

TO: PLANNING & REGULATORY COMMITTEE **DATE:** 16 July 2014

BY: PLANNING DEVELOPMENT CONTROL TEAM
MANAGER

DISTRICT(S) EPSOM & EWELL BOROUGH COUNCIL **ELECTORAL DIVISION(S):**
Epsom West
Ms Lallement

PURPOSE: FOR DECISION **GRID REF:** 519741 161142

TITLE: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSAL EP/13/01703/CMA

SUMMARY REPORT

Land at Stamford Green Primary School, Christchurch Mount, Epsom, Surrey KT19 8LU

Single storey classroom block extension comprising 9 new classrooms and ancillary spaces; new hard surfaced play area and games court; alterations to pedestrian routes within the site and associated external works.

Stamford Green School is located within the Green Belt and part of the site (at the frontage) is within Flood Zone 3. The application is seeking to provide an extension to the school to increase its size from 2 forms of entry to 3 forms of entry ready for the September 2015 intake. The proposals include new build accommodation and some internal remodelling works.

The application was publicised by the posting of 2 site notices and an advert was placed in the local newspaper. A total of owner/occupiers of 93 neighbouring properties were directly notified by letter. As a result of this publicity 18 letters and a petition signed by 191 people have been received raising objections to the proposal on grounds which are summarised in the report.

Officers consider that the design and scale of the building is acceptable to the site and will not have any adverse impact on neighbouring residential dwellings. There is no significant impact on trees, some trees will be lost but these do not have significant value and can be replaced elsewhere. The proposals will not give rise to additional flooding

within a flood zone as the only works within the flood zone comprise alteration of footpaths and these can be constructed from permeable materials.

The proposal will give rise to a significant increase in vehicle movements and the impact of this on the surrounding area has been considered in detail and mitigation measures sought to alleviate the impact. The overall conclusion is that there is capacity within the local area to accommodate the increase in traffic without compromising highways safety.

The proposal will cause harm to the Green Belt by virtue of the fact that it represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt but the applicant has submitted very special circumstances which clearly outweighs the harm caused by virtue of that inappropriateness and other harm to the open character of the Green Belt. The factors which constitute very special circumstances amount to the need to provide school places in this area and the lack of alternative suitable sites within the urban area to meet the need. Officers consider that very special circumstances do therefore exist in this case to warrant and the proposal can be considered acceptable having regard to Green Belt Policy.

The recommendation is to permit the application subject to conditions.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Applicant

Estates Planning and Management

Date application valid

12 March 2014

Period for Determination

7 May 2014

Amending Documents

02/04/2014 Arboricultural Report dated 13/11/13

02/04/2014 Flood Risk Assessment dated Feb 2014

30/05/2014 Drawing 12261.03/L (90)003 rev P9 Proposed Site GA Plan dated 23/10/2013

30/05/2014 Transport Assessment dated May 2014

16/06/2014 School Travel Plan

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.

	Is this aspect of the proposal in accordance with the development plan?	Paragraphs in the report where this has been discussed
DESIGN AND VISUAL AMENITY	Yes	22 - 24
RESIDENTIAL AMENITY	Yes	25 - 29
HIGHWAYS TRAFFIC AND AMENITY	Yes	30 - 37
IMPACT ON TREES	Yes	38 - 41
FLOODING	Yes	42 - 43
ARCHAEOLOGY	Yes	44 - 45
PRINCIPLE OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREEN BELT	No	46 - 50
VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES	Yes	51 - 58

ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL

Site Plan

Plan

Aerial Photographs

Aerial

Site Photographs

Figure 1: Site of extension showing existing rear elevation of school and change in site level

Figure 2: Site of proposed extension

Figure 3 Existing access viewed from school site

BACKGROUND

Site Description

- 1 Stamford Green Primary School is located to the rear of houses in Christ Church Mount to the north and Manor Green Road to the east, with the main access to the school off Christ Church Mount. There are allotments to the south of the school site whilst well beyond the western boundary lies the new housing development on the former Epsom Hospital Cluster land.
- 2 The main school buildings, which are of single storey prefabricated panel construction, are located on the eastern part of the site and are set at a lower level than the school playing fields. An extensive area of school playing fields lie to the west of the school buildings with the land rising upwards to the western boundary. The western boundary is well screened with trees and bushes whilst the northern boundary is defined by a mix of close board and chain link fencing with bushes and mature trees. The southern boundary is defined by chain link fencing.
- 3 A small part of the site lies within Flood Zone 3, the remainder being within Flood Zone 1. The whole school site lies within the Green Belt.

Planning History

- 4 In July 1999, planning permission was granted (ref. 99/0799) for the construction of a pedestrian entrance and footpath.
- 5 In April 2003, replacement of an existing conservatory was considered to fall within permitted development rights.
- 6 In August 2004, permission was granted (ref. EP04/0006) for the erection of a covered outdoor teaching area of 6 metres by 17 metres and a new brick retaining wall.
- 7 In 2006 the District granted planning permission for the provision of two store sheds, raised pergola's with flower beds ball wall, covered seating area, & low retaining wall with seating alcoves (ref: 95/00726/FUL)
- 8 In February 2007 planning permission was granted (ref. EP06/1117) for the construction of a hard surfaced playground with a surrounding 2.75 metre high chain link fence.
- 9 In June 2007, a shelter in the school playground was judged to be 'permitted development'.
- 10 In 2007 planning permission was granted for a single storey cloakroom extension (ref: 07/01338)

- 11 In February 2014 the District Council granted planning permission (ref. 13/0949/FULL) for a synthetic sports pitch
-

THE PROPOSAL

- 12 The application is seeking to provide an extension to the school to increase its size from 2 forms of entry to 3 forms of entry ready for the September 2015 intake. The proposals include new build accommodation and some internal remodelling works.
- 13 The new building comprises a new teaching block to the rear of the existing school building attached to the existing school by a covered link. This would accommodate 6 new general teaching classrooms, 3 reception classrooms and studio space. The proposed linked building measures 17.5m deep at its widest point and 45m long. It would be a maximum of 4.9m high and would have a flat roof. The building would extend to 3.5m to the site boundary with adjacent residential dwellings in Christ Church Mount to the north. The external elevations of this building would be part rendered and painted and part clad with horizontal timber cladding.
- 14 The proposal also includes making improvements to the access into the school in order to segregate pupil and vehicle access and provide a safer and larger waiting area for parents within the school grounds. This involves changing the use of part of the existing rear garden to the adjacent school caretaker's house on the school frontage and requires the removal of several trees.
- 15 The proposal also includes changes to the hard surfaced areas to the rear of the school with the proposed relocation of the netball court (there will be no fencing around this court) to the southern boundary of the site where the current MUGA is located and a new smaller hard play area provided adjacent to the proposed new building which will be fenced with 2.4m weldmesh (colour to be agreed).
-

CONSULTATIONS AND PUBLICITY

District Council

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council: No objection

Consultees (Statutory and Non-Statutory)

Transportation Development Planning: No objection subject to conditions

Summary of publicity undertaken and key issues raised by public

16 The application was publicised by the posting of 2 site notices and an advert was placed in the local newspaper. A total of owner/occupiers of 93 neighbouring properties were directly notified by letter. As a result of this publicity 18 letters have been received together with a petition containing 191 signatures. The petition states *'We the undersigned petition Surrey County Council to create, as part of the expansion of Stamford Green Primary School in Epsom, a zebra crossing, additional staff car park, a drop-off/pick-up area, a School Travel Plan encouraging the use of the school's West gate and an off-road cycle route via the allotments'*. The points made in the letters of objections to the proposal can be summarised as follows:-

1. The proposed development does not accord with the Development Plan as the site lies within the Green belt and the proposal is inappropriate development
2. There is severe traffic congestion in the area and this proposal will exacerbate that
3. The Travel Plan requires behavioural change which is unlikely to be successful
4. There should be more parking within the school site
5. Suitable screening should be provided on the northern boundary
6. Any increase in playground noise would be unacceptable as it is already high and prevents neighbours relaxing in their gardens
7. Drainage should not affect neighbouring properties
8. A proper pedestrian crossing should be provided as well as a formal one way system in the neighbouring road
9. The Council should think ahead and provide more local schools near to the areas of need
10. The Atkins survey of parking was undertaken on a warm sunny day when many people walked to school
11. The school should provide a drop off zone in Manor park at the back gate to encourage people coming from that direction to go there and reduce congestion the other side
12. The building is close to the northern boundary and should be moved further away to match the existing school
13. The white render is inappropriate and should be better blended with the environment
14. The building height should be reduced
15. A *green roof* would be a better solution as it would be environmentally friendly
16. There should be landscaping on the northern boundary not just for the school itself as currently proposed

17. The Construction Management Plan proposes a 7.30am start on site – it should be 8.00am
-

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 17 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”.
- 18 At present in relation to this application the Development Plan consists of the saved policies of The Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000 and the Epsom and Ewell Core Strategy 2007.
- 19 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.
- 20 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).
- 21 In this case the main issues are the impact of the development on the Green Belt and whether very special circumstances exist which clearly outweigh the harm due to inappropriateness and any other harm such that an exception to policy can be made. The impact that the proposed building and associated works would have on the design and visual amenity of the existing site and the surrounding area will also be considered as well and the impact upon residential amenity, transportation considerations, archaeological implications and the impact upon trees.

DESIGN AND VISUAL AMENITY

Epsom and Ewell Core Strategy 2007

Policy CS5 – Design

8

Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000

Policy DC 1 - General Development Control Criteria

- 22 Epsom and Ewell Sustainable Design Supplementary Planning Document June 2012
Both Core Strategy Policy CS5 and Local Plan Policies BE1 and DC1 require design to make a positive contribution to the quality of the built environment.

The existing school in this case is a flat roofed building and the proposed extension has been designed to reflect this and is proposed with a flat roof. The scale and massing of the building will remain ancillary to the larger school and is considered will relate acceptably to it. The use of render and timber panelling on the external elevations will relate well to the existing site and buildings which also have rendered external walls. The proposed new building will not be visible from outside of the school and therefore there is no requirement to consider the wider context of the area.

- 23 The proposal also includes changes on the frontage of the school site involving the relocation of the existing fence around the rear garden of the caretaker's house and the removal of trees to facilitate an improved pedestrian access into the school. This is within the school curtilage and not visible in the general street scene. The implications in respect of the trees to be removed are discussed in paragraphs 38 – 41 below but in terms of the impact on visual amenity officers consider that the proposed changes will enhance the frontage of the school and provide an improved frontage which will enhance the visual appearance of the site.

- 24 Having regard to the above officers consider that the proposal meets the requirements of the Development Plan and is acceptable in this regard.

RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000

Policy DC 1 - General Development Control Criteria

- 25 Policy DC 1 of the Epsom and Ewell Local Plan states, inter alia, that planning permission will only be granted for development where it would not cause serious harm to the living conditions or operational efficiency of adjoining properties in relation to the impact it has on the outlook, the amount of daylight, sunlight, and privacy; and the level of noise, fumes, vibrations and general disturbance in the area.

- 26 The proposed new building comes to within 3.5m of the northern boundary of the site which abuts the rear gardens of residential dwellings in Christ Church Mount. There is a well defined close board fence along this boundary which is approximately 2m high and the rear gardens of the dwellings themselves extend to 45m. Given the distances involved and the fact that the proposed building is flat roofed with a maximum height of 4.9m officers do not consider that the proposal will have any adverse impact on the residential amenities of neighbouring properties by virtue of loss of outlook, overlooking or loss of light.

- 27 The proposal also includes changes on the frontage of the school site involving the relocation of the existing fence around the rear garden of the caretaker's house and the removal of trees to facilitate an improved pedestrian access into the school. The caretaker's house will have a reduced rear garden but will retain an acceptable level of private amenity space. The garden area will be brought within the school site and landscaped to provide an improved pedestrian access into the school. The proposals do not bring the existing parking areas any nearer to the dwelling than exists at present. Officers therefore do not consider that this element of the proposal will have any undue adverse impact on residential amenity.

- 28 The proposal also includes the relocation of an existing netball pitch from the southern boundary of the site to adjacent to the proposed building. This would comprise a hard surfaced pitch surrounded with a fence. This is on the site of open grass and raises no issues; officers consider that this aspect of the proposal is acceptable.

- 29 Having regard to the above officers consider that the proposal meets the requirements of the Development Plan and is acceptable in this regard.

HIGHWAYS, TRAFFIC AND AMENITY

Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000
Policy DC 1 - General Development Control Criteria
Policy CF4 - Educational facilities
Policy MV8 – Parking Standards

- 30 Policy DC 1 of the Epsom and Ewell Local Plan states, inter alia, that planning permission will only be granted for development where it would not cause serious harm to the living conditions or operational efficiency of adjoining properties in relation to the impact it has on noise, fumes, vibrations and general disturbance in the area whilst Policy CF 4 states that proposals for new educational facilities or for extensions to existing educational facilities will be permitted provided that:-
 - I. The amenities of neighbouring residents are not unduly harmed; and
 - II. There is no adverse effect on highway safety and efficiency.

- 31 The applicants have submitted a Transportation Assessment in support of this application. 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.
- 32 The results of these assessments revealed that there is still spare parking capacity on local roads during school drop off and pick up times and this was influenced by the fact that the arrival and departure times of people is staggered over a period of around 45 minutes (as a result of morning and after school clubs). The parking review took account of available capacity at both entrances to the school, including the west gate.
- 33 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 49% of pupils walk to school, 8% cycle and 10% scoot, 34% access the school by car
 - In 2013/14 and 2014/15, over half of reception pupils admitted to the school live within 0.47 km of the site (source SCC School Commissioning Officer), the existing catchment of the school is very local and there is considerable scope for access by non-car means
 - A worst case scenario projected trip generation shows that the number of cars arriving at the school during peak times could increase from 101 in 2013 to 151 by 2021; there would also be additional staff journeys of around 12 vehicles
 - The parking beat survey shows that over 100 spaces are available within a 5 minute walk of the school and therefore the additional 50 cars arising from the school expansion 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
 - As the school currently does not have a Travel Plan the introduction of such (and one is proposed as part of this application) could result in the 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.

- 34 Transportation Development Planning assessed the application and considered the representations received, including detailed representations made by the Local Councillor. TDC advised that further mitigation measures could be sought in recognition of the fact that the catchment area for the school extended to the south and west. In particular the following areas were identified and the applicant was asked to explore them further:-
- a) A proper investigation - including making approaches to Epsom and Ewell Council - into the feasibility of using an existing footpath through the allotments as an alternative access to the school from the south which would link in with a new bus route and cycle route running along the road to the south
 - b) (An analysis of the ability to make more use in the future of the existing western gate into the school to serve those pupils accessing the site from the west for example looking into whether there are any proposals on the adjoining land which would jeopardise the existing footpath link, highlighting areas where vehicles can legitimately park to drop off and ensuring that the school support the measures and actively promote this access in their Travel Plan
 - c) The provision at this stage of a draft Travel Plan which could show other possible mitigation measures that could be achieved such as car sharing and access by alternative modes of transport. One example of where this would have helped is with the amount of on-site parking for staff which is provided which is much less than the actual predicted numbers of staff.
- 35 In addition amended plans were sought showing highways works to the road outside of the school to extend the works proposed within the school gate in an appropriate fashion onto the public highway.
- 36 The applicant's response on these matters and the comments of Officers are as follows:-
- a) Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Officers have indicated via an email that they are unlikely to support the provision of a shared cycle/pedestrian link to the school through the allotments, although it is unclear why not. This seems to be based on the premise that the Borough Council is unlikely to agree to the transfer of allotment land. There is an existing track along the edge of the allotments; it is unclear why there could not be a shared use of this by the allotment holders and the school and why a land transfer is necessary. The applicant has been asked to pursue this further with the District and the school itself and the Committee will be updated on the outcome of this.
 - b) The initial parking survey did take into account Ethel Bailey Close but no other roads close to the west gate. Officer observations and photographs supplied by the applicant demonstrate that there is considerable on-street parking available to the west. The school intends to direct all parents accessing the school by car to the west gate once construction commences. Once parents start to routinely use this entrance, it is likely that some will continue to use this access even when construction ceases.

- c) The site is constrained and the staff parking has been maximised. It is not possible to provide additional parking within the site available. Staff are also included in the travel plan.
- d) The applicant has proposed a raised table adjacent to the school gates to make it easier for pedestrians to cross the access road and to slow traffic entering and exiting the site. These works will improve facilities for pedestrians at the access. The footway into the site has also been widened.

37 In view of the above, officers are satisfied that all matters other than the access through the allotments have been satisfactorily addressed. It is recommended that a condition be attached to ensure that this matter is pursued until all avenues have been exhausted.

IMPACT ON TREES

Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000

Policies NE5 and NE6 – Trees and Woodland.

Policy NE7 – New Development

- 38 Local Plan Policy NE5 seeks assessment of trees where they are a significant feature of a development site and promotes retention of important trees. Policy NE6 seeks measures to protect retained trees during construction. Policy NE7 requires landscaping to a high standard to retain existing features of landscape and nature conservation significance.
- 39 A full Arboricultural Assessment has been submitted with this proposal. This considers the removal of the trees on the frontage of the site as well as the implications of the development on trees outside of the school site but within rear gardens of neighbouring dwellings which back onto the site of the proposed school extension. The Assessment shows that a total of ten individual trees will be lost as a result of this proposal. These are on the frontage of the site where the proposed changes to the pedestrian access are proposed. The trees are all category C2 grade with the exception of one which is category B2 and the trees are required to be removed as they are on the direct conflict with the line of the proposed path.
- 40 Although several trees are shown to be removed in this case those trees are within the school site and are not visible 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 to achieve a safer pedestrian access into the site. Replacement trees will be provided in other appropriate locations across the site to mitigate against the loss for the longer term. The proposal includes measures to ensure that the roots of trees in neighbouring gardens 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.

- 41 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.

FLOODING

Epsom and Ewell Core Strategy 2007 Policy CS6 – Sustainable Development

- 42 Policy CS6 of the Core Strategy requires that proposals for development avoid increasing the risk from flooding.
- 43 A small proportion of the site lies within Flood Zone 3a (access road into school and car park and parts of the frontage of the school building) and therefore has a relatively high risk of flooding but the major proportion of the site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore not at risk of flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted with this application. This concludes that as the built development proposed lies within the parts of the site which are not affected by flooding and therefore mitigation measures will not be required. Officers generally concur with this view but it is noted that the proposed new pedestrian footway on the school frontage does lie within the Flood Zone. Whilst this is a very small area of development it is considered that it would be appropriate to attach a condition requiring this footpath to be constructed from a permeable material. Subject to this (which can be required via a condition on the planning permission) officers consider that the proposal accords with the requirements of the Development Plan in this regard.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000 Policy BE17 Archaeology

- 44 Policy BE17 of the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000 states that where planning permission is granted on sites of 0.4 hectares or more methods for identifying and preserving any archaeological remains will need to be undertaken.
- 45 The County Archaeologist has commented that given that the proposed development in this case will largely be on an area of existing hard standing the proportional requirement

would be for a watching brief to be carried out as the development proceeds. Officers therefore recommend that a condition is attached to this permission requiring this and with this the proposal is acceptable and complies with Development Plan Policy.

PRINCIPLE OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREEN BELT

The National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Chapter 9, paragraph's 87 - 89: Protecting Green Belt Land

Epsom and Ewell Core Strategy 2007

Policy CS2 – Green Belt

Policy CS13 – Cultural and Community Facilities

Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000

Policy GB1 – Green Belt

Policy CF4 – Educational Facilities

- 46 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.
- 47 Policy CS2 of the Epsom and Ewell Core Strategy states that strict control will be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt as directed by Government Policy. Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy states that the upgrading of existing D1 facilities (which includes schools) will be encouraged, particularly where they address a deficiency in current provision, and where they meet the identified needs of communities both within the Borough and beyond.
- 48 Policy GB1 of the Epsom and Ewell Local Plan reiterates that the boundaries of the Green Belt in the borough will be maintained. Policy CF 4 of the Local Plan proposals for new educational facilities or for extensions to existing educational facilities will be permitted provided that:-
- I. The amenities of neighbouring residents are not unduly harmed; and
 - II. There is no adverse effect on highway safety and efficiency.
- 49 The National Planning Policy Framework also states in paragraph 89 that new buildings in the Green Belt represent inappropriate development. However several exceptions to this are then listed, one of which is the *extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.*

- 50 The proposed extension amounts to approximately 836 sq m which represents an increase of some 45% over the floor space within the existing school building. The proposed classroom block stands separate to the existing building but is joined to it by a covered link which renders it effectively an extension to the existing building. 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'. In this case officers consider that the proposal is a 'disproportionate' extension' in view of the proposed increase in floor space but also because it is detached from the main building and also located on higher ground. The proposed development therefore would be considered as inappropriate development within the Green Belt. In these circumstances it is for the applicant to then demonstrate very special circumstances exist in order to justify the inappropriate development. The NPPF 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).

Need for the development

- 51 Primary school rolls have been rising steadily over the last decade across Epsom and Ewell Borough. Overall there have been around 27% more births and an increase in the housing trajectory to include smaller developments, along with the planned expansion of the former hospital site in the northern part of the Borough. There is a clear need for additional primary school places in the North West Epsom planning area equivalent to one form of entry per year. Officers consider that it is not appropriate to create a new school to deal with the scale of the need, and that the only real option is to extend existing schools.

- 52 The North West Epsom primary place planning area is served by three existing primary schools:-

1. Southfields Park Primary
2. Epsom Primary School
3. Stamford Green Primary School

- 53 **Southfields Park Primary** is an over-subscribed school built as a one form entry school approximately ten years ago. It was intended to take children from one for the new estates on the former hospital site. The school was rated as 'Outstanding' at its last inspection in 2010 and was expanded five years ago to two forms of entry. It now has 360 pupils on roll and is growing year on year. This school cannot expand further as it occupies a compact site and does not have its own playing fields, therefore cannot currently provide suitable outdoor space to deliver the PE curriculum entitlement in line with the most recent minimum guidance.
- 54 **Epsom Primary School** is a two form entry primary school with a nursery. The school was judged as 'Good' by OFSTED at its last inspection in 2010. It currently has 427 pupils plus 50 nursery children on its roll because it has already taken additional pupils into reception classes in September 2013 in order to provide more places in the area to meet the local need. Epsom Primary School occupies a compact site in the town with very little playground or playing fields space. Although it has historically been undersubscribed in terms of parental first preference applications, it is becoming increasingly popular and has been filled up to its PAN with second preferences. The frontage of this Victorian building is listed and there are planning restrictions on what may be done on the site. For all of these reasons further permanent expansion has been discounted, although the school has temporarily agreed expand again in September 2014 to help relieve the pressure for places in the area, pending a decision on Stamford Green's expansion plans.
- 55 **Stamford Green School** is a two form entry primary school which has increasingly served the new estates as well as its immediate locality. It is an oversubscribed school rated by OFSTED as Good at its last inspection in 2010. The standard of education at the school was further endorsed in February 2013 in an Interim Assessment by OFSTED. The school has accommodation for 420 pupils at present and has its own playing field. The school roll is full at February 2014.
- 56 This current planning application has been made as Stamford Green School is willing to permanently expand in the longer term and is keen to do so with the promise of new accommodation designed to enhance the quality of the educational opportunities on offer. The staff and governors have worked with Surrey County Council and the Cluster Programme Office to agree the proposal. There are no alternative local schools in the area that could expand by the 1FE that is required and the only other option would be to build a new primary school within the planning area. However in this planning area land is scarce and it is surrounded by the Green Belt. Therefore although Stamford Green School is itself partly located within the Green Belt it is considered that expansion of this school can be considered acceptable as an exception to Green belt Policy as there is an overriding need for additional school places and this need cannot be catered for at any other site outside of the Green Belt.

Other Harm to the Green Belt

- 57 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 paragraph 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.
- 58 The whole of the school site is within the Green Belt which extends outwards towards the west and south. The residential dwellings to the north and east 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 west and the South. In this case the proposal is for a large extension to the existing school. This will be clearly visible to users of the allotment ground to the south of the site as well as partial views from residential dwellings in that area and Christ Church Road to the south. In view of the size of the proposed building and its location on higher ground to the rear of the school officers consider that it 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.

Whether need for additional school places constitutes very special circumstances

- 59 Officers consider that a robust case has been made by the applicants demonstrating a need to increase the number of primary school places within this area as summarised above and given the rural 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.'*
- 60 Officers consider that the need set out above coupled with the lack of suitable alternative sites constitutes very special circumstances which would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm such that an exception to policy can be made.

Conclusions on Green Belt

- 61 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

- 62 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.
- 63 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

- 64 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 .

- 65 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.

RECOMMENDATION

That pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, that application EP/13/01703/CON 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.
2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in all respects strictly in accordance with the following plans/drawings:

12261.03/L (PA) 001 rev P2 Location plan dated 28/02/14

12261.03/L (PA) 002 rev P2 Existing Site Plan dated 28/02/14

12261.03/L (PA) 003 rev P2 Existing Ground Floor Plan dated 28/02/14

12261.03/L (PA) 005 rev P1 Existing Elevations dated 21/11/13

12261.03/L (PA) 090 rev P4 Proposed Site Plan dated 28/02/14

12261.03/L (PA) 101 rev P7 Proposed Ground Floor GA Plan dated 28/02/14

12261.03/L (PA) 103 rev P4 Proposed Roof GA Plan dated 28/02/14

12261.03/L (PA) 106 rev P4 Proposed Elevations dated 28/02/14

12261.03/L (PA) 107 rev P4 Proposed Elevations Sheet 2 dated 28/02/14

12261.03/L (91)001 rev P3 Hard Landscape Strategy dated 03/03/14

12261.03/L (92)001 rev P2 Soft Landscape Strategy dated 26/02/14

12261.03/L (90)003 rev P9 Proposed Site GA Plan dated 23/10/2013

3. The measures set out in the Arboricultural Implication and Assessment and Method Statement by Babcock dated 13th November 2013 shall be fully implemented prior to and during the construction of the development.
4. During school term time there shall be no HGV movements to or from the site between the hours of 08.15am and 09.15 am and 2.30pm and 3.30pm.
5. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in all respects strictly in accordance with the Construction Method Plan Issue 2 dated 3rd February 2014
6. The School Travel Plan dated June 2014 hereby approved shall be implemented on the first occupation of the development hereby permitted and shall thereafter be maintained, monitored and developed.
7. Within 6 months of the date of this permission details of the review of the School Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority and the approved measures shall be implemented thereafter.
8. No later than six months after the commencement of the development hereby permitted a scheme to provide replacement trees for those trees to be removed on the frontage of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Such scheme shall include the size, location and species of the proposed replacement trees and measures for the landscaping to be maintained for a period of five years. Such maintenance shall include the replacement of any tree or shrub 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.
9. The proposed new footpath and paving area on the site frontage shall be constructed in permeable material.
10. The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied unless and until the revised access arrangements and raised pedestrian crossing as generally shown on drawing number 12261.03/L(90)003 Revision P9 have been designed and implemented to the satisfaction of the County Planning Authority.
11. In carrying out the development hereby permitted, no works involving groundwork's, the excavation of foundations or any other works involving the disturbance of any previously undisturbed ground shall be carried out unless the applicant has secured at his own

expense the presence of a suitably qualified archaeologist to exercise a watching brief over the works being carried out in accordance with a specification which has been agreed in writing by the County Archaeologist.

12. The applicant shall use all best endeavours to the satisfaction of the County Planning Authority to provide an additional pedestrian/cycle access via the allotments to the south of the site.
13. The development shall not be occupied until an additional scooter pod (12 parking spaces) has been provided within the site.

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 the interest of the visual amenity of the site and the area in accordance with Policies NE5, NE6 and NE7 of the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000.
4. To manage and mitigate the transportation implications of the development pursuant to Policies DC 1, and CF4 of the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000
5. To manage and mitigate the transportation implications of the development pursuant to Policies DC 1, and CF4 of the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000
6. To manage and mitigate the transportation implications of the development pursuant to Policies DC 1, and CF4 of the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000
7. To manage and mitigate the transportation implications of the development pursuant to Policies DC 1, and CF4 of the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000
8. In the interest of the visual amenity of the area in accordance with policies NE5, NE6 and NE7 of the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000.

9. That part of the site lies within a Flood Zone and permeable material will assist in alleviating the flood risk within the site in accordance with Policy CS6 of the Epsom and Ewell Core Strategy 2007.
10. To manage and mitigate the transportation implications of the development pursuant to Policies DC 1, and CF4 of the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000
11. To ensure that an opportunity is afforded to examine any remains of archaeological interest which are potentially affected by the development and to ensure that adequate steps are taken for the preservation or recording of such remains pursuant to Policy BE17 of the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000
12. To manage and mitigate the transportation implications of the development pursuant to Policies DC 1, and CF4 of the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000
13. To manage and mitigate the transportation implications of the development pursuant to Policies DC 1, and CF4 of the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000

Informatives:

1. 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.
2. 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.

CONTACT

Dawn Horton-Baker

TEL. NO.

020 8541 9435

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:

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Epsom and Ewell Core Strategy 2007 and the Epsom and Ewell District Wide Local Plan 2000

This page is intentionally left blank