
APPLICATION DETAILS

Application No:	20/0208/FUL
Location:	Acklam Grange School Lodore Grove Middlesbrough
Proposal:	Single storey extension to provide additional student facility
Applicant:	Asset Management, Middlesbrough Council
Agent:	Design Services, Middlesbrough Council
Ward:	Kader
Recommendation:	Approve with Conditions

SUMMARY

Planning permission is sought for the erection of an extension to an existing school to provide an Autism teaching area, consisting of a classroom for 16 pupils, staff room for 3 additional staff and a small number of ancillary rooms including WC's and meeting room.

A number of objections have been received in relation to the proposal, the vast majority of which relate to the existing and additional impacts on traffic movements, congestion, parking, pedestrian safety, blocking of driveways, construction traffic.

The proposed use, appearance and scale is considered to be in line with the existing use of the site and the relevant Local and National Planning Policy and would not notably affect residential privacy, amenity or the open nature of the site. In relation to concerns over highway related matters, as this proposal is very limited in scale in relation to the overall school, it is considered that the additional pupil and staff numbers being proposed are negligible and would not amount to a notable additional impact that would warrant refusal of the application.

The officer recommendation is to approve the application subject to conditions.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS AND PROPOSED WORKS

1. The site is a modern purpose built school divided into separate blocks arranged around a central courtyard with external teaching areas between. The buildings are predominantly two storey with a flat roof. The school site has extensive playing fields around the outer areas and is set within a residential area of Acklam. Surrounding

the school grounds are a mix of two storey domestic dwellings along the boundaries to the north, east and south and open land to the west with the A19 beyond.

2. The proposal subject of this application is to construct a new Autism Resource Centre (ARC) within the school by providing an additional block which would include a classroom (up to 16 pupils), staffroom, meeting room, group room, meditation room and changing / WC's. The extension would be positioned to the western end of the most southerly block, measure approximately 12m x 20m, be constructed from brick / render and have a flat roof. The Autism Resource Centre would have a small garden area which would be fenced off with a 2m high weld mesh fence.

PLANNING HISTORY

Planning History

M/GRG/0465/07/P - Outline application for new secondary school and ancillary external works including temporary haul road.
Approved conditionally 16.07.07

M/FP/1469/08/P - New School Building with temporary Haul Road, Landscaping, car parking and playing fields.
Approved conditionally 10.11.2008

PLANNING POLICY

In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Local Planning Authorities must determine applications for planning permission in accordance with the Development Plan for the area, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 143 of the Localism Act requires the Local Planning Authority to take local finance considerations into account. Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) requires Local Planning Authorities, in dealing with an application for planning permission, to have regard to:

- The provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application
- Any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application, and
- Any other material considerations.

Middlesbrough Local Plan

The following documents comprise the *Middlesbrough Local Plan*, which is the Development Plan for Middlesbrough:

- Housing Local Plan (2014)
- Core Strategy DPD (2008, policies which have not been superseded/deleted only)
- Regeneration DPD (2009, policies which have not been superseded/deleted only)
- Tees Valley Joint Minerals and Waste Core Strategy DPD (2011)
- Tees Valley Joint Minerals and Waste Policies & Sites DPD (2011)
- Middlesbrough Local Plan (1999, Saved Policies only) and
- Marton West Neighbourhood Plan (2016, applicable in Marton West Ward only).

National Planning Policy Framework

National planning guidance, which is a material planning consideration, is largely detailed within the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF). At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11). The NPPF defines the role of planning in achieving economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development although recognises that they are not criteria against which every application

can or should be judged and highlights the need for local circumstances to be taken into account to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

For decision making, the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way, working pro-actively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area and that at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development (paragraph 38). The NPPF gives further overarching guidance in relation to:

- The delivery of housing,
- Supporting economic growth,
- Ensuring the vitality of town centres,
- Promoting healthy and safe communities,
- Promoting sustainable transport,
- Supporting the expansion of electronic communications networks,
- Making effective use of land,
- Achieving well designed buildings and places,
- Protecting the essential characteristics of Green Belt land
- Dealing with climate change and flooding, and supporting the transition to a low carbon future,
- Conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment, and
- Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals.

The planning policies and key areas of guidance that are relevant to the consideration of the application are:

DC1 - General Development
CS5 - Design
CS20 - Green Infrastructure
E2 - Green Wedges
E7 - Primary Open Space (Existing)
CS16 - Education

The detailed policy context and guidance for each policy is viewable within the relevant Local Plan documents, which can be accessed at the following web address.
<https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/planning-and-housing/planning/planning-policy>

CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY RESPONSES

MBC Highways

Through the planning process we are bound to consider the implications arising from the development/application proposed. A number of concerns have been raised regarding issues surrounding traffic generation, access and car parking. When assessing development proposals we are considering the fallback position, e.g what can/does occur without the need for further planning consents against the net change/impact of the proposed development.

Furthermore any mitigation and/or contributions must meet certain tests to make development acceptable and to also be proportionate in scale and kind to the development proposals.

The proposals seek to provide a small area of additional student facility space to the existing Acklam Grange School. This additional facility will lead to an increase of 16 pupils and 3 staff. The site currently provides over 158 car spaces, a level of provision which is in accordance with the Tees Valley Highway Design Guide Standards. Any associated traffic increase with such a small change in pupil and staffing numbers will be negligible.

Given the existing size of the school and the small scale of development/limited increase in staffing and pupil numbers it is not considered that there are grounds to object to the proposals nor to seek mitigation works/contributions.

No highway objections are therefore raised.

Suggested that a condition is added for; Method of Work Statement

Sport England

It is understood that the proposal prejudices the use, or leads to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field or has been used as a playing field in the last five years. Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of:

- o all or any part of a playing field, or
- o land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or
- o land allocated for use as a playing field

unless, in the judgement of Sport England, the development as a whole meets with one or more of five specific exceptions.'

Having assessed the application, Sport England is satisfied that the proposed development meets exception 3 of our playing fields policy, in that:

'The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

- o reduce the size of any playing pitch
- o result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
- o reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
- o result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; or
- o prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.'

This being the case, Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to this application.

Councillor Ronald Arundale

I submit a formal objection to this application on the grounds of a further increase in vehicle traffic on Lodore Grove is unreasonable. I have lived over thirty years on Ruskin Ave next to the Lodore Grove entrance and seen a steady increase in vehicles accessing that entrance to the school, particularly since the rebuild. It has now reached the stage at start and finish times that people cannot get out of Ruskin or Keswick in their cars because traffic is backed up from inside the school gates to the traffic lights on the Acklam Road junction. I dread to think what would happen if an emergency vehicle needed to access Lodore and the roads off it during those periods.

As I recall it was stated by planning when the new school was proposed that had there not been an existing school on that site the application would have been refused on the grounds of access thereby recognising the problem at that time. A more even distribution of traffic between the two entrances as was the case with the original school - boys at Heythrop - girls

at Lodore is needed to alleviate the nightmare on Lodore. To finish I add that should this application be approved I know of at least one resident on Lodore who says she will have to move as she finds it virtually impossible to get to work as it is .

Public Responses

Number of original neighbour consultations	176
Total numbers of comments received	38
Total number of objections	37
Total number of support	1
Total number of representations	0

Public comment

Nearby Neighbours were notified of the proposal, a total of 38 comments were received of which 37 were objections and one was in support. Individual comments are summarised in appendix 1 but related to the following issues:

- o General Traffic
- o Second access needed
- o Suggested drop off at Mandale or Acklam Road
- o Pollution
- o Emergency vehicle access
- o Is additional Housing Development being taken into consideration?
- o Health
- o Noise from additional traffic and construction traffic
- o Impact on environment
- o Drainage
- o Litter
- o Blocking of driveway
- o Anti-social behaviour
- o Existing road too narrow to deal with current traffic
- o Vibration from construction vehicles causing damage to houses
- o Entrance at Heythrop should be used more
- o Parking on Lodore Grove

The objections were received from the following addresses;
Lodore Grove – No's 4, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 28, 31, 33, 35
Ruskin Avenue – No's 1, 6, 8, 28, 55, 85, 107, 123, 127, 133
Rushleigh Avenue – No's 23, 26
Melbreak Grove – No 3
Keswick Close – No 2
Heythrop Drive – No 85
Honister Grove – No. 10
Wordsworth Vale – No's 6 & 12
Banbury Grove – No. 1
Cornsay Close – No.4

PLANNING CONSIDERATION AND ASSESSMENT

Policy

3. As a starting point, the proposal should be assessed against policies set out in the Development Plan. Policies DC1 and CS5 in essence seek to ensure high quality sustainable development and ensure the amenity of nearby residents, the character of the area and highway safety are not adversely affected by new development. The site is also located within an area covered by open space designations (Green Wedge E2, Green Infrastructure CS20 and Primary Open Space E7) which seek to limit development on them and maintain the predominant green aspects that they provide.
4. Policy CS16 (Education) is also relevant and advises that the council will ensure that everyone has access to the facilities required to meet their educational needs and that when considering the provision of new facilities (including extensions) regard will be had to its contribution to regeneration, elimination of overcrowding, design and use of materials to provide a high quality learning environment and facilities being accessible.
5. In view of the relevant development plan policies, the key considerations are the principle of development, the impact of the development on the character of the area, the impact on residential amenity and privacy and highway related matters. These, and other material planning matters are considered below.

Principle of Development

6. Permission is sought for the extension of an existing school building. The site falls within the development limits for the borough and in a sustainable location and is therefore acceptable in principle.
7. The open space designations which are relevant to the site (Green Wedge, Green Infrastructure and Primary Open Space seek mainly to,
 - limit development on the site, (in particular residential development),
 - prevent significant effects on the pre-dominantly open character,
 - prevent harm to visual amenity and
 - prevent reduction of the physical separation between existing developments.
8. In view of the proposal being a relatively modest extension connected to the main building and the significant area of open space remaining unaffected, it is considered that the principle of an extended education building in this location is in accordance with these local plan designations in this regard.

Character and appearance of works

9. In respect of design, the Middlesbrough Urban Design Guide states that extensions should be consistent with the design of the original building, should be subservient to it and development should enhance not detract from the character of the area. The proposal is for a relatively small addition to the overall school building. It is proposed to be single storey, have brick lower section and render upper section which will fit with the character and appearance of the existing school building. The proposed building will be attached and accessed as part of the main building and therefore assimilate into the existing school functioning. The proposed building is set well within the school grounds and only visible at distance from the wider area.
10. In view of the above it is considered that the proposed development will not have a notable or adverse impact on the character of the area in accordance with Policy CS5 (test c), Policy DC1 (test b) or the Urban Design Guide.

Impacts on adjacent residential amenity and privacy

11. There are two aspects to privacy and amenity to consider in this regard, firstly the impact of the use at the location it is proposed and secondly, the traffic impacts of the use on residential amenity, the latter of which has been the source of notable objection.
12. The proposed building is set a significant distance away from the nearby residential properties and would only be viewable at distance, across the existing school fields. Pupils already move within this area and the impacts of the existing school buildings will already be experienced by the occupiers of properties on the perimeter of the site. As such, the use, positioning and operation of the proposed extension on the occupiers of properties abutting the school grounds including those in Yearby Close and Minsterley Drive will have a negligible impact.
13. Notable objection has been received in relation to the impacts of traffic on the access roads, Lodore Grove in particular. Objectors refer to both the existing problems that are experienced due to traffic at drop off and pick up time and the additional traffic that this proposal would lead to. Objectors suggest that an additional access should be opened up on Heythrop Drive which is indicated as being a former access into the school. Other objections have been made in relation to the issues experienced mainly during school drop off and pick up times including the blocking of driveways by cars, the lines of traffic either side of the road trying to get to the school or get out of the school, backing up all the way into the school from the junction of Lodore Grove and Acklam Road.
14. It is understood that living within a street which provides access to a school, will be subject to some traffic and pedestrian impacts at certain times of the day, similarly to the same impacts that people living on main roads into town / city centres would experience. This application however, has to be considered on its own merits as the existing impacts of the school traffic are just that, an existing situation, which will have been considered and dealt with under previous planning applications / considerations. In planning it is not appropriate to mitigate the impacts of an existing situation but instead, consider a scheme in the context of its own impacts, against the backdrop of the existing situation. In this instance, the proposal is for a modest sized extension to the school building for an additional 16 pupils and 3 staff to be accommodated at the school.
15. It is understood that the school has a student capacity of 1,470 students, currently hosting 1448 students and that this proposal would increase that by 16 students which equates to an increase of 1.09%. Similarly, the net internal floor area is 10,990sqm and this proposal is approximately 250sqm which equates to a 2.3% increase in floorspace. These are very minor additions to the overall school provisions and existing capacities. It is also understood that the school currently has-
 - 150 car park spaces + 8 accessible bays for school use accessed from Lodore Grove
 - 15 linear Drop of bays accessed from Lodore Grove for school / parent use
 - 27 car park spaces + 4 accessible bays for MIC use from Lodore Grove
 - 85 car park spaces +2 accessible bays for school and Acorn use from Heythrop Drive, plus a large service yard which accommodates site vehicles and more parking as required
16. In view of these numbers, it is considered that the additional traffic / pedestrian activity associated with the application would not amount to a level of demonstrable harm to residential amenity that would warrant refusal of the application.
17. In light of the above, it is considered that the proposed alterations will not have a significant impact on the amenity of nearby residents in accordance with Policy DC1 (test c).

Impacts on highway safety

18. Objections have been received in relation to the existing and additional impacts that this proposal will result in, the congestion of footpaths, issues of driveways being blocked, concerns over access for emergency vehicles, road safety in general terms (including the safety of pupils) as well as the impact on existing delays at the junction with Acklam Road. The objections received refer largely to matters of existing traffic queues being problematic at school drop off and pick up times, with a number of suggestions that an additional access be provided to alleviate this problem (off Heythrop Drive) where it is understood an access used to exist. Whilst this would reduce traffic, an additional access is not being proposed as part of the application and we are duty bound to consider the application as submitted. It is also important to consider the impact of the scheme proposed, taking into account Local Plan Policy DC1 (d) which seeks that there be a 'limited impact upon the capacity of existing and proposed transportation infrastructure both during and after completion, with no impact on highway safety being evident throughout the development process'.
19. There are no additional parking / drop off arrangements proposed to those which currently exist to meet the needs of the 16 additional pupils and 3 staff. The councils Highways team have considered the application, the existing traffic situation in the area and provision at the site, as well as the indicated numbers of additional pupils that the proposed development will result in. The Highways Officer has confirmed that the site currently provides over 158 car spaces, a level of provision which is in accordance with the Tees Valley Highway Design Guide Standards. It is the highways officers professional opinion that any associated traffic increase with such a small change in pupil and staffing numbers will be negligible on existing highway / parking related matters and that there are no grounds to object to the proposals nor to seek mitigation works/contributions based on such minor increases.
20. Taking these matters into account, it is considered that the additional pupils / impact on traffic related matters will be negligible and likely to be unperceivable and whilst it is noted that there are impacts on the highway, congestion etc. as a result of the school, this is not entirely uncommon at most schools. It is relatively normal situation, similarly to the peak traffic flows associated with the wider highway network. There is existing parking on site already and the school has relatively typical footways serving the school entrance which themselves are linked up with pedestrian crossing on the more major road of Acklam Road. In recommending on this application it is not officers view that there are no highway implications relating to schools, or indeed this school but that this proposal, being considered against the minor amount of development it is proposing, at this point in time, is of a scale which would not result in additional significant impacts on highway safety or highway related matters such as need for additional on-site parking or schemes to reduce congestion or mitigate road safety.
21. Objectors have raised concerns about access for emergency services and whilst noted, for the reasons above, it is considered that this negligible increase in pupils / staff at the school would not unreasonably increase such impacts.

Other material planning considerations

22. The school fields lie within land allocated in the Local Plan as Green Infrastructure, Green Wedge and Primary Open Space which generally seek to restrict new development from taking place within them which would undermine those provisions. The proposed addition, although a new extension, maintains the same use as that of

the existing school, it is a modest extension to the school building which does not undermine the intent and functioning of the school fields as open space or green wedge. The school fields will still form a buffer between nearby development elsewhere and other allocations within the Local Plan.

23. Objections have been raised in relation to additional litter, anti-social behaviour, impact on drainage and the impact on the environment including Blue Bell Beck. Whilst these are noted, the school already operates and this is a modest extension to the school and there is no evidence to suggest the proposal would unduly affect these matters. In addition, anti-social behaviour is not a material planning consideration in this regard.
24. The impact of construction traffic is raised as an objection, however, this is an implication for all development. Movement of traffic along the public highway and within the site will need to respect appropriate regulations / legislation and as such, although it will be noticeable, it would not be unduly significant for such a small development. Notwithstanding this, a 'Method of Works Statement' has been required by the conditions as recommended in order to assist with minimising impact.
25. Objection has been raised in relation to the application based on pollution and whilst there is some level of pollution with a construction phase of development, this would need to adhere to appropriate legislation and were there to be an issue, it would need to be dealt with by the appropriate methods. There are no known matters of pollution which would suggest this application could not be supported.
26. Objection has been raised in relation to driveways being blocked from people dropping off children etc. It is not anticipated that this proposal would notably increase the propensity of this existing situation.
27. The proposed new building will require the moving of an existing pathway within the school. The pathway will need to be moved into existing grassed area (school field). Sport England are a consultee where 'playing field' is adversely affected by development and were consulted on the application. In view of the very limited incursion into an area of playing field of no notable use, Sport England have not objected to the proposal.

Conclusion

28. The proposed development is for a modest extension to the existing school building which will introduce a small addition to pupil and staff numbers above the existing situation. The building has been designed to be in keeping with the existing school building and would not unduly affect the open aspect of the site or extent of greenspace at the site in accordance with relevant policies. The additional traffic and pedestrian movements associated with the proposed development are considered would be negligible to the overall movements and would not unduly increase the impacts of such on the existing traffic related matters within the adjacent residential streets. The proposal is considered to accord with all relevant Local Plan Policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

Approve with Conditions

1. Time Limit

The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which this permission is granted.

Reason: The time limit condition is imposed in order to comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. Approved Plans

The development hereby approved shall be carried out in complete accordance with the plans and specifications detailed below.

Plan A001 as received on the 16th April 2020

Plan A004 as received on the 28th April 2020

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory form of development and for the avoidance of doubt.

3. Method of Works Statement

Prior to works commencing on site a Method of Works Statement shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to minimise the impacts of operations on the surrounding highways.

Reason for Approval

The proposed development is for an extension to the existing school, is located within the school ground, set sufficient distance away from surrounding residential properties to prevent undue impacts on residential amenity or privacy. The scale and appearance of the proposed extension is in keeping with the host building. Additional traffic (vehicular and pedestrian) is considered to be limited for such a modest extension and existing arrangements at the school are considered to adequately provide for this addition. It is recognised that residents in nearby streets are concerned about traffic related matters, however, in view of the scale of this proposed development, it is considered that the additional impacts related to this proposal would not be unduly significant. The proposed development is in accordance with relevant Local Plan Policies and the general guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Case Officer: Maria Froggatt

Committee Date: 12th June 2020

