

Regulatory Committee - 26 May 2020

Provision of one temporary classroom for educational use while the second phase of Heathcote School development is completed, Heathcote School, Vickers Way, Heathcote, Warwick, CV34 7AP.

WDC/20CC001

Application No.: WDC/20CC001

Advertised date: 11 March 2020

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Registered by: The Strategic Director for Communities on 05 March 2020

Proposal: Provision of one temporary classroom for educational use whilst second phase of Heathcote school is completed.

Site & location: Heathcote School, Vickers Way, Heathcote, Warwick, CV34 7AP. [Grid ref: 430696.263086].

See plan in Appendix A

Recommendation

That the Regulatory Committee authorises the grant of planning permission for the provision of one temporary classroom for educational use while the second phase of Heathcote School development is completed at Heathcote School, Vickers Way, Heathcote, Warwick, subject to the conditions and for the reasons contained within Appendix B of the report of the Strategic Director for Communities.

1. Application details

- 1.1 The planning application as originally submitted sought permission for the installation of the temporary classroom for a period of 9 months at Heathcote Primary School. During the course of dealing with the application, a National Emergency has been declared as a result of the Covid19 viral outbreak. At the time of report writing, the construction works for the Phase 2 element of the school have been halted as the country has been placed in lockdown. The lockdown situation will have an impact on the timetable for the completion of the extension works with the result that the temporary classroom may be installed on site at a date later than initially programmed and may be required on the school site for a longer, but as yet unknown period of time. The applicant has indicated in the amended Design and Access statement, that the temporary classroom may be required on site for a maximum period of 12 months.
- 1.2 The additional classroom would be required to accommodate one class of pupils from the start of the new academic year in September 2020 until the phase 2 extension to the school is completed.
- 1.3 The proposed temporary building would be 10.1 metres by 10.1 metres in floor area with a flat roof (with a shallow fall) to a maximum height of 3.6 metres. The building would provide a single classroom space; storage area and toilet facilities including one accessible toilet.
- 1.4 The proposed building would be constructed with external wall facing material of plastisol coated composite steel, coloured goosewing grey. Windows and rainwater goods would be dark grey uPVC.
- 1.5 The classroom would be located to the south-west of the existing Heathcote Primary School building, adjacent to Vickers Way. The site is currently an area of hardstanding composed of compacted stone chippings adjacent to the school's tarmac car park and is designated as the extended staff car parking area in the approved plans for the phase 2 expansion of the school.
- 1.6 The building would be situated on a tarmac hardstanding area, laid prior to the installation of the classroom, with spreader plates to act as foundations. The final tarmac wearing course for the car park would be applied after removal of the temporary classroom.
- 1.7 The main access to the temporary classroom would be from the eastern side of the building via a stepped entrance. Heras fencing would be erected between the classroom and the tarmac car park to secure the boundary between the two areas. A temporary path would be installed to the rear of the building to serve the emergency exit on the western side.

- 1.8 The temporary classroom would not be fully accessible for pupils or staff with disabilities and for this reason the application advises that the needs of such individuals would be met within the main school building.
- 1.9 It was originally anticipated that the classroom would be installed on the school site during June 2020 in order to be available before the school summer break begins to enable pupils to visit their new classrooms prior to the start of the new school year. However, in the current circumstances, the timing of the installation would be governed by the timing of the lifting of the national lockdown.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 **Warwick District Council – Planning:** No comments received.
- 2.2 **Warwick District Council – Environmental Heath:** No comments received.
- 2.3 **Warwick Town Council:** No comments received.
- 2.4 **Councillor Les Caborn:** No comments received by 23 April 2020.
- 2.5 **WCC Equality Officer:** No Equality comments.
- 2.6 **WCC Chief Fire Officer:** No objection subject to an advisory note drawing the applicant's attention to the need for the development to comply with Approved Document B, Volume 2, Section B5 - Access Facilities for the Fire Service.
- 2.7 **WCC Fire Water Supply Officer:** No comment as the existing water supply is sufficient.
- 2.8 **WCC Highways:** No objection subject to conditions requiring removal of the classroom within 12 months or on first occupation of the phase 2 development, whichever is sooner, and for the area on removal of the classroom to be surfaced and laid out as parking prior to the occupation of the phase 2 development.
- 2.9 1 site notice posted on 11 March 2020
- 2.10 14 nearest residential properties individually notified on 11 March 2020.

3. Representations

- 3.1 No responses have been received from neighbouring residents.

4. Previous Planning History

- 4.1 Heathcote Primary School was granted planning permission in 2016 for the erection of a two-form entry (2FE) Primary School to be built in two phases (Ref: WDC/16CC005).
- 4.2 Phase 1 of the construction was completed, and the school opened in September 2017, initially as a one-form entry (1FE). The phase 1 building has a total of 8 classrooms in addition to a hall and office and other ancillary facilities.
- 4.3 The phase 2 element of the development provides an additional 8 classrooms and an extension of the onsite car parking provision.

5. Assessment and Observations

Site and Surroundings

- 5.1 The planning application relates to Heathcote Primary School, Vickers Lane, located south of Harbury Lane, Warwick. The school is some 3 kilometres to the south-west of Leamington Spa town centre and approximately 3 kilometres to the south-east of Warwick town centre.
- 5.2 The school site is within an area of new residential development to the south of Leamington Spa, a significant proportion of which is not yet completed. At the time of report writing, the dwellings immediately adjacent to the south and east of the school are completed and occupied, while areas further to the west, south and east are under construction. In addition to use by local residents and the school, Vickers Way and Garrett Drive are in use by construction traffic.
- 5.3 The school boundary is marked by 2.4-metre-high green security fence which surrounds the whole school site.
- 5.4 The north-eastern boundary with Harbury Lane is marked by the security fence and a length of hedgerow that runs alongside the public highway. The school playing field is located between the school buildings and Harbury Lane. The second phase of the school development has been under construction on the northern side of the school, however, at the time of writing the works are on hold.
- 5.5 The eastern boundary of the school is marked by Garrett Drive with green security fencing securing the school site. Three storey dwellings on the opposite side of Garrett Drive face towards the school site.

- 5.6 The southern boundary is marked by Vickers Way. Green security fencing runs along the back edge of the pavement, with two access points for pedestrians and vehicles from Vickers Way into the school grounds and car park. Opposite the school, on the southern side of Vickers Way, are modern, recently constructed two storey houses. These properties face towards the site of the proposed temporary classroom.
- 5.7 The existing school is a single storey building, with white rendered elevations, light grey windows, doors and rainwater goods with a shallow pitched Kingspan standing seam roof.
- 5.8 The site area for the temporary classroom is currently a hardstanding of stone chippings and grasscrete.

Planning Policy

- 5.9 Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) February 2019 explains that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and what that means. Where proposals accord with an up to date development plan it means that development should be approved without delay.
- 5.10 In this case the up to date plan is the Warwick District Local Plan (2011 – 2020), adopted in September 2017. The application should therefore be determined (as required by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) in accordance with those policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.11 The NPPF states that the planning system has three overarching objectives; economic, social and environmental which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.
- 5.12 Paragraph 91 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction; are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion.

5.13 Paragraph 94 states that it is important 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:

- a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and
- b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

5.14 Paragraph 109 states the development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

5.15 Paragraph 127 states that planning decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.

The Development Plan

Warwick District Adopted Local Plan (2011 – 2020)

5.16 **Policy BE1 Layout and Design:** New development will be permitted where it positively contributes to the character and quality of its environment through good layout and design. Development proposals will be expected to demonstrate a number of requirements including that they:

- reflect, respect and reinforce local architectural and historical distinctiveness;
- respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing;
- adopt appropriate materials and details;
- meet the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion for potential users regardless of disability, age or gender.

5.17 **Policy BE3 Amenity:** Development will not be permitted that has an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of nearby users and residents.

- 5.18 **Policy TR3 Parking:** Development will only be permitted that makes provision for parking which does not result in on-street parking detrimental to highway safety and is expected to comply with the parking standards set out in the most recent Parking Supplementary Planning Document.
- 5.19 **Policy NE3 Biodiversity:** New development will be permitted provided that it protects, enhances and/or restores habitat biodiversity.
- 5.20 **Policy HS1 Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities:** The potential for creating healthy, safe and inclusive communities will be taken into account when considering all development proposals. Support will be given to proposals including those that i) provide good access to local shops, employment opportunities, services, schools and community facilities.

Need for the temporary classroom.

- 5.21 Heathcote Primary School opened following the construction of the first phase of development in September 2017. The building has 8 classrooms, a school hall and school offices.
- 5.22 In September 2017 the school opened as a 1FE with one class in each of the year groups Reception; Year 1 and Year 2. In addition, one classroom was occupied by Nursery age pupils, giving a total of 4 classrooms occupied.
- 5.23 In September 2018 the school accepted a single class intake of Reception pupils giving a total of 5 classrooms occupied.
- 5.24 In September 2019 the school increased to 2FE for Reception. As a result, 7 of the 8 classrooms are in use during the current academic year 2019/2020.
- 5.25 During the school year 2020/2021 starting in September 2020 the school will continue to expand as a 2FE with a need at that point for 9 classrooms. As a result of the phase 1 element of the school reaching capacity, the implementation of the phase 2 construction was triggered. However, as a result of delays in commencing the phase 2 construction works during 2019 it was clear that the new classrooms would not be available to accommodate the additional numbers of pupils at the school in September 2020. It is for this reason that the need for a temporary classroom has arisen. The classroom would provide accommodation for a single class of children until the phase 2 building is completed.
- 5.26 As a result of the further delays to the construction programme caused by the Covid 19 lockdown, the temporary classroom is likely to be required on the site for a longer time than originally anticipated. The applicant has indicated a maximum period of 12 months.

- 5.27 While it would appear logical for the temporary classroom to be occupied by the Year 5 pupils as the eldest pupils in the school, there are only 19 children in that class. For that reason, it is more likely that the 30 pupils of the Year 4 class would occupy the temporary building.

Amenity and Environmental Issues

- 5.28 The school is located in a residential area, large areas of which are currently under construction. The two storey houses to the south of the school, closest to the site for the proposed temporary classroom are however completed and occupied.
- 5.29 The school is surrounded by 2.4-metre-high fine mesh security fencing which gives open views into the school grounds from the surrounding area.
- 5.30 The proposed site of the classroom is currently an area of additional/overspill parking which will be incorporated into the main car park area with a tarmac finish following removal of the temporary classroom and completion of the phase 2 works.
- 5.31 There would be a separation distance of some 27 metres between the flank/south-western elevation of the proposed classroom and the front/north-eastern elevation of the dwellings on the opposite side of Vickers Way. There would be no loss of light to these neighbouring dwellings as a result of the temporary classroom.
- 5.32 The classroom would be sited close to the boundary fence and therefore in a prominent position in the street scene. The choice of design and materials for the temporary building would be utilitarian in appearance and would not be appropriate for a permanent building. However, it is considered that the visual impact on the character and appearance of the area would be not be detrimental to a degree that would warrant a recommendation of refusal of the installation for a temporary period.
- 5.33 The classroom would be positioned with the windows of the front elevation facing southeast towards the school car park and with the windows on the rear elevation facing northwest overlooking the school playing field. No windows are proposed in the south-western elevation facing towards Vickers Way. Given the distance to the neighbouring dwellings and the aspect of the windows, there would be no unacceptable overlooking between the school and the residential premises.

- 5.34 The classroom internally is on one level and provides an accessible toilet facility. Access into the building however would require the use of a stepped entrance which would restrict access into the building for individuals with some disabilities. The applicant has advised that the needs of those children and staff would be met within the main building. It is considered that for the temporary period required for the classroom the stepped access would be acceptable.
- 5.35 The application site is not in the Green Belt.
- 5.36 The site for the proposed classroom is currently an area of hardstanding. There would be no impact on trees; protected species or on the net biodiversity of the area as a result of the installation of the building in this location.

Highway and Parking Issues

- 5.37 The school currently has a tarmac car park with 32 spaces formally laid out and with 2 additional accessible parking spaces located adjacent to the entrance to the building. There is space for two additional cars at the eastern end of the car park. The approved details for the development on completion of phase 2 provides a total of 44 car spaces and the 2 accessible spaces. The additional parking spaces are approved to be located on the site of the proposed temporary classroom.
- 5.38 The parking standard for schools adopted by Warwick District Council require the provision of 2 car spaces per classroom for staff and visitors and for 5% of the provided spaces to be accessible spaces.
- 5.39 The school as it currently operates has 8 classrooms with a requirement for 16 car spaces. On completion of phase 2 there will be 16 classrooms with a requirement for 32 car spaces. The school therefore does comply with the adopted parking standard for the District.
- 5.40 Heras fencing would be erected between the temporary classroom and the existing tarmac car park area to ensure that pupils and staff have a secure separation from the car park. The applicant has advised that at break times children would be escorted through gated access points in the fencing to the playground area to the rear of the main school building. A temporary path would be provided to the rear of the classroom to provide an exit from the building in the case of emergency. The path would be removed and the area restored on removal of the classroom.
- 5.41 The Highway Authority raised no objection to the application subject to a condition requiring the temporary classroom be removed within 12 months of installation or on first occupation of the Phase 2 development; and a condition for the site area to be laid out as car park in accordance with previously approved plans.

Heritage

- 5.42 The application site is not within a Conservation Area. There are no Listed buildings seen in the context of the existing school or the proposed classroom, the closest Listed building being a grade II listed barn at Newhouse Farmhouse which is over 1 kilometre to the south.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 While the appearance and location of the proposed temporary building does not accord with Policy BE1 of the Local Plan, it is considered that the impact on the character and appearance of the area is not significantly adverse to a degree that would warrant a recommendation of refusal for this temporary use. The classroom would be in position for the period of time required to complete the construction of the phase 2 building, after that time and prior to the occupation of the building, the temporary classroom would be removed from the site and the area restored to the approved use as school car park.
- 6.2 There is considered to be no significant adverse impact on the amenities of local residents as a result of the development and the application is considered to accord with the NPPF and Policy BE3 of the Local Plan.
- 6.3 The Highway Authority raised no objection to the development subject to the recommended conditions to ensure the classroom is removed and the approved car park area for the Phase 2 element of the school development is provided prior to occupation of the permanent classrooms.
- 6.4 The proposed installation of the temporary classroom for the period of time required to complete the construction of the phase 2 extension to the school is recommended for approval subject to the proposed conditions and is considered to be in accordance with the development plan overall.

7. Supporting Documents

- 7.1 Submitted Planning Application – Planning reference WDC/20CC001
- 7.2 Appendix A – Map of site and location.
- 7.3 Appendix B – Planning Conditions.

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