

Committee: **Regulatory
Planning Committee**

Date: **20 July 2016**

Report by: **Director of Communities, Economy and Transport**

Proposal: **Flat roofed single storey extension to hall to provide additional storage.**

Site Address: **Westfield School, Main Road, Westfield, TN35 4QE.**

Applicant: **Business Services Department, East Sussex County Council**

Application No. **RR/3308/CC**

Key Issues: **1. Purpose of development
2. Siting & Design**

Contact Officer: **Jeremy Patterson – Tel: 01273 481626**

Local Member: **Councillor Carl Maynard**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To grant planning permission subject to conditions as indicated in paragraph 8.1 of this report.

CONSIDERATION BY DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES, ECONOMY AND TRANSPORT.

1. The Site and Surroundings

1.1 Westfield School lies within the development boundary of the village on a level site on the east side of the A28 (Main Road) and west side of Workhouse Lane, Westfield. The surrounding area is largely residential with properties adjoining the School site to the south-east. The village is in a rural location within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

1.2 Westfield School shares the site with a Community Hall. The School buildings are in the northern part of the site with the Community Hall just to the south of the buildings at the eastern side of the site facing Workhouse Lane. The hard playground and grassed playing field extend from the School buildings to the south-west. Vehicular access is from Workhouse Lane with pedestrian access also from that road and from Main Road.

2. The Proposal

2.1 The proposal is for a small extension to the southern side of the Community Hall, which would be sited about 3 metres from the boundary hedge to the south. The extension would be located in a recess adjoining an existing store room. A small

plant poly-cover is currently present in this area but would be removed. The proposed extension would be about 6 metres in length and create additional floorspace of about 7.6 square metres. It would stand at 2.5 metres in height below the existing windows of the Community Hall. The extension would be flat-roofed and the external brickwork would match that of the main building. The extension would allow for the storage of tables and chairs used by the School for dining purposes.

3. Site History

3.1 There are two planning permissions of relevance to this proposal: (i) RR/2340/CC, granted in 2005, for the erection of a new single storey extension to the Community Hall for School and community use to provide new kitchen and new dining room, servery and preparation area, toilets, changing rooms, office and store and demolition works; and (ii) RR/3150/CC, which was granted in 2013 for an extension to accommodate 4 new classrooms with internal refurbishment and external works.

4. Consultations and Representations

4.1 Rother District Council raises no objections.

4.2 Westfield Parish Council raises an objection on the basis that the proposed extension has a flat roof and is not in keeping with the architecture of the existing building.

4.3 Representations: One letter has been received from a neighbour who objects on the grounds that there is already noise from the hall and a flat roof could encourage people to climb onto it and injure themselves. The neighbour also notes that people have been told that the hall is nothing to do with the School and so it would not have an educational use.

5. The Development Plan and other policies of relevance to this decision are:

5.1 Rother Local Plan Core Strategy 2014: Policy OSS4 (General Development Considerations).

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012: The NPPF does not change the status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making. It constitutes guidance as a material consideration in determining planning applications. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and regard should be had to NPPF policies so far as relevant. In this case, paragraph 72 is relevant advising that planning authorities should give great weight to the need to alter schools.

5.3 Policy Statement on Planning for Schools Development 2011:

The policy statement states that the planning system, when dealing with planning applications for state-funded schools should operate positively and there should be a presumption in favour of the development of state-funded schools. The policy statement encourages a collaborative approach to applications, encouraging pre-application discussions and use of planning obligations to help mitigate adverse impacts of developments. Where it is necessary to impose conditions, they should

be necessary in order to make development acceptable and be clearly justified, thereby demonstrably meeting the tests set out in Circular 11/95 (now superseded by Planning Practise Guidance 'Use of Planning Conditions'). The policy statement goes on to indicate that the Secretary of State will be minded to consider refusal of any application for state-funded schools to be unreasonable conduct, unless it is supported by clear and cogent evidence.

6. Considerations

Purpose of development

6.1 The introduction of the schools meals programme has meant that the existing School dining hall within the Community Hall building does not have sufficient space to accommodate both children having school meals and those having packed lunches during the allocated lunch period. Consequently, as well as using the dining hall, the School also uses the adjacent larger amenity hall within the building as an overflow. The amenity hall is jointly used by the School and the Westfield Community Association.

6.2 The School currently stores tables and chairs for school lunches within the dining hall and the built-in stores attached to the amenity hall, although the latter are unlocked and, according to the applicant, the furniture is regularly used by others without permission, which can cause the School some inconvenience. As a result, the School proposes to construct a new lockable store which would allow for the secure storage of the furniture. It would also free up existing storage space at the dining hall for the exclusive storage of PE equipment.

6.3 The School requires additional secure storage space in order to effectively administer its schools meals programme. As such, the proposal accords with the Policy Statement on Planning for Schools Development and the NPPF.

Siting & design

6.4 Policy OSS4 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy requires that all development should respect its surroundings and not to unreasonably harm the amenities of adjoining properties.

6.5 The proposed extension represents a modest addition to the south side of the Community Hall, being approximately 6 metres in length, 1.5 metres in width and 2.5 metres in height and would be constructed within an existing recess. It would be flat-roofed so as not to cover the existing windows of the Community Hall, thereby allowing natural light to continue to enter the main building. The proposed brickwork would match that of the Community Hall.

6.6 Although the extension would be about 3 metres from the boundary of the School site, it would be approximately 12 metres from the nearest residential dwelling in Geary Place. A large hedge is present on the boundary of the site and would largely screen the new extension from views from residential properties to the south. Moreover, the proposed external brickwork of the extension would match that of the Community Hall and would not result in any change to the existing arrangement of the windows of the main building along its southern elevation. Any views from residential properties would be slight and it is considered there would be no adverse effect to visual amenity. A neighbour has noted that the hall is noisy but

the proposed extension would not result in any additional noise within the hall, as it would be used for storage purposes only. Indeed, the development of the extension might lessen some noise from the activities in the hall by providing acoustic attenuation between the hall and residential properties to the south.

6.7 The Parish Council has objected to the proposal on the basis that it has a flat roof and is not in keeping with the architecture of the existing building. However, the existing building has no particular architectural merit and the extension would use similar materials to match its design. The extension would also be located within a discrete alcove and would be largely screened from views to the south as a result of it having a flat roof and by a large boundary hedge. The flat roof would enable the existing fenestration on the southern elevation of the Community Hall to be retained, thereby allowing natural light to enter the building, as well as maintaining its design. A neighbour has noted that the flat roof would encourage persons to climb onto it but the extension would be largely concealed from outside the site and it is not considered that it would directly lead to unsocial activities.

6.8 As such, the location of the proposed extension is considered to be appropriate, being placed in a relatively concealed position. Its design and use of materials would complement the existing building and there would be no unacceptable effects to amenity. The development is considered to be acceptable and accords with Policy OSS4 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy.

7. Conclusion and reasons for approval

7.1 In accordance with Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the decision on this application should be taken in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.2 The proposal is for a modest extension to create additional secure storage space for dining furniture to enable the schools meals programme to be properly managed. The location, design and use of materials are appropriate and would have no adverse effect on amenity. Consequently, the proposal complies with Policy OSS4 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, the Policy Statement on Planning for Schools Development 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

7.3 In determining this planning application, the County Council has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner. The Council has also sought views from consultees and neighbours and has considered these in preparing the recommendation. This approach has been taken positively and proactively in accordance with the requirement in the NPPF, and as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

7.4 There are no other material considerations and the decision should be taken in accordance with the Development Plan.

8. Recommendation

8.1 To recommend the Planning Committee to grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:-

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the plans listed in the Schedule of Approved Plans.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Schedule of Approved Plans

Block Plan 15072-003, Existing & Proposed Extension 15072-106, e16038-001
Proposed Single Storey Extension

RUPERT CLUBB
Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
12 July 2016

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Application file RR/3308/CC
The Development Plan & NPPF