PLANNING STATEMENT

Site Address: Higham Ferrers Junior School
Wharf Road
Wellingborough
Northants

Contact Details:

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Wharf Road
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Northants

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INTRODUCTION

This Planning Statement has been prepared to accompany a full planning application for a conversion of an existing storage building and extension to the storage buildings to form a new office room formed in the grounds of Higham Ferrers Primary School.

The purpose of this statement is to outline the reasons and thought behind the need for the development and how these have been formulated so as to reflect the context of the site. The application drawings compromise the following:

- Proposed Building Plans
- Proposed Elevations
- Proposed Site Plans
- Proposed 3D Perspective View

The application site is located within the centre of the growing town of Higham Ferrers. Development along Wharf Road & Saffron Road and the surrounding streets is predominately residential in character. Properties in the vicinity of the site differ considerably in size and style and include traditional two storey Victorian properties, bungalows and more modern detached dwellings.

Higham Ferrers itself is served by bus services including those running north to south between Kettering and Bedford, and east to west between Northampton and Peterborough. Wellingborough, Northampton and Kettering are both served by a mainline railway station. There is also easy access to the M1, A45 & A14.

The area of the proposed development is set on the western edge of the playground associate with the long established Higham Ferrers Junior School. It is currently used as storage buildings for the school with a small adjacent area which is currently part of the playground, the existing building are built using traditional brick construction, with slate roof tiles.

PLANNING HISTORY

The site is set close to the centre of Higham Ferrers and has always been used as a primary school since it was first constructed. It has had some extensions previously with the most recent being a small reception extension and a sports hall extension.

To the east of the school is the Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School with its own range of land and buildings. Together the two schools form a comprehensive group of education buildings in a very sustainable location in the heart of the community.
PROPOSAL

Like many schools in settlements with growing numbers of children Higham Ferrers needs to make the most of its facilities and so it is proposed to convert some of the existing storage buildings on site and construct a small new extension to these storage buildings to provide additional office space along with a meeting room. Higham Ferrers Junior School is now at capacity and is very limited on space for staff to undertake the required administrative tasks, the principle behind the extension is to provide the extra space that is required.

The scale of the proposal will be constrained to ensure that it will integrate with the general scale & appearance of the existing storage barns that are on site.

The design proposal seeks to be sympathetic to the surrounding areas. The elevations have been designed upon an appreciation of the character of the site and the area within which the proposal is located.

The ultimate form of the building has been derived from the existing conditions and buildings on site, the shape will aim to provide a simple, clean and elegant solution to the school’s needs. The façades will be in red brickwork to match the surrounding buildings, with white UPVC double glazed doors & windows. The new roof pitch is to match the existing pitches of the adjacent building and is to be finished in traditional slate with roof lights all designed to blend in with the adjacent existing buildings.
RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES & GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 15 makes it clear that Policies in Local Plans should follow the approach of the presumption in favour of sustainable development so that development which is sustainable can be approved without delay. All plans should be based upon and reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, with clear policies that will guide how the presumption should be applied locally.

The school site and buildings is located in the heart of the community and is suffering from ever increasing demands. This proposal provides a response to those pressures by improving school facilities and teaching and by making more efficient use of the school site so that it can continue to provide a high standard of junior education for its pupils.

Paragraph 17 recognises the need to provide improved infrastructure for thriving local places and always seek to secure high quality design.

The proposal seeks to address the needs of the school whilst respecting its historic form in terms of materials and layout.

North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (2008)

Policy 1 identifies the smaller towns including Higham Ferrers as secondary focal points for development with the emphasis on regeneration of the town centres, through environmental improvements and new mixed use developments, incorporating cultural activities and tourism facilities, in order to provide jobs and services, deliver economic prosperity and support the self sufficiency of the network of centres.

Policy 10 identifies Rushden, Higham Ferrers and Irthlingborough as a focus for housing growth in the East Northamptonshire District.

Higham Ferrers has seen a growth in house numbers and population as a result of this strategic policy. Paragraph 3.40 of the Spatial Strategy recognises that “housing growth will need to be supported by improvements to the physical and social infrastructure ... facilities such as schools, libraries, leisure centres, museums, green infrastructure, health and social care infrastructure and open spaces that make sustainable communities.”

This application is a partial response to those pressures identified above.
Policy 13 provides a checklist of the key issues that need to be considered in delivering the quality of development sought by the Plan.

Development should:

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<td>a) 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;</td>
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<td>b) seek to design out antisocial behaviour, crime and reduce the fear of crime by applying the principles of the “secured by Design” scheme;</td>
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<td>c) maintain and improve the provision of accessible local services and community services, whilst focusing uses that attract a lot of visitors within the town centres;</td>
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<td>d) have a satisfactory means of access and provide for parking, servicing and manoeuvring in accordance with adopted standards;</td>
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<td>e) Be designed to take full account of the transport user hierarchy of pedestrian-cyclist public transport-private vehicle, and incorporate measures to contribute to an overall target of 20% modal shift in developments of over 200 dwellings and elsewhere 5% over the plan period;</td>
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<td>f) Not lead to the loss of community facilities, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer needed by the community they serve and are not needed for any other community use, or that the facility is being relocated and improved to meet the needs of the new and existing community;</td>
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| g) Not lead to the loss of open space or recreation facilities, unless a site of equivalent quality and accessibility can be provided, | The development would lead to a modest loss of informal playground area which is not used for formal sports purposes. It does however serve to
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<th>Service and made available to the community prior to use of the existing site ceasing.</th>
<th>relieve growing pressure on built school space which is a considerable benefit to the teaching staff and children. This benefit should be weighed favourably against the small loss of playground space.</th>
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<td>h) 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;</td>
<td>The extension is expressly designed to reflect the character and appearance of the school through the use of matching materials, finishes and is of a similar scale to its immediate neighbours.</td>
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<td>i) 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;</td>
<td>The site is already a long established school site. Further investment in the site seeks to maintain and strengthen is community and functional character.</td>
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<td>j) Be designed to promote healthier lifestyles and for people to be active outside their homes and places of work;</td>
<td>The school will continue to provide play and sport in accordance with the curriculum.</td>
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<td>k) Allow for travel to home, shops, work and school on foot and by cycle and public transport.</td>
<td>The school and the proposed extension the subject of this application is in a very sustainable location, accessible on foot, cycle and public transport close to the heart of the town.</td>
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<td>l) Not result in an unacceptable impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties or the wider area, by reason of noise, vibration, smell, light or other pollution, loss of light or overlooking;</td>
<td>The extension is on an established school site and will be used mainly for storage and staff facilities. It looks into the site rather than upon its neighbours and will not change the character or intensity of usage.</td>
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<td>m) Be constructed and operated using a minimum amount of non-renewable resources including where possible the reuse of existing structures and materials;</td>
<td>The modest extension will be built with efficiency and minimisation of waste in mind in order to make best use of limited school resources.</td>
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<td>n) Not have an adverse impact on the highway network and will not prejudice highway safety;</td>
<td>The extension will not result in additional parking requirements and does not affect the school access in any way.</td>
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<td>o) Conserve and enhance the landscape character, historic landscape designated built environmental assets and their settings, and biodiversity of the environment making reference to the Environmental Character Assessment and green infrastructure strategy;</td>
<td>This is a long established town centre school site. The development will be built to reflect the prevailing character of its surroundings. It is not a conservation area, nor affecting the setting of listed buildings and does not result in the loss of habitat as the area is already hard-surfaced.</td>
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<td>p) Not sterilise known mineral reserves or</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
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degrade soil quality;

q) Not cause a risk to (and where possible enhance) the quality of the underlying groundwater or 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.

The site is already hard-surfaced and so no additional runoff will be likely. The building will be drained into the existing established infrastructure serving the school.

Local Plan 1996

There are a number of saved policies dating from the 1996 Local Plan but none are directly relevant to this modest school building extension in Higham Ferrers.

A New Local Plan is currently being prepared but is still some way from adoption. The Local Planning Authority may therefore rely upon the advice contained in the NPPF with regards to the drive for improved standards of design. The proposal achieves a high standard by utilising space within the established site to good effect. It will fit in with the character of the area and improve facilities at the school. The improvement and extension of Higham Ferrers Junior School is a response to the strategic and demographic pressures identified above.

Taking into account all the relevant criteria these proposals are in compliance with both Local Plan policies and the NPPF and as such paragraph 187 is particularly worthy of note:

“Local Planning Authorities should look for solutions, rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. Local Planning Authorities should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.”