

PART A

Report of: **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SECTION HEAD**

Date of Committee:	29th August 2013
Site address:	Garston Manor School, Horseshoe Lane
Reference number:	13/00663/FULM
Description of development:	Demolition of existing school and erection of a new school and associated landscaping
Applicant:	Wates Construction Limited
Date received:	21st June 2013
13 week date (major):	20th September 2013
Ward:	Woodside

SUMMARY

Full planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing school and the erection of a new school on the site. The school is a specialist secondary school for children with special educational needs but is significantly substandard in the floorspace and level of facilities provided. The application is part of the Government's Priority Schools Building Programme and is one of 42 capital projects funded by the Education Funding Agency. The site is located within the Green Belt at the northern edge of the Borough, and the boundary between Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council cuts through the site. An identical application has also been submitted to Three Rivers District Council.

The proposed new school will have a floor area of 3007m² and will meet all current standards for a specialist school for 120 pupils. There will be no increase in the number of pupils as a result of the proposal. The new school will comprise a single storey building to be built immediately to the south of the existing school buildings. This will allow the existing school to continue to function fully during construction works.

The proposed new school building will constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and is therefore, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. However, in this case, it is considered that very special circumstances exist to allow the proposal to be approved. It will provide a new specialist school for children with special educational needs that will replace the existing school and meet all current standards for a school of this nature and size. This will be a very significant benefit to the town and the wider area of south west Hertfordshire which the school serves. The layout of the site and the siting and design of the building have also been designed to minimise any impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Although part of the southern playing field will be lost to accommodate the new building, the actual impact on outdoor pitches is limited due to the varying topography of this part of the site. Overall, the sports facilities within the site are to be improved through the provision of a new MUGA and multi-use hall and Sport England has raised no objections to the proposal. The proposal will also address existing problems of congestion and vehicle/pedestrian conflicts within the site which have also had an adverse impact on the adjacent highway and access to adjoining school sites.

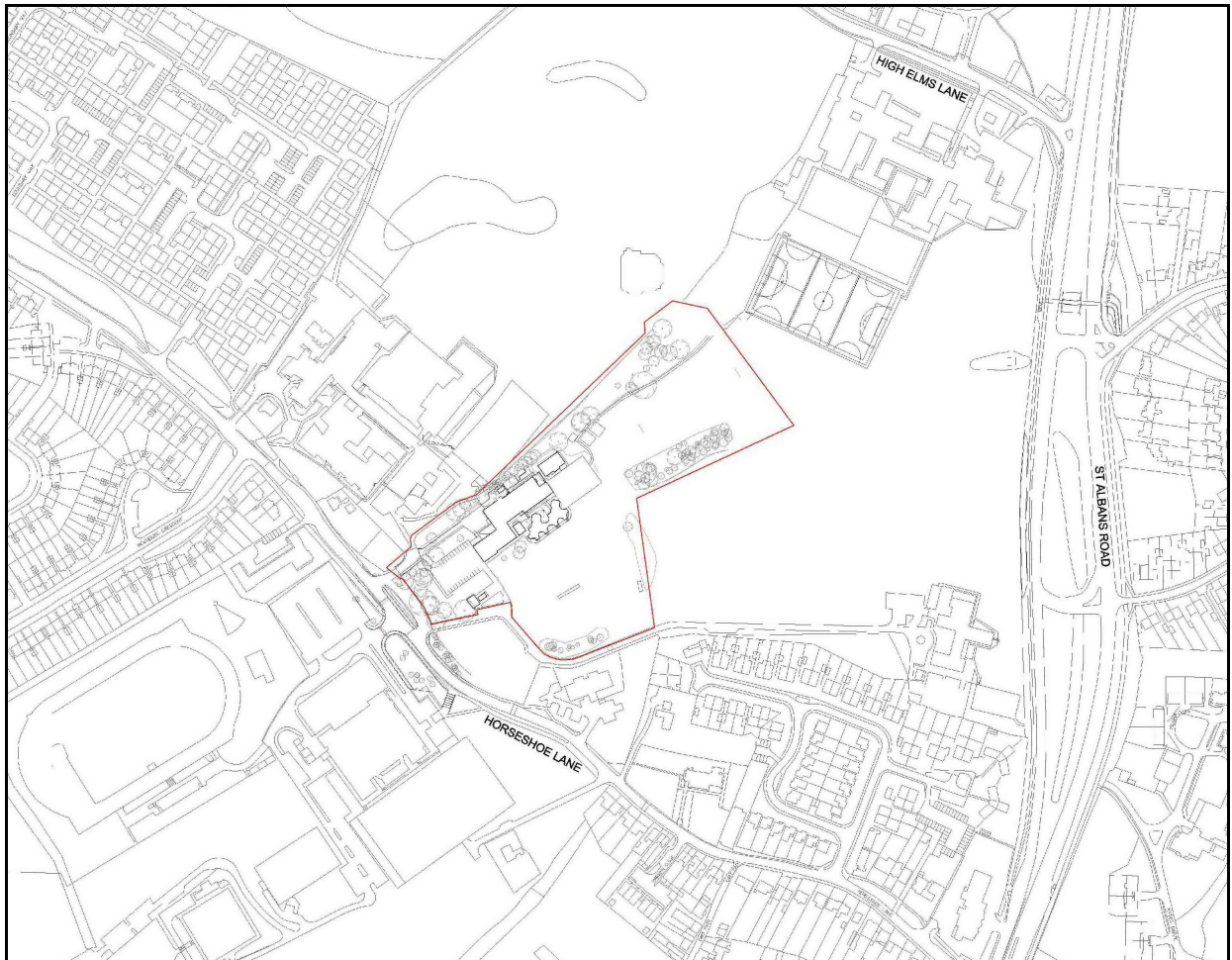
The Development Management Section Head therefore recommends that the Committee resolve to grant conditional planning permission for the application, subject to appropriate conditions, and that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government be consulted under the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009, as set out in the report.

BACKGROUND

Site and surroundings

The application site is located on the north-western side of Horseshoe Lane opposite Woodside Leisure Centre. It is surrounded to the north and east by other schools and their

associated playing fields – Francis Combe Academy, St Michael’s School and St Catherine’s Primary School. To the south is Woodside Court, a residential block of flats. To the west is Horseshoe Lane which provides the main access to the school off a small lay-by which also serves Francis Combe Academy and St Catherine’s School.



Location plan

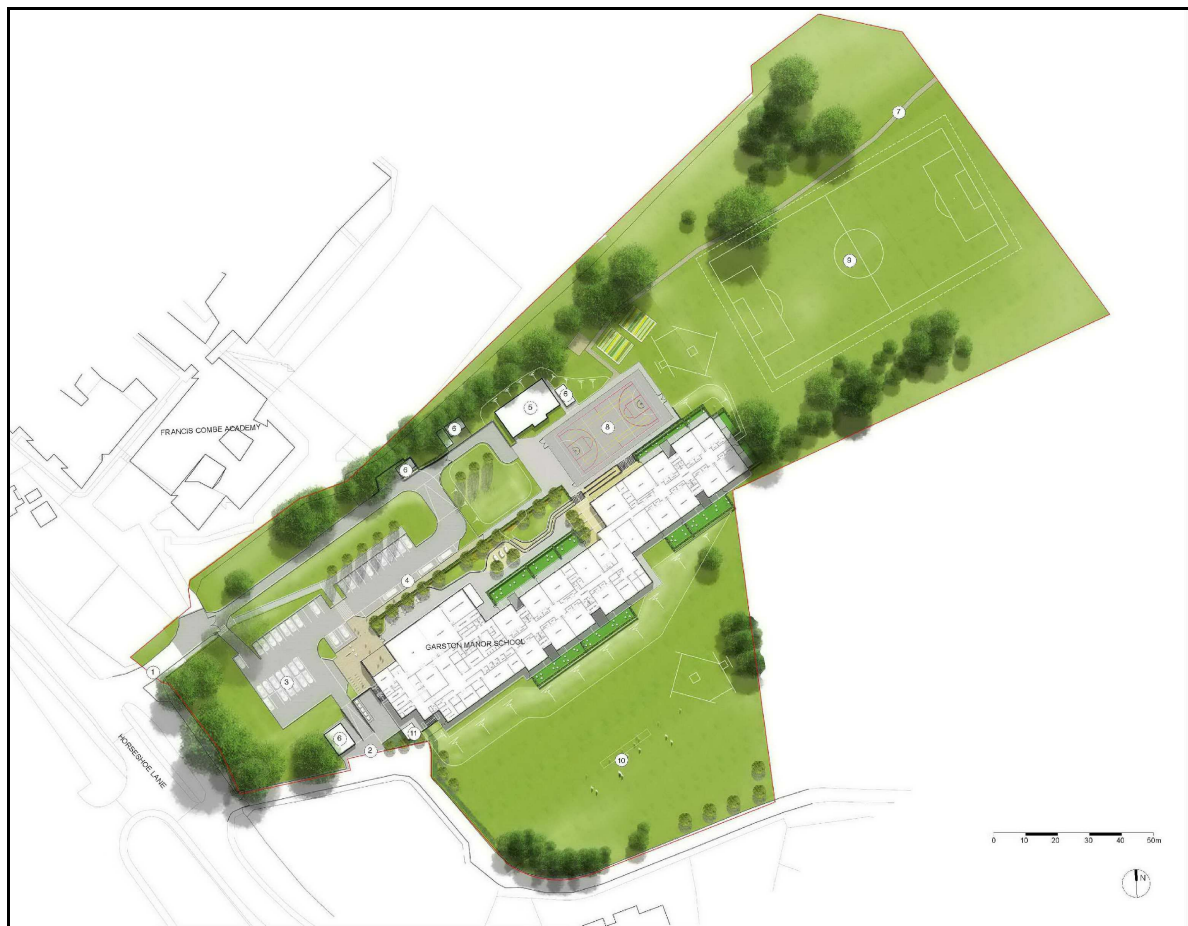
The whole of the site is located within the Green Belt and straddles the boundary between Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council. It has an area of 3.3 hectares. The northern boundary with Francis Combe School is formed by a significant belt of trees that extend the length of the boundary. The southern boundary is formed by the access road to St Catherine’s School. Although the eastern boundary is not physically defined, as it sits within a wider area of playing fields, it can be generally identified by several linear

groups of trees. The existing school comprises various single storey buildings located close to the northern boundary of the site, approximately 60m from the Horseshoe Lane entrance. To the north-east and south of these buildings are the school playing fields. To the west, close to the entrance, is a car park for staff and visitors.

None of the buildings on the site is nationally or locally listed and there are no tree preservation orders that affect the site.

Proposed development

Full planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing school and the erection of a new school on the site. The school is a specialist secondary school for children with special educational needs and accommodates 120 pupils.



Proposed development

It currently has an internal floor area of 1610m² but this is significantly below the current recommended standards for this type and size of school. The application is part of the Government's Priority Schools Building Programme and is one of 42 capital projects funded by the Education Funding Agency.



Detail of proposed development

The proposed new school will have a floorarea of 3007m² and will meet all current standards for a specialist school for 120 pupils. There will be no increase in the number of pupils as a result of the proposal. The new school will comprise a single storey building to be built immediately to the south of the existing school buildings. This will allow the existing school to continue to function fully during construction works. The existing school buildings, with the exception of a detached building used by sixth form pupils, will only be demolished once the new building is occupied. The site of the existing school buildings will

then be used to provide landscaped informal space, pedestrian circulation space, improved and extended minibus drop-off spaces and new parking for staff and visitors.

As the boundary between Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council cuts through the site, an identical application has also been submitted to Three Rivers District Council.

Planning history

The existing main school buildings were built in the 1960s and 1980s and are all single storey. In 2006 planning permission was granted for a single storey detached building which is used as the sixth form block.

Relevant policies

National Planning Policy Framework

- Section 7 Requiring good design
- Section 8 Promoting healthy communities
- Section 9 Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 10 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Section 11 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document 2011-2026

No relevant policies.

Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016

No relevant policies.

Watford Local Plan Part 1 - Core Strategy 2006-31

- SD1 Sustainable Design
- SD2 Water and Wastewater
- SD3 Climate Change

- SD4 Waste
- T2 Location of New Development
- T3 Improving Accessibility
- T4 Transport Assessments
- T5 Providing New Infrastructure
- UD1 Delivering High Quality Design
- GI1 Green Infrastructure
- GI2 Green Belt
- GI3 Biodiversity

Watford District Plan 2000

- SE7 Waste Storage and Recycling in New Development
 - SE22 Noise
 - SE27 Flood Prevention
 - SE36 Replacement Trees and Hedgerows
 - SE39 Tree and Hedgerow Provision in New Development
 - SE40 Landscape Character Area Assessment
 - T10 Cycle Parking Standards
 - T21 Access and Servicing
 - T22 Car Parking Standards
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CONSULTATIONS

Neighbour consultations

Letters were sent to 90 properties in Horseshoe Lane and The Glebe. No replies have been received.

The Committee will be advised of any additional representations received after the date this report was written.

Advertisements in local paper/site notices

Two site notices were placed outside the site on 1st July 2013. The application was advertised in the Watford Observer on 28th June 2013.

Consultations

Sport England

Sport England has considered the application in the light of its playing fields policy. The aim of this policy is to ensure that there is an adequate supply of quality pitches to satisfy the current and estimated future demand for pitch sports within the area. The policy seeks to protect all parts of the playing field from development and not just those which, for the time being, are laid out as pitches. The policy states that:

“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, all or any part of a playing field, or land last used as a playing field or allocated for use as a playing field in an adopted or draft deposit local plan, unless, in the judgement of Sport England, one of the specific circumstances applies.”

The proposal involves redeveloping the school to provide a new school building and external works that would be sited on part of the school's playing field. As part of the development, the school's existing hard play area would be extended and improved to become a multi-use games area (MUGA). I consider that Exception E5 of Sport England's playing fields policy would be the most applicable to the proposal:

“The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.”

I have visited the site and considered the information provided and would make the following assessment of how the proposed development would relate to exception E5:

Sports Development Benefits

The key potential sports development benefits of the proposed development are considered to be as follows:

- The proposal to extend the hard play area to the north of the site to become a MUGA would offer potential to significantly improve the delivery of curricular and extra-curricular sport/PE at Garston Manor School. The proposed MUGA would be of sufficient size to be used for netball, basketball and tennis and a number of other sports and appropriate line markings would be provided. This would allow these sports to be played on a suitably sized surface for the first time at the school as the existing hard play area is too small for all of these sports. The MUGA would offer an all weather surface for a range of outdoor sports which could be used continuously throughout the year by the school and could also be used as an alternative facility for pitch sports if the school's natural turf pitches are not available in the winter season due to ground conditions. The 3m high weld mesh fencing is an important addition as this will help retain balls and provide safety for spectators and new drainage is also proposed;
- The new school building would provide a new multi-purpose assembly/dining hall which would provide some opportunities for indoor sports activities. At present, the school use off-site facilities nearby for meeting many of their formal sports needs. While this would be expected to continue, the new hall would be superior in size (250 sqm compared to 200 sqm) and quality (improved flooring and internal height) to the one that it would replace and would therefore provide greater opportunities for the school's indoor PE curriculum to be met on-site e.g. small sided games suitable for the needs of the school's pupils.

Impact on Playing Field

In relation to the impact on the playing field, the new school building would be sited to the south of the existing school on the school's southern playing field. This playing field has the characteristics of a bowl as it slopes down from the existing school building before

rising up to the school's southern boundary. Due to the topography, this area is not used for playing pitches such as football but is marked out for a running track in summer and there is a disused artificial cricket strip in the centre. The school are understood to use this playing field mainly for informal sport and recreation as the school's northern playing field is more suitable for playing pitches which require a more consistent gradient. The majority of the new school building would be sited on a slope which due to its gradient would not be suitable or capable of being used for marking out conventional playing pitches (i.e. would accord with exception E3 of our policy). While a minority of the development area is less constrained, it is not considered that the development would prejudice the use of the remaining playing field due to the constraints imposed by the gradients of this area. It would still be possible to mark out a linear running track in the summer in the less constrained area at the centre of the bowl and the area could still be used informally for sports such as cricket and rounders. The oval running track would be relocated to the school's northern playing field which has a more suitable gradient.

Part of the new school build and the hard play area extension would encroach onto the school's northern playing field where a football pitch is marked out in the winter and a rounders pitch in the summer. However, the existing pitches would not be affected and the areas of the playing field that would be encroached onto are relatively small in size and would offer limited potential for being marked out for additional playing pitches in any case due to the lack of space available.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above assessment, I consider that, on balance, the potential sports development benefits to Garston Manor School that the proposed MUGA and school hall would offer would outweigh the detriment caused by the impact on the playing field. I therefore consider that the proposal would meet exception E5 of our playing fields policy. This being the case, Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to this application.

Environment Agency

We are pleased to see that the applicant is proposing a greenfield runoff rate. This will be achieved through the use of swales and permeable paving. We request that the following condition is attached to any planning permission granted:

The development shall not begin until a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site has been prepared and approved by the local planning authority. The scheme design shall be based on the criteria identified in Section 3 of the approved Flood Risk and Drainage Document prepared by Mott MacDonald dated January 2013. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed.

Thames Water

Waste Comments - There are public sewers crossing or close to your development. In order to protect public sewers and to ensure that Thames Water can gain access to those sewers for future repair and maintenance, approval should be sought from Thames Water where the erection of a building or an extension to a building or underpinning work would be over the line of, or would come within 3 metres of, a public sewer. Thames Water will usually refuse such approval in respect of the construction of new buildings, but approval may be granted in some cases for extensions to existing buildings.

Surface Water Drainage - With regard to surface water drainage it is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for drainage to ground, water courses or a suitable sewer. In respect of surface water it is recommended that the applicant should ensure that storm flows are attenuated or regulated into the receiving public network through on or off site storage. When it is proposed to connect to a combined public sewer, the site drainage should be separate and combined at the final manhole nearest the boundary.

No impact piling shall take place until a piling method statement (detailing the type of piling to be undertaken and the methodology by which such piling will be carried out, including measures to prevent and minimise the potential for damage to subsurface

sewerage infrastructure, and the programme for the works) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with Thames Water.

Hertfordshire County Council (Highway Authority)

Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority has no objection to the proposal subject to the imposition of conditions relating to the parking of contractors vehicles, storage of materials, a Construction Traffic Management Plan and the continued implementation of the school's existing travel plan.

Police Architectural Liaison/Crime Prevention Officer

Has made a number of detailed comments relating to the design of security measures within the school building. Other more planning related comments are:

- I do have some concerns over the cycle storage as it would appear only to be “hoops” with no security and I would recommend an enclosed cycle store which can be secured, or even something like CycloPods. Whilst I accept very few students will cycle, some local members of staff and visitors may cycle to the school and they should have somewhere safe and secure to leave their cycles.
- We discussed the boundary treatment along the roadway to St Catherine's School and this will be upgraded.
- There is currently an access through the boundary fencing between Francis Combe and Garston Manor and no gate is shown. Any gate must be kept secured until used by either school and again locked once having been used, as the gate will compromise the security of both schools.

APPRAISAL

In accordance with s.38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Development Plan for Watford comprises:

- (a) *Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31*;
- (b) the continuing “saved” policies of the *Watford District Plan 2000*;
- (c) the *Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document 2011-2026* ; and
- (d) the *Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016*.

The East of England Plan 2008 and the “saved” policies of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1991-2011 were revoked on 3rd January 2013.

Land allocation

The site has no specific allocation on the Proposals Map of the Watford District Plan 2000 but is located within the Green Belt. Paragraph 87 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 88 states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and that ‘very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

New buildings in the Green Belt are considered inappropriate development; however, six exceptions to this are set out in paragraph 89 of the NPPF. Only two are relevant to the consideration of the current application:-

- 1) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

In this case, the proposed replacement building will be in the same use but will be significantly larger in its footprint than the existing building. It will also be sited within a different part of the site and not on the same siting as the existing buildings.

- 2) limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land) which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.

In this case, the open playing fields around the existing school buildings are not classed as previously developed land. The proposed new building will be sited within part of the open playing field to the south of the existing buildings and will therefore have an impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

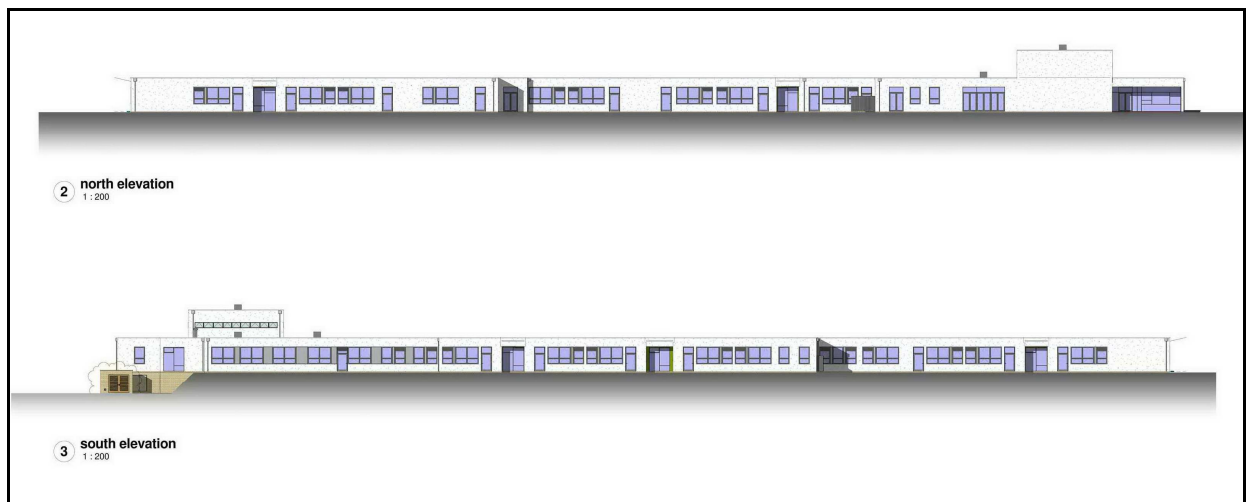
The proposed replacement school building does not, therefore, fall within any of these exceptions. Notwithstanding the current use of the site, the proposal therefore constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It will, therefore, be necessary to demonstrate that 'very special circumstances' exist to justify the proposal and that harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

In assessing the matters that may constitute or contribute significantly towards establishing 'very special circumstances' for the proposal, two of the main considerations are the existing use of the site and its context. The site currently provides a specialist secondary school for children with special educational needs. The existing school buildings are, however, nearing the end of their useful life with some of the buildings being approximately 50 years old. The buildings also fail to meet current standards for educational provision, with the existing floorspace of the buildings being some 46% below the current standards for this type and size of school. The fact that the school has been included in the Government's Priority Schools Building programme as one of only 42 capital projects emphasises the importance of rebuilding this school.

The context of the site is also important. The school is surrounded by 3 other schools – Francis Combe, St Michael's and St Catherine's – all of which were developed in the post-war period to meet the educational needs of a growing town. Francis Combe has only

recently been completely redeveloped as a new academy and St Michael's School has also undergone a number of extensions and refurbishments in recent years. Although all of these schools are within the Green Belt, the character of this part of the Green Belt is one of educational buildings surrounded by open playing fields. The current proposal will be in keeping with this character.

The proposal has also sought to minimise any harm to the openness of the Green Belt through its siting and design. Because of the need to keep the existing school open during construction works, it has not been possible to provide the new school on the site of the existing school buildings, which would have been the preferred option. This has necessitated building the new school within the open space in the school site. In order to minimise the impact of the new development, the new school is proposed as close as possible to the existing school on its southern side where it will be seen in context with the existing built form along Horseshoe Lane. This also ensures that the new building is as close as possible to the edge of the Green Belt boundary, which runs along the edge of Horseshoe Lane at this point. The building also sits between two belts of trees, one along the western boundary adjacent to the main entrance, and the other sited along the eastern boundary. The other option, to site the building to the north-east of the existing buildings, would have given rise to a significant encroachment into the open area of playing fields and Green Belt. Visually, this would have been far more intrusive.



North and south elevations

The design of the school building has been kept at single storey to minimise its visual impact, with the exception of a relatively small two storey element that forms the main assembly/dining hall. Due to the site levels falling away to the south of the existing buildings, the new building will also be sited at a lower level than the existing buildings.

Overall, it is considered that 'very special circumstances' do exist in this case. The benefits of replacing the existing, inadequate school buildings that are nearing the end of their life with a new building that meets all current standards for a specialist school of this nature is considered to outweigh any harm to the Green Belt through inappropriate development. Furthermore, it is considered that the siting and design of the new building has successfully minimised any additional impacts on the openness of the Green Belt in this location.

Under the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009, where a local planning authority proposes to approve inappropriate development within the Green Belt of 1000m² or more, the authority is required to consult the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government before any planning permission can be issued. The Secretary of State has the power to call-in the application for his own determination. As the proposed new school building falls within these criteria, the Council will need to consult with the Secretary of State in accordance with this Direction if a resolution to grant planning permission is made by the Committee.

Principle of development

Setting aside the matter of the site being within the Green Belt, discussed above, the principle of a replacement school building being provided on this site is considered acceptable. Although the site is within a primarily residential area, it has been in educational use for the past 50 years and is adjoined by three other educational sites. Together with the Woodside Leisure Centre and athletics track opposite, the immediate locality is characterised by larger scale educational and leisure buildings. The proposed new school building will sit comfortably within this context.

As the new building will be sited to the south of the existing buildings, partially within the southern playing field area, Sport England was consulted as a statutory consultee on the application. In its response on the application, Sport England is satisfied that the proposed benefits of the scheme outweigh the disbenefits of part of the southern playing field being lost. In particular, the southern playing field is far from ideal for normal playing pitches as the land forms a bowl shape with land levels sloping down from the existing school buildings before rising up again towards the southern boundary (formed by the road to St Catherine's School). As such, this area is largely used for informal sporting activities. The loss of the northern part of this area would not prevent similar informal sporting activities taking place on the remaining land. In contrast, the playing field to the north-east of the school buildings is largely level and used for more formal sports activities, and will be unaffected by the proposals.

The benefits of the scheme include an enlarged and upgraded multi-use games area (MUGA) that will provide an all-weather facility for various sports, and a new assembly/dining hall which has been designed to provide improved facilities for indoor sports.

Flood risk and drainage

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 with minimal risk of flooding from all sources. In order to minimise the risk of post-development flooding, a surface water drainage strategy has been proposed based upon sustainable drainage principles. This approach is set out in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and has been agreed by the Environment Agency. This also accords with the recommendations of Thames Water.

Transportation, access and parking

The access to the site is from Horseshoe Lane via a small lay-by, with the access off the northern end of this lay-by. The lay-by also gives access to St Catherine's School which is located at the southern end. The initial part of the access road to Garston Manor is also shared with Francis Combe Academy, with a northern spur immediately before the entrance to the site leading to the staff car park. These access arrangements will remain

as existing. The number of pupils at the school will remain unchanged at 120 with the number of staff also unchanged at 47. As such, the proposal will have no impact on Horseshoe Lane or the wider highway network in terms of traffic generation, which is predicted to be unchanged.

In terms of highway safety, the improved site layout will provide enlarged and improved facilities for minibuses. Due to the nature of the school, a high proportion of pupils arrive by minibuses which currently have no dedicated drop-off/pick-up facility. Consequently, this takes place within the staff car park, which also operates as a one-way route through the site. This leads to significant congestion within the site which on occasion results in congestion in the lay-by and on Horseshoe Lane. The proposal will provide five dedicated minibus bays that are separate from the staff car park and located outside the main entrance to the building. This will resolve fully the current congestion issues experienced at the site.

Car parking for staff and visitors will be increased from 32 spaces to 39 spaces, including 2 disabled spaces. This level of provision is below the maximum standard for the number of staff and pupils. Fifteen cycle parking spaces will also be provided adjacent to the main entrance of the building, which accords with current standards.

Layout and design

The layout of the site has been dictated by the need for the existing school to remain fully operational during construction works and to minimise the encroachment of the new building into the Green Belt and school playing fields, as previously discussed. In terms of circulation and the separation of vehicles and pedestrians, addressing existing issues of site congestion, and improving general security, the proposed layout is very successful.

The relationship of the new building to surrounding buildings, in particular Woodside Court to the south, is acceptable. Although the new building will be 27m closer to Woodside Court, it will remain 78m from this building. Furthermore, direct views of the new building from Woodside Court will be prevented by an existing belt of trees along the southern

boundary of the school. The new building will therefore have no adverse impact on the amenities currently enjoyed by the occupiers of Woodside Court.

The new school building is essentially single storey with only a relatively small two storey element accommodating the increased height for the assembly/dining hall, which also provides space for indoor sport. The design of the building successfully meets the design criteria for the new school. It meets the internal space and accessibility requirements for a school of this nature, where a high proportion of pupils have mobility difficulties. It also provides outdoor learning spaces for each classroom as well as areas for outdoor social spaces.

The design itself is simple comprising white rendered elevations with a high proportion of glazing to maximise natural light to the classrooms. This gives the building a light and uncluttered appearance. All plant areas are also provided at basement or ground level to avoid the need to place plant on the roof of the building.

No BREEAM rating is to be sought for the building but a number of significant sustainability measures have been incorporated into the design. These include:-

- A fabric first approach to the thermal envelope of the building to significantly exceed the Building Regulations for insulation and air-tightness and reduce the need for heating and minimise energy use.
- Maximising natural daylight levels within the classrooms to reduce the need for artificial lighting.
- A hybrid ventilation strategy maximising natural ventilation, including automated night-time purge ventilation, with the use of secondary mechanical ventilation with heat recovery units to maintain constant room temperatures.
- The use of high performance glazing to reduce heat loss, control solar thermal gain and maximise the transmission of natural light.
- A Smart Building Management System.

Ecology, trees and landscaping

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site has been undertaken to identify habitats of significant ecological value and potential signs/habitats suitable for protected species. The most significant habitats on the site are the broadleaved woodland belts and the groups of trees located around the boundaries of the site. These are considered of moderate ecological value. The other habitats (amenity grassland, allotments, hardstanding and buildings) are all of low value. With regard to protected species, none were found on the site with only the woodland/tree belts having potential value. The site overall was considered to be of high value for foraging bats with 3 mature trees on the site having high bat roost potential. As such, a bat activity survey and bat roost potential survey has been recommended. Within the woodland along the northern boundary, evidence of badgers was found in the form of 3 disused sett entrances but no signs of the current use of the site. This area of woodland will be unaffected by the proposal.

The only additional survey work recommended is the bat activity survey and bat roost potential survey. Appropriate conditions should ensure no tree works/removal is undertaken in the bird nesting season (March-September) and that the opportunity is taken to secure bat and bird boxes in the landscape scheme, together with the use of native species where possible.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has also been undertaken. This identified 42 individual trees, 6 groups of trees and 2 woodland areas, largely located around the boundaries of the site. This has recommended the removal of 15 individual trees, comprising 5 category B trees, 4 category C trees and 6 category U trees (dead or in severe decline). Only the removal of the 9 category B and C trees, 4 from the centre of the site and 5 from the western end of a tree group, are required due to a direct conflict with the proposed development. The category U trees are recommended for removal as good arboricultural practice.

Conclusion

The proposed new school building will constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and is therefore, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. However, in this case, it is considered that very special circumstances exist to allow the proposal to be approved. It will provide a new specialist school for children with special educational needs that will replace the existing school on the site which is in poor condition and is significantly substandard in the floorspace and level of facilities provided. This will be a very significant benefit to the town and the wider area of south west Hertfordshire which the school serves. The layout of the site and the siting and design of the building have also been designed to minimise any impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The proposal will also address existing problems of congestion and vehicle/pedestrian conflicts within the site which have also had an adverse impact on the adjacent highway and access to adjoining school sites. Although part of the southern playing field will be lost to accommodate the new building, the actual impact on outdoor pitches is limited due to the varying topography of this part of the site. Overall, the sports facilities within the site are to be improved through the provision of a new MUGA and multi-use hall and Sport England has raised no objections to the proposal.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The Local Planning Authority is justified in interfering with the applicant's Human Rights in order to alleviate any adverse effect on adjoining properties and their occupiers and on general public amenity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (A) That the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government be consulted on the application in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009.

(B) That, provided the Secretary of State does not call in the application for his own determination, planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be begun within a period of three years commencing on the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:-

PSBPE-GM-PL-L-000 P00, 001 P00, 002 P00, 004 P00, 005 P00, 006 P00
A-7426-20-001-5, 24-001-2, 20-020-3, Z4000-001-P1
LNS2079 HD 500 P2, 501 P2

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. Construction of the development hereby permitted shall not take place before 8am or after 6pm Mondays to Fridays, before 8am or after 1pm on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and Public Holidays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities and quiet enjoyment of neighbouring properties during the time that the development is being constructed, pursuant to saved Policy SE22 of the Watford District Plan 2000.

4. No development shall commence within the site until a Construction Environmental Management Plan has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. This Plan shall include details of the routing of and access for construction vehicles, contractors parking, the delivery and storage of materials,

measures to mitigate noise and dust, wheel washing facilities, plant and equipment and a contact procedure for complaints. The Plan as approved shall be implemented throughout the construction period.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities and quiet enjoyment of neighbouring properties and prevent obstruction of the adjoining highway during the time that the development is being constructed.

5. The development shall only be carried out in accordance with the Site Specific Method Statement Arboricultural Report (ref. PP-02708437 dated 24th June 2013 by Marishal Thompson Group) unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the health and vitality of the existing trees which represent an important visual amenity during the period of construction works, in accordance with saved Policies SE37 and SE39 of the Watford District Plan 2000.

6. No trees, scrub or hedges on the site shall be lopped, topped, felled, grubbed up or otherwise removed from the site between 1st March and 31st August in any year unless a suitably qualified ecologist has previously surveyed the trees, scrub or hedges and certified in writing to the Local Planning Authority that such works of removal are unlikely to harm any protected species.

Reason: In order to avoid harm to any protected species, in accordance with Policies GI1 and GI3 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

7. No impact piling shall take place until a piling method statement (detailing the type of piling to be undertaken and the methodology by which such piling will be carried out, including measures to prevent and minimise the potential for damage to subsurface sewerage infrastructure, and the programme for the works) has been

submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any piling shall only be undertaken in accordance with the approved piling method statement.

Reason: The proposed works will be in close proximity to underground sewerage utility infrastructure. Piling has the potential to impact on local underground sewerage utility infrastructure.

8. No development shall commence until a detailed surface water drainage scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme design shall be based on the criteria identified in Section 3 of the approved Flood Risk and Drainage Document prepared by Mott MacDonald dated January 2013. The building shall not be occupied until the drainage scheme has been constructed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the surface water drainage is designed to minimise the likelihood of flooding downstream, to reduce the risk of flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of and disposal of surface water from the site, and to reduce the impact of flooding on the proposed development in accordance with Policy SD2 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

9. No development shall commence until details of the materials to be used for all the external finishes of the building, including all external walls, doors and windows, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out only in accordance with the approved materials.

Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the site and the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

10. No development shall commence until full details of a soft landscaping scheme, as shown in principle on drawing no. PSBPE-GM-PL-L-004 P00, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This shall include measures to enhance the biodiversity value of the site, as set out in paragraph 8.3 of the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey by Marishal Thompson Group (dated 21st June 2013). The approved landscaping scheme shall be carried out not later than the first available planting and seeding season after completion of the development. Any trees or plants whether new or existing which within a period of five years die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, or in accordance with details approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the site, in accordance with Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

11. No development shall commence until details of an external lighting scheme for the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be installed as approved before the first occupation of any part of the development.

Reason: To meet the needs for safety and security for users of the site in accordance with Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

12. No development shall commence within the site until details of all means of enclosure around the boundaries of the site and within the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No part of the development shall be occupied until all related means of enclosure have been provided as approved. Once provided, all means of enclosure shall be retained at all times thereafter, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the site and in the interests of security of the site and adjacent properties in accordance with Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

13. The new school building shall not be occupied until the new multi-use games area (MUGA) shown on the approved drawings has been constructed to Sport England standards, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To off-set the loss of part of the southern playing field and to ensure the quality of sports facilities at the site is improved, in accordance with the policies of Sport England.

Informatives

1. In dealing with this application, Watford Borough Council has considered the proposal in a positive and proactive manner having regard to the policies of the development plan as well as paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and other material considerations, and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010, as amended. The Council also gave pre-application advice on the proposal prior to the submission of the application and undertook discussions with the applicant's agent during the application process.

Case Officer: **Paul Baxter**
Tel: **01923 278284**
Email: paul.baxter@watford.gov.uk