

Electoral Division affected: Ribble Valley North East
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Ribble Valley Borough: Application 03/12/1059
Demolition of part of the school buildings and construction of a 2/3 storey building, external walkway, glazed link roof, remodelled caretaker building, and reconfiguration of parking and external play areas at Bowland High School, Sawley Road, Grindleton

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Executive Summary

Application - Demolition of part of the school buildings and construction of a 2/3 storey building, external walkway, glazed link roof, remodelled caretaker building, and reconfiguration of parking and external play areas at Bowland High School, Sawley Road, Grindleton.

Recommendation – Summary

That, planning permission be **granted** subject to conditions controlling commencement, working programme, building materials, protected species, hours of construction working, reversing alarms, construction working method statement and landscaping.

Applicant's Proposal

Planning permission is sought for demolition works, construction of a 2/3 storey building, remodelled caretaker building, external walkway, glazed link roof and reconfiguration of parking and external play areas. The main elements of the proposal would be:

- Demolition of old school buildings lying in the centre of the current school campus. The buildings cover an area of 1255m² over four floors.
- Construction of a new 2/3 storey building to provide 1909m² of floorspace. The building would measure approximately 28m x 33m and would incorporate a flat roof with a maximum height of approximately 12.5m. The elevations would be finished in pitched face natural sandstone, cedar cladding, neutral render and would incorporate dark grey aluminium windows and doors and sections of curtain walling. The roof would be finished in a grey King Span single ply roofdeck incorporating, roof vents, roof lights, solar panels and dark grey aluminium eaves, fascia and soffit boards.

- Construction of an external walkway along the northern elevation of the new building linking into the first floor of the main school building.
- Construction of a glazed roof canopy between the north eastern elevation of the new school building and the multi-media and music blocks.
- Redevelopment of the existing caretaker's building. New walls would be provided at the upper level to provide 58m² of new floorspace which would incorporate new windows and doors and would be clad in neutral render and timber cladding. A new slate roof would be provided.
- Reconfiguration of the school site to accommodate staff and visitor parking on the current school playground. The playground provision would be relocated to an area to the north of the site which is currently used for car parking. The reconfiguration would result in the provision of 58 spaces, an increase of 13 spaces over the existing provision.

Description and Location of Site

Bowland High School lies approximately 10km to the east of Clitheroe, within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The school buildings occupy an elevated position on a natural terrace above the floor of the Ribble Valley and are positioned in a roughly north-east to south-west orientation. The site itself is characterised as a ridge sloping from east to west which reduces the prominence of the buildings within the wider landscape. Bowland High School was previously a country hotel and subsequently an orphanage, with the original buildings being extended and modified as their use for educational purposes developed. The original buildings which would be demolished as part of the development are located to the north of the main school building and sports hall and to the south of the multi-media and music blocks. The caretaker building, which would be subject to re-modelling is located at a lower level to the west of the school site, adjacent to the existing staff and visitor parking area.

The school is accessed via the C571 (Sawley Road) which runs to the west of the site.

Background

History

Planning permission for the construction of an all weather multi use playing surface with 3m high weld mesh fencing and consolidation and extension of existing footpath and associated landscaping was granted in August 2010 (ref. 03/10/0495).

Planning permission for the demolition of a HORSIA building and replacement with a single storey music facility comprising of music room, media/recording room, 2 no practice rooms, recording control room, disabled WC, stores, plant room and veranda was granted in March 2008 (ref. 03/08/0074)

Planning permission for the erection of a sports hall for school and community use incorporating new vehicular and pedestrian access points and 2 no disabled parking spaces together with the provision of a new two storey teaching block was granted in January 2004 (ref. 03/03/1000).

Planning permission for the demolition of two demountable classrooms and depot building. Creation of revised access and new car parking area and a two storey extension to new teaching block was granted in April 2001 (ref.03/01/0073)

Planning permission for a single classroom demountable building, flat roof & textured paint finish external walls (green), timber steps to entrance was granted in June 2000 (ref. 03/00/0313).

Planning permission for the demolition of 2 demountable buildings and the erection of a new 2 storey teaching block was granted in June 2000 (ref. 03/00/29).

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraph 72 - Promoting Healthy Communities.

Paragraph 115 to 118 – Conserving and enhancing the Natural Environment

Ribble Valley Local Plan (RVLP)

Policy ENV1 Forest of Bowland AONB

Policy ENV7 Species Protection

Policy G1 General Development Considerations

Policy G5 Development Outside the Main Settlement Boundaries.

Consultations

Ribble Valley Borough Council – No objection in principle. Would be interested in the views of the County Landscape Architect given the location of the site within the Forest of Bowland AONB as the new 2/3 storey building will be significantly more visible than the one it replaces. If approved conditions relating to the protection of bats and tree preservation should be imposed.

Grindleton Parish Council – No observations received.

LCC Assistant Director (Highways) – No objection in view of revised details shown on revised site plan 4266-L (00)03 Rev 06. It is recommended that a condition be imposed requiring a construction method statement in the interests of residential amenity and to enhance safe working practices on or near the highway.

Environment Agency – No objection.

Natural England – Consider that the application does not pose any likely or significant risk to those features of the natural environment for which they would otherwise provide a more detailed consultation response and does not wish to make specific comment of the details of the consultation. However, Natural England would expect the local planning authority to consider the potential impacts upon protected species and the scope for biodiversity and landscape enhancements when determining the application.

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

- That the removal of the mature tree to facilitate the proposed widening of the existing vehicular access point would be severely detrimental to the aesthetics of the local surroundings.
- The school does not have sufficient parking provision on a permanent basis and whilst the development is constructed. Alternative parking should be provided during construction and in the long term to ensure pedestrian safety in light of existing problems with traffic congestion.
- To widen the access point would place traffic directly onto the junction with Sawley Road which would exacerbate existing problems with vehicles using the road to the side of the school which is the only access road for householders located behind the school.
- The new building would incorporate brightly coloured window frames which would not be in keeping with the surroundings or existing buildings.
- The impact of inappropriate design in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- The addition of exterior lighting of the new building is unnecessary given modern security systems can operate using infra red lights that would reduce light pollution on the immediate surround area.

A further representation has been received from Ribble Valley Borough Councillor Michael Ranson objecting to the application on the grounds that the current parking facilities at the school are unsustainable and the application should make provision for additional permanent car parking spaces.

Advice

Director of Transport and Environment – Observations

Planning permission is sought for demolition works, construction of a 2/3 storey building, external walkway, glazed link roof and reconfiguration of parking and external play areas. The development is required to replace and upgrade the existing 'old school' buildings at the site which are sub-standard and currently do not provide suitable accommodation or facilities for the pupils on role. The application would also improve accessibility for disabled school users and circulation of staff and pupils throughout the school site. The reconfiguration of the car parking would lead to an overall increase in provision at the site and would be beneficial in addressing existing problems with traffic congestion and pedestrian safety. The redevelopment of the existing caretaker's building would provide improved ancillary accommodation and facilities for non-teaching staff.

The main issues to consider are the acceptability of the proposals within the AONB, landscape & visual assessment and building design, protected species, traffic and the impacts of construction and demolition.

AONB, Landscape & Visual Assessment and Building Design

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF sets out the Government's Planning Policies and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Paragraph 72 of the NPPF states *'The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:*

- *give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools; and*
- *work with schools promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.'*

Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states *'Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.'*

Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states *'Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:*

- *the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- *the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- *any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.'*

Policy ENV 1 of the RVLP seeks to ensure that the landscape and character of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is protected, conserved and enhanced and requires that development contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area. The policy states that the environmental effects of proposals will be a major consideration and the design, materials, scale, massing and landscaping of development will be important factors in deciding planning applications. The protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural environment will be the most important considerations in the assessment of any development proposal and regard should be had to the economic and social well-being of the area.

The development would provide for the replacement of the original buildings at the site which are now in a poor condition and sub-standard for a modern day educational establishment. The sloping topography of the site has determined the

overall layout of the proposed development, with the major new building being split over three floors reflective proportionally of the structure it is to replace. The lower floor of the building would be set into the slope of the site and as a result only two floors would be apparent in views to the main front-facing elevation which faces Sawley Road, whereas all three storeys of the new building would be visible from the rear where site levels are lower. The front and rear elevations of the major new building would be stepped back from the building line of the adjacent sports hall which would reduce the overall prominence of the development and the provision of a flat roof would reduce the overall height and massing of the structure.

The applicant has submitted a landscape and visual impact assessment to evaluate the potential impacts the development may have on local visual amenity and wider landscape character. The assessment concludes that the scale and appearance of the new building would be consistent with the character of other contemporary buildings at the site and that the overall effects on the character of the campus would be slight and not significant. At a broader scale, the assessment concludes that the location of the replacement building within an existing school campus would be appropriate to the site and would not compromise the landscape character. There would be no significant effect on the Forest of Bowland AONB. The assessment acknowledges the enclosed location of much the site, behind a local ridge, and identifies that mature trees and woodland belts would restrict potential views from the north and west. The assessment states that given the majority of visual receptors would be in excess of 450m from the site and that the school campus would be a small element within a wider diverse landscape, the overall visual impact of the development would not be significant.

An objection has been received in relation to design following a pre-application meeting with the applicant on the belief that the proposed development was to include brightly coloured window frames. However, the submitted application does not provide for this. The elevations would be finished in pitched face natural sandstone, cedar cladding, neutral render and would incorporate dark grey aluminium windows and doors and sections of curtain walling to maximise the ingress of natural daylight. The roof would be finished in a grey King Span single ply roofdeck incorporating roof vents, roof lights, solar panels and dark grey aluminium eaves, fascia and soffit boards. It is considered that the proposed materials would be appropriate to a contemporary structure but also reflective of materials used in the surrounding area and would either be of natural composition or finished in neutral colours which would serve to minimise any visual impact.

It is considered that the new building would be of an acceptable scale and massing, reflective of the existing building that it would replace, that would not adversely impact upon the character of the AONB and would therefore serve to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area. The development would provide improved accommodation and facilities for the staff and pupils of the school at an existing site and it would contribute to the economic and social well being of the area. There are exceptional circumstances for the development and it would be in the public interest in accordance with paragraph 116 of the NPPF.

The proposed development would provide new and improved school accommodation and facilities to allow a more effective delivery of the curriculum. The reconfiguration

of the car parking would lead to an overall increase in provision at the site, contrary to the concerns raised, and would be beneficial in addressing existing problems with traffic congestion and pedestrian safety. The redevelopment of the existing caretaker's building would provide improved ancillary accommodation and facilities for non-teaching staff. In view of the submitted details, it is considered that the location and design of the proposed development is acceptable in principle.

Protected Species

The development would require the demolition of existing school buildings at the site, the remodelling of the existing caretaker's building, the felling of a mature tree and two further smaller trees. The trees have been surveyed and are of poor quality with no or limited potential for bats.

Buildings and trees have the potential to provide habitat for bats which are afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The EC Habitats Directive 1992 requires the UK to maintain a system of strict protection for protected species and their habitats. The UK implemented the directive by introducing regulations now consolidated in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, referred to below.

The application is supported by bat surveys, including an updated bat licence method statement July 2013, which found evidence of bat roosts, both maternity and transient roosts, in the main school building. Consequently, a suite of proposed mitigation measures have been proposed including contractor advice, appropriate demolition techniques and timings, the provision of roost boxes, and the provision of adapted roost space within the remodelled caretaker's building.

To lawfully remove a bat roost a European Protected Species Licence would be required through Natural England and a developer must demonstrate that the three tests set out in The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 have been met. The tests are that:

1. The development is required for the purpose of:
 - preserving public health or public safety,
 - for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.
 - for preventing serious damage to property.
2. There is no satisfactory alternative
3. The development would not be detrimental to maintaining the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status.

It also follows that planning permission should not be granted if a licence is not likely to be issued and therefore the three tests should also be addressed at the planning stage. It is considered that the development is not required for the purpose of preserving public health or public safety and is not required for preventing serious damage to property. Therefore it would need to be for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

Overriding public interest

The development would result in the replacement of substandard school buildings which currently do not provide adequate accommodation or facilities for the pupils or staff at the school. The school catchment area is substantial and is mainly the rural Ribble Valley parishes. It is considered that the development is essential in providing contemporary educational facilities appropriate to the delivery of the modern curriculum and that the social and economic benefits to be accrued from the development would be of overriding public interest.

No satisfactory alternative

The proposal would be located on an existing school campus located within the Forest of Bowland AONB. The campus itself is very restricted and demolition and re-development of the site is the only viable option in providing the accommodation needed to house the required facilities. The development proposals would constitute the re-development of previously developed land in a sustainable fashion that would be sympathetic to the sensitive landscape setting.

Maintaining population of the species

The applicant's proposed mitigation strategy would provide for alternative replacement bat roost habitat for both the maternity and transient roosts and these would, in part, be installed in advance of any works that would affect the location of bat roosts within the building to be demolished. The mitigation strategy concludes that the population of bats would be likely to be maintained at the current level in terms of species, numbers and types of roost.

The County Council's Specialist Advisor on ecology has advised that following the submission of the updated bat licence method statement, the mitigation proposals may be adequate to form the basis of a mitigation method statement to address the third test (above) in a licence application and the application should not be refused on the grounds of potential impacts on European protected species.

In view of the submitted information and the advice received a condition is proposed requiring the development be carried out in accordance with the submitted Bat Licence Method Statement dated July 2013 or as amended by the requirements of any changes dictated by a European Protected Species Licence.

Traffic and the Impacts of Construction and Demolition

Objections have been received on the grounds that that the school does not have sufficient parking provision both on a permanent basis and would not have while the development is constructed, which raises issues of potential traffic congestion and pedestrian safety. The proposed development would involve the reconfiguration of the school car parking to increase the number of spaces from 45 to 52. The increase would be achieved through re-locating the majority of staff and visitor parking from the rear of the school to the existing front playground area and would also involve the improved formalisation and configuration of existing spaces. It is

considered that the proposed increase in spaces and reconfiguration of the existing parking provision would represent a considerable improvement over the existing parking layout and would serve to alleviate general traffic congestion around the site both during construction and upon completion of the development. The use of the existing parking area as a play area would provide for a greater degree of pedestrian and vehicle segregation and would result in an improvement in highway safety generally.

Concern has been raised that widening the existing access point would create traffic safety issues at the junction with Sawley Road. The Assistant Director Highways has raised no objection to the proposals on the grounds of highway safety and it is considered that the widening of the access point to the proposed staff and visitor parking area would serve to improve traffic circulation at the site generally by allowing vehicles to easily exit the public highway and would serve to alleviate existing issues of traffic congestion at the site.

The nearest residential properties to the development site are located to the south west at Foxley Bank Farm and Sykes Cottages at an approximate distance of 45m and 70m respectively. The proposed development would not encroach on the proximity of the residential properties and the majority of the development would take place to the north west of the site. It is considered that the completed development would not have a detrimental impact upon residential amenity. However, to mitigate impacts during the construction period, conditions are proposed restricting the hours of construction working from 0730 to 1800 Monday to Friday and 0800 to 1300 on Saturdays, with no working on Sundays and Bank Holidays, and to restrict plant and equipment reversing alarms to broadband (white sound) type. A condition is also proposed requiring the submission and approval of a construction working method statement in the interests of residential amenity and to enhance safe working practices on or near the highway.

Lighting and Landscaping

An objection has been received on the grounds that the addition of exterior lighting to the new building is unnecessary and would lead to light pollution of the surrounding area. The development provides for the installation of a number of forms of wall-mounted lighting, in the interests of health and safety, and is focussed on providing illumination for pedestrians moving around the site particularly given the provision of new access arrangements for pupils and visitors to the site. The proposed lighting would be replacement for that which already exists, would be of a type with a modern lower light spill and is therefore unlikely to result in any additional or unacceptable light pollution.

An objection has been received on the grounds that the removal of the mature tree to facilitate the proposed widening of the existing vehicular access point would be severely detrimental to the aesthetics of the local surroundings. The removal of the tree would be a practical necessity to allow for the highway access improvements and appropriate mitigation would be provided in the form of replacement tree and hedgerow planting in the same location and the provision of additional decorative planting around the area of the new school building. A tree survey has concluded that the tree is of low quality with an estimated life span of approximately 10 years.

The loss of the tree in question and two other trees is considered acceptable in the circumstances subject to the provision of replacement trees and planting and which can be required by condition. The recommended condition relating to a construction working method statement referred to above also requires details for the protection of all other trees within the site during the construction phase of the development.

Human Rights

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

Conclusion

The proposed development would provide improved school accommodation and facilities to allow a more effective delivery of the curriculum. It is considered that the development would be acceptable by way of scale and design and would not have an unacceptable impact on the landscape character of the AONB and would not impact upon residential or local visual amenity. The development would be unlikely to have a detrimental impact on bats subject to compliance with the bat mitigation method statement and on securing the necessary European Protected Species Licence. The development would be acceptable in terms of highway safety and subject to conditions controlling construction working, would be unlikely to have a detrimental impact on local residents by way of noise or traffic nuisance. The development would be unlikely to lead to unacceptable levels of light pollution. There are exceptional circumstances for the development and it would be in the public interest. It is considered that the proposed development complies with the policies of the NPPF and the policies of the development plan.

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, except where modified by the conditions of this permission, in accordance with the following documents:
 - a) The Planning Application received by the Director of Transport and Environment on 22 November 2012.
 - b) Submitted plans and documents:

Drawing No:

L (00) 03 Rev 6 Proposed Site Plan
L (2-) 03 Rev 09 Proposed Elevations Sheet 1 of 2
L (1-) 04 Rev 13 Proposed Upper Ground Floor Plan
L (1-) 05 Rev 13 Proposed First Floor Plan
L (1-) 06 Rev 02 Proposed Roof Plan
L (1-) 11 Rev 03 Proposed Caretaker Building Plans and
Elevations
L (00) 15 Proposed Landscaping Layout
4054-E10 Rev A Proposed External Lighting & Elevations Layout
Material Examples sheet, Ref: 4266, version 1.02, dated 22.08.2013

- c) All schemes and programmes approved in accordance with this permission.

Reason: To minimise the impact of the development on the amenities of the area and to conform with Policies Env1, Env7, G1 and G5 of the Ribble Valley Local Plan

Building Materials

3. The building materials used for the external elevations and roofs shall be as shown on materials example sheet, version 1.02, dated 22.08.2013.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area and to conform with policies G1 and ENV1 of the Ribble Valley Local Plan.

Hours of Construction Working

4. No demolition work, construction development, delivery or removal of materials shall take place outside the hours of:

0730 to 1800 hours Monday to Friday (except Public Holidays),
0800 to 1400 hours on Saturday (except Public Holidays).

No demolition work, construction development, delivery or removal of materials shall take place at any time on Sundays or Public Holidays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of local residents and adjacent properties/landowners and land users and to conform with Policy G1 of the Ribble Valley Local Plan.

Control of Noise

5. Where reversing alarms are employed on site during the construction phase only broadband multi-frequency sound alarms (white sound) shall be used.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of local residents and adjacent properties/landowners and land users and to conform with policy G1 of the Ribble Valley Local Plan.

Highway Matters

6. No development shall commence until a construction method statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Director of Environment and Transport. The construction method statement shall include details of the following:-
 - a) The arrangements for the parking of vehicles of construction staff and visitors.
 - b) The arrangements for the loading and unloading of plant, construction materials, waste materials associated with construction development.
 - c) The storage of plant and materials associated with construction development.
 - d) The construction compound(s) including temporary fencing.
 - e) The proposed wheel cleaning facilities and their use.
 - f) The measures to control emissions of dust from the site during construction works.
 - g) Protection of trees within the site other than the three trees referred to within the submitted tree survey report entitled survey details for trees at Bowland High School, dated 19 December 2012.

The construction phase of the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved construction method statement.

Reason: In order to satisfy the County Planning Authority that the construction phase of the development would have no unacceptable impact on local amenity.

Ecology

7. The development, including demolition works, shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted Bowland Ecology document entitled 'Bat Licence Method Statement' dated July 2013 (or as amended by the requirements of a European Protected Species Licence).

Reason: To ensure the preservation of protected species at the site and to comply with Policy ENV7 of the Ribble Valley Local Plan.

8. No demolition or building refurbishment works shall commence or trees or hedgerows removed during the bird-breeding season between 1 March and 31 July inclusive unless the buildings to be demolished or refurbished and the trees and hedgerows to be removed have been previously checked and found clear of nesting birds in accordance with Natural England's guidance and if appropriate, an exclusion zone set up around any vegetation to be protected. No work shall be undertaken within the exclusion zone until birds and any dependant young have vacated the area.

Reason: To protect nesting birds and to conform with Policy ENV7 of the Ribble Valley Local Plan.

Landscaping

9. All landscaping works including the planting of trees and hedgerows as shown on Drawing no. L(00) 15 shall be implemented within the first planting season, as defined in this permission, following the completion of the construction development and shall thereafter be maintained for a period of five years including replacement of dead and dying species, weed control and maintenance of protection measures.

Reason: In the interests of visual and local amenity and the local environment and to conform with Policy G1 of the Ribble Valley Local Plan.

Definitions

Planting Season: The period between 1 October in any one year and 31 March in the following year.

Director of Transport and Environment: means the Director of Transport and Environment of the County Planning Authority or any successor position to that post

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
03/10/0495		
03/08/0074		
03/03/1000		
03/01/0073		
03/00/0313		
03/00/0029		
03/12/1059	Aug 2013	Rob Hope/ENV/34159

Reason for Inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A