Proposed Enclosed Playground Extension to 14-16 Years ASD Suite – Billing Brook Special School, Northampton

Supporting Statement

Address:
Billing Brook Special School,  
Penistone Road,  
Northampton, NN3 4EZ

REASON FOR DEVELOPMENT:

Billing Brook School is an all age special school (5 – 16) which addresses the needs of pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties, including, moderate, severe, significant and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Currently there are 47 pupils aged 5 – 16 on the roll of Billing Brook School who are identified as having ASD on their statement of Special Educational Needs. As of September 2007, 21 of these pupils are aged 11 – 16 and display severe challenging behaviour in addition to their ASD.

The provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder is being refurbished with a new building being constructed as part of a former planning decision (your ref: 07/00077/CCD). However the remodelling of the existing building will result in the loss of playground space and therefore this application is to extend the existing playground to the North East (rear) of the proposed 14-16 Building to replace the lost area of playground.

The DCSF recognises the demand, both locally and nationally for specialist discrete provision. The proposed playground compliment the new 14-16 ASD suite and support the increased demand as result of the new building works.

The students learning is supported by Pictorial Exchange Communication Systems (PECs) and TEACCH programmes. All students follow appropriate accreditation and award schemes, such as ASDAN - “Towards Independence”; “Milestones – Literacy and Numeracy” and “Moving on”. To deliver these specialist programmes students require specialist discrete environment internal and external environments that are safe and secure. The proposed development will address the safety and security issues of the students.

EXISTING SITE/ PROPOSALS:
The main site upon which Billing Brook School is located is owned by Northamptonshire County Council. The site is within a predominantly residential area within Northampton, within close proximity of Weston Favell Shopping Centre.
To create the extended ASD playground area it is proposed to extend the existing playground to the rear of the 14-16 ASD suite closest to the public footpath leading from Billing Brook Road, by extending the existing hardstanding up to the boundary fence and making use of an area of undeveloped land between the current playground and boundary fence.

**Design approach:**
The design approach to the project has been carefully considered in order to minimise the visual impact within the context of the local surroundings, whilst providing for the specific needs of the Special School and more specifically those children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (refer to Design & Access Statement attached).

The proposed playground extension has been designed on a single level to provide ease of access for all pupils. All relevant Disability Discrimination Act legislation has been taken account of during the design process within the areas affected by the construction works. Works will include the provision of a high level fence around the playground to screen the playground from the public footpath for ASD pupils.

**Staffing implications:**
Staff levels will not change as a result of these works.

**Statement of Community Involvement / Pre-application publicity:**
The school is a community special school, using the local community to support our work, wherever possible. The ASD pupils will be involved in supported work experience, at the Salvation Army (located opposite the school); within the local community using the Leisure facilities at the Lings Forum and Weston Favell Shopping centre. In the wider community the school intends to develop local college links for the ASD pupils at Northampton College; Moulton College and Daventry College.

**Demolitions:**
No demolitions are required.

**Trees to be felled:**
No trees are required to be felled prior to site development.

**Flood Risk Assessment:**
As the area of land does not fall within the flood plain, therefore no risk assessment is required. However initial consultation has been sought from the Environment Agency due to the proximity of Billing Brook and their recommendations have been incorporated within the scheme.

**Land Contaminants:**
Ground Investigations previously undertaken.

**Vehicle access:**
Access to the site is via Penistone Road.

At present vehicular access is only possible for staff use and the school minibus, to prevent parents associated with any of the schools on the site from dropping off children on the site. The existing staff car parking for the site comprises of 35 designated spaces.

Of the full staff compliment (26 full time and 69 part time), at Billing Brook Special School, there are varying methods of travelling to the site. Whilst the majority use a car, approximately 25 members of staff either walk, cycle or use public transport to reach work. This pattern is expected to continue once the extended playground becomes operational.

**Site access during construction period:**
Construction access to the site will be via Penistone Road and it is expected that no deliveries will be accepted to site during School start/finish periods or before 9.00am in the morning or after 5.00pm at night. Weekend construction work is not proposed at this stage to limit the impact to the local area.

**Car parking:**
Car parking provision will remain unaffected as a result of the works.

**Services implications:**
All necessary mains statutory services exist upon the site. It is not anticipated at this stage that any of the incoming services will need to be upgraded.

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**Proposed Extension and Internal Alterations – Billing Brook Special School, Northampton**

**Design & Access Statement**

This statement should be read in conjunction with the associated building plans and elevations depicting detailed elements.

**Assessment**

- **Physical** – the extended playground makes use of an undeveloped piece of land to rear (North West) of the site. One of the main priorities when designing the extended playground was to screen the playground from the public footpath due to the nature of the pupils using the playground. This is to be achieved by a new 2.5m high fence comprising of steel cranked posts with
stained timber privacy fence panels with clear polycarbonate ball retention panels fixed at high level. The design of the fencing is to broadly match the fencing to other playground areas upon the site. To the side of the playground a new set of steps are to be introduced to maintain access to the rear gate within the boundary palisade fencing.

- **Social** – the proposed extended playground supports the Every Child Matters agenda by providing opportunities to achieve the following five outcomes:
  
  - Stay Safe;
  - Be Healthy
  - Enjoy and Achieve
  - Achieve economic Wellbeing
  - Make a Positive Contribution

- **Economic** – in line with the above, the development will have a positive economic impact on the area in its utilisation of a patch of underutilised space within the grounds of the School.

- **Planning policy** – this development supports the planning policy of development of brown field sites for construction works.

**Site Context**
The school is situated on the edge of a residential area which largely consists of two storey houses with pitched roofs. The site itself slopes steeply from west to east towards Billing Brook.

The school buildings are all single storey in height. The original buildings constructed in the 1970’s have flat roofs. Later additions in the 1990’s were provided with shallow pitched roofs covered with aluminium roof coverings.

**Evaluation**
In the evaluation process, a number of elements had to be incorporated into the detailed design process, outlined below:-

The level of the playground has been kept as high as possible to reflect the initial comments made by the Environment Agency with regards to the current extensions to the existing building.

**Design**
Use – The proposals are a playground extension of the current site use as a School for Special Needs Pupils between the ages of 3-16 years. The Scheme proposal comprises the extension of an existing playground to replace some of the existing playground which is being lost as a result of the current remodelling of the existing building to provide suitable teaching accommodation for pupils between the ages of 14-16 years.

Amount – The works will extend the existing playground by circa 60m².

Layout – The layout of the proposals are dictated by the following factors:

1. Physical site restraints which include the proximity of boundary palisade fence.
2. The requirement for the ASD provision to be separated from the other Special Needs accommodation.
3. Direct external access required to the playground from the adjacent school footpath accommodation.

Scale – The scale of the playground is to reflect the existing playground before the current remodelling works commenced (see previous planning application).

Appearance – The appearance of the playground and associated fencing is to match the existing playground areas.

Landscaping – Provision will be made for a hard tarmacadam surfacing to the extended playground.

Access

The principal access to the site for vehicles and pedestrians is from Penistone Road. A one way traffic management system is employed for vehicle movements with entry at the north-west access and exit from the south-west access.

The site slopes considerably from west to east but a suitable level access is currently available from the level of the south car park to the main School entrance.
The site topography and underground services however precludes the provision of an access ramp from the south car-park to the new entrances to the extended playground.

An external stepped access is to be provided, with access for wheelchair users being provided through the main School building via a platform lift to the lower floor levels of the 14–16 Year Suite and the new provision.

The property design takes account of:-

- **Approach** – The design of the extended playground sensitively reflects the requirements of the pupils, but also produces a design which compliments both existing adjacent features on the school site.

- **Parking** – There is only Staff Parking on site.

- **Entrances** – not applicable.

- **Horizontal and Vertical circulation** – the horizontal circulation within the property has been carefully planned (refer above). Vertical circulation is not applicable for these works.

- **Emergency Egress/Alarm Systems and Evacuation Planning** – the design of the extended playground will ensure and assist evacuation should an emergency need occur. All travel routes have been carefully planned and existing emergency exit options are numerous. Evacuation planning will be recorded, and regularly tested in line with regulatory residential homes requirements.

Philosophy and Approach:
The new extended playground area has been specifically designed to enable safe and easy use for people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Sources of advice and consultation
- Planning advice from both Northamptonshire County Council
- Full consultation with the Billing Brook Head teacher to ensure the design of the property meets the safe and essential needs of the Nursery
- Advice from a range of professional groups and bodies – particularly around disabled access and compliance with Building Regulations. During the design process key structural, mechanical/electrical and access professional advice has been sought to ensure the Children’s Centre operates as efficiently as possible.
Nature and impact of environmental constraints
No apparent environmental constraints identified.

Proposed solutions for overcoming identified constraints
N/A

What steps have been taken to ensure this information is made available to building occupiers
Refer above. All key building occupants have been regularly consulted with and are part of the overall design team. Information has been disseminated to all interested parties for comment and direction on a regularly basis.

Additional material information
N/A

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