TO: PLANNING & REGULATORY COMMITTEE  DATE: 21 MAY 2009
BY: PLANNING MANAGER

DISTRICT(S)  ELMBRIDGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
ELECTORAL DIVISION(S): The Dittons
Mr Hickman

PURPOSE: FOR DECISION  GRID REF: 515812; 167147

TITLE: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSAL EL09/0563

SUMMARY REPORT

Land at Thames Ditton Infant School, Speer Road, Thames Ditton.

Installation of demountable classroom block comprising two classrooms, ancillary stores and toilets for a temporary period of 5 years; erection of a canopy to the main building.

Thames Ditton Infant School is a traditional red brick Victorian building with recent extensions, located in the built-up area of Thames Ditton and on the edge of the Thames Ditton Conservation Area. The Local Education Authority (LEA) has identified a shortfall of reception age places across Elmbridge, including the Thames Ditton and Weston Green community area, in September 2009. A further shortfall is anticipated in 2010. To address this situation, the LEA is proposing a two classroom demountable unit at Thames Ditton Infant School, which would temporarily add 60 places to the existing capacity of 270 places. The application also involves the erection of a canopy to provide covered play space that would meet Government requirements.

Objections to the proposed demountable building have been received from local residents raising issues of traffic congestion and parking, and the adverse impact on the Conservation Area. Officers consider that the demountable unit and the canopy would have no detrimental effects on the Conservation Area and would be acceptable in terms of design, transportation, access and impact on residential amenity. Officers also consider that the proposal complies with the policies of the Development Plan.

The recommendation is to PERMIT subject to conditions.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Applicant
Estates Planning and Management, Surrey County Council

Date application valid
31 March 2009

Period for Determination
26 May 2009
Amending Documents
Revised Design and Access Statement received on 14 April 2009
Drawing No. 6203 04 04 – Proposed Canopy to Existing Building
email of 23 April 2009 outlining the material proposed for window frames
email of 28 April 2009 stating that a maximum of 30 additional pupils are proposed to attend the school from September 2009

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is this aspect of the proposal in accordance with the development plan?</th>
<th>Paragraphs in the report where this has been discussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design and Impact on the Conservation Area</td>
<td>YES 15 - 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic and Parking Matters</td>
<td>YES 22 &amp; 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on Residential Amenity</td>
<td>YES 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Aspects</td>
<td>YES 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL

Site Plan
Location Plan - Land at Thames Ditton Infant School, Thames Ditton

Aerial Photographs
Aerial 1 - Thames Ditton Infant School
Aerial 2 - Thames Ditton Infant School

Site Photographs
Figure 1 – View looking north to the location of the proposed demountable unit
Figure 2 – Looking northwest from the location of the new unit
Figure 3 – View to the southeast from the location of the unit
Figure 4 – Looking south showing the location of the proposed canopy
Figure 5 – View to the southeast from the location of the canopy

BACKGROUND

Site Description
1 Thames Ditton Infant School lies within, but on the edge of, the Thames Ditton Conservation Area and within the urban area. The buildings are set well back from Speer Road; there is a playing field used by the school at the front of the site. Speer Road is otherwise predominantly residential in character. To the south and
southeast are the residential areas of Old School Square and Church Walk. North and northwest of the school are residential properties in Speer Road and St Nicholas Road, the latter being a private road. St Nicholas Road marks the boundary of the Conservation Area and leads to a private sports ground and health and fitness club at the rear of the school.

2 Thames Ditton Infant is a three-form entry school with a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 90 and a capacity of 270 places. The main school building is traditional and dates from about the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The building is brick built with multiple clay-tiled steeply pitched and gabled roofs, the tallest one featuring a prominent cupola. Many of the gable ends are characterised by tile hanging. There are several subsequent extensions and one freestanding classroom, most of which also have pitched roofs. The principal exceptions are the existing staffroom at the northwest corner of the building, and the reception area in front of the main gable, which have flat roofs. An extension containing a new library cum staff room and a lobby also has a pitched roof.

3 A significant shortfall in the number of reception class places in September 2009 has been identified in Elmbridge by the County Council as Local Education Authority (LEA). This shortfall results partly from natural demographics and partly from an increasing number of families choosing state provided education rather than private education. The LEA expects a similar occurrence in September 2010. The shortfall in Elmbridge has been divided among six community areas, with the actual shortfall in the Dittons and Weston Green community area being 96 places in September 2009 and the shortfall in 2010 predicted at approximately 60 places. These shortfalls are proposed to be addressed by providing temporary classrooms at Cranmere Primary and Thames Ditton Schools, the latter school being selected because of its location and effective catchment, the size of its site and the existing infrastructure being generous for the current enrolment. A proposal involving about 60 places at Cranmere is attached elsewhere to the Agenda (Item 21).

Planning History

4 EL06/2922 Erection of canopy to create a covered play and waiting area. Permitted 13/02/07.

EL04/1394 Erection of single storey ‘L’ shaped extension to existing staffroom to provide a combination library and staffroom and a lobby. Permitted 11/10/04.

EL98/1136 Erection of classroom block and minor extension to staffroom. Permitted 24/09/98.

EL96/1861 Erection of extension to form school hall and ancillary accommodation. Permitted 07/03/97.

THE PROPOSAL

5 This proposal has two components, the first being a double demountable building situated in the northern corner of the school site, adjacent to the boundary of the Conservation Area. This unit would have two classrooms, toilets, ancillary storage space and a lobby. There would be one entrance which would be provided with an external ramp and steps which comply with disabled access requirements. The building would be approximately 16.75 by 10 metres, with a height of just over 3.5 metres and a floor area of about 156 square metres. More than 127 metres of the
floorspace would be classroom space. Planning permission for this building is requested for a temporary period of 5 years.

6 The second component of the proposal is a single storey open sided canopy located adjacent to the northeast facing elevation of the southernmost part of the main building. The canopy would be approximately 10 by 5 metres and would have circular section steel posts and a roof of double thickness polycarbonate sheeting. The canopy is required to provide covered outside play space for reception age pupils, in accordance with Government guidance. The applicant has chosen the design of the canopy to reflect the location of the school in a Conservation Area.

CONSULTATIONS AND PUBLICITY

District Council

7 Elmbridge Borough Council : No objection

Consultees (Statutory and Non-Statutory)

8 County Highway Authority – Transportation Development Control : No objection

9 Heritage Conservation Team – Historic Buildings Officer : No objection

Parish/Town Council and Amenity Groups

10 Thames Ditton and Weston Green Residents Association : Support application but raise issues of the need for better long term education planning and the temporary accommodation being out of character

11 Thames Ditton Conservation Area Advisory Committee : No objection subject to conditions about five year time period of permission and building being clad in cedar boards

Summary of publicity undertaken and key issues raised by public

12 The application was publicised by the posting of 3 site notices. A total of 49 owner/occupiers of neighbouring properties were directly notified by letter. Seven representations were received from members of the public, with six raising objections relating to traffic congestion and parking on grounds of amenity and traffic safety. Other issues were the temporary nature of the proposed building and the time period of any permission, the need for longer term planning to accommodate increases in school enrolment and the adverse impact of the building on the Conservation Area and in visual amenity terms. The Thames Ditton and Weston Green Residents Association has raised the issue of the demountable classroom being out of character in the Conservation Area.
13 The school lies within the built-up area of Thames Ditton. The main issue is the impact of the proposed development on the Conservation Area. Special consideration needs to be given to whether the proposal preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Other issues in this case are traffic and parking matters, impact on local amenity and design and access aspects.

14 Pursuant to Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 a planning authority in determining a planning application has to consider the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the Development Plan comprises the policies of the South East Plan 2009 and the Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan 2000.

Design and Impact on the Conservation Area

*South East Plan 2009*
- Policy BE1 – Management for an Urban Renaissance
- Policy LF5 – Urban Areas and Regional Hubs
- Policy BE6 – Management of the Historic Environment

*Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan 2000*
- Policy ENV1 – Development and the Environment
- Policy ENV2 – Standard of Design
- Policy HEN11 – Development within a Conservation Area

15 Regional Plan Policy BE1 requires local authorities to use opportunities associated with new development to promote and support design solutions relevant to the local context and which build upon local character and distinctive and sense of place. Regional Plan Policy LF5 states that improvements to the physical environment will be achieved by setting high design standards for new development and its relationship to existing buildings and spaces. Local Plan 2000 Policy ENV1 seeks to ensure that development does not have a materially detrimental effect on the Borough’s character and environment by satisfying criteria including having regard to the scale, character and materials of existing local development. Local Plan Policy ENV2 requires development to achieve a standard of design which is sensitive to local character and appearance, including in terms of scale, massing, height, siting, layout and visual characteristics.

16 Regional Plan Policy BE6 states that local authorities will support proposal which protect, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment and the contribution it makes to local and regional distinctiveness and sense of place. Local Plan Policy HEN11 states that new development within a conservation area should preserve or enhance its character, appearance and setting. Development needs to meet a number of criteria including the scale, design and proportion of new buildings being sympathetic; features of architectural or historic interest such as boundaries being retained; materials, finishes and special details reflecting those traditionally found in the locality; and the position, scale, design and materials of any detached buildings within the curtilage of an existing building being in keeping with the area’s character. Elmbridge Borough Council has prepared a Conservation Area Character Appraisal Consultation Document (dated January 2009), which identifies Thames Ditton Infant School as a focal building and identifies the cupola (bell tower) on the school building as a local landmark, the focus of an important view from Speer Road. The school is on the edge of the Conservation Area and is located adjacent to the Church Walk Character Area.
17 The Design and Access Statement notes that the requirement for a temporary building by necessity restricts the scope for designing a building with similar characteristics as the Victorian school building. The proposal is for a structure in contemporary architectural style, but the applicant considers that a standard demountable unit with plastic-coated galvanized steel elevations would be utilitarian in style and therefore inappropriate in a Conservation Area. Consequently, the proposal is for horizontal cedar cladding which would fade naturally over time to a silver grey colour, which the applicant considers would blend favourably with the asphalt of the playground and to some extent would compliment existing trees and shrubs along the adjacent portion of St Nicholas Road. The building is proposed to have white uPVC window frames. The doors would be fully glazed and the flat roof would be of steel with grey plastic coating. Officers consider that the building would contrast suitably with the original school building and would be appropriate in scale, proportion and materials. Officers also consider that the new unit would be suitably located within the curtilage of the school building, that the design and materials are suitable and that the unit would have no negative impact on the Conservation Area.

18 The proposed canopy has been designed to reflect the plain and simples lines of the adjacent recently built brick faced extension and to take account of the position of the school within the Thames Ditton Conservation Area. The canopy would have a simple outline, a slim profile and slightly decorated brackets. The framework and posts would be made of 100 millimetre diameter circular hollow section black polyester coated steel. The covering would comprise clear twin-wall polycarbonate sheeting. Officers consider that the canopy would integrate well with the school building and with the Conservation Area, and that the canopy would not materially affect the scale or massing of the school building. The combination of antique-looking columns and the transparency of the polycarbonate covering means that the canopy would appear subordinate to the main school building and therefore would maintain the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

19 Three residents object to the proposal on the grounds that the demountable building would have an adverse affect on the Conservation Area. One representation suggests that the proposed timber cladding would not reduce this impact significantly. The Thames Ditton and Weston Green Residents Association supports the proposed development but considers that the demountable unit would be out of character in the Conservation Area. However, these concerns are not shared by the County Council’s Historic Buildings Officer and the Thames Ditton Conservation Area Advisory Committee, with both raising no objection to the proposed development. The Historic Buildings Officer has advised that the school building dates from circa 1900 and is not of listable quality, so conservation concerns are limited to the impact on the special architectural or historic interest of the area. The houses to the south of the school site, along Church Walk, date from the first decade of the 20th century and are architecturally accomplished, having survived comparatively unaltered. He indicates that the location of the demountable building means that its impact on the special interest of the area will be negligible. He considers that the proposed canopy is sympathetically handled and that it would have no impact on the special interest of the area.

20 Two local residents raised the issue of the temporary nature of the development, the time period and whether a permanent extension would be built towards the end of that period. The application form specifies a five year period for the demountable unit. One resident suggests a shorter time period. Officers consider that a five year period is a proportionate response to the identified need for new places specified by the LEA (see paragraph 3 above). The imposition of a planning condition will afford the appropriate degree of control. Officers consider
that the temporary nature of the demountable building lessens its impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Three representations and the consultation response from the Thames Ditton and Weston Green Residents Association raise the issue of need for improved forward planning of education facilities. Officers do not consider this a planning issue in this case, which is concerned with meeting perceived a short term shortfall in educational provision. Any future proposal for the retention of the demountable unit or provision of new accommodation should be treated on its merits.

21 Officers consider that the proposal would have no adverse impact on the Conservation Area and that each component will maintain or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Consequently, officers consider that the proposed development complies with the relevant Development Plan policies and with Government advice on design.

Traffic and Parking Matters
Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan 2000
Policy MOV4 – Traffic Impact of Development Proposals

22 Local Plan Policy MOV4 states that all development proposals should minimise the impact of vehicle and traffic nuisance, particularly in residential areas. The increase in the number of pupils attending the school would worsen current problems of traffic congestion and parking at school drop off and collection times. Three residents have recommended mitigation measures, one resident asking for enforcement and two requesting implementation of a comprehensive parking scheme for the Thames Ditton area. Transportation Development Control have no objections to the proposed development on safety, road capacity or policy grounds. They are aware of localised, short term traffic congestion and parking problems at dropping and picking up times, but are of the view that these issues are generally related to amenity rather than highway safety. St Nicholas Road is a private Road, so any use of it by parents is a matter for the owners of the road to consider. They also commented that it is sustainable for additional accommodation to be located in the community where the increase in demand originates, since this makes it more likely that pupils will walk to school rather than being driven there.

23 Despite residents’ concerns about congestion, safety and parking, Officers consider that the proposal would not significantly worsen the existing situation from an amenity or a safety point of view, particularly since the approved School Travel Plan encourages pupils to travel to school by other means than the car and many of the new pupils are expected to live within walking distance of the school. Officers consider that the proposal complies with the Development Plan policies relating to highway issues.

Impact on Residential Amenity
Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan 2000
Policy COM4 – Provision of Educational Facilities

24 Local Plan Policy COM4 in the Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan 2000 permits extensions to existing schools provided that there would be no significant adverse impact on local residential amenity. Officers consider that the proposed demountable unit would have no significant adverse effect on the amenities of two residences located on the north side of St Nicholas Road, the closest of these houses being approximately 11 metres distant. Existing trees and shrubs would screen most of the building. There would be no detrimental impact on houses to the south because an existing tree and hedge along the school boundary would screen the ground floor of these residences and because the nearest one would be
nearly 40 metres away from the new unit. The same situation exists in relation to the proposed canopy, which officers consider to be unobtrusive. In this case the structure would be screened from the ground floor of adjacent houses, the nearest being about 15 metres away from the canopy. As noted above (see paragraph 22), Officers consider that the traffic generated by the proposal would have no adverse impact on residential amenity. Officers therefore consider the proposal to comply with this Development Plan policy.

**Access Aspects**

*Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan 2000*

Policy GEN6 – Accessibility for All

25 Local Plan Policy GEN6 encourages reasonable access to all public areas for everyone, including disabled users, and requires that all development make suitable provision for such access. The demountable unit will be fully accessible via a ramp and level landing serving the entrance to the building. Therefore, Officers consider that the proposal complies with this Development Plan policy and with Government advice on access.

**HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

26 The Human Rights Act Guidance for Interpretation, contained in the Preamble to the Agenda is expressly incorporated into this report and must be read in conjunction with the following paragraph.

27 Officers consider that the proposed development would have no adverse impact on local amenity. Therefore the proposal would not interfere with any Convention right and has no Human Rights implications.

**CONCLUSION**

28 Officers are satisfied that the proposed demountable classroom building is needed to enable the school to accommodate additional pupils from September 2009, in response to a shortfall in school places in Elmbridge Borough. The canopy is needed to meet Government standards for covered play space for reception age pupils. Officers consider that the development would have no significant detrimental effect on local residential amenity. Officers also consider that the proposal is acceptable in highway terms. Officers are satisfied that both components of the proposal are acceptable in a Conservation Area and in design terms. The development is also satisfactory in an access context. All relevant planning policy tests are therefore considered to have been satisfied. The development is therefore recommended for permission subject to conditions.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country General Regulations 1992, application number EL09/0563 be PERMITTED subject to the following conditions:

**Conditions:**

1. This permission for the demountable unit shall be for a limited period expiring on 31 July 2014, on or before which date the building hereby permitted shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out and completed in all respects strictly in accordance with the terms of this permission, the submitted documents and plans contained in the application and in accordance with such details as are subsequently approved by the County Planning Authority. No variations or omissions shall take place without the prior approval in writing of the County Planning Authority.

Reasons:

1. To reflect the terms of the application and in order that the County Planning Authority may have the opportunity to reconsider the matter in light of experience, taking into account any altered circumstances at the time of the expiry of the permission and ensure that the land is returned to a condition that does not prejudice the resumption of the previous use, in the interests of preserving the character and amenities of the area pursuant to Policies ENV2 and COM4 of the Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan 2000, and of preserving the character and appearance of the Conservation Area pursuant to Policy HEN11 of the Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan 2000.

2. To ensure that the permission is implemented in accordance with the terms of the application and to enable the County Planning Authority to exercise planning control over the development in accordance with Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan 2000 Policies ENV1 and ENV2.

Informatives:

1. 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 approval under the Building Regulations 2000 or for the purposes of any statutory provision whatsoever.

2. 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 Design Note 18 'Access for Disabled People to Educational Buildings' published in 1984 on behalf of the Secretary of State, or any prescribed document replacing that note.

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) (AMENDMENT) ORDER 2003

Reasons for the grant of planning permission and development plan policies/proposals relevant to the decision.

1. The development will have the benefit of providing classroom space needed to accommodate an increase in pupil enrolment and to enable the school to comply with Government advice on providing covered play space;

2. The development is in accordance with the development plan policies so far as they are relevant to the application and there are no material considerations which indicate otherwise; and

3. Any harm can be adequately mitigated by the measures proposed in the application and the conditions subject to which planning permission is granted.
The proposal has been considered against the following development plan policies/provisions:

**South East Plan 2009**
Policy BE1 – Management for an Urban Renaissance  
Policy LF5 – Urban Areas and Regional Hubs  
Policy BE6 – Management of the Historic Environment

**Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan 2000:**  
Policy ENV1 – Development and the Environment  
Policy ENV2 – Standard of Design  
Policy HEN11 – Development within a Conservation Area  
Policy COM4 – Provision of Educational Facilities  
Policy GEN6 – Accessibility for All  
Policy MOV4 – Traffic Impact of Development Proposals

**CONTACT** Nathan Morley  
**TEL. NO.** 020 8541 9420

**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:

**The Development Plan**  
South East Plan 2009  
Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan 2000

**Government Guidance**  