

Development Control Committee

Meeting to be held on 9 July 2014

Electoral Division affected:
Chorley Rural East

Chorley Borough: Application number LCC/2014/0077

New single storey extensions to provide a reception area and workshop/community meeting room and minor demolition where new structures meet existing structures at Withnell Fold School, Withnell Fold, Withnell, Chorley

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

Application - New single storey extensions to provide a reception area and workshop/community meeting room and minor demolition where new structures meet existing structures at Withnell Fold School, Withnell Fold, Withnell, Chorley.

Recommendation – Summary

That planning permission be **granted** subject to conditions controlling commencement and working programme.

Applicant's Proposal

Planning permission is sought for two single storey extensions to increase classroom space for teachers to work with small groups of children and a new reception area.

The proposed extension for additional classroom space would measure approximately 3.1m x 7.7m x 3.7m high.

The proposed reception area would measure approximately 3m x 2.5m x 3.3m high.

The proposed extensions would be constructed from natural stone, natural roofing slate with new barge boards and fascias to be softwood timber battens. Windows would be powder coated aluminium double glazed units colour white with natural stone lintel, cills & mullions to window openings and timber panelled doors with either paint finish or natural stain and varnish all to match existing.

Description and Location of Site

Withnell Fold Primary School is located at the south western corner of an un-adopted, privately maintained highway called 'Withnell Fold' and is adjacent to terraced dwelling houses of similar original age, character and appearance. The original school building was constructed in 1897. More recently a large extension was added to the western side of the school (aerial photographs show this to be present around 2000).

The reception area would be located at the school main entrance to the north east of the school building. The nearest residential property to the proposed extension would be located approximately 7m away.

The proposed new school room extension would be located to the north western corner of the school. The nearest residential property to this proposed extension would be located approximately 2m away.

Withnell Fold School lies within a Conservation and Green Belt Area.

Background

History

This site is an established education facility.

Planning permission was granted for a single storey pitched roof extension to provide an IT room and new kitchen facilities in February 2003 (ref 09/02/1267).

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraphs 11 – 14 and 56 – 64 are relevant and set out the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the need for high standards of design.

Section 8: Promoting Healthy Communities

Section 9: Protecting Green Belt Land

Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Central Lancashire Core Strategy

Policy 14 Education

Policy 17 Design of New Buildings

Chorley Local Plan

Policy C21 Educational building

Policy HT7 Conservation Area

Policy DC1 Green belt

Consultations

Withnell Parish Council – No observation received.

Chorley Borough Council – No observation received.

Representations – The application has been advertised by press, site notice and neighbouring residents informed by individual letter. Eleven letters of representation have been received objecting to the proposed development for the following summarised reasons:

- The nature of the workshop is not stated; this could present a nuisance on access, noise or waste grounds.
- There is an existing community meeting space at the Sports and Social Club.
- In the supporting statement, the use states for community meeting, for what purposes or at what time?. No community organisations have been consulted.
- No mention is made that all vehicular access to the school passes over privately own land by means of a right of way that does not include the right of visitors to park on Withnell Fold.
- Concern regarding the extra capacity of the school and the increase in traffic.
- Opening times '09:00 to 16:00 weekdays and 09:00 to 13:00 on Saturdays; the community will not be able to access the ' community meetings' in the evening.
- The supporting statement states that there has been community consultation. No residents/groups/organisations have been consulted.
- There is no elevation showing the proposed rear of the extension.
- Measurements to the boundary of the school are incorrect.
- The main extension size seems excessive for a one storey requirement.
- The design would affect the aesthetics of the building in the Conservation Area.
- Rather than extend, the school/community should make more use of Withnell Fold Church thereby making more use of an underused resource and reducing traffic congestion at Withnell Fold.

Advice

The school site is constrained and there is limited scope for expansion. However, the school has identified a need for a small area of additional space to provide security for staff and pupils, provide additional floor area to enhance teaching programmes and to provide a reception area.

Since the application was first submitted the applicant has amended the design and scale of the proposed school room extension in view of concerns raised regarding design, impact on the existing building and proximity to a neighbouring residential property. Revised drawings illustrate a more compact and less imposing design that it is considered would fit more comfortably against the existing structure. The proposed reception area remains unchanged.

Policy 14 of the Core Strategy for Central Lancashire seeks to work in partnership with the education authority in any modernisation programme or new construction and to enable educational facilities to be built in locations where they are accessible by the communities they serve.

Paragraph 72 of the NPPF states that great weight should be given to creating, expanding or altering schools.

The proposed development lies within the Conservation Area. Section 12 of the NPPF emphasises the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. It also acknowledges the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring, and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Policy HT7 of the Chorley Local Plan states, in essence, that all development within a Conservation Area should preserve or enhance its character or appearance and that design should be of a standard that respects the features of the Area.

The proposed extensions would be likely to provide a much needed improvement to the running of the school while at the same time respecting the local conservation area and the historical importance of the building. The extensions are minor, would be in keeping with the existing structure and would be constructed with materials to match.

The proposed development lies within the Green Belt. Green Belt policy is set out in Section 9 of the NPPF. The NPPF attaches great importance to Green Belts in order to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Furthermore, inappropriate development including the construction of new buildings is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Exceptions to this include the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

In the case of this application it is considered that the extensions would not result in disproportionate additions and would therefore not be inappropriate development.

Policy DC1 of the Chorley Local Plan provides no specific allowance for extensions to buildings other than dwelling houses in the green belt. Therefore the proposed extensions would be considered inappropriate development in line with this policy. However, guidance within the NPPF indicates that little weight should be given to policies that are inconsistent with the policies of the NPPF beyond 12 months of the date of the publication of the NPPF (which this is). Irrespective, if it was the case that very special circumstances had to be demonstrated, it is considered that they would be given that the school is at an existing location within green belt and the educational benefits associated with the extensions would outweigh the insignificant impact on the Green Belt.

The applicant has provided additional information to confirm that the school has no plans for additional children to come to the school therefore the admission number would remain the same. While it is recognised that there may be existing parking problems associated with the school, as with many other schools across the County, it is considered that objections raised in relation to the current traffic and parking arrangements are not material to this application given the extensions are small and could not, in themselves, lead to any significant increase in pupil numbers. The rights of the public to access and park on 'Withnell Fold' and for local residents to resist any access are not material planning matters in this case.

There has been some concern raised over the nature of the proposed use of the school room extension and consequently the school has clarified that the extensions are proposed for school use. Nevertheless, schools fall within a planning use class of 'non residential institution' and this use class includes a number of other community related uses. This being the case, it is arguable that the school could be used for other uses within this use class without requiring separate planning permission. Therefore the specific detail of how this space would be used in terms of community/educational terminology is not required. Additionally, there would appear to be no conditional restrictions on the existing school in relation to hours of use and therefore a restriction on the use of the extensions would be unreasonable in planning terms.

The proposed development complies with the policies of the NPPF, the policies of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy and the policies of the Chorley Local Plan.

In view of the nature, scale and location 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 and supporting statement received by the Director of Transport and Environment on 13/05/2014
 - b) Submitted Plans and documents:

Drawing No. PL02 Rev B Existing Plan Layout and Elevations

Drawing No. PL03 Rev B Proposed Plan Layout and Elevations

Reason : To minimise the impact of the development on the amenities of the area and to conform with Policies 14 and 17 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy and Policies C21, HT7 and DC1 of the Chorley Local Plan.

Notes

The applicant's attention is drawn to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the British Standards Institution Code of Practice for Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of Disabled People (BS8300:2009). The design of the building will also need to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations 2010. In the case of educational buildings, the applicant's attention is drawn to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and the guidance prepared by the Department of Education and Skills Building Bulletin 91 (Access for the Disabled to School Buildings) and Building Bulletin 94 (Inclusive School Design).

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Ext
LCC/2014/0077	June 2014	Jess Manfield / ENV / 31942

Reason for Inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A