenities that the adjacent residential property should reasonably expect to continue to enjoy contrary to Policy BE1 of the Unitary Development Plan.

In 2004 under planning ref. 03/04432/FULL1, permission was granted for four 6m high floodlighting columns.

In 2001 under planning ref. 00/03582/DEEM3, permission was granted for one/two storey building for six classes, kitchen, large and small halls, toilets and store rooms and car parking area.

In 1989 under planning ref: 89/01188/LBB, permission was granted for six bay mobile classroom.

In 1987 under planning ref: 87/00460/FUL, permission was granted for a detached timber shed for the storage of PTA equipment.

In 1984 under planning ref: 84/01584/LBB, permission was granted for a detached four classroom unit and single storey side extension for a kitchen/storeroom.

### **Conclusions**

The main issues relating to the application are the effect that it would have on the character of the area and the impact that it would have on the amenities of the occupants of surrounding residential properties.

As outlined in the accompanying Design and Access Statement and Statement of Special Circumstances the purposes of the proposed extensions are to create a larger floor space as the School states the current Key Stage 2 classroom sizes fall short of the national requirement for m<sup>2</sup> per pupil, being a total of 45.9 square metres with doors 700mm wide and do not conform to DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) or health and safety requirements.

The hallway width is also to be extended to provide additional storage space for children's lockers.

Policy G1 outlines the stringent conditions attached to extensions within a Green Belt and states that "permission will not be given for inappropriate development, unless very special circumstances, can be demonstrated that clearly outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness or any other harm". In addition, Policy C7 states that educational facilities are not considered to be appropriate uses in the Green Belt and proposal for extensions associated with educational uses will therefore have to show that very special circumstances exist.

In order to overcome the previous grounds of refusal in relation to planning ref. 10/02622/DEEM3 the hardstanding proposed in the previous application has been omitted from the current application. In addition a Statement of Special Circumstances has been submitted as part of the current application to justify that while other locations within the curtilage of the site have been considered, none were deemed acceptable and as such the current locations (which are in the same position as the previous application) are the only suitable sites for the proposed extension, as required by Policy G1. The School's Statement of Special Circumstances argues that an aerial view of the site is somewhat misleading as it does not show the contours of the site. From the school's perspective the use of the existing playing fields to accommodate additional play areas for pupils is inappropriate as can only be accessed via a steep embankment with 24 steps and is very wet from October to May and as such children are required to play on the hard surface closest to the school with the playing fields being used solely for supervised curriculum activities. From a planning perspective considering the use of this previously undeveloped land as an alternative location to accommodate outbuildings for additional teaching space or hardstanding for play areas would be discouraged due to the detrimental impact on the openness of the green belt, contrary to Policy G1.

The School also argues that the use of the existing staff car park to the east of the site (identified as Area 1) is inappropriate as it is well-used at present, adjacent to the school's kitchen and a shared teaching space. Developing the land in this location would not address the 'substandard' Key Stage 2 classrooms. Were the school to remove the existing on-site parking for staff this would raise concerns from a highways perspective.

The School states that the area to the south east of the site (identified as Area 2) is an outdoor learning area for Foundation Stage children. Children's planned use of an outdoor environment is an Ofsted expectation and the classrooms adjacent to this area are of an adequate size and if the School was to build here the Key Stage 2 classrooms would remain 'substandard'.

The existing hardstanding is also inappropriate position for the proposed extensions, the School argues, as the area identified as Area 3 is designated for the use of the youngest children to be separated the noise and activities of the older children in the rest of the playground. The classrooms adjacent to this area are of an adequate size and as such if the School was to build here the Key Stage 2 classrooms would remain 'substandard'.

The quadrangle adjoining the Key Stage 2 classrooms which are proposed to be extended to the North West would enable the School to enlarge the Key Stage 2 classrooms, however, the School feels this is inappropriate as it is a currently well utilised play area which the School argues is already very limited and could not be recovered elsewhere on site. The DDA and health and safety issues would remain unresolved and the proposal would incur additional costs as work would be required to both sides of the wing, both the extension and works to the existing corridor. In addition, the School argues that development on the quadrangle would be emotive as it contains a memorial tree and bench and story teller's seat to commemorate a pupil and teacher who have died.

The school identifies the proposed site for the north western extension (Area 5) as an appropriate area for redevelopment as it is not used on a daily basis as it is grassed, is separated from the main playground and cannot be easily supervised. The school argues that developing on this site would allow the School to extend the Key Stage 2 classrooms to meet the minimum size, address the substandard doorways to meet DDA and health and safety requirements, improve the appearance of the property, retain the limited outdoor useable play areas and extend without impacting upon the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt as they argue the current view of the Green Belt from the highway is limited and the site is a very narrow strip on the furthest edge of the site. The School also argues that the 6m area between the school and No. 100 would no longer be used as a play area and therefore there would be less noise pollution than there is currently. The school states that appropriate measures (including double glazing and sound-proofing as appropriate) would be taken to limit the potential impact in terms of sound transmission and disturbance to the neighbouring property at No. 100. The school also states that the external wall of the extension is to be used as a corridor and as such would only be used intermittently during the day. Alternatives such as creating a low loft type extension to the west corridor was also considered by the school to provide 3 classrooms on the first floor and 2 in the proposed loft, however, the School was advised that may impact upon the neighbours and also due to the structural complexity would be more expensive than the current proposal.

From a planning perspective, the proposed extensions are not intended to accommodate additional employment or increased visitors levels and is merely to provide additional space for the existing students, with the result that there is no

direct impact on car parking or increased vehicular movement anticipated on or around the site and as such proposal is not anticipated to exacerbate congestion or result in additional traffic generation at the site.

The proposed extension of classrooms 1 - 5 is to have a number of windows in the side elevation and is located 6m from boundary with No. 100. Given the modest height of 3.4m and the distance from the boundary with No. 100 the potential loss of light is anticipated to be minimal. In addition the distance from the boundary is considered to be sufficient to mitigate against any potential loss of privacy or sense of overlooking for the rear elevation and garden area of No. 100. It is worth noting that the windows in the flank elevation of the proposed extension are to service a hallway as opposed to a classroom and as such shall only be in use for short periods intermittently during the day. The proposed extension to classrooms 7 and 8 shall face onto an external courtyard within the school's grounds and as such the potential loss of light or privacy for neighbouring properties is negligible.

The application site is surrounded to the north and west by residential properties which are not located within the Green Belt and as such the character of this area is not particularly open in nature. As such the proposal is not anticipated to impact upon the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt to such an extent as to warrant refusal. Views from the highway into the Green Belt at the application site are limited at present and as such the proposed extension is not anticipated to be significantly detrimental in this regard. Therefore, in this instance the educational benefits of the proposed extension are considered to outweigh the potential detrimental impact to the Green Belt.

While the proposed extension with its flat roof will be clearly visible from the streetscene and will alter the appearance of the property somewhat it is not considered to be sufficiently detrimental to the overall appearance of the property or the character of the area to such an extent as to warrant refusal.

In summation, the proposed extensions are not anticipated to impact upon the residential amenity of the neighbouring property to No. 100 to such an extent as to warrant refusal unlikely to be significantly detrimental to the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt.

Background papers referred to during production of this report comprise all correspondence on files refs. 11/00459 and 10/02622, excluding exempt information.

As amended by documents received on 15.03.11

## **RECOMMENDATION: PERMISSION**

Subject to the following conditions:

- |   |        |  |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | ACA01  | Commencement of development within 3 yrs |
|   | ACA01R | A01 Reason 3 years                       |
| 2 | ACC04  | Matching materials                       |
|   | ACC04R | Reason C04                               |



- 3      ACB16      Trees - no excavation  
ACB16R      Reason B16
- 4      The windows located in the flank elevation of the proposed single storey side extension to the west shall be so adapted as to achieve a reasonable resistance to airborne sound as far as is practical having regard to existing construction. These works shall be implemented before the use hereby permitted is first occupied in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and shall be permanently retained thereafter.

**Reason:** In order to comply with Policy BE1 of the Unitary Development Plan and to ensure a satisfactory standard of amenity for adjacent properties.

**Reasons for granting permission:**

In granting permission the Local Planning Authority had regard to the following policies of the Unitary Development Plan:

- BE1    Design of New Development  
G1     Green Belt  
C7     Educational and Pre-school Facilities  
PPG2   Green Belts

The development is considered to be satisfactory in relation to the following:

- (a)    the impact on the amenities of the occupiers of adjacent and nearby properties;
- (b)    the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt shall be maintained

and having regard to all other matters raised.

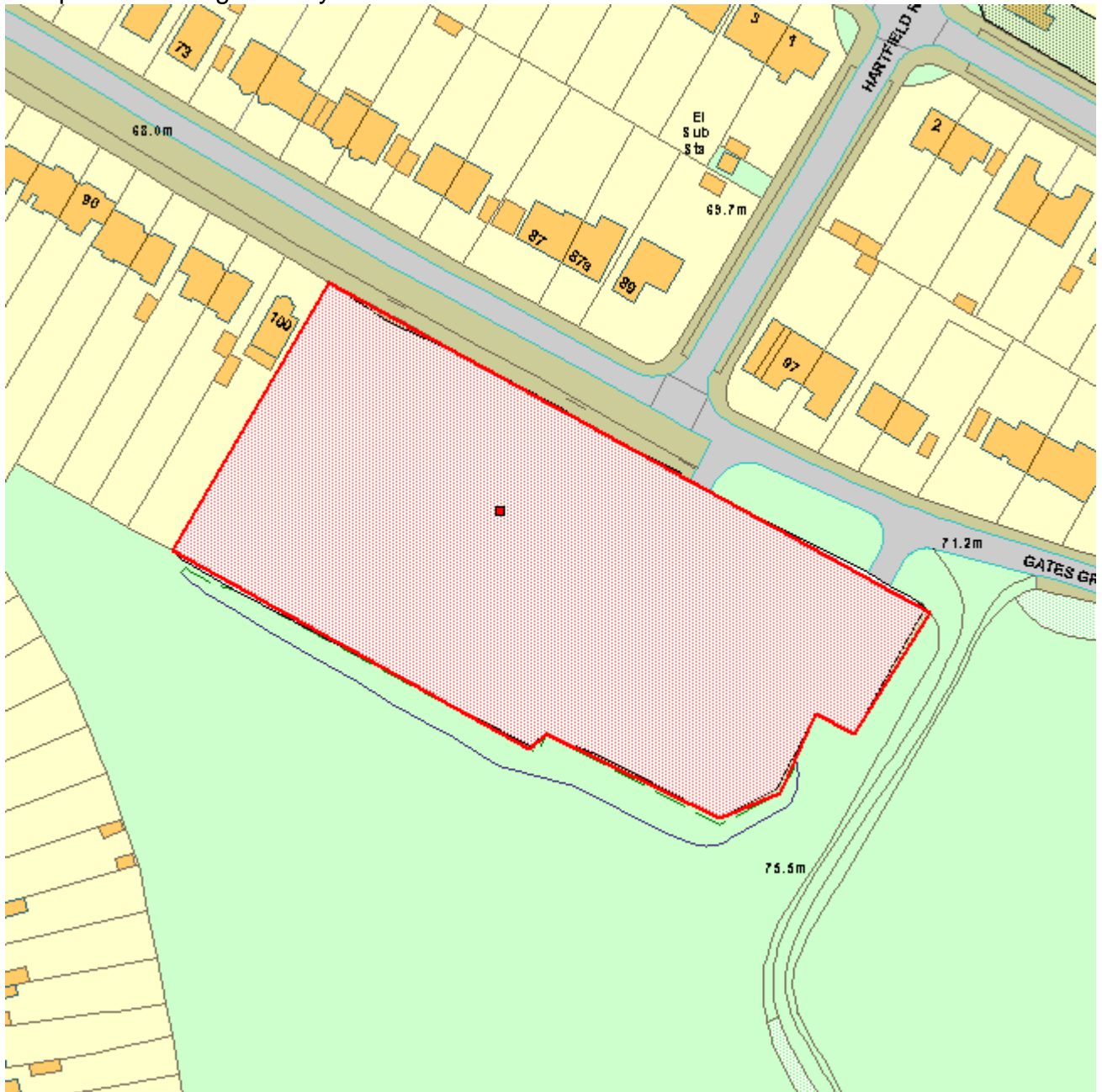
**INFORMATIVE(S)**

- 1      The applicant is advised to promote and encourage parents and teaching staff to use alternative modest of transport to the car and provide a school Travel Plan for the employees.

Reference: 11/00459/DEEM3

Address: Wickham Common Primary School Gates Green Road West Wickham BR4 9DG

Proposal: Single storey side extensions to North West and South East elevations



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