

TO: PLANNING & REGULATORY COMMITTEE **DATE:** 18 November 2014
BY: PLANNING DEVELOPMENT TEAM MANAGER
DISTRICT(S) WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL **ELECTORAL DIVISION(S):**
The Byfleets
Mr Wilson

PURPOSE: FOR DECISION **GRID REF:** 504556 161200

TITLE: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSAL WO/2014/0573

SUMMARY REPORT

West Byfleet Infant and Junior Schools, Camphill Road, West Byfleet Surrey, KT14 6EF

Construction of two single storey buildings and single storey extension comprising new hall, 3 new classrooms and ancillary accommodation; external landscaping works and play areas and laying out of 16 additional parking spaces.

The site of the West Byfleet Infant and Junior Schools lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt and the infant school is locally listed being of Architectural interest. There is an extensive planning history on this school dated back to the 1940s and comprising applications submitted to and determined by both Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council. Recently a new nursery building has been erected to the north of the Infant School following planning approval WO/2014/0931 (determined under delegated powers).

The proposal is to expand the West Byfleet Infants and Junior Schools by one form of entry (from 2 to 3 FE) with a new Published Admission Number of 90. This would increase the capacity of the infant school from 180 to 270 and the capacity of the junior school from 240 to 360 pupils. The existing gross external floor area for the infant and junior school buildings is approximately 1900m² with the proposed additional floor area following the infant and junior expansion being 860m² resulting in a combined total floor area of 2760m².

The application was publicised by the posting of two site notices and an advert was placed in the local newspaper. A total of 146 owner/occupiers of neighbouring properties were directly notified by letter. As a result of this publicity 5 letters of objection have been received, on grounds which relate largely to highways and traffic issues.

As this site lies within the Green Belt and the proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the applicant in this case has had to demonstrate that *very special circumstances* exist to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green belt due to inappropriateness and any other harm and this is the main issue which needs to be assessed in this application. In addition the highways aspects of the proposal needs to be considered in particular the impact of the increased numbers of children at the site and how the vehicle movements arising from this will be accommodated on the local highway network. Other issues such as the impact on the existing Locally Listed building, design and visual appearance, impact on neighbouring residents, impact on trees and contaminated land issues all also have to be considered.

Officers consider that the need for additional school places within the area which cannot be accommodated elsewhere amount to factors which constitute very special circumstances which clearly outweigh the harm due to inappropriateness and the loss of openness. Officers are satisfied that the scale of the proposal is proportionate to the need and the harm to the Green Belt has been limited by locating the new building close to the existing buildings coupled with the sympathetic design of the building and appropriate use of materials .

Officers consider that the development can be permitted as an exception to Green Belt policy and that otherwise potential harm can be ameliorated by the imposition of planning conditions.

The recommendation is to permit this application subject to conditions.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Applicant

Estates Planning and Management

Date application valid

9 May 2014

Period for Determination

4 July 2014

Amending Documents

Transport Assessment dated June 2014 received 24/09/2014

Technical Note dated June 2014 received 24/09/2014

Technical Note dated September 2014 received 24/09/2014

JSL2239_100GA Rev H Landscape Masterplan received 04/11/2014

SUMMARY OF PLANNING ISSUES

This section identifies and summarises the main planning issues in the report. The full text should be considered before the meeting.

	Paragraphs in the report where this has been discussed	Is this aspect of the proposal in accordance with the Development Plan?
PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT	12 - 14	Yes
DESIGN	15 - 16	Yes
LOCALLY LISTED BUILDING	17 - 18	Yes
IMPACT ON RESIDENTIAL AMENITY	19 - 20	Yes
HIGHWAYS IMPLICATIONS	21 - 27	Yes
CONTAMINATED LAND	28 - 29	Yes
TREES	30 - 33	Yes
BIODIVERSITY	34 - 35	Yes
GREEN BELT	38 - 56	Yes
Green Belt harm due to inappropriateness	41 - 42	No
Other harm to Green Belt	43 - 44	No
VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES	45 - 55	Yes
Need for the development	46 - 53	Yes

ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL

Site Plan

Plan

Aerial Photographs

Aerial

Site Photographs

Figure 1 – Rear of existing Infants School

Figure 2 – Rear of existing Junior School

Figure 3 – Infant School (locally listed building) as viewed from Camphill Road

Figure 4 – View of rear of site as viewed from adjacent recreation ground

BACKGROUND

- 1 The site of the West Byfleet Infant and Junior Schools lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The school buildings are located near the site frontage with Camphill Road with the playing fields lying to the rear (east) and extending up to Parvis Road to the south. To the south of the school site there is an open recreation ground, to the north is the Camphill Social Club together with allotment land and to the east and west there is residential development which is within the Urban Area. Byfleet Recreation Ground adjacent is designated as Urban Open Space on the Woking Borough Council Local Plan
- 2 The school buildings on this site are brick built and both single and two-storey with both pitched and flat roofed elements. The Junior School building is two storey under a pitched tiled roof on the frontage of the site with single storey additions at the rear. This has brick and partial rendered elevations. The Infant School dates from around 1913 and is an arts and crafts building built of red brick in English Bond under sweeping tile roofs. This building has been included on Woking Borough Council's Local List of Buildings of Architectural Interest. To the north of the infant school is a recently erected new nursery building erected in accordance with planning approval WO/2014/0931. This building has been erected to replace an existing nursery, accommodated within a single storey HORSAs building towards the rear of the site, which will shortly be demolished in accordance with the planning permission for the replacement building. There are a number of existing trees within the site.

Planning History

- 3 There is an extensive planning history on this school dated back to the 1940s and comprising applications submitted to and determined by both Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council. The most recent applications are:

SCC2014/0190 Installation of Platform lift in external lift shaft. Currently being considered

WO/2014/0931 Demolition of existing nursery building on the site and the erection of a replacement modular nursery building comprising 4 classrooms and associated areas. Approved October 2014 (under delegated powers).

PLAN 2010/0060 Erection of shade sail on northern part of the site
Permitted 30th March 2010

PLAN 2008/1259 Erection of wooden shelter in playground
Permitted January 2009

PLAN/2008/0258 Installation of canopy on western elevation of new classroom block
Permitted 24th June 2008

PLAN/2005/0763 Alterations to pedestrian access and installation of replacement gates
Permitted 5th August 2005

PLAN/2003/1343 Erection of single storey extension comprising two classrooms, toilets and link Permitted February 2004

PLAN/1993/0447 Single storey extension to form additional teaching/storage area
Permitted July 1993

PLAN/1992/1123 Single storey extension to form cloakroom
Permitted February 1993

PLAN 1991/1099 Erection of four floodlights at the rear of West Byfleet Middle School to illuminate evening football
Permitted February 1993

THE PROPOSAL

- 4 The proposal is to expand the West Byfleet Infants and Junior Schools by one form of entry (from 2 to 3 FE) with a new Published Admission Number of 90. This would increase the capacity of the infant school from 180 to 270 and the capacity of the junior school from 240 to 360 pupils. The existing gross external floor area for the infant and junior school buildings is approximately 1900m² with the proposed additional floor area following the infant and junior expansion being 860m² resulting in a combined total floor area of 2760m².
- 5 The proposals comprise the following:
 - A new stand alone single storey flat roofed building to the rear of the Infant School. This would measure a maximum of 24m long and 20m wide at its widest point being T-shaped. This building would have brick elevations and would be 5.7m high under a flat roof. This building would provide a new hall and kitchen, reception class and toilets and would be linked to the existing school via a covered link
 - A single storey extension to the rear of the Infant School measuring approximately 9m by 8m to provide a further classroom. This building would have brick elevations and be 3.2m high under a flat roof

- A new stand alone building to the rear of the Junior school. This would measure 22m long by 16m wide and would be 3.6m high under a flat roof with domed lantern lights within it. This building would have brick elevations and would accommodate three new classrooms and associated toilets and group room. This building would be linked to the existing school by a covered link
- An extended staff car park for 16 cars would be provided between the two proposed buildings to the rear of the site
- Hard and soft landscaping measures are proposed around the site

CONSULTATIONS AND PUBLICITY

6	Woking Borough Council	No objection
7	Transportation Development Planning	No objection subject to conditions

Summary of publicity undertaken and key issues raised by public

- 8 The application was publicised by the posting of two site notices and an advert was placed in the local newspaper. A total of 146 owner/occupiers of neighbouring properties were directly notified by letter. As a result of this publicity 5 letters of objection have been received which raise the following points:
1. There are already major problems for residents with parents parking as they get blocked in at peak times and no notice is taken of the parking restrictions
 2. A proper car park should be made for the use of parents
 3. The volume of traffic which would be created would not be appropriate
 4. Stoop Court nearby is an elderly residential site in the middle of the very busy road and ambulances need to regularly visit this
 5. An access could be made to the site from Leisure Lane
 6. A full assessment should be made of the impact of the additional traffic
 7. The provision of the extra 16 car parking spaces is not sufficient to cater for the expansion
 8. Parents park on adjacent vacant residential driveways to drop off and pick up
 9. The existing chicane system should be dismantled to cater for the extra traffic as it already causes congestion and has never worked
 10. There should be a drive through drop off area on site

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 9 The County Council as County Planning Authority has a duty under Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to determine this application in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) (1990 Act) requires local planning authorities when determining planning applications to “have regard to (a) the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, (b) any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application, and (c) any other material considerations”. At present in relation to this application the Development Plan consists of the Woking Core Strategy October 2012 and saved policies within the Woking Borough Local Plan 1999.

- 10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was adopted in March 2012. This document provides guidance to local planning authorities in producing local plans and in making decisions on planning applications. The NPPF is intended to make the planning system less complex and more accessible by summarising national guidance which replaces numerous planning policy statements and guidance notes, circulars and various letters to Chief Planning Officers. The document is based on the principle of the planning system making an important contribution to sustainable development, which is seen as achieving positive growth that strikes a balance between economic, social and environmental factors. The Development Plan remains the cornerstone of the planning system. Planning applications which comply with an up to date Development Plan should be approved. Refusal should only be on the basis of conflict with the Development Plan and other material considerations.
- 11 The NPPF states that policies in Local Plans should not be considered out of date simply because they were adopted prior to publication of the framework. However, the policies in the NPPF are material considerations which planning authorities should take into account. Due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies are to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight they may be given).
- 12 As this site lies within the Green Belt and the proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the applicant in this case has to demonstrate that *very special circumstances* exist to warrant overriding Green Belt Policy and this is the main issue which needs to be assessed. In addition the highways aspects of the proposal will need to be considered in particular the impact of the increased numbers of children to the site and how the vehicle movements arising from this will be accommodated on the local highway network. Other issues such as the impact on the Locally Listed Infants School building, design and visual appearance, impact on neighbouring residents, impact on trees and the presence of contamination will also have to be considered.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Woking Core Strategy October 2012

Policy CS19 – Social and Community Infrastructure

Woking Borough Local Plan 1999

Policy CUS7 – Schools

- 13 The National Planning Policy Framework advises in Section 8, para 72 that the government attached great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. It advises that Local Planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should: give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools; and work with school promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

- 14 Policy CS19 of the Core strategy states that the Council will work with its partners to provide accessible and sustainable social and community infrastructure to support growth in the Borough. It will do so by promoting the use of social and community infrastructure for a range of uses. The provision of new community facilities will be encouraged in locations well served by public transport, pedestrian and cycle infrastructure. Local Plan Policy CUS7 states that the expansion of school facilities on existing sites will be permitted subject to the requirements of other detailed criteria (such as highways, residential amenity) being met.
- 15 Have regard to the above, and subject to the detailed considerations in respect of other policy areas below there is a strong presumption in favour of this development.

DESIGN

Woking Core Strategy October 2012

Policy CS21 – Design

Policy CS24 – Woking's Landscape and Townscape

Woking Borough Local Plan 1999

Policy BE1 – Design of New Development

- 16 Core Strategy Policy CS21 states that proposals for new development should create buildings and places that are attractive with their own distinct identity; make a positive contribution to the street scene and the character of the area; and pay due regard to the scale, height, proportions, building lines, layout, materials and other characteristics of adjoining buildings and land. Policy CS24 requires all development proposals to have a positive benefit in terms of landscape and townscape character and local distinctiveness, respect setting of and relationship between individual buildings, and conserve and where possible enhance townscape character, including structure, land form, views and landmarks and appropriate building styles and materials. Saved Local Plan Policy BE1 expects a high standard of design for new development which is appropriate to the site and respects the character of the area.
- 17 In this case the proposed buildings are both at the rear of the site and behind the existing school. They will not be prominent in the general street scene but will be visible from the recreation ground to the rear and partially from the site frontage. The buildings proposed are both flat roofed structures but with brick external elevations to blend in with the existing school buildings. Whilst the original school buildings on the frontage of the site have pitched roofs, there are also existing flat roofed elements of a similar design and appearance to those now proposed. Officers consider that the proposed extensions pay due regard to the scale, height, proportions, building lines and materials of the existing school buildings and are therefore acceptable in this regard and comply with Development Plan Policy.

LOCALLY LISTED BUILDING

Woking Core Strategy October 2012

CS20 Heritage and Conservation

- 18 The explanatory advice to Policy SC20 of the Core Strategy states that the effects of development on buildings on the Local List will be taken into account and a balanced judgement will have to be made having regard to the scale of any harm or loss given that such buildings do not have the same legal status as those which are statutorily listed. The existing Infant School is 'Locally Listed' for its merit as a building of 'Townscape Merit'.
- 19 The new buildings will be sited to the rear of the locally listed Infant School building on this site and will not have any direct impact on its fabric or appearance. The proposed buildings are single storey with simple brick elevations and officers considered that their scale will not harm to the visual appearance of the locally listed building or detract from its existing Townscape Merit. It is therefore considered that the proposal accords with the provisions of the Development Plan in this regard and is acceptable.

IMPACT ON RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

Woking Core Strategy October 2012

Policy CS21 – Design

Woking Borough Local Plan 1999

Policy BE1 – Design of New Development

Policy CUS7 – Schools

- 20 Core Strategy Policy CS21 requires new development to achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjoining properties avoiding significant harmful impacts in terms of loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight or an overbearing effect due to bulk, proximity or outlook. The criteria to be met by school development under saved Local Plan Policy CUS7 include there not being an adverse impact on local residents. Local Plan Policy BE1 expects new development to avoid visual and audible conflict with adjoining land uses.
- 21 The nearest residential dwellings to the school are on the other side of Camphill Road with the existing school buildings intervening. The proposed buildings themselves will not therefore have any impact on the amenity of existing residential dwellings. The other issue to consider in respect of impact on amenity is the impact arising from the highways implications of this proposal. The proposal will give rise to an increase in vehicle movement (as set out in the following paragraphs) as well as an increase in parking in the surrounding residential roads during the morning and afternoon dropping off and picking up periods. Officers acknowledge that the school does give rise to high levels of traffic and parking during the peak drop off and pick up periods and that this does cause some level of inconvenience to local residents. However this is no different to many schools located within residential areas and the traffic is limited to two short periods a day. The scale of the increase in pupils associated with this proposal means there will be no significant increase over and above the impacts of the existing established school and this would not constitute grounds to refuse the proposal.
- 22 The proposal is therefore acceptable and accords with Development Plan policy in this regard.

HIGHWAYS IMPLICATIONS

Woking Core Strategy October 2012

Policy CS18 Transport and Accessibility

Woking Borough Local Plan 1999

Policy CUS7 – Schools

- 23 Core Strategy Policy CS18 seeks to achieve a balanced community connected by a sustainable transport system by locating most development in urban areas served by a range of sustainable transport modes, including walking and cycling to minimise the need to travel; ensuring development proposals provide appropriate infrastructure measures to mitigate the adverse effects of development traffic; requiring development proposals which generate significant traffic to be accompanied by a Travel Plan; and implementing maximum car parking standards for all types of non-residential development provided it does not create, or exacerbate existing on-street parking problems. However, applying standards should not undermine overall sustainability objectives. The criteria in saved Local Plan Policy CUS7, which school expansion proposals should meet, include that the existing road network is capable of absorbing the increase in traffic generated and that adequate provision is made for stopping and parking on site.
- 24 The applicants submitted a Full Transportation Assessment with this proposal which has been expanded with additional Technical Notes following comments received from Transportation Development Planning. This examines the existing highways conditions in the area and arising from the school and identifies the additional implications arising from this proposed development. In order to examine the existing position a pupil survey was undertaken looking at modes of travel to school both existing and preferred for both pupils and staff at the school and it also identified the catchment area of the school to look at how far people travel. A review of the existing footway and cycleway networks was undertaken, as well as the frequency of bus provision. In addition a parking survey was undertaken to assess the existing demands for parking at school drop off and pick up times and the road network was examined in terms of the volume and speed of existing traffic.
- 25 In connection with an expansion from 420 pupils to 630 as proposed (though the increase would be staggered over the period 2015 to 2021) the main conclusions which are reached in the transportation assessment are:
- Currently 50% of pupils walk to school, 8% cycle or scoot, 42% access the school by car
 - A worst case scenario projected trip generation shows that the number of cars arriving at the school during peak times could increase to 208 from the both schools combined from 160; there would also be additional staff journeys of around 14 vehicles
 - The parking beat survey shows that the existing parking situation along the roads in the vicinity of the site is likely to remain within capacity (being 72% occupied as opposed to 56% occupied as at present) throughout the peak periods following the planned expansion and the resulting additional cars could be accommodated on the local roads, assuming they all arrived simultaneously, and even if the number of spaces was reduced by virtue of poorly parked vehicles or sections where people did not want to park there would still be a supply in excess of requirement

- The school currently does have a Travel Plan which will be reviewed and updated and this could have a positive impact giving rise to a reduction in the total number of vehicles visiting the school as other modes of transport are encouraged and adopted
- The proposed anticipated increase can therefore be accommodated in highways terms

- 26 Transportation Development Planning has assessed the Transportation Statement submitted and undertaken negotiations with the applicants transport consultant to resolve a number of highway-related issues and queries. This has resulted in the submission of further transport information. In summary these further submissions have been for the following purposes:
- to address and resolve a number of transport queries raised by TDP's normal review and checking of the application transport assessment report,
 - to assess the transport impact of the school development to the north - towards New Haw - of the schools, which was not included within the original application transport assessment, and
 - to decide what transport mitigation measures are needed to enable the school development to go ahead.
- 27 From this work, TDP has produced a final application response, which requests conditions be imposed on the planning permission to secure the following:
- the removal of the pinch points (referred to in a representation received as chicanes) in the Camphill Road traffic calming outside the schools
 - the promotion by the school of the creation of additional controlled parking zone on-street vehicle parking bays in roads close to the site
 - the promotion, setting up, management and running of additional park and stride and/or scoot sites in and around West Byfleet / New Haw villages by the School, including the safe management of student travel between the park and stride and/or scoot site(s) and the school(s) (Waitrose car park and the Library Car park are both being looked at as suitable sites for parents to park)
 - the formal review and updating of the school travel plan, to seek to increase the proportion of students and staff who walk, scoot, cycle, use public transport, car share or use any other sustainable form of transport to travel to and from the school(s).
- 28 On this basis, TDP consider that the transport impact of the schools development on the local roads will be acceptable. In view of the above, officers are satisfied that all highways matters have been satisfactorily addressed and the proposal complies with the Development Plan in this regard.

CONTAMINATED LAND

Woking Borough Local Plan 1999

Policy BE4 – Environmental Pollution

- 29 Policy BE4 of the Local Plan requires that the impact of any development in respect of environmental pollution be considered and control measures introduced as appropriate. In this case no present day or historical uses of the site show any potential

contamination sources within influencing distances but the area within which the school is located is known to have been heavily involved with the manufacture of asbestos in the past and therefore contamination cannot be ruled out. In view of this the applicants have carried out a Ground Investigation Report which has been submitted as part of this application.

- 30 The Ground Investigation comprised five mini boreholes, six inspection pits and three in-situ soakaway tests on the site undertaken in March 2014. The samples taken from the site were laboratory tested. No contaminants of concern were found within the samples tested and in addition no asbestos was detected in any of the samples. The report however makes a number of detailed precautionary recommendations for the construction phase of the development of the site and officers would consider that it is appropriate to attach a condition which requires the applicants to comply with the recommendations in the Ground Investigation Report. The proposal therefore complies with Development Plan policy in this regard.

TREES

Woking Borough Local Plan 1999

Policy BE1 – Design of New Development

Policy NE9 – Trees Within Development Proposals

- 31 Local Plan Policy BE1 requires development to pay due regard to significant features of the site, such as mature trees. Local Plan Policy NE9 does not normally permit development that would result in the loss of trees or groups of trees of significant amenity value. In appropriate cases tree surveys are required to be submitted. Development should allow for retention of the best specimens.
- 32 An Arboricultural Implication Assessment and Method Statement was submitted with this application which concludes that 4 individual existing trees, two groups of trees and a Cypress hedgerow would need to be removed to facilitate the development. The trees to be removed are classified as 3 Grade B trees, 2 Grade C and 2 Grade U and these all lie to the rear of the Infant School along the edge of the existing hard play area. The trees range between low and moderate landscape and amenity value. There are a significant number of other trees on the site, particularly on the site boundary, which will be unaffected by the proposed development. There are also significant trees within the recreation ground adjacent to the school including a number of mature oaks.
- 33 Although several trees are shown to be removed in this case those trees are within the school site and are not prominent from the surrounding area nor do they make any contribution to the wider amenity of the area. None of the trees to be removed are of a character or species which would warrant any amendment to the scheme to ensure their retention and officers consider that the loss of these trees is acceptable. Replacement trees will be provided in other appropriate locations across the site to mitigate against the loss for the longer term and this will be secured by a planning condition. The proposal includes measures to ensure that the roots of other trees being retained are protected during the development of the extension of the school and officers consider that the approach put forward is appropriate and proportional and will ensure that there will be no

adverse impact on those trees, subject to a condition to require tree protection measures during construction.

- 34 Having regard to the above officers consider that the proposal meets the requirements of the Development Plan and is acceptable in this regard, subject to appropriate conditions to require replacement trees and ensure protection measures.

BIODIVERSITY

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Woking Core Strategy October 2012

Policy CS7 Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

- 35 Chapter 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework emphasises that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, inter alia, aiming to conserve and enhance biodiversity when determining planning applications. Core Strategy Policy CS7 states that development which will have a potentially harmful effect or lead to the loss of features of interest for biodiversity will be refused.
- 36 In considering planning application WO/2014/0931 for a replacement nursery on this site it was noted that the application gave rise to the loss of a school pond. The County Ecologist had identified this as a requirement in line with Core Strategy Policy CS7. The applicant confirmed at that time that a replacement pond would be provided as part of this current application on the whole school site and a condition was therefore attached to planning permission WO/2014/0931 requiring this.
- 37 The applicant has submitted an amended Landscape Masterplan which shows the siting of a proposed replacement pond in the south east corner of the school site adjacent to the vegetable garden. In order to secure this, officers recommend that a planning condition is attached requiring its provision within 1 year of occupation of the building. With this condition officers consider that the proposal accords with Development Plan Policy in this regard.

GREEN BELT

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Woking Core Strategy October 2012

CS6 – Green Belt

Woking Borough Local Plan 1999

Policy GRB1 Green Belt

- 38 Paragraph 87 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 states that as with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 89 states that Planning Authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt except in specific circumstances which include 1) where the proposal would be for the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces and 2) For the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building.

- 39 The NPPF further states that *'When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. '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'* (Para 88).
- 40 Woking Core Strategy Policy CS6 states that development in the Green Belts will be assessed against the advice contained in the NPPF, and Local Plan Policy GRB1 States that development in the Green Belt will be restricted to those uses that are considered *appropriate* in the Green Belt.

Harm due to inappropriateness

- 41 The proposed extension in this case amounts to approximately 860m² which represents an increase of some 45% over the floorspace within the existing school building, which has already been the subject of previous extensions. The proposed new buildings block stand separate to the existing buildings but are joined to them by covered links which renders them to be considered as extensions to the existing buildings. Extensions to existing buildings can be considered to be appropriate development in the Green Belt provided they do not amount to disproportionate additions over the existing building. Generally extensions above a 30% increase (though sometimes this can be extended up to 50%, depending on the circumstances in each case) are likely to be considered 'disproportionate'.
- 42 In this case officers consider that the proposal does represent a 'disproportionate' extension' in view of the cumulative increase in floorspace which has occurred on this site but also because the buildings are set away from the main buildings, albeit linked. The proposed development therefore should be considered as inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

Other Harm to the Green Belt

- 43 In accordance with paragraph 88 of the NPPF the impact of the development needs to be assessed in terms of any other harm to the Green Belt in addition to the inappropriateness of the proposal as discussed above in paragraphs 41 and 42 above. The extent of harm to the Green Belt, and in particular the impact the proposal has on the purposes of including land in Green Belts through its impact on openness is influenced by the scale and location of the proposed development.
- 44 The whole of the school site is within the Green Belt which extends outwards towards the east and south. The residential dwellings to the north and west lie within the urban area. In respect of any harm to the open character of the Green Belt this will therefore be as it is viewed from the Green Belt to the east and the South. In this case the proposal is for large extensions to the existing school. This will be clearly visible to users of the recreation ground to the south and east of the site as well as partial views from residential dwellings in that area. In view of the size of the proposed buildings and views of them to the rear of the school officers consider that they will give rise to a loss of openness and will cause harm to the Green Belt in this location. Nevertheless officers consider that the impact has been ameliorated by the design of the proposal in this case and the scale of the extension is proportionate to the need and the development cannot

be located elsewhere to meet the need identified for the locality. Accordingly officers attach moderate weight to this aspect.

Very Special Circumstances

- 45 In considering whether very special circumstances exist which clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt caused by inappropriateness and other harm it is necessary in this case to assess the need for the development and whether that need could be accommodated elsewhere.

Need for the development

- 46 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in Surrey. Demand for school places has increased significantly in Woking in recent years. Expansions have been recently commissioned at a number of primary schools in Woking including St Dunstan's Catholic Primary School, Goldsworth Primary School, Beaufort Primary School, Westfield Primary School, The Marist Catholic Primary School and the Local Authority is creating new school provision at Brookwood. Even with these additional reception and junior places, most primary schools in Woking are expected to be full in 2013 with additional demand expected in the future. The Local Authority is seeking to bring forward further proposals to ensure there are sufficient primary places in the Borough. The proposed project at West Byfleet Infant and West Byfleet Junior School is one such proposal.

Need for additional school places – Overview of Woking

- 47 There are a number of different factors that can affect the demand for school places in an area. The most important is the birth and fertility rates in an area. Based on figures provided by the Office for National Statistics, births in Woking dipped from 1997 to a low point in 2001. Births then rose quite sharply year on year to 2007 before flattening out through to 2008. Births then rose again in 2009 and 2010. It should be noted that the recent increases in applications are unlikely to be the result of the number of births alone. There are other factors such as additional pupils from housing growth, inward and outward migration, parental preferences and the changing percentage of parents applying for independent or private provision - all of which can affect the number of applications in any given year making applications more difficult to model.

Need for additional school places West Byfleet and Byfleet

- 48 Projections have underestimated demand in Woking in 2011 and 2012 so 2011 projections have been 'inflated' to reflect this recent experience. The Local Authority was projecting a need for a minimum of 3 further forms of entry from 2014. Even with this inflated projection the Local Authority is needing to provide closer to 1300 school places in the Borough from 2014 against the 1252 projected. The project to provide additional places at West Byfleet Infant and Junior School is therefore crucial to the Local Authority meeting its statutory requirements to provide a school place for every pupil in the Borough.

- 49 The need for places is not uniform across the Borough. The Local Authority projects the need for school places based on planning areas. West Byfleet Infant and Junior school are located in the Byfleet and West Byfleet Planning Area. Within this Planning Area the projection is indicating a small surplus of places until 2022 but Education Officers have made the following comments in this regard:
- projections do not account for any 'inflationary factor' and are therefore likely to be an underestimate of true demand as experienced in 2011 and 2012.
 - By way of example, in 2012 the actual numbers on roll in schools in this area was 296 against a total PAN of 255 and a projection in 2011 of 256. Additional classes were commissioned at The Marist Catholic Primary School (as part of a permanent expansion) and at Pyrford Church of England Primary School (as a temporary measure) to help meet this demand.
 - School count data in 2013 showed that numbers dropped back to 268 however the applications for 2014 have increased even further with 334 first preference applications for only 270 available places and a projection of 254 pupils being on roll. The increase in first preference application can be a result of the popularity of schools in the area as well as the increase in the number of school age children living locally, but against a collective PAN of 270 it is relatively clear that with 334 first place preference applications that further provision is needed in the area.

Parental Preferences

- 50 The Local Authority has a duty to respond to parental preferences and to increase opportunities for parental choice when planning the provision of schools. West Byfleet Infant School and West Byfleet Junior School are both popular schools and have been heavily oversubscribed against their published admission number of 60 for the last 7 years by about a class of children. The Local Authority has a presumption to expand popular and successful schools where the demands for those places are demonstrable.

Location of pupil populations

- 51 Whilst first preferences are important, the Local Authority is mindful that popularity can be transient and that additional provision, where possible, should be located as local to the demand as possible. Surrey County Council believes that local schools should serve their local communities where possible. In 2013 there were 75 children living within 0.5 miles of the school with 197 pupils living within a mile of the school. The figures were very similar in 2012 with 70 children living within half a mile of the school and 189 living with a mile. There is therefore a large number of pupils within good proximity of the school with a high percentage of those pupils with the potential to walk, scoot or cycle into school.
- 52 Whilst lying close to the centre of West Byfleet, West Byfleet Infant and Junior School is located in the Green Belt. The NPPF contains a general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt. NPPF guidance is that such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances. What would constitute very special circumstances is not specified by the NPPF as this is clearly related to the use of any development that was proposed. It is recognised that West Byfleet Infant and Junior school is in the Green Belt and that there is a presumption against development unless it can be demonstrated that there are 'very special circumstances' and that alternatives have been fully explored before planning permission

could be granted. The following commentary is made against other schools in the local area:

New Haw and the Grange	Already at 3 forms of entry the site is not considered large enough to expand to 4 forms of entry. Located in Runnymede and therefore not an optimum location to serve demand in the West Byfleet area without increasing journey distances to school.
The Marist	Already expanded to maximum capacity in 2013. Site not capable of further expansion.
Byfleet Primary	Site too small to expand.
St Mary's CofE Primary School	School undersubscribed and not in the right location to meet demand. The schools in Byfleet meet the demand from the local population well currently. Expansion would draw in pupils from other areas increasing traffic on the A245
Pyrford CofE Primary School	Popular school but more remote to the main pupil populations than most other schools in Woking (only one other primary school had less pupils living within half a mile in 2013). Although popular with parents, expansion wouldn't meet a defined local need and would draw in pupils to the village of Pyrford from other areas of Woking increasing traffic in the area.

- 53 West Byfleet Infant and Junior schools are popular and oversubscribed schools that are well located to the main pupil populations in the local area. For the reasons given above, other schools in the area are either unsuitable for expansion or would likely have an impact on traffic in this busy part of the Borough as more parents would be travelling further to transport their children to school. In addition there is no justification for a new school in the area whilst sufficient potential capacity exists within existing school sites. The proposals at West Byfleet Infant and Junior schools represent a suitable and sustainable solution to the increasing demand for primary school places in the Borough.

Whether need for additional school places constitutes very special circumstances

- 54 Officers consider that a robust case has been made by the applicants demonstrating a need to increase the number of school places within this area as summarised above and given the location, there are limited alternatives available and a new school site is not a feasible option in this area. Paragraph 72 of the NPPF also lends additional weight to this proposal; this states *'The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:*
- *give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools; and*
 - *work with schools promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.'*

55 Officers consider that the very special circumstances of the need for additional school places in this area, coupled with the lack of suitable alternative sites clearly outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt by virtue of the inappropriateness.

Conclusions on Green Belt

56 The new building proposed as part of this scheme constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Officers consider that the proposal causes harm to the Green Belt by virtue of its inappropriateness but also the size of the proposed extensions also cause harm to the open character of the Green Belt in this location. Notwithstanding this, officers are satisfied that the applicant has demonstrated that there is a clear need to expand this school. It has been demonstrated that this is the most suitable site within the local area to provide this provision and that the accommodation needed cannot be located within the urban area given the specific need in this area. The proposal would provide additional school places given the shortfall in the local area. Officers consider that the very special circumstances of need for additional school places to meet the clear demand within the local area which cannot be accommodated on another site clearly outweighs the harm caused to the Green Belt including moderate harm due to the loss of openness. Officers therefore consider that the proposal can be supported as an exception to Green Belt policy.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

57 The Human Rights Act Guidance for Interpretation, found at the end of this report, is expressly incorporated into this report and must be read in conjunction with the following paragraph.

58 In this case, the Officers' view is that while impacts on amenity caused by traffic movements at the start and end of the school day are acknowledged, the scale of such impact is not considered sufficient to engage Article 8 or Article 1 of Protocol 1. Their impact can be mitigated by conditions. As such, this proposal is not considered to interfere with any Convention right.

CONCLUSION

59 The development constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Officers consider that the very special circumstances of the need for additional school places within the area which cannot be accommodated elsewhere amount to factors which constitute very special circumstances which clearly outweigh the harm due to inappropriateness and the loss of openness. Officers are satisfied that the scale of the proposal is proportionate to the need and the harm to the Green Belt has been limited by locating the new building close to the existing buildings coupled with the sympathetic design of the building and appropriate use of materials .

60 Officers consider that the development can be permitted as an exception to Green Belt policy and that otherwise potential harm can be ameliorated by the imposition of planning conditions. The proposal also satisfies all of the other relevant Development Plan policies.

RECOMMENDATION

- 61 That pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, that application WO/2014/0573 be PERMITTED subject to the following conditions:

Conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission. Written confirmation shall be sent to the Local Planning Authority of implementation of the development within seven days of the date of commencement.
2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in all respects strictly in accordance with the following plans/drawings:

EC/R.J509923/500 Drainage Layout dated March 2014
E02403 E SK02 Electrical Engineering Services External Lighting dated 16/04/2014
200 Rev 6 Existing Floor Plans and Site Plan dated 18/10/2013
100 Rev 4 Existing Location Plan dated 22/01/2014
201 Rev 3 Existing Roof Plan dated 22/01/2014
300 Rev 3 Existing Site Context elevations dated 18/10/2013
101 Rev 6 Existing Site Plan dated 18/02/2014
305 Rev 4 Infant Block Proposed Elevations dated 12/03/2014
306 Rev 14 Infant New Building Proposed Elevations dated 12/03/2014
100 Rev H Landscape Master Plan dated 03/03/2014 received 04/11/2014
111 Rev 3 Proposed Contractors Access and Compound Plan dated 26/02/2014
230 Rev 7 Proposed Floor Plans dated 20/01/2014
303 Rev 4 Proposed Junior New Build Elevations 1 of 2 dated 12/03/2014
304 Rev 4 Proposed Junior New Build Elevations 2 of 2 dated 12/03/2014
233 Rev 5 Proposed New Build Infants Ground dated 18/03/2014
232 Rev 5 Proposed New Build Junior's Ground dated 26/02/2014
231 Rev 5 Proposed Roof Plan dated 04/02/2014
301 Rev 4 Proposed Site Context Elevations dated 26/02/2014
110 Rev 6 Proposed Site Plan dated 18/02/2014
58271_P Topographical & Utility Mapping Survey dated October 2013
3. The recommendations set out in the Ground Investigation Report dated April 2014 submitted with this application shall be followed and adhered to.
4. The combined schools shall not admit more than 60 additional pupils over and above their 2013/14 combined Published Admission Number unless and until the applicant has secured the removal of the existing two number carriageway width restrictions with cyclist bypass lanes located on the Camphill Road (outside the application site), and the existing carriageway road tables have been modified to extend between both carriageway edges of Camphill Road.
5. Prior to the first occupation of the school development hereby approved, the existing school travel plan(s) for the West Byfleet County First And Middle School(s) shall be amended and improved to include proposals and a timetable to:

1. expand on site cycle and scooter parking facilities,
2. promote the creation of additional controlled parking zone on-street vehicle parking bays within Madeira Road and Camphill Road,
3. promote the setting up, management and running of additional park and stride and/or scoot sites for the drop-off and collection of students in and around West Byfleet and New Haw villages, where appropriate and necessary to include the safe management of student travel between the park and stride and/or scoot site(s) and the school(s),
4. increase the proportion of students and staff who walk, scoot, cycle, use public transport, car share or use any other sustainable form of transport to travel to and from the school(s)

in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Travel Plan shall be implemented upon first occupation of the development hereby permitted and thereafter maintained, monitored and developed.

6. No development shall commence until a Construction Transport Management Plan, to include details of:
 1. parking for vehicles of site personnel, operatives and visitors,
 2. loading and unloading of plant and materials,
 3. storage of plant and materials,
 4. vehicle routing,
 5. measures to prevent the deposit of materials on the highway,
 6. measures to prevent deliveries of plant and materials at the beginning and end of the school day,

has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Only the approved details shall be implemented during the construction of the development.

7. Prior to the commencement of development a scheme to provide replacement tree planting within the site shall be submitted for approved to the County Planning Authority. Such scheme shall include the size, location and species of the proposed trees and measures for the replacement trees to be maintained for a period of five years. Such maintenance shall include the replacement of any tree which is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies or becomes in the opinion of the County Planning Authority seriously damaged or defective. The replacement shall be of the same species and size and in the same location as that originally planted.
8. The replacement trees to be provided in accordance with condition 7 above shall be completed within the first planting season following the completion of the development hereby approved.
9. Written notice of the first occupation of the development shall be given to the Local Planning Authority within seven days of the event and within 1 year of the occupation of the development hereby approved a replacement pond shall be provided on the site in accordance with drawing JSL2239_100GA RevH received 04/11/2014.
10. Before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought onto the site for the purposes of carrying out the development hereby permitted, protective fencing shall be installed in full accordance with the details contained within the Arboricultural Implication Assessment & Method Statement April 2014 . The protective fencing shall thereafter be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. For the

duration of works on the site no materials, plant or equipment shall be placed or stored within the protected areas and the ground levels in those areas shall not be altered.

Reasons:

1. To comply with Section 91 (1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 (1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
2. For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.
3. In order to ensure that the known contaminated land risks are adequately dealt with in accordance with Policy BE4 of the Woking Borough Local Plan 1999
4. In order that the development should not prejudice highway safety nor cause inconvenience to other highway users in accordance with Policy CUS7 of the Woking Borough Local Plan 1999 and Policy CS18 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012
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7. In the interest of the visual amenity of the area in accordance with Policies BE1 and NE9 of the Woking Borough Local Plan 1999.
8. In the interest of the visual amenity of the area in accordance with Policies BE1 and NE9 of the Woking Borough Local Plan 1999.
9. In the interest of the visual amenity of the area and to maintain the biodiversity of the site in accordance with Policies BE1 and NE9 of the Woking Borough Local Plan 1999 and Policy CS7 of the Woking Core Strategy October 2012
10. In the interest of the visual amenity of the area in accordance with Policies BE1 and NE9 of the Woking Borough Local Plan 1999

Informatives:

1. The County Planning Authority confirms that in assessing this planning application it has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way, in line with the requirements of paragraph 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.
2. This approval relates only to the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and must not be taken to imply or be construed as an approval under the Building Regulations 2000 or for the purposes of any other statutory provision whatsoever.
3. The attention of the applicant is drawn to the requirements of Sections 7 and 8 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and to Building Bulletin 102 'Designing for disabled children and children with Special Educational Needs' published in 2008 on behalf of the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, or any prescribed document replacing that note.

4. The permission hereby granted shall not be construed as authority to carry out any works on the highway or any works that may affect a drainage channel/culvert or water course. The applicant is advised that a permit and, potentially, a Section 278 agreement must be obtained from the Highway Authority before any works are carried out on any footway, footpath, carriageway, verge or other land forming part of the highway. All works on the highway will require a permit and an application will need to be submitted to the County Council's Street Works Team up to 3 months in advance of the intended start date, depending on the scale of the works proposed and the classification of the road. Please see <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/road-permits-and-licences/the-traffic-management-permit-scheme>. The applicant is also advised that Consent may be required under Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991. Please see www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/emergency-planning-and-community-safety/flooding-advice.
5. The developer is reminded that it is an offence to allow materials to be carried from the site and deposited on or damage the highway from uncleaned wheels or badly loaded vehicles. The Highway Authority will seek, wherever possible, to recover any expenses incurred in clearing, cleaning or repairing highway surfaces and prosecutes persistent offenders. (Highways Act 1980 Sections 131, 148, 149).
6. The developer is advised that as part of the detailed design of the highway works required by the above condition(s), the County Highway Authority may require necessary accommodation works to street lights, road signs, road markings, highway drainage, surface covers, street trees, highway verges, highway surfaces, surface edge restraints and any other street furniture/equipment.

CONTACT

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The deposited application documents and plans, including those amending or clarifying the proposal, responses to consultations and representations received as referred to in the report and included in the application file and the following:

Government Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

The Development Plan

Woking Borough Local Plan 1999 saved policies

Woking Core Strategy 2012
