PLANNING SUPPORT STATEMENT

New School Hall and Ancillary Facilities

at

Geddington C of E Primary School

for

Northamptonshire County Council (Bovis Lend Lease)

prepared by

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July 2010
Planning Policy Framework

The purpose of this section is to outline the local, regional and national planning policy context for the planning application site. A summary of the relevant policy and guidance is provided below.

National Policy Guidance

National Policy and Government guidance is provided in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG’s) and Planning Policy Statements (PPS’s). We have taken reference from the following PPG’s/PPS’s, which we believe are relevant to the proposed development: -

- PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004).
- PPS10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management (July 2005).

Regional and Local Plan Policy

North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (June 2008) sets out criteria for effective and appropriate developments which can be supported by the Local Planning Authority. In particular, Policy 13: General Sustainable Development Principles clarifies key elements that are relevant to this Application namely: -

- Incorporate flexible designs for buildings and their settings, including access to amenity space, enabling them to be adapted to future needs and to take into account the needs of all users.
- Seek to design out anti-social behaviour, crime and reduce the fear of crime by applying the principles of the ‘Secured by Design’ scheme.
- Maintain and improve the provision of accessible local services and community services whilst focussing uses that attract a lot of visitors within the town centres.
- Have a satisfactory means of access and provide for parking, servicing and manoeuvring in accordance with adopted standards.
- Not lead to the loss of open space or recreation facilities, unless a site of equivalent quality and accessibility can be provided, serviced and made available to the community prior to use of the existing site ceasing.
- Be of a high standard of design, architecture and landscaping, respect and enhance the character of its surroundings and be in accordance with the Environmental Character of the area.
- Create a strong sense of place by strengthening the distinctive historic and cultural qualities and townscape of the towns and villages through its design, landscaping and use of public art.
- Be designed to promote healthier lifestyles and for people to be active outside their homes and places of work.
- Allow for travel to home, shops, work and school on foot and by cycle and public transport.
- Not result in an unacceptable impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties or the wider area, by reasons of noise, vibration, smell, light or other pollution, loss of light or overlooking.
- Be constructed and operated using a minimum amount of non-renewable resources including where possible, the re-use of existing structures and materials.
- Not have an adverse impact on the highway network and will not prejudice highways safety.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape character, historic landscape designated built environment assets and their settings, and biodiversity of the environment making reference to the Environmental Character Assessment and Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- Not sterilise known mineral reserves or degrade soil quality.
- Not cause a risk to (and where possible enhance) the quality of the underlying ground water or the surface water, or increase the risk of flooding on the site or elsewhere, and where possible incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and lead to a reduction in flood risk.
Design Background

Geddington is a small, traditional village, located to the north of Kettering, Northamptonshire.

It is characterised by an abundance of limestone buildings which follow the vernacular of Northamptonshire villages, being set close to the road frontage with the building form often arranged in an organic way with differing angles of walls, stepped building lines and varying roof heights. The centrepiece of the village is the Eleanor’s Cross with the Church opposite.

The site of the Primary School in rises up from Wood Street towards the rear playing fields, there is approximately a 2m level change from the rear facing classrooms up to the playground. The site of the proposed building extension is outside the Conservation Area but the old school building on Wood Street constructed circa 1894 at the front of the site is encompassed by it.

The only works proposed within the Conservation area are the application of a window film to existing external part glazed door the new store area within the old hall and underground drainage connections across the existing car park.

The relatively recent modern low roof pitch extensions were completed in 1986.
The primary brief and *raison d’etre* for the scheme is to provide the school with a new hall, to BB99 standards with associated storage for dining furniture and PE equipment with small plant room. In addition, the project includes provision of a re-heat kitchen to serve hot school meals and provision of new toilet facilities. The existing Victorian style hall will be converted to a new classroom with a small store, to allow the existing mobile classroom in the playground to be removed from the site.

It is important to note that this project does not relate to any change in either pupil or staff numbers at the school.

Following site visits, we have explored various options for siting and arrangement of the required new building elements, taking account of the raised levels of the playground, the position of an underground LV electric cable, the existing rear classroom extension, routes into the hall from the existing classrooms and the public entrance / parent route into the new building. We have also taken account of practical considerations to ensure that the school can continue normal operations during the construction phase and the restricted access available to the rear of the site.

These options assessed a full range of design choices including partial demolition of the existing buildings, new building works located both to the NE and SW of the rear projecting classroom and the proposed design draws on the positive aspects of each scheme.

Discussions held at the public consultation and subsequent feedback received, have raised suggestions about locating the proposed extension on the site of the existing car park at the front of the school (refer to details contained within Public Consultation section for explanation).

The situation regarding deliveries will remain as the current arrangement, where delivery vehicles will manoeuvre off Wood Street and wait in the front car park to allow for short term transfer of goods (stationery, school meals, etc). It is not anticipated that delivery vehicles will use the rear access route into the school.

The proposal retains the existing school complex as-built, therefore maximising the benefit of any new build space. The proposal creates a new Hall set away from the existing classrooms and forms a part glazed linking space between, with a new entrance created to the west incorporating new toilet provision and Kitchen. By locating the store room elements towards the playground side, given the change in level, we believe that this could provide for additional hard play area above the extension in the form of a raised deck with a stepped terrace back down to the playground (all with good south-east aspect). This design also means that the largest element of the Hall is set back from the site boundaries, wrapped with single storey elements to ‘soften’ the building into the context and reduce any impact on neighbours. The Hall will benefit from high level glazing and ‘windcatchers’ to provide natural ventilation. It is proposed to install new small ‘windcatchers’ on the roof of the 3no. existing classrooms adjacent to the extension to ensure they are provided with adequate ventilation.

We were conscious that any extension should seek to minimise any impact on the existing playground areas (as explained above). The removal of the existing mobile classroom (currently located in the middle of the grasses play area) will offer a much improved external space for the children to use. The school also has beneficial use of an adjacent playing field owned by Boughton Estates for larger outdoor activities and events (such as Sports Day).
The building construction will be designed to exceed the requirements of the Building Regulations in terms of thermal performance and incorporate such environmentally sustainable elements as low energy light fittings and dual flush low water use toilets/taps. There may be an opportunity to utilise other renewable energy sources such as ground/air source heat pumps, solar thermal/voltaic panels, rainwater harvesting, etc which will be investigated when the project progresses to the detailed technical design stage.

The Hall will be provided with acoustic plasterboard to the ceiling to create good sound absorption and significantly enhanced acoustic performance (in terms of lower reverberation times) than the existing school hall. Being of ‘heavy-weight’ construction, the masonry external building envelope will also resist sound break-out.

The internally re-modelled existing Victorian Style hall would be provided with a lowered suspended ceiling to improve the acoustic performance of the proposed classroom whilst allowing the external elevations of this important building on the frontage of the school to be preserved (it has confirmed that the existing hall is not listed).

The elevation design has been developed to be sympathetic to the style of the adjacent existing buildings using a palette of robust and durable traditional materials in-keeping with the setting but which also takes the opportunity to provide the school with an identity that looks towards the future.

As explained above, the new school hall is primarily for use for the school but there may be the opportunity (subject to demand from the local community) for this to accommodate other community uses on a limited basis. To this end, there may be a need to use the building during Saturdays, Sundays or Bank Holidays but we do not anticipate any regular use and therefore we are unable to stipulate any specific opening hours on the Planning forms.

The side access track to the rear playground is not adopted and we are not aware of any public rights of way along this track (other than for the adjacent building owners). Therefore the statement within the Planning Forms remains correct, however, the Planning case officer/committee are able to use this access track to view the site of the proposed extension via consultation with the School. The roof of the new extension will be visible above the existing roofline of the school, when viewed from Wood Street.
Statement of Community Involvement and Consultations

A Public Consultation was held at the School on 24 June 2010. Invitations were issued to school parents, pupils, local residents and parish councillors.

Questionnaire and feedback forms were available to allow comments and possible concerns to be expressed, together with representatives from Northamptonshire County Council, Bovis Lend Lease, the School, School Governors and pHp Architects being present to respond to queries raised and provide accurate information and clarification.

Photograph of old school building to Wood Street with low roof pitch extensions beyond
The response received both at the event and on the feedback forms highlighted the following issues:

- The event was very well supported with approximately 65 people attending and 44 completed feedback forms returned.

- Generally, the proposed development was felt to be in-keeping with the local context and sensitive to the existing school buildings and neighbouring properties in terms of its location, layout and design.

- The way in which the stores had been located to provide a raised terrace play area and mitigate the impact to the existing playground was identified as a very positive aspect of the scheme.

- The introduction of a Kitchen to serve hot school meals was also strongly welcomed by most people attending the event.

Photograph showing location of proposed extension (set down at level of existing school)
Some concern was raised regarding access to the new Hall roof from the terrace area. The school has fence/gates which can be secured closed outside of normal opening hours to deter unwanted visitors gaining access to the school grounds although we appreciate that these only offer a limited solution as they are ‘open’ type timber post and rail fencing/gates, particularly to the rear playground side. As presented at the Public Consultation, the eaves level of the new Hall was set 1350mm from the terrace ground level (this is a factor of the hall being kept as low as possible both to run through at existing school level and mitigate impact on neighbouring properties). Therefore, there was a risk that people could access onto the roof (although this was not considered a problem for the school during the occupied daytime). It should be noted that there is an existing lean-to covered play area with timber walls and roof that is already fairly low to the ground (approx. 2m high). In response to the comments raised, we have modified the design to provide a solid wall upto 2.4m high from the ground on this elevation, with the brickwork changing to timber boarding above to act as a deterrent to anti-social use, whilst still visually ‘breaking-up’ the elevation to reduce the apparent scale.

Points were raised regarding the fact that some existing classrooms (along the building perimeter against the new extension) would no longer have outside windows. We have considered this during development of our design and firstly highlight that the existing windows look out across a small external area onto the face of a brick retaining wall with scrub planting above. The windows are virtually completely covered with children’s drawings/painting. These classrooms are all provided with rooflights that will provide good natural daylight. We have created a new circulation zone between these existing classrooms and the new Hall that will have opening rooflights to ensure that adequate light and ventilation is maintained. They will also benefit from new small windcatchers fitted through the rear facing roof slope.
Several comments have been received regarding possible use for badminton, pilates, yoga and other activities. The hall will have a resilient floor covering which would be suitable for these types of use but is not of sufficient size or height to accommodate a badminton court (this is a standard size and requires 7.6m height, playing area of 13.4 x 6.1m with minimum 900mm clear zones around, making a minimum length of 15.2m). The proposed Hall has an internal eaves height of 3.8m and ridge height of 6.0m. The internal size of the Hall on plan is 10.6 x 13.3m. Having considered the possibility of increasing the length of the proposed Hall space to accommodate this (at the expense of the Hall width to maintain same area), we believe that this would result in the building being too close to the existing projecting classroom, it would necessitate additional excavation and retaining wall works to provide the required fire exit escape route and would also have a negative impact on the proportions of the Hall.

Some concern was raised by the adjacent neighbours regarding temporary construction access for the works, given the relatively restricted rear site access route available. We have viewed the likely route on site and note that it has a tarmac surface although this is not likely to be able to support heavy vehicles. The entrance onto Grafton Road contains a tight bend which is further restricted by an existing telegraph/electricity pole (see photograph below). For background information, we are currently working on a number of similar School Hall extension projects which also have restricted access routes, limited by road width, bends, car parking, etc. Through a careful process of assessment/control the Contractors are continuing to successfully allow vehicles to access the site whilst protecting the neighbouring properties, verges, driveways, etc. We would also include various control measures within Contract documents to restrict the size/weight of vehicles to be used on the project which may increase vehicle movements during construction but would ensure appropriate vehicles are adopted. We would also seek to control construction traffic delivery times to avoid the busy school drop-off/collection times. A dilapidation schedule to record the state of the existing access road, adjacent boundary fences, walls, etc will be taken prior to commencing any construction works and any making good works to reinstate these elements to their existing condition will be undertaken. We can confirm that School has rights to use this rear access road and that the road is not adopted by Highways. It is proposed to replace the existing single gate and remove part of the rear fence and cut back the trees locally to improve the construction access, replaced with new fence and double gates to match existing. Given the quantity of excavated material arising from the construction works, it is proposed to retain some of this on site, set against the rear playing field boundary, covered with top soil and grass seed to further reduce any impact of vehicle movements along the track access road.
Discussions held at the public consultation raised suggestions about locating the proposed extension on the site of the existing car park at the front of the school. As explained at the meeting, we had discounted this approach firstly because of the loss of on-site parking (and the location of any replacement car parking would reduce playground area), secondly because any new extension would then visually ‘compete’ with the setting of the existing historic hall building and thirdly that the space available is inadequate to accommodate the new footprint required for the hall. It would also involve extensive remodelling of the existing school to accommodate the necessary circulation and ancillary spaces.

Some comments were raised relating to the extent of storage areas provided. We have provided storage in accordance with the BB99 requirements and the 30m2 of storage should allow for the inclusion of some Community store items, if required. The exact internal layout of the store rooms (i.e. whether the area is sub-divided into two or three rooms can be determined by the School in due course).

Additionally, the following consultations have taken place during the preparation of the Planning Application to demonstrate the inclusive approach to the design and development that has been adopted:
Meeting with Peter Moor on 14 June 2010 to discuss scope of project, highlight issues for further review/consultation and to ensure no objections in terms of principle or policy. No objections were raised in terms of principle of development, building design, elevational treatment and materials, or Planning Policy.

It was advised that Travel Plan, Flood Risk Assessment and Design & Access Statement documents would not be required to be submitted as part of this application.
Statement of Planning Need

This project will be jointly funded by the Primary Capital Programme and Targetted Capital for Dining Facilities, both are grants from the Department for Education (formerly DCSF). The lack of a suitably sized school hall is identified as a priority for action in the “Strategy for Change”. It is one of the key suitability issues for primary schools in that it has a major impact on:

- Delivery of the PE curriculum, as well as music and drama
- Increases opportunities for whole school assemblies and performances
- Provision of a hot school dinner
- The school’s ability to offer extended services and be a resource for the local community

There is a drive towards greater commitment to 5 hours PE per week, plus opportunities for music and the arts, and therefore a multi-purpose school hall is increasingly important for primary aged children. The provision of Hot School Meals for children is also recognized as an important target, working towards National Healthy Schools Status. The provision of a school hall therefore has an important part to play in providing opportunities for improving children’s physical and emotional health and well-being. It can also contribute to longer term improvements in health, reduction of inequalities in health, and increasing social inclusion.

We believe that the proposed design responds positively to the context of the site and the existing buildings, providing essential facilities both for the school and for the local communities in accordance with relevant Planning Policy criteria.
Artist impression showing proposed extension from Wood Street (existing school building in foreground)

Artist impression showing proposed extension looking North
Artist impression showing proposed extension looking North (stepped terrace play area)

Artist impression showing proposed extension looking down existing stepped ramp access to playground
Artist impression showing proposed extension from rear access track

Artist impression showing proposed extension across playground, looking West