

Development Control Committee
Meeting to be held on 20 October 2021

Electoral Division affected: West Lancashire East
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West Lancashire Borough: application number LCC/2021/0037
Provision of a temporary Classroom, Lathom Park C of E Primary School, Hall Lane, Lathom

Contact for further information:
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Executive Summary

Application – The construction of a temporary classroom at Lathom Park C of E Primary School, Hall Lane, Lathom.

Recommendation – Summary

That planning permission be **granted** subject to conditions controlling time limits, working programme, duration of the development and building materials.

Applicant's Proposal

The proposal is for a temporary classroom (for a maximum of three years) to alleviate pressure on classroom space due to rising roll numbers. The dimensions of the building are 6.55m x 4.88m with an overall height of 2.78m with a flat roof, UPVC windows and aluminium doors and clad in shiplap cladding which would be silver grey.

Description and Location of Site

The application is at Lathom Park C of E Primary School located off Hall Lane (B5240) in the village of Lathom, approximately 4km north east of Ormskirk town centre. The school building itself is a Grade II Listed Building with modern additions. The site is located within the Lathom Park Conservation Area and is within the Green Belt. The proposed development would be located near the western edge of the school grounds on a grass area. The site is well screened to the north and west by mature trees. To the south and north east are the school playgrounds and car park, and to the east, the school building.

Background

History

The application site is within the grounds of an existing primary school. There is no relevant planning history.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework:

Paragraphs 11-14, 95, 126 –130, 147 - 150 and 194 –202 are relevant with regards to the definition of sustainable development, the requirement for new school places, the requirement for good design, green belt and impacts on heritage assets.

West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027

Policy GN1 – Settlement Boundaries

Policy GN3 – Sustainable Development

Policy EN2 – Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment

Policy EN4 - Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Cultural and Heritage Assets

Consultations

West Lancashire Borough Council - Object to the development as it would result in harm to the openness of the Green Belt and fails to demonstrate very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh the identified harm. The siting of the classroom fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Lathom Parish Council - Support of the application.

Coal Authority – The proposed development lies within a coal mining area which may contain unrecorded coal mining related hazards. If any coal mining feature is encountered during development, this should be reported immediately to the Coal Authority.

LCC Highways Development Control – No comments received.

Representations – The application has been advertised by press and site notice, and neighbouring residents informed by individual letter. No representations have been received.

Advice

Lathom Park C of E Primary School offers education for children from pre-school age to eleven years. Due to new development in the area and the good reputation of the school, roll numbers are rising and there is now an urgent need for additional specialist teaching space. The school wish to extend the existing school building but due to its design, any extension will be costly, and it will take time for the school to acquire the

necessary finance. A small temporary classroom building is therefore proposed to alleviate the immediate pressure on classroom space.

Paragraph 95 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that it is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities and Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement and to the development that will widen choice in education. It also states that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications. The County Council's general strategy towards providing education provision is to provide additional space at existing schools rather than construct new schools in order that this provision can be delivered quickly and to achieve best value for money by reducing infrastructure and land acquisition costs. However, it is important to balance the need for the proposal against the impacts of the development.

The main issues relate to the impacts on the Green Belt and location adjacent to a listed building and within a Conservation Area.

Paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The proposed school building does not fall within any of the listed exceptions to Green Belt policy and therefore the building should be approved only if very special circumstances apply.

The school currently has 46 children with a current legal capacity of 70 children. However due to the nature of the existing school, the school consider that it is impossible to accommodate this number with adequate space. The school has a high proportion of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) pupils (35%) which require specialist teaching support using external staff and requires provision of a separate area that can be used for pupils with special educational needs. The head teacher has stated that 35% of pupils have such needs and that the layout of the existing school does not provide an undisturbed area where the educational needs of these children can be addressed. The building would be small in scale and is proposed for a temporary period of up to three years. The temporary building would also be within the existing developed area of the school. Taking these factors into account, it is considered that the harm to the openness of the Green Belt would be very limited and in any event there are very special circumstances in terms of the need to provide school accommodation and lack of space within the school that would justify the development within the Green Belt. In order to ensure that the impacts on the Green Belt are only temporary, a condition is recommended to ensure the life of the building is restricted to three years.

The existing school building is Grade II listed being of red brick construction with a steeply pitched roof and distinctive dormer and chimney features. Paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that where a development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Policy EN4 of the West Lancashire Local Plan states that there will be a presumption in favour of

the conservation of designated heritage assets and that development will not be permitted that will adversely affect a listed building or conservation area.

The new building would be approximately 7 metres from the existing school building adjacent to the early years playground and therefore would be within the setting of the building as viewed from Hall Lane. However, the proposed building is very small in scale and would not dominate the listed building or be a particular incongruous feature in the Conservation Area. No trees or other vegetation would require removal for the development. Any harm to the heritage importance of the locality should also be weighed against the benefits of providing new school accommodation as set out in Paragraph 95 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). On balance it is considered that the temporary impact of the development on heritage assets is acceptable.

In view of the duration, location and nature of the proposed development it is considered that no Convention Rights set out in the Human Rights Act 1998 would be affected.

Recommendation

That planning permission be **granted** subject to the following conditions:

Time Limits

1. The development shall commence not later than 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: Imposed pursuant to Section 91 (1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Working Programme

2. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following documents:

- a) The Planning Application received by the County Planning Authority on 22 July 2021.

- b) Submitted Plans and documents:

Drawing LP/001 - Location Plan
Drawing LP/002 - Plan

Reason: To enable the County Planning Authority to adequately control the development and to minimise the impact of the development on the amenities of the local area, and to conform with Policies GN1, GN3, EN2 and EN4 of the West Lancashire Borough Local Plan.

3. Written notification of the date of commencement of the development shall be sent to the County Planning Authority within 7 days of commencement.

Reason: To enable the County Planning Authority to monitor the development to ensure compliance with this permission and to conform with Policies GN1 and GN3 of the West Lancashire Borough Local Plan.

4. The building together with any foundations and services shall be removed from the site not later than 3 years from the date of commencement of the development as notified to the County Planning Authority under the requirements of condition 3 above.

Reason: To ensure that the development is temporary in the interests of the Green Belt and to protect the setting and character of local heritage assets and to conform with Policies GN3 and EN2 of the West Lancashire Borough Local Plan.

5. The external elevations of the building shall be clad using fibre cement exterior wall cladding boards coloured 'granite' as detailed in the email from Robert Wood dated 30 September 2021.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area and to conform with Policy GN3 of the West Lancashire Local Plan.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Ext
LCC/2021/0037	22/07/21	Susan Hurst, Planning and Environment 01772 534130

Reason for Inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A