

TO: PLANNING & REGULATORY COMMITTEE

DATE: 10 December 2014

BY: PLANNING DEVELOPMENT TEAM MANAGER

DISTRICT(S) TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

ELECTORAL DIVISION(S):

Caterham Hill

Mr Orrick

PURPOSE: FOR DECISION

GRID REF: 533581 156883

TITLE: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSAL TA2014/1520

SUMMARY REPORT

Land at St Francis RC Primary School, Whyteleafe Road, Caterham, Surrey CR3 5ED

Erection of single storey classroom and hall extensions, canopy and external walkways, playground and car park extensions and alterations to access road.

St Francis is one of a group of four schools located in the Green Belt on the east side of Caterham on the Hill. Three, including St Francis, are served by a private access road in the form of a loop leading from Whyteleafe Road. The other two are a community primary school and a part residential special school. The proposal would provide the accommodation for St Francis to expand from 1.5 forms of entry (FE) to 2 FE, which would mean an increase in pupils from 315 to 420. In addition to new buildings, the proposals include additional staff parking for St Francis and alterations to the access road to improve its capacity, including additional parking bays and the widening of the junction. These improvements involve the loss of a number of trees both in the centre of the loop and on either side of the junction of the access road with Whyteleafe Road.

Objections to the proposal have been received from Caterham on the Hill Parish Council and 22 other representations have been received. The Parish Council consider that the measures taken to mitigate traffic and parking impacts are insufficient, but also consider that the tree removal involved is unnecessary and incompatible with the site's green belt status. They are concerned that the proposal does not address the more general need for school places locally. The other representations mainly raise objection on grounds of the traffic and parking impacts of an increased number of pupils travelling to and from the site.

The proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Officers consider that the design of the extensions is acceptable and the buildings do not adversely affect residential amenities. Planning and Highways Officers consider that the measures proposed in the application to mitigate potential traffic and parking impacts will have a positive effect on the capacity of the loop access road such that there will not be a severe residual impact. They consider that possible additional measures suggested in representations will not benefit its capacity. Some of the trees which would be lost do

have some significance, but officers consider the right balance has been struck between limiting traffic impacts and limiting impact on trees. Replacement tree planting can be achieved by imposing conditions. The need for additional faith based school places has been demonstrated, and St Francis is the only catholic primary school in the northern part of Tandridge District. This need is considered to constitute very special circumstances and some weight should be given to the desirability of providing a sufficient choice of school places. The very special circumstances are considered sufficient to clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt and any other harm identified.

The recommendation is to PERMIT subject to conditions

APPLICATION DETAILS

Applicant

Estates Planning and Management

Date application valid

10 September 2014

Period for Determination

5 November 2014

Amending Documents

None

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
Whether Inappropriate Development in Green Belt	no	19 - 20
Design	yes	21
Residential Amenity	yes	22 - 24
Impact on Tree Cover	no	25 - 33
Transport Impacts	yes	34 - 43
Whether Very Special Circumstances exist to Justify Inappropriate Development in Green Belt	yes	44 - 51

ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL

Aerial Photographs

Aerial 1

Aerial 2

Site Plan

Plan 1 Tree Protection Plan

Site Photographs

- Figure 1 Location of proposed classroom block, viewed from the east.
- Figure 2 Location of proposed hall extension and covered walkway, viewed from the east.
- Figure 3 Existing drop off area at head of access road to schools, adjoining St Francis.
- Figure 4 School access road during afternoon pick up period.
- Figure 5 Location for additional parking bays on access road.
- Figure 6 Looking north along Whyteleafe Road towards junction with schools access road.
- Figure 7 Looking north along Whyteleafe Road from junction with schools access road.
- Figure 8 Parking in Strathmore Close during afternoon pick up period.

BACKGROUND

Site Description

- 1 St Francis Roman Catholic Primary School is currently a 1.5 form of entry (FE) primary, with approximately 310 pupils. It is one of four schools grouped together at the western edge of an area of open land occupying the steep valley side of Caterham Valley. On the west side of the group of schools is Whyteleafe Road, which has residential development on its west. To the west of St Francis' lies Audley Primary School. To the south is Sunnydown, a residential special school, and de Stafford College, a secondary School. All four schools occupy land designated as Green Belt.
- 2 The existing St Francis buildings lie in the north east corner of the group and comprise mainly single storey buildings of brick and panel construction with flat roofs dating from the 1960s. On the north (rear) side is a recently completed two storey modular classroom block. On the east side is a freestanding demountable classroom block. There is a car park for 15 staff and visitors cars on the west side of the main building. A caretaker's house sits between the St Francis and Audley sites.

- 10
- 3 Audley, Sunnydown and St Francis share a private access road from Whyteleafe Road which forms a loop around three islands, with short cut back to the exit creating the islands. The first two islands have dense tree and shrub cover containing self sown , mostly small trees, while the third, at the end of the loop adjoining the St Francis buildings, is more open but contains two very large oak trees. This operates as a one way gyratory system on which parents of pupils at both of the schools park when collecting or dropping off their children. The loop at the east end, is maintained by St Francis, and parents are permitted to stop only briefly to pick up and drop off children, rather than park and leave their cars.. Both Audley and St Francis have small staff car parks on the north side of the access road. On Whyteleafe Road approximately 20m north of its junction with the schools access road is a recently installed signal controlled pedestrian crossing and speed table. There is traffic calming on this section of Whyteleafe Road. There are single yellow line parking restrictions preventing parking on Whyteleafe Road north of the pedestrian crossing between 14.30 and 16.00, and double yellow lines to the south, and on the junctions of Whyteleafe Road with Matlock Road, Strathmore Close and Portley Lane.
- 4 In response to the County Council's forecast increases in the number of school places required in the area, and specifically to the rise in demand for catholic school places in the area, it is proposed that St Francis be expanded to 2FE, which would give it a capacity of 420 pupils.

Planning History

- 5 TA2012/1280 Erection of building for use as teaching wing and relocation of garages. Permitted subject to conditions 11/01/13.
- TA2011/0514 Erection of extension to detached group room. Permitted subject to conditions 15/07/11.
- TA2009/0907 Erection of storage shed. Permitted 09/10/09.
- TA2007/1922 retention of extension to playground. Permitted 09/01/09.
- TA2007/1406 Erection of single storey extension to east elevation to provide classroom, library and staffroom. Permitted subject to conditions 14/11/07.
- TA2003/1138 Erection of lean to canopy to west elevation and detached storage hut to north side of school building. Permitted 30/09/03.

THE PROPOSAL

- 6 To provide appropriate accommodation for the increased number of pupils, it is proposed to construct a single storey extension on the east side of the main building comprising two new classrooms, and an extension to the school hall on the north side. The latter, together with a covered walkway, would join the recently completed two storey block to the main building. Both extensions would be of similar height to the existing building, with flat roofs continued on the same line and using similar materials, with windows of similar proportions set at the same cill height. The classroom extension would be located on the

corner of the school's main hard play area and to compensate for that, the play area is to be extended northwards by approximately 3m northwards.

- 7 The existing car park would be extended northwards, to the rear of the caretaker's house, providing an additional 9 parking spaces. Improvements are also proposed to the internal access road, including;
- the provision of additional parking bays for parents on the 'island' in the middle of the loop, increasing the parking capacity of the loop road by a net 12 spaces;
 - identified crossing points for pedestrians on the internal access road;
 - Widening of the school access road to provide for left and right turning lanes at its junction with Whyteleafe Road
 - improvements to the sightlines at the junction of the access road with Whyteleafe Road.

Creation of the parking bays would require the removal of a number of relatively small trees. Several trees would also be lost in improving the sightlines, including a large turkey oak.

The proposed buildings would enable the school to expand from its existing capacity of 315 pupils to 420 pupils. It would involve an increase in staff numbers from 40 to 43.

CONSULTATIONS AND PUBLICITY

District Council

- 8 Tandridge District Council: *{subject to written confirmation}*
No objection subject to County Planning Authority being satisfied that the application offers sufficient mitigation of potential traffic impacts and that removal of the turkey oak from the sightline visibility splay is necessary

Consultees (Statutory and Non-Statutory)

- 9 County Highway Authority
(Transport Development Planning): Taking into account proposed improvements to staff and parents parking provision and to the internal access road, scheme is acceptable in transport terms. Recommends conditions to secure these improvements, the provision of on site cycle storage and to update the school's travel plan.
- 10 County Arboriculturist: *[subject to written confirmation]*
Concurs with consultant's assessment that arboricultural impact is moderate. No objection subject to implementation of measures proposed in arboricultural method statement for protection of trees to be retained, arboricultural supervision of excavation with root protection areas of retained trees and holding of a pre-start meeting between

contractors and arboricultural interests. Considers arboricultural impact should be further mitigated by requiring hand digging of excavation within root protection areas and provision of new tree planting.

Parish/Town Council and Amenity Groups

- 11 Caterham on the Hill Parish Council: Object on the following grounds:
- “- in planning the proposed traffic measures and arboricultural work, insufficient regard has been had to the Green Belt location of the school and precinct;
 - the proposed traffic circulation and parking provision is not the best that can be achieved;
 - in particular, it appears that the precinct site has not been assessed as a whole and that the best outcome for the three schools overall has not been sought;
 - there is need for full agreement by all schools on the best use of the precinct for car parking and circulation;
 - the consultation could include de Stafford School as well as St Francis', Audley and Sunnydown Schools;
 - there is also a need to consult local residents on parking mitigation measures which may be needed on Whyteleafe Road and in local side roads;
 - the proposed School Travel Plan is inadequate;
 - the proposed felling of 31 trees and other tree reduction works are excessive and largely unnecessary”
- The proposal does not address the need for additional school places generally as well as the need for faith based places.

Summary of publicity undertaken and key issues raised by public

- 12 The application was publicised by the posting of 2 site notices and an advert was placed in the local newspaper. 37 owners/occupiers of neighbouring properties were directly notified by letter. These were mostly residential properties but included the two adjoining schools. A total of 22 representations have been received.
- 13 Objections have been raised on the following grounds;
- support in principle for school expansion but traffic and parking issues must be addressed
 - proposal must not adversely affect the provision of other more broadly based provision to address general demand for school places from a growing population in area
 - existing congestion on the private access road to the three schools and other surrounding local roads, particularly Whyteleafe Road, Portley Lane, Strathmore Close and Matlock Road; inconsiderate parking on pavements, across drives and around junctions; additional impact of increased number of pupils

- safety issues caused by parents crossing roads between parked cars, particularly on Whyteleaf Road; private access road is an unsafe environment for children; speed control humps and standing water around signal crossing; these pose a risk to pedestrians
- St Francis refuse to allow parking on their part of the site, creating problems for all three schools on the rest of the access road; adverse impacts of proposal fall mainly on Audley School
- recently imposed parking restrictions have moved rather than solved parking problems on surrounding roads; parking restrictions are useless unless enforced; enforcement visits have become less frequent
- development has potential to add 100 cars to existing movements to and from schools; 12 new parents parking bays and 9 new staff spaces are insufficient to address likely extra congestion; opportunities to improve access road and parking in and around it have not been addressed; manoeuvring in and out of proposed parking bays will cause congestion; additional provision should be made for parents parking; there is enough land on the St Francis site to create a larger parking area
- all schools should do more to promote car sharing; opportunities for park and stride and walking buses should be developed; staggering school start and finish times is desirable but not realistic; proposals should incorporate provision for cycle storage
- pressure on school places is a result of excessive development of land in the area for housing; building more schools only attracts more people and traffic
- problem should be addressed by building new schools, rather than extending existing ones
- extra car parking causes a reduction in the size of Audley School's environmental study area
- loss of trees is detrimental to character of area; shelter from high winds and screening of noise emanating from schools would be lost
- Sunnydown School supports in principle the expansion of St Francis School. Seeks more information on numbers and location of extra parking, traffic studies undertaken and clarification of the respective responsibilities of the three schools for maintenance and control of shared access road.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 14 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".
- 15 At present in relation to this application the Development Plan consists of the Tandridge Core Strategy 2008 and the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 – Detailed Policies 2014 – 2029, adopted July 2014.

- 10
- 16 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.
- 17 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).
- 18 The main issues relating to this application are;
- whether it constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - whether the development achieves an appropriately high standard of design
 - whether any element has an adverse impact on residential amenity
 - whether the development adversely affects the tree cover on the site
 - whether there are any substantial transportation impacts, and whether any impacts have been adequately mitigated
 - whether very special circumstances exist which would clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt and any other harm

**Whether Inappropriate Development in Green Belt
Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 – Detailed Policies 2014 – 2029
Policy DP13 – Buildings in the Green Belt**

- 19 Local Plan Part 2 policy DP13 reflects the guidance on Green Belts contained in para 89 of the NPPF. New buildings are to be regarded as inappropriate development except in prescribed circumstances. These include buildings directly related to agriculture forestry or outdoor sport and recreation, involving infill development in defined villages or limited affordable housing. The proposed development does not meet any of these exceptions. However, one of the exceptions is potentially relevant to the development proposed;

“Extension & Alteration

E. The extension or alteration of buildings within the Green Belt (outside the Defined Villages), where the proposal does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building as it existed at 1 July 1948 (for non-residential buildings) or 31 December 1968 (for residential dwellings), or if constructed after the relevant date, as it was built originally”.

- 20 The extensions now proposed represent an increase of about 15% of the floorspace of the existing main building, which corresponds to the original building. However, the new two storey building to the north, which was granted permission in early 2013, has a floorspace of approximately 380 m², or 27% of the main building. Cumulatively these extensions represent an increase of about 42% over the original, which must be considered to be disproportionate. Officers consider that the proposal does therefore constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Design

Tandridge District Core Strategy 2008

Policy CSP18 – Character and Design

Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 – Detailed Policies 2014 – 2029

Policy DP7 – General Policy for New Development

- 21 Core Strategy policy CSP18 requires that new development is of a high standard of Design which reflects and respects character, setting and local context, including features that contribute to local distinctiveness. Local Plan Policy DP7 also requires development to be of high quality and integrate effectively with its surroundings, reinforcing local distinctiveness and landscape character. Built form should be in keeping with prevailing landscape and/or streetscape, reflect variety of local building types by use of complementary building materials and not result in overdevelopment by reason of factors such as scale, form, bulk, height and design .

Residential Amenity

Tandridge District Core Strategy 2008

Policy CSP18 – Character and Design

Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 – Detailed Policies 2014 – 2029

Policy DP7 – General Policy for New Development

- 22 Core Strategy policy CSP18 requires that development should not significantly harm the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties by reason of overlooking, overshadowing, visual intrusion, noise, traffic or other impact. Local Plan policy DP7 requires that development should not significantly harm amenities and privacy of neighbouring properties by reason of overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing effect.
- 23 The nearest dwelling to the proposed classroom extension is St Francis' own caretaker's house. Apart from the several staff houses located within the group of three schools, the nearest private dwelling is on the east side of Whyteleafe Road, the rear boundary of which is approximately 105m to the north west, beyond the existing buildings of both St Francis and Audley schools. The hall extension is an infill between existing buildings. The corner of the extended hard play area would be about 97m from the nearest residential boundary compared to the existing 100m. Taking account of the separation distance, officers do not consider there would be any adverse impact on residential amenity as result of loss of privacy, overlooking or noise.
- 24 The proposed car park extension would be directly behind the school caretaker's house, which has a short rear garden, separated from it by sheds and containers. The existing school car park adjoins the side of the caretaker's house. Given the scale and proximity of the car park and that the house is integrated into the school uses on this site, the car park extension is not considered to have adverse impacts on residential amenity.

Impact on Tree Cover

Tandridge District Core Strategy 2008

Policy CSP18 – Character and Design

Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 – Detailed Policies 2014 – 2029

Policy DP7 – General Policy for New Development

- 25 Core Strategy Policy CSP18 requires that development has regard to important trees or groups of trees and other important features which need to be retained. Local Plan Policy DP7 requires that provision be made for the retention of existing trees which are important in the local landscape.
- 26 The St Francis site itself has no substantial trees in the immediate vicinity of the existing buildings. Tree cover is restricted to its northern boundary, and its western boundary with Audley School. The most significant tree cover in the vicinity is that on the three 'islands' within the school access road, and along the western boundary of the schools group as a whole, on the east side of Whyteleafe Road. The belt of trees separating the schools from Whyteleafe Road is continuous over a distance of approximately 350m from the junction with Burntwood Lane to the houses north of the schools, apart from the opening created by the schools access road.
- 27 The proposals involves the removal of 18 trees or groups of small trees / bushes, of which 1 is graded class A and 3 graded B in the tree survey submitted in support of the application. Two small hawthorns would be removed to create the extension to St Francis' staff parking, but the remainder of the proposed tree removal is to accommodate the additional parking bays and footways around them on the island side of the access road, and the improved sightlines at the junction with Whyteleafe Road. The grade A tree is a turkey oak in the proposed sightline splay to the south of the access road, and an oak on the north side is graded B. The other two higher quality trees to be removed are on the second island.
- 28 The tree survey also identifies trees and groups of trees where there would be a partial incursion into the root protection area for the creation of parking bays and footways around them on the first two island of the access road. The maximum incursion is 19% of the previously unsurfaced root protection area (RPA), and in most cases substantially less than that proportion. The applicants arboricultural consultant points out that this is within the maximum 20% recommended by BS5837, 'Trees in Relation to Construction'.
- 29 The arboricultural method statement submitted with the application concludes that the arboricultural impact of the proposal is moderate, and seeks to limit impact through the following measures;
- extensive provision of tree protection fencing during the construction period
 - the holding of a pre-start meeting between contractors, arboricultural consultants and council tree officer
 - a scheme of arboricultural supervision for any excavation work within the root protection areas

- 30 Officers consider that, while the proposal involves the removal of a small number of trees of relatively high quality, these are part of areas of extensive tree cover and as individuals their loss would not seriously affect the levels of amenity provided by tree cover as a whole in the vicinity. Sufficient tree cover is retained on the first 'island' in the access road to allow for the retention within the island of the existing Audley School environmental study area. The possible exception is the large turkey oak in the sightline visibility splay to the south of the access road. However, the position of its trunk in the centre of the visibility splay is considered to be incompatible with its retention. Officers are satisfied that there is no alternative way of designing the access improvements such that the Class A graded oak can be retained.
- 31 The two trees on the site which on their own constitute a significant landscape feature are the two very large oak trees on the third island, which are not affected either directly or indirectly by the proposal. Suggestions are made in representations that the third island could be modified to create additional parking around it. Officers consider that this would be likely to have a significant impact on these trees. Because of their size, and condition they have a very extensive RPA which is particularly sensitive to further disturbance.
- 32 The application does not at present contain any proposals for new planting. The arboricultural officer considers that the impact on trees could be more fully mitigated if specific proposals could be made for replacing the higher quality trees lost to the development. Opportunities for new planting in the immediate vicinity of those trees is considered to be limited, but there is considered to be some scope for new planting on the relatively open 'third island'. This could be considered also to constitute succession planting, recognising that the two large oaks, while having substantial existing landscape and amenity value, may have a limited lifespan.
- 33 The arboricultural officer also considers it important that works involving excavation within RPAs of retained trees or groups of trees should be undertaken by hand. Both these additional mitigations can be secured by means of conditions.

Transport Impacts
Tandridge District Core Strategy 2008
Policy CSP18 – Character and Design
Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 – Detailed Policies 2014 – 2029
Policy DP5 – Highway Safety and Design

- 34 Core Strategy Policy CSP18 requires that development should not significantly harm amenities by reason of traffic. Local Plan Policy DP5 permits development which does not unnecessarily impede the free flow of traffic or create hazards to traffic on the network or other road users.
- 35 NPPF para 32 states that 'All developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment. Plans and decisions should take account of whether:
 - the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure;
 - safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people; and
 - improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost

effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.'

- 36 The access road serves three schools, St Francis, Audley Primary School and Sunnydown Boys Schools. Audley is a 1 form entry primary school (210 pupils) and Sunnydown is a SEN school for boys aged between 11 and 16. It has a total of 80 pupils, 47 day pupils and 33 weekly boarders. The three schools stagger their start and finish times in order that the three sets of parents avoid one another as far as is possible. Pupil drop offs for all three schools occur along the entire length of the access road. The Transport Assessment submitted with the application observes that vehicles are generally parked on the left hand side and parents then walk their children into school. St Francis also has its own drop off area at the eastern end of the access road - there is no parking permitted and vehicles circulate slowly, stopping only to drop children off alongside the school. School staff manage this area during the school peaks and ensure that children get from their cars safely into the school. Officers' observations of conditions on the access road show that it does become congested despite the staggering of hours, but traffic does not come to a standstill for prolonged periods. The access road is not an adopted highway and serves only the schools themselves, and this level of congestion does not adversely affect highway safety or amenity. Existing arrangements (the staggering of the start and finish times of the three schools and retaining the area in front of St Francis as short term drop off rather than parking) contribute to its functioning well in dealing with school traffic. It does not result in prolonged queuing back onto Whyteleafe Road. However, It is clear from parking surveys that have been undertaken in local roads (Portley Lane, Strathmore Close and Matlock Road) and officers observations that some parents park here and walk their children into school, rather than using the access road. It is not clear from the surveys whether it is St Francis parents, Audley parents or both
- 37 The maximum demand for parked vehicles on the school access road in the morning is between 08.30 and 08.45, with a maximum of 40 vehicles. The maximum demand in the afternoon is between 15.30 and 15.45, with a maximum of 34 vehicles. The number of vehicles circulating in the access road is higher than this, indicating that they either stop momentarily and drop off/pick up, park as spaces become available or drive into the access road in search of parking but drive elsewhere when none is available. Current parking capacity is often reached and congestion is experienced on the school access road at school drop off and pick up times. This is further exacerbated by teachers parking on the access road as there is insufficient teachers parking within the site.
- 38 Surveys at the junction of the school access road with Whyteleafe Road indicate that the highest proportion of vehicles travel to and from the site from the south (ie turn right in and left out). 60% arrive from the south and 68% depart to the south in the morning and 79% approach from the south and 74% depart to the south in the afternoon. St Francis is a faith school and as such it draws from a wider area than community schools tend to. The majority of pupils live more than 1km away, with a significant number living more than 2km away. Unsurprisingly therefore, the vast majority (84%) of pupils are reliant on the car for access to school. Only 15% walk and 1% scoot or park & stride. Applying the same proportions to the additional 100 children will result in an additional 84 children arriving by car, an extra 15 walking and the remainder using other modes. There is currently insufficient available parking to accommodate an additional 84 cars, should they all arrive at the same time. In reality, there will not be as many as 84 cars, taking

siblings and car sharing into account, and they are unlikely all to arrive at precisely the same time. Nevertheless, there will be an impact and the applicant has proposed mitigation that will reduce the impact on the immediate locality.

- 39 The approach taken to mitigate the impact of additional car trips is to make improvements to the school access road to improve its capacity. The additional staff parking proposed is greater than the increase in staff numbers and spaces on the access road currently occupied by staff. There is also a net increase of 12 parents parking spaces. Given that traffic around the access road is slow moving anyway at peak times, the addition of these bays is not considered to have a negative effect on capacity through manoeuvring in and out of them. While the majority of turning movements out of the access road onto Whyteleafe Road are to the left, a significant minority(32% in the morning and 26% in the afternoon) are to the right, and two or more cars waiting to turn right slow down the circulation around the access road, adversely affecting its overall capacity. The proposed widening of the access road to allow left and right turning lanes addresses this.
- 40 Officers consider that the loop at the head of the access road, immediately adjoining the entrance to St Francis, contributes more to the flow of traffic around the access road as a drop off area than if it were to be used for parking. Consideration has also been given to widening Whyteleafe Road itself to provide a right turn lane into the access road. This could not be provided to full highway design standards, would necessitate modifying the recently installed pedestrian and require greater tree loss than the improvements to the sightlines. Highway officers do not consider the benefit to be sufficient to warrant those impacts.
- 41 The application states that there is existing space on site for 30 cycles, but no cycle storage facilities. Secure, sheltered cycle facilities for 18 cycles are proposed to be provided, but the application does not include details of where. This provision should therefore be secured through a condition.
- 42 The school travel plan was prepared by the school in 2013 and some of the measures advocated (such as the pedestrian crossing over Whyteleafe Road) have already been provided. It is unusual for a school to have already prepared a travel plan and this is welcomed and commended. The travel plan will however need to be updated once the expansion has been completed. The school has negotiated a 'park and stride' arrangement with The Sacred Heart Church on Whyteleafe Road. The church is 1.1 km away from the school to the south and thus far, only 3 children use it, understandable perhaps because of its distance away from the school. An update of the Travel Plan should consider greater promotion of it, perhaps to parents of year 5 and year 6 pupils and perhaps with a formal walking bus, once the expansion is completed.
- 43 Overall, planning and highways officers consider that the package of mitigation measures are proportionate to the likely additional traffic generation of the proposal and that they are sufficient to avoid the development having a severe residual cumulative impact on highway safety and amenity.

Whether Very Special Circumstances exist to Justify Inappropriate Development in Green Belt
Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 – Detailed Policies 2014 – 2029
Policy DP10 – Green Belt

- 44 Local Plan Policy DP10 states that development which is inappropriate in the Green Belt will only be permitted where very special circumstances exist, to the extent that other considerations clearly outweigh any potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm.
- 45 Para 72 of the NPPF highlights that 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. It continues by stating 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. It states that Local Planning authorities should *inter alia* give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools.
- 46 In this instance, the applicant has stated that there is a need for additional Roman Catholic faith based places in the Caterham area as part of an expansion of the number of school places in the area generally. It is recognised that other proposals will need to be brought forward to meet a more general demand, and the applicant does not intend that the provision of faith based places be seen as the only form of additional provision.
- 47 In support of the particular need for catholic school places, the applicant has provided data on the number of baptisms at the Roman Catholic churches in the area. Within the parish of Caterham, baptisms have risen from 45 in 2004 to 75 in 2013. In the neighbouring parish of Oxted and Warlingham there has been a more modest rise from 22 to 26. Over the two parishes baptism in 2013 were 101. St Francis is the only catholic primary school in Tandridge and has a current PAN of 45. Even with the expansion proposed, it would only admit 60 pupils per year. Within the overall demand, there is therefore a clear mismatch between availability and demand for catholic places and no alternative way of addressing that mismatch at existing schools.
- 48 This clear need for additional catholic places and the lack of alternatives is considered by officers to constitute very special circumstances.
- 49 In the wider context of the four schools, the largest component of the development, the proposed classroom extension, is on the north east, outer edge of the envelope of existing development. However, in the immediate context of the existing buildings at St Francis, it sits in the angle of the main building and an existing permanent demountable classroom and does not extend beyond the northern or eastern limits of these buildings. It is single storey and therefore lower than both the existing hall and the other recently completed classroom block. The hall extension fills a narrow gap between the main building and the two storey classroom building. Overall, therefore, officers consider the development has only a limited impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

- 50 There are other sources of non Green Belt harm through the additional traffic generated as a result of increasing the size of the school, and the impact on trees. The adverse impacts on highway safety of additional traffic have been fully addressed by the improvements proposed to the access road, and the amenity impacts are significantly reduced. In the context of the tree cover which would remain in the immediate vicinity, harm arising from loss of trees is moderate and would be reduced by a requirement to carry out replacement planting. Further mitigation of the traffic impacts (and reduced harm) could be achieved by the provision of additional parking, but only at a cost of greater loss of trees and the impact on openness of more extensive parking areas. Officers consider, however, that the application proposals draw an appropriate balance between the protection of trees and provision for traffic and parking. As a result there would be limited harm to amenity resulting from traffic and moderate harm to trees.
- 51 Overall, officers consider that the need for and appropriate choice of school places, and the lack of a suitable alternative site for faith places in northern Tandridge constitute very special circumstances which clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt due to inappropriateness and a limited impact on openness, and other harm in the form of traffic impacts and impacts on trees.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 52 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.
- 53 In this case, the Officer's view is that while the possibility of impacts on amenity caused by additional traffic are acknowledged, the scale of such impacts 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

- 54 The proposed development constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt, but officers consider that very special circumstances exist which clearly outweigh the harm due to inappropriateness and any other harm, including harm arising from traffic and loss of trees. No other sources of harm can be identified and harm can be appropriately limited by imposing conditions which reflect the mitigation measures proposed in the application. All relevant planning policy considerations have been addressed and the development can therefore be permitted.

RECOMMENDATION

That, pursuant to regulation 3 of The Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, application no. TA2014/1520 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:

02-07-14 1-1046	A-100 rev.A	Site Location Plan dated 05/09/14
	A-101	Existing Block Plan dated April 2014
	A-102	Proposed Block Plan dated April 2014
	A-103	Existing Floor Plan 1 dated 02/14
	A-104	Existing Floor Plan 2 dated 02/14
	A-105	Proposed Floor Plan and External Works dated 02/14
	A-106	Proposed Floor Plan dated 02/14
	A-107	Existing Roof Plan dated 03/14
	A-108	Proposed Roof Plan dated 03/14
	A-110 rev A	Existing Elevations dated 06/09/14
	A-111 rev A	Proposed Elevations dated 06/09/14

3. a.) Before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought onto the site for the purposes of carrying out the development hereby permitted, protective fencing in accordance with the details contained in Appendix 3 and drawing no. TPP01 dated 18/08/14 contained in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement submitted with the application shall be installed and 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 area.

b.) Subject to Condition 13 below, the development shall be carried out in all respects in full accordance with all other measures to protect trees during construction set out in Section 4 and Appendix 3 of the above Arboricultural Method Statement.
4. The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied unless and until the junction of the school access road with Whyteleafe Road has been improved generally in accordance with Figure GA/002, contained within Appendix F of the Transport Statement dated 19 August 2014 submitted with the application.
5. The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the proposed additional parking and crossings on the school access road have been implemented generally in accordance with Figure SK/006, contained within Appendix E of the Transport Statement dated 19 August 2014. submitted with the application. The parking areas shall be retained and maintained for their designated purpose.

6. The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied unless and until space has been laid out within the site in accordance with the details of additional staff parking shown on plan number 02-07-14 1-1046 A-102 dated April 2014. Thereafter the parking area shall be retained and maintained for its designated purpose.
7. The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied unless and until provision has been made within the site for sheltered and secure cycle storage for not less than 18 cycles.
8. Subject to the provisions of condition 9 below, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in all respects fully in accordance with the Construction Traffic Management Plan submitted with the application.
9. In carrying out the development hereby permitted, no HGV movements to or from the site shall take place between the hours of 08.15 and 09.15 and 14.30 and 15.30 nor shall the contractor permit any HGVs associated with the development at the site to be laid up, waiting, in the school access road, Whyteleafe Road, Matlock Road, Strathmore Close or Portley Lane during these times.
10. The School Travel Plan dated June 2013 shall be updated and implemented on the first occupation of the development hereby permitted and shall thereafter be maintained, monitored, reviewed and developed in accordance with details which have, before the development is occupied, been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority.
11. Within six months of the date of this permission, details of replacement tree planting shall be submitted to the County Planning Authority for approval. The submitted details shall include planting plans; written specifications for operations associated with tree or shrub planting, schedules of trees shrubs and plants noting species, sizes positions and proposed numbers / densities and implementation programme.
12. Replacement tree planting shall be carried out no later than in the first planting season after the first occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme which has first been agreed in writing by the County Planning Authority. Thereafter the landscaping shall 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.
13. In areas where excavation is to be carried out under arboricultural supervision, as identified in orange on Appendix 3 of the Arboricultural Method Statement submitted with the application, those excavations shall be carried out using hand tools only.

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. To ensure all reasonable measures are taken to protect during construction works the trees on the site which are proposed to be retained, pursuant to Policy CSP18 of the Tandridge Core Strategy 2008 and Policy DP7 of the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 - Detailed Policies 2014 - 2029
4. In order that the development should not prejudice highway safety nor cause inconvenience to other highway users pursuant to Policy DP5 of the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 - Detailed Policies 2014 - 2029
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10. In order that the development should not prejudice highway safety nor cause inconvenience to other highway users pursuant to Policy DP5 of the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 - Detailed Policies 2014 - 2029..
11. In the interests of maintaining the contribution made by trees to the visual amenity and character of the site and area pursuant to Policy CSP18 of the Tandridge Core Strategy 2008 and Policy DP7 of the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 — Detailed Policies 2014 - 2029
12. In the interests of maintaining the contribution made by trees to the visual amenity and character of the site and area pursuant to Policy CSP18 of the Tandridge Core Strategy 2008 and Policy DP7 of the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 — Detailed Policies 2014 - 2029.
13. To ensure all reasonable measures are taken to protect during construction works the trees on the site which are proposed to be retained, pursuant to Policy CSP18 of the Tandridge Core Strategy 2008 and Policy DP7 of the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 — Detailed Policies 2014 – 2029.

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. 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 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.
4. The applicant is reminded that, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended (Section 1), it is an offence to remove, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or is being built. Planning consent for a development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this Act.

Trees and scrub are likely to contain nesting birds between 1 March and 31 August inclusive. Trees and scrub are present on the application site and are assumed to contain nesting birds between the above dates, unless a recent survey has been undertaken by a competent ecologist to assess the nesting bird activity during this period and shown it is absolutely certain that nesting birds are not present

5. Details of the highway requirements necessary for inclusion in any application seeking approval of reserved matters may be obtained from the Transportation Development Planning Division of Surrey County Council.

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 : Tandridge Core Strategy 2008 and Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 – Detailed Policies 2014 – 2029, adopted July 2014.

Other Documents : BS5837, ' Trees in Relation to Construction'

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