

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

DATE: **7TH FEBRUARY 2018**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT)**

SUBJECT: **FULL APPLICATION - ERECTION OF A NEW BUILD PRIMARY SCHOOL, ASSOCIATED EXTERNAL WORKS, ADDITIONAL VEHICULAR ACCESS POINT AND FORMATION OF TEMPORARY SITE ACCESS TO EXISTING PENYFFORDD INFANTS SCHOOL SITE AT YSGOL PENYFFORDD, ABBOTTS LANE, PENYFFORDD**

APPLICATION NUMBER: **057599**

APPLICANT: **FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

SITE: **YSGOL PENYFFORDD,
ABBOTTS LANE,
PENYFFORDD**

APPLICATION VALID DATE: **6TH OCTOBER 2017**

LOCAL MEMBERS: **COUNCILLOR MRS. C. HINDS
COUNCILLOR D. T. M. WILLIAMS**

COMMUNITY COUNCIL: **PENYFFORDD COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

REASON FOR COMMITTEE: **SITE AREA EXCEEDS THAT FOR WHICH POWERS TO DETERMINE ARE DELEGATED TO THE HEAD OF PLANNING**

SITE VISIT: **YES**

1.00 SUMMARY

- 1.01 This full application presents proposals for the provision of a school facility to provide primary level educational facilities currently provided at 2 sites across Penyffordd, namely the Ysgol Penyffordd Infants at Parc Crescent (the application site) and Penyffordd Juniors at Penymynydd Road, upon a single site.

1.02 The proposals include the demolition of the existing school building upon the site and the re-development of the site to provide ancillary recreation, sports, access and parking facilities. Also proposed are improvements to pedestrian access upon Corwen Road.

2.00 RECOMMENDATION: TO GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION, SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:-

2.01 That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

1. 5 years for commencement of development.
2. In accordance with the approved plans.
3. Implementation of landscaping scheme.
4. No development until scheme for provision of pedestrian crossing, refurbishment of speed management markings and provision of new 'School Keep Clear' markings has been submitted and agreed. Scheme implemented before first use of the development hereby approved.
5. No development until siting, layout and design of access submitted and agreed.
6. Visibility splays of 2.4m x 22m in both directions to be provided and retained. No obstructions in excess of 0.6m in height.
7. Scheme for closure of temporary construction access to be submitted, agreed and implemented before first use of the development.
8. Facilities for pick up and set down of pupils, parking, turning, loading and unloading of vehicles to be provided in full prior to the first use of the development approved and thereafter retained for this purpose.
9. No development until scheme to prevent any surface water runoff from the site entering the Highway is submitted, agreed and thereafter, implemented.
10. The use hereby approved shall not commence until an Interim Travel Plan has been submitted and agreed.
11. A Final Travel Plan shall be submitted within 6 months of the commencement of the use hereby approved. Thereafter the use shall be undertaken in accordance with the agreed details.
12. No development shall take place until a Construction Traffic Management Plan has been submitted and agreed. The development shall thereafter be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.
13. No development until a scheme indicating the proposed methods of disposal of foul, surface and land drainage waters from the site has been submitted and approved. The development shall thereafter be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.
14. No development until tree and hedgerow protection measures

are implemented as per approved details.

3.00 CONSULTATIONS

3.01 Local Members

Councillor C Hinds

Considers matters in relation to the restriction of parking upon Park Crescent to residents only should be addressed before works upon the school commence.

Councillor D. Williams

Requests that the application be considered by the Planning Committee following a committee site visit.

Councillor Williams feels unable to support the application and objects to the provisions within the scheme for future expansion of the school, considering that this element of the scheme should be removed from the proposals.

Considers that the scheme should provide changing room facilities for community football field and its users.

In respect of his inability to support the proposals, he cites the following issues;

- The location of the school towards the south of the settlement will increase traffic movements to and from school;
- Road infrastructure within the vicinity of the site is inadequate to accommodate increased traffic, especially due to levels on street parking;
- Considers proposals to encourage walking to and from school are improbable;
- Considers traffic impact assessment has failed to address concerns in respect of the junction of Park Crescent with Wats Road; and
- Considers there are other suitable sites within the community and questions the appraisals undertaken in identifying this site. However, respects the community support for this site;

Penyffordd Community Council

Supports proposals for the new school in so far as the comprises Phase 1 of the scheme, but objects to the inclusion of Phase 2 proposals within the application. The following observations are offered;

- the proximity and overbearing nature of the proposed building is unsympathetic to neighbouring properties;
- the design poses serious concerns in relation to privacy;
- consideration be given to relocating the proposed building

- elsewhere upon the site;
- consideration be given to an alternate design;
 - considers Traffic Impact Assessment is inadequate and fails to identify the existing problems in respect of traffic and parking. Suggest alternative solutions and matters to be addressed via conditions; and
 - considers that the proposals should include provision for the inclusion of community available changing facilities in connection with the community use of the football pitch.

Highways Development Control Manger

No objection subject to the imposition of conditions. Notes that footpaths 9 and 11 abut the site but will be unaffected by the development.

Pollution Control

No objection to the proposals.

FCC Flood Risk Management

Satisfied that the proposed surface water drainage information provided is sufficient to provide the comfort that this matter can be addressed via a suitably worded condition.

Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water

No objection subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the submission, agreement and implementation of a detailed foul and surface water drainage system.

Airbus

No objection upon aerodrome safeguarding grounds.

The Coal Authority

No adverse comments. Requests that standing advice notes are imposed upon any subsequent permission granted.

4.00 PUBLICITY

4.01 Prior to the submission of the application, this proposal was the subject of pre-application consultation in accordance with the statutory PAC process. This process was undertaken between the 10th July 2017 and 7th August 2017 and a report accompanies this submission setting out the process and outcomes.

4.02 The application has been publicised by way of the publication of a press notice, display of a site notice and neighbour notification letters. At the time of writing this report, 122 No. letters have been received in response.

92 No. letters offer support for the proposals upon the following grounds:

- the facility is needed within the village;
- the existing school facilities are inadequate, outdated and in need of modernisation;
- the proposals will enable an increase in walking children to school as children will not be at 2 sites within the village; and
- the proposals do not give rise to parking or highway concerns,

30 No. letters raise objection on the following grounds;

- impacts upon residential amenity;
- impacts upon highway safety and increased traffic;
- inadequacy of the submitted Traffic Impact Assessment; and
- the proposal does not include facilities for changing for community teams using the football pitch.

5.00 SITE HISTORY

5.01 No previous relevant history.

6.00 PLANNING POLICIES

6.01 Flintshire Unitary Development Plan

- Policy STR1 - New Development
- Policy STR8 - Built Environment
- Policy STR10 - Resources
- Policy STR11 - Sport, Leisure & Recreation
- Policy GEN1 - General Requirements for Development
- Policy GEN2 - Development inside Settlement Boundaries
- Policy D1 - Design Quality, Location & Layout
- Policy D2 - Design
- Policy D3 - Landscaping
- Policy D4 - Outdoor Lighting
- Policy D5 - Crime Prevention
- Policy TWH1 - Development Affecting Trees & Woodland
- Policy TWH2 - Protection of Hedgerows
- Policy AC1 - Facilities for the Disabled
- Policy AC2 - Pedestrian Provision & Public Rights of Way
- Policy AC13 - Access and Traffic Impact
- Policy AC18 - Parking Provision and New Development
- Policy SR1 - Sports, Recreation and Cultural Facilities
- Policy SR4 - Protecting Recreational Open Space
- Policy CF1 - Retention of Existing Facilities
- Policy CF2 - Development of New Facilities
- Policy EWP2 - Energy Efficiency in New Development
- Policy EWP3 - Renewable Energy in New Development

7.00 PLANNING APPRAISAL

7.01 The Site and Surroundings

The site comprises some 2.07 hectares of land and is presently occupied by the Infants Department of Ysgol Penyffordd. The remainder of the site is used for the recreation and sports facilities at the school. The site is located within an area of predominantly residential character, albeit that a bowling green and associated clubhouse building are located to the north west of the site.

7.02 The existing school building is a single storey school building which occupies 965m² of the site at the most northern point of the application site. Land to the south and east of the school building is used a sports pitches and hard surfaces recreation/sports areas or vehicle parking and turning facilities. The site boundaries are formed by a variety of hedges, trees and residential style fences. The western and northern boundary abut Footpaths 9 & 11, with those boundaries formed by chain link fencing and hedging. Strong belts of trees marks the southern and western boundaries of the site, with a further belt of mature trees running east - west to the rear of the existing school buildings.

7.03 The site is currently accessed by 3 points along its northern boundary with Parc Crescent, enabling both vehicular and pedestrian access to and from the site. Vehicular access is provided to the small staff car park located immediately to the east of the school building. The 2 other points of access provide pedestrian access presently.

7.04 The Proposal

This application, submitted by the Council as Local Education Authority proposes the following;

- The demolition of the existing infants school building;
- The construction of a new school on the site of existing areas of recreation space to the south of the existing school building to provide facilities for a combined infants and junior school;
- The creation of amended vehicular access and egress points from Parc Crescent;
- The creation of a temporary construction site access at the junction of Parc Crescent and Abbots Lane – post construction, this access will be used to form a new pedestrian access points to the school;
- The creation of replacement outdoor sports, play and recreation areas across the site;
- The creation of improved staff and visitor parking facilities upon the site of the current school; and
- The provision of details of a future 2 storey, 2 classroom extension to future proof capacity at the school.

7.05 The new school premises is intended to provide a combined school with capacity for 315 pupils of primary school age and 30 nursery places. The scheme also includes an element of future proofing for

this school and community in the form of further 2 storey, 2 classroom extension to the south of the proposed school. This would increase the school capacity to 375.

- 7.06 Members should note however that the development of this school is proposed in 2 distinct phases. Phase 1 relates to the development of the school and ancillary facilities as set out above. Phase 2 relates to the extension of the school at a point as and when identified to be required.

The Main Issues

- 7.07 The main issues for consideration in respect of this proposal are;

- The principle of development;
- Impacts upon highway safety and access;
- Matters relating to design;
- Impacts upon existing residential amenity;
- Community use of facilities.

The Principle of Development

- 7.08 The site is located within the settlement boundary of Penyffordd as defined in the Unitary Development Plan. Policy GEN2 is permissive of development within settlement boundaries and Policy GEN1 sets out the general requirements expected to be satisfied by all development.

- 7.09 Policies CF1 identifies that the loss of community facilities will be resisted unless there is no longer a demand for the facility or suitable provision exists or can be provided as a part of the proposed development. Policy CF2 is permissive of the development of, inter alia, education facilities upon suitable sites within settlement boundaries. I consider the proposals to be reflective of the overall aspiration of these policies in aiding in the provision of community facilities in the locality.

- 7.10 Accordingly, I consider that the principle of the development of this site in the manner proposed is acceptable as a matter of principle.

Highways Matters

- 7.11 The site currently served via a vehicular access points off Parc Crescent. Pedestrian access to the site is also served via 2 access points from Parc Crescent. The proposed scheme seeks to utilise the existing vehicular access to access the proposed parking area for the school. The access arrangements to the site are proposed to be upon a one –way route of access, via a remodelling of the existing access points, and egress via a new egress point closer to Abbots Lane. The vehicular access is also proposed to serve the staff and visitor car parking areas, providing 42 No. spaces (including 4 No. disabled spaces) which is, in part, barrier controlled. A further point of

dedicated pedestrian access are proposed to be created off Abbotts Lane. This will enable the segregation of walking traffic from vehicular traffic and reduce the risks to one from the other. This proposal has been the subject of careful consideration and enables use of the access as both an access and egress route for buses, with a drop off area located adjacent to the entrance apron to the school, allowing simultaneous passage of vehicles whilst pupils are dropped off at the school via the 5 No. proposed 'drop off' spaces. Consideration has been given during the course of the development of the scheme to providing additional drop off spaces to the north of the site access road. However, whilst this might yield a further 3 or 4 spaces, the increased risk to pedestrian safety arising from children crossing the access road towards the school entrance apron is considered too great a risk. Accordingly, the benefit of the additional spaces does not outweigh the risk.

7.12 The planning application is supported by a Transport Assessment. The Highways DC Manager considers that this assessment provides a reasonable review of existing transportation issues and assessment of the future requirements. The application includes a Travel Implementation Strategy, with the intention of developing and implementing a Final Travel Plan following occupation of the school. I propose that this requirement should be conditioned.

7.13 The proposed parking and drop-off facility provides a total of 47 No. spaces. This provision is based upon the fact that the school will have 37 No. members of staff. This provision has been considered by the Highways DC Manager against the adopted guidelines set out within SPG 11 – Parking Standards. It is noted that the level of provision exceeds that required by SPG 11 and therefore provision will be sufficient to meet the projected demand for day long parking at the site. The new location of the combined school, with closer proximity to the residential areas from which the preponderance of pupils are derived, together with the implementation of a travel plan, will contribute to a reduction in the demand for vehicle parking spaces at the site. On that basis, and with an opportunity to improve the parking and drop-off facilities at the site, I conclude that the facilities provided are adequate to meet the demand arising from the development.

7.14 The Transport Assessment identifies that the following measures will be required to mitigate the impact of the proposals;

- The provision of a pelican crossing upon Corwen road to assist with pedestrian movements from the north;
- Re-marking of existing traffic management markings in the highway to raise their prominence;
- The development of a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) in respect of construction traffic;
- Use of existing parking facilities at the nearby Red Lion Public

- house on a 'park and walk' basis by parents;
- The development and implementation of an informal 'one way' route for school traffic at peak times; and
- The development of a School Travel Plan to influence and support behaviour change around travel to school by parents and children.

7.15 The matters in respect of the pedestrian crossing, highway markings and TMP can be addressed through appropriately worded conditions. The development of park and walk arrangements and an informal one way system are matters which expect to be reflected within the suggested Travel Plan.

7.16 In view of all of the above and the objections in respect of highway safety, the Highways DC Manager does not raise objection to the proposals, subject to the conditions outlined above.

Design and Appearance

7.17 The design brief for this site required a single building to provide a facility for the housing of the 2 schools currently forming Ysgol Penyffordd, together with 30 place nursery. The brief required a solution that allows the current infants department based at the site to continue to operate during the course of the development.

7.18 The evolution of the design of this building has been undertaken upon a design team basis, with the end user (the school) being involved from the outset to ensure that those using the building consider it will function relative to their needs and provide practical usable arrangement of spaces. The design has also been the subject of consideration by the Design Commission for Wales on 2 separate occasions (July and November 2017).

7.19 The design approach to the response to this brief examined a range of options in terms of the siting of the proposed school. This siting is constrained by existing mature trees, existing community playing fields (and the need to retain the same), the operational requirements of the site as a school through the construction process and the desire to produce a betterment in terms of parking and access facilities from that currently in existence at the site. In responding to this, examination of a variety of locations within the wider site has been undertaken. This exercise has demonstrated that the location of the school building represents the most logical position for the school and this choice is well justified.

7.20 The concept behind the design provides the administration hub of the building to be located as close as possible to the public interface between the building and its users. Adjacent is the proposed hall and community room which is positioned so as to allow ease of access for all and servicing. The linear elements of the building extending to the

south comprise foundation and Key Stage 1 teaching facilities upon the ground floor, with Key Stage 2 accommodation above. These facilities are grouped around a central 'student street' which is seen as the circulation core of the overall building. The building has a very contemporary design and serves to provide some 2011m² of floor space into a compact footprint of 1264m².

7.21 External materials are selected to be representative of the locality and have a robust simplicity to them which serve to have a minimalistic appearance from a distance but has greater warmth, depth and texture when viewed closer. The simple palette comprises stacked slate, coloured renders, HPL cladding in a timber effect and fibre cement weatherboarding in a grey finish. The use of the coloured render panels serve to act as a 'way finder' to the points of access to the building. The use of a variety of materials serve to break the mass of the elevations.

7.22 During the course of examination of the design evolution process and in response to consultation and publicity, concerns have been raised in relation to the scale of the building, the materiality of the building and the clarity of the concept of the arrangement of the building.

7.23 The concerns in relation to scale arose from the design stage which proposed the building to have a parapet, behind which a flat roof was proposed. It was considered that this proposal introduced a verticality and scale of development which was over dominant. Accordingly the design was amended and a pitched roof was re-introduced to the scheme. It should be noted that the re-introduction of the pitched roof does not simply involve the addition of a pitch roof to the eaves height as suggested within the 'parapet' option. The building height at the eaves (and therefore at the closest point to dwellings to the west), as a consequence of the amendment is therefore lower than was originally intended and stands at 7.3m. I am therefore satisfied that the highest point of the western element of the building (9.9m) is some 25.3m distant from the nearest dwellings to the west and south. The highest point of the building overall (11.8m) is some 40m distant from dwellings to the west and 26.7 m to dwellings to the south.

7.24 I have also had regard to the provision within the application for a Phase 2 to the development of the school in the form of a 2 storey extension to the southern elevation of the proposed building. This would provide an additional 2 No. classrooms. This proposal would add a further 7.3m of built form to the southern end of the most easterly element of the building. This extension does not propose the inclusion of windows within either the southern or western elevation.

7.25 I do not consider therefore that the scale of the proposed building (or for that matter the extended building) by virtue of its height will appear incongruous in visual terms, given the degree of landscape screening, and will not adversely impact upon the amenity of nearby

residents.

7.26 Issues in respect of materiality, and the views that it created an unduly 'industrial external appearance to the building, have been addressed with the substitution of the originally proposed standing seam metal cladding finish, in primary colours, with the HPL cladding in a timber effect and fibre cement weatherboarding in a grey finish.

7.27 The concerns in respect of the clarity of the concept in the form of the building proposed is noted. However, design is a very subjective issue and whilst this view is respected, it is not shared entirely and is not, in itself considered to be an issue of such significance as would warrant the refusal of this proposal. As advised, the design has evolved in very close consultation with the school staff, the school pupils and the local education authority. It should also be noted that the proposals have been the subject of extensive community consultation and engagement, as reflected by the volume of consultation responses and degree of support for the scheme.

7.28 Accordingly, I consider the proposals represent the correct design response to the site and its particular constraints.

Environmental Performance

7.29 The building is designed to achieve BREEAM Excellent 2014 requirements for a reduction in carbon emission and represents best practice in terms of the creation of a sustainably performing building.

7.30 The building design follows first principals in the approach to sustainability and employs a fabric first approach, together with the proposed incorporation of roof mounted solar PV arrays which together is anticipated to yield an approximate reduction in energy usage of 12% and a 20% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

Landscaping and outdoor spaces

7.31 The scheme has been developed from the outset to have regard to the existing natural features within the site. Accordingly the scheme seeks to protect the majority of mature trees and makes provision for supplemental planting upon the boundaries where required. In addition, and in response to the loss of some trees and shrubbery from the centre of the site, a belt of planting upon a north – south alignment adjacent to the external school yard areas is proposed. The application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment & Method Statement. This approach has been broadly supported and the Council's arboriculturalist who considers the proposed site layout to be the best achievable in terms of safeguarding trees of merit.

7.32 During the consideration of the proposals by the Design Commission for Wales, it was observed that there was sound rationale in both design and context terms for the location of the school building in the position proposed. It is recognised that the retention of the mature

trees towards the north of the site aids not only in softening the views of the school from the north, but also serves to give a soft green feel to the secure line of the school at the public interface.

7.33 In addition to the retention of the existing sports pitch within the scheme and recreation provision on the site in the form of the MUGA, the remaining external spaces within the site are arranged as either landscaped spaces or spaces for outdoor education and play by school children. Hard surfaced areas adjacent to the school are proposed to be arranged to provide opportunities for soft play and outdoor education spaces relevant to the classrooms which they abut.

Amenity Impacts

7.34 I am mindful that the site is bounded to the north, south, east and west by existing areas of residential development, albeit that dwellings to the east are significantly further afield. It should be noted that there is no fundamental change of use involved between the site as it currently exists and the proposals.

7.35 At the time of writing this report, objection letters received raise concerns in respect to amenity impacts arising from the proposed position, scale and height of the school to adjacent properties.

7.36 I am satisfied that the design of the building is such that there are no significant proposed alterations to site levels, but notwithstanding this, these details will be required to be submitted and agreed before development commences. I am satisfied that the degree of separation between the building and adjacent properties would accord with the Council's guidance in respect of space around dwellings. Whilst I am mindful that these standards apply primarily to the relationship of dwellings to one another, they remain a useful guide to assist in the assessment of impact as a whole.

7.37 To all surrounding dwellings, I consider the degree of separation, taking account of the existing significant landscaped boundaries (which are proposed to be retained) to be acceptable. I further consider the scale of the proposals to be proportionate to that which would be expected of a school building within an urban location such as this.

7.38 As outlined previously, concerns have been raised that the proposals will give rise to significant increases in traffic which will, in turn, adversely affect amenity. It is clear following perusal of the transport assessment that whilst there will be an increase in traffic, it is not so significant as would give rise to concern or be deemed unacceptable.

7.39 Accordingly I do not consider that the proposals are such that would give rise to unacceptable impacts upon amenity.

Community Use of Facilities

7.40 It was recognised during the consideration of various options in respect of the siting of the school within the site that the existing sports field is in both school and community use. Accordingly the site layout has been designed to retain this facility which is unaffected by the proposals. The school building has been designed to enable use by community groups outside of the school day via the provision of a community use room at the frontage of the school building for after hours school and community activities. Arrangements for the hire and use of community facilities has previously been a matter between the school and any such community groups so I do not propose to condition these matters. During use by community groups of the sports pitch, access will be derived via the proposed pedestrian access point outside of the 'secure line' of the school grounds only.

7.41 There is a historical private covenant whereby specific arrangements were set out in respect of the use of community facilities. It has been suggested, in response to consultation, that the matters covered by the covenant should be replicated via the imposition of planning conditions to require the same use of shared facilities as set out in that covenant and all other practical arrangements surrounding that provision.

7.42 I am advised that Private legal agreements are not, in themselves, material to the determination of any land use planning application. Accordingly the existence of any historical private agreement does not carry weight in itself. However, differences in terms of community facility provision between that previously enjoyed at the site, and that proposed as a consequence of this application, are relevant. The main difference between what is proposed and that which the agreement related to, is the absence within the proposals of changing facilities for use by community groups in connection with the use of the sports pitch. This cannot be conditioned as it would require an alteration of the proposed scheme. Having taken account of all relevant matters, I do not consider that the omission of changing facilities for community use in the overall context of this application is, of itself, a matter of such weight to outweigh all of the other matters which weigh in favour of the proposals.

8.00 CONCLUSION

8.01 I consider the proposal to acceptable as matter of planning policy principle. I am satisfied that the proposed development takes account of the applicable planning policies and represents the correct balance between the various issue which relate to this site. I am satisfied that with the application of appropriate conditions, the scheme is acceptable in all other respects.

Other Considerations

8.02 The Council has had due regard to its duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and considered that there would be no significant or unacceptable increase in crime and disorder as a result of the recommended decision.

8.03 The Council has acted in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998 including Article 8 of the Convention and in a manner which is necessary in a democratic society in furtherance of the legitimate aims of the Act and the Convention.

8.04 The Council has had due regard to its public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010.

8.05 The Council has had due regard to its duty under Section 3 of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and considered that there would be no significant or unacceptable impact upon the achievement of wellbeing objectives as a result of the recommended decision.

LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Planning Application & Supporting Documents
National & Local Planning Policy
Responses to Consultation
Responses to Publicity

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