

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/23/96514

Site Address: LAKESMERE HOUSE, ALLINGTON LANE, FAIR OAK, EASTLEIGH, SO50 7DB

Case Officer: Gary Osmond

Description: Provision of a new two storey Primary School building and removal of the existing northern timber teaching block building from the site and associated ancillary works including enlargement of the existing on-site parking courtyard

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
- Straddles urban edge boundary - Blanket Tree Preservation Order (552-E) - Borders SINC (Quobleigh Pond & Woods) - Within Great Crested Newt Red zone - Locally Listed Building (Elgin Lodge & Lakesmere House) - Partially within Flood Zone 3		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Multiple planning applications for various works to original house, extensions to enlarge school, temporary classroom buildings and tree works. The most recent record is F/06/57089 for a two storey classroom extension to the original school, approved in July 2006, which itself was an amendments to planning permission 14802/020/00, which was approved in July 2000.		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☐
Representations:	Four representations were received objecting to the proposals on the following grounds: - Close proximity to neighbouring residential dwellings - Loss of light - Loss of privacy - Intrusive - Impact on trees - Additional traffic problems - Damage to and maintenance of boundary fencing - Increased noise		
Parish Council:	No Objection.		
Trees:	Unfortunately, the arboricultural information supplied is lacking in certain areas. Regardless, from the application documents, it is possible to assess that the proposal is theoretically feasible, so long as more information is provided pre-commencement in order to protect the significant trees. A single example, concerns levels: there is a proposal to regrade some of the area behind the tree protection fencing, which obviously is not compatible with the protection. The requirement for revised and more details tree protection measures, etc is recommended.		
Ecology:	This site is in a red great crested newt impact risk zone. There are records of great crested newts in Quobleigh Woods to the east of the		

	site, and numerous records of bats nearby. There are nesting swifts in the wider vicinity. I have reviewed the PEA report by Vesper Conservation and Ecology Limited (September 2023). It is not likely that any protected species will be affected by these proposals, however precautionary working methods are required. The recommendations for precautionary working methods recommended in the report are appropriate and can be conditioned in a CEMP. The recommendations for biodiversity enhancements are appropriate and can be conditioned. A surface water drainage plan can be conditioned. This must use the simple index approach to pollution mitigation to demonstrate that any pollutants from the car park and roof drainage will be adequately mitigated.
Newt Officer:	This development falls in the red impact risk zone, which indicates that there is highly suitable habitat for great crested newts within the area surrounding the application site. Great crested newt records have been recorded within 250m of the development and as there are few barriers present between the nearby waterbodies and the application site, there is potential for great crested newts to terrestrially disperse across the site. This development involves the demolition of a preexisting structure on hardstanding as well as the construction of a new school building and courtyard/playground on the well maintained grassland to the east. These works are considered to be relatively low risk, however, due to the presence of great crested newt records within 250m it is determined that there is still some risk of newts dispersing across the site, along the hedgerow to the north. Therefore, it is recommended that the development follow Reasonable Avoidance Measures to minimise the risk to great crested newts. This should be produced by a suitably qualified ecologist.
Hampshire Highways:	No objection from a highway perspective. Access in and out of the site from the highway is unchanged, and this is acceptable, given that the proposals are for a betterment of existing facilities, and no additional pupils or staff are anticipated to be attracted to the school as a result. It is proposed that the parking quantum will be increased given the existing shortfalls, lack of dedicated site parking, and surrounding development restricting parking to some extent, and this is acceptable. The layout has been reviewed, and conforms to standards in terms of parking bay dimensions, and an aisle width suitable for easy turning in and out of spaces. Given the site location, it would however be requested that a condition is applied to ensure a Construction Site Management Plan is in place prior to the start of works.
Environment Agency:	No comments received.

Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Details: 06/09/2023 as part of pre-application discussions.		

Photographs has also been provided in support of the application.

Policy:

National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance

Development Plan:

The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 The most relevant policies are Strategic policies S1, S2, S8 & S10; and Development Management policies DM1, DM2, DM3, DM6, DM11, DM12, DM13, DM14 & DM36.

Supplementary Planning Documents:

Quality Places; Residential Parking Standards; Character Area Appraisals; Trees and Development.

Assessment:

Proposals:

The application seeks consent for the construction of a new two storey primary school building to replace an existing single storey timber structure which is no longer fit for purpose. Further works consist of providing more on-site car parking and improved pedestrian access as part of a remodelled entrance courtyard, as well as secure play space for the younger year children, together with new landscaping and other ancillary works.

Site Context & Background:

Lakesmere House has been used as an independent Christian school for the past thirty years, known as 'The Kings School'. The school caters for children from Yr R to Yr 11 (5 – 16) and is split into Primary and Secondary schools. The primary school is housed in a single storey timber building which sits along the northern boundary of the site. This building is made up of a number of temporary classrooms joined together, which despite extensive repairs has served its useful life and is no longer fit for purpose.

Immediately adjacent to the primary school building is an older timber built 'pavilion' building, which is to be retained and refurbished for use as a music and drama space for the whole school. To the south of the existing primary school building, across the existing car park and hard surfaced playground, is a more recent two storey brick built extension to the original Lakesmere House, which sits further to the south. The original house and later large extension form the secondary school. To the east is open ground used as playing pitches, as well as a recently constructed all-weather Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA).

The northern boundary of the site is bounded by a dense hedge, fence and trees, some of which lie outside the site. There is also a group of large mature cedar trees which lie to the south of the proposed new building.

In terms of topography, the western half of the site which contains all the school buildings is relatively flat and level but then slopes away to the east, where the eastern site boundary meets 'Quobleigh Pond & Woods Site of Importance' for Nature Conservation (SINC), which forms the eastern and southern boundaries of the wider site. To the west and north is recently built residential development.

Policy & Principle:

The wider school site straddles the urban edge boundary, albeit all the school buildings are within the urban edge, with the remainder of the school grounds to the east being outside the urban edge. In principle therefore, development is acceptable, provided that proposed is considered to be in accordance with the relevant policies of the adopted Local

Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents. In this instance the most relevant policies are S10, DM36 and DM1.

Policy DM1 requires all new development to be of a high quality design and to take appropriate account of the site and its surrounding context. It also requires development to minimise its impact upon neighbouring uses and occupiers, as well as ensure natural features worthy of retention are protected and enhanced.

Policies S10 and DM36 relate to the provision of community, cultural and leisure facilities, with S10 stating “The Borough Council will work with Hampshire County Council, the health authorities, emergency services, town and parish Councils, faith groups and voluntary groups to ensure the adequate provision of facilities to serve the Borough’s communities.” This goes on to set out that the provision of new schools and enhancements to existing schools will be supported.

Other policies of note are DM2, which relates to environmentally sustainable development, DM6, which relates to sustainable drainage, DM11 relating to nature conservation, S8 and DM12 relating to heritage assets, and DM13 and DM14 on transport and parking.

In principle therefore, the provision of a replacement primary school building is acceptable, subject to the above mentioned policies being complied with.

Layout, Form, Scale & Design:

The new primary school building is to be positioned just to the east of the current large secondary school extension, running roughly parallel with the northern site boundary but set back by 12 metres at its closest point. The building will remain just inside the urban edge boundary and will be no further forward of the current building line created by the neighbouring housing development, ‘Davidson Drive, to the immediate north of the school site. Whilst sitting beyond the existing school campus buildings, the position proposed will nonetheless still be seen as part of the wider campus and help to form one edge of a new landscaped entrance courtyard.

The building is a very simple rectilinear shape with a footprint measuring approximately 36 x 12.5 metres. The infant school (Yrs R – 2) will be accommodated on the ground floor, and the primary school (Yrs 3 – 6) on the first floor. Both floors would also have ancillary communal study spaces/library, as well as toilets and staff facilities, with both floors being linked via a main staircase and entrance lobby at the western end of the building facing onto the courtyard. A second staircase is positioned at the eastern end of the building. Both floors are then covered by a low pitched roof with central ridgeline.

The building would be of a modular construction, manufactured off-site by a local company and erected by crane. The ground floor would be faced in brick, with the first floor clad in vertical timber boards. The roof would be a zinc metal finish or similar. A condition requiring the final materials to be agreed is recommended.

Whilst very simple and functional in form and appearance, the building is nonetheless considered to be appropriate in design terms and will reflect features of the neighbouring secondary school building in presenting a glazed gable end to the newly created entrance courtyard. It is this courtyard feature which will greatly enhance the public face of the school site by providing an approach more appropriate for the nature of the site and making the main front entrance more legible. Whilst it will be predominantly used for staff and visitor parking, it will include new soft landscaping and tree planting, as well as properly segregated vehicular and pedestrian routes into the school.

Overall in terms of general design, that proposed is considered to be a significant enhancement of not just the facilities available to the primary school but also of the wider school campus and its public entrance. As such, the scheme is considered to accord with the requirements of Policy DM1 in achieving good design, as well as those of the Council’s ‘Quality Places’ SPD.

Heritage:

Lakesmere House is a locally listed building, as such the proposed development's impact upon this heritage asset and its setting needs to be considered. In this instance, Lakesmere House is positioned to the south-western corner of the site away from the location of the new primary school building. The intervening space between the to accommodates the large modern extension for the secondary school, as well as a significant group of mature evergreen cedar trees. As such, whilst the new primary school building will be visible from Lakesmere House, it is sufficiently far enough away and visually softened by the mature trees so as not to result in any adverse impact upon the setting of the locally listed building. As such, the requirements of Policies S8 and DM12 are met.

Access, Parking & Highways:

The position of the site access from St Swithun Wells Way will remain unchanged, albeit a more formalised demarcation between vehicular and pedestrian routes along the driveway will be provided.

Parking at school drop-off and pick-up time has been highlighted as an existing problem by those commenting on the application, with concern that this could worsen as a result of that proposed. Whilst these comments are noted, the parking issues raised are not unusual around a school site and should have been expected when moving into a development with a school next door. Notwithstanding, the school does currently encourage parents to use the nearby church carpark, rather than neighbouring residential streets. This arrangement will continue. In addition, the proposed new entrance courtyard will provide 27 spaces, including 3 disabled spaces. This is considerably more than the approximately 8 to 10 spaces current available on site and will allow more staff to park on site, freeing up further spaces for parent use in the church car park.

It should also be noted that the proposed new primary school building is intended to replace an existing facility. As such, there will be no increase in overall pupil numbers, meaning that traffic impact will not increase. A brief transport statement has been provided in support of the planning application and has been assessed by Hampshire Highways who have raised no issues with that proposed. As such, that proposed is considered to accord with the requirements of Policies DM13 and DM14 of the Local Plan.

Amenity:

Concerns have been raised by immediate neighbours in relation to the proximity of the proposed building and resulting loss of light and privacy, as well as visual intrusion. Whilst these concerns are understandable, the removal of the existing timber building would improve the outlook for some neighbouring properties, given its current position against the northern boundary of the site. Whilst the proposed new building will be two storey in scale, at an eaves height of 5.3 metres and overall ridge height of 7.7 metres, the proposed building would not be dissimilar terrace of two storey dwellings, and would in fact be lower in terms of its ridge height due to the low pitched roof form. This together with being set away from the shared northern boundary by between 15 and 12 metres would mean that in planning terms it could not be deemed as overbearing or visually intrusive, particularly considering this boundary is marked by a line of trees and hedge which will help to screen the presence of the building.

These boundary trees, together with the distance away from the boundary and perpendicular aspects, will mean that whilst there may be a degree of overlooking from the northern first floor windows of the block, it would not be to an unacceptable extent in planning terms and could not be used as a reason to refuse the application. Equally, there would be no noticeable loss of light to any of these neighbouring properties or their gardens.

With regards to concerns of disturbance, as mentioned above, the presence of the school should have been evident to those moving into the new residential development. As such a degree of noise and disturbance is likely but would not be expected to be any greater than any other school establishment. However, disturbance during construction works will

likely be expected, although this can be controlled to a reasonable extent via the application of conditions requiring submission and approval of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), as well as a restriction on working hours, burning, etc.

Overall, that proposed is not considered to result in any additional disturbance or amenity impact upon neighbouring properties over and above that already experienced. As such, the application is considered to accord with the amenity requirements of Policy DM1 and the 'Quality Places' SPD.

Trees & Nature Conservation:

As set out in the Council's Tree Consultant's response above, very limited information in relation to the proposed development's impact upon trees has been provided.

Notwithstanding, it does appear feasible to undertake that proposed, albeit more detailed information will need to be provided prior to any works commencing. A condition to this effect is recommended.

The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisals which has been reviewed by the Council's Ecologist, and to which no objection has been raised to the proposals. The appraisal demonstrates that protected species are unlikely to be impacted by the proposed development, provided appropriate cautionary working practices are used during construction. These can be conditioned, as can the biodiversity enhancement measures proposed.

Drainage & Flooding:

Limited details have been provided in relation to drainage proposals. However, there is easily scope to provide sustainable surface water drainage for the building and its associated external areas of hardstanding, many of which already exist, to meet the requirements of Policy DM6. A condition requiring details of the exact drainage proposals is recommended.

Technically a very small part of the wider site falls within Flood Zone 3. However, this is to the far eastern site boundary with the neighbouring SINC, meaning that the proposed new building and its ancillary external areas, which are all on higher land, will not be impacted by possible flooding.

Sustainability:

Policy DM2 requires all new development over 500 square metres floor area to achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' or equivalent. However, in reality this often proves to be difficult, particularly for smaller scale projects such as that proposed. Notwithstanding, the application is supported by a BREEAM Pre-assessment Estimator report, which demonstrates that at the current stage the scheme will achieve a 'Very Good' rating. It also demonstrates that it will not be able to achieve the required 'Excellent' rating. This is principally due to the inability to secure a range of pre-design stage credits, mainly because the need for a formal BREEAM assessment was not considered from the beginning of the project by the applicant, albeit environmental sustainability was always a significant consideration. Equally, as a charity, the budget constraints and costs of employing the various specialist consultants required to undertake the work to achieve these credits would have been prohibitive.

Notwithstanding the reasons for not beginning the BREEAM assessment, the submitted pre-assessment estimator does demonstrate that were it possible to secure these early design stage credits, the project could realistically achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' with ample margin/buffer should credits be lost through construction. As such, whilst that proposed will not be able to meet the exact requirements of Policy DM2, sufficient justification and evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the requirements of this policy could be achieved. It also needs to be borne in mind that the proposed new building will replace a very poorly insulated temporary structure with a bespoke and fit for purpose modern building which utilises modern and renewable construction methods – the building be of modular timber construction produced by a local manufacturer – which will provide a far better learning environment for many years to come.

Climate Change:

In July 2019, the Council declared a Climate Change and Environmental Emergency. In doing so it agreed, among other things, to: (a) put in place measures to ensure the Council's own operations and functions achieve carbon neutrality by 2025; (b) work with partners to aim for all projects and services delivered in the Borough to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030; (c) ensure that the Council's procurement policy recognises carbon neutrality as one of its primary considerations; and (d) recognise the urgency of action to mitigate and adapt to climate change in every decision taken by the Council. This is underpinned by the Climate and Environment Emergency Strategy 2020–2030 and the supporting Climate and Environment Emergency Action Plan – Update June 2020.

The declaration of the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency demonstrates a strong commitment from the Council to achieve net zero. The NPPF, development plan and adopted local plan policy do not set this as a specific target, but it is a material consideration to be considered alongside all other material considerations. In any case addressing climate change is a core part of the NPPF and local plan policy. The need to support the economy is part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted local plan, as is an assessment of climate impacts.

The NPPF, Policies S1, DM2 and DM3 of the Local Plan and energy and water elements of the adopted Environmentally Sustainable Development SPD require development to be sustainable in terms of resource use, climate change and energy use. When considering the impact of climate change, the proposed development is expected to be resilient to the potential effects of climate change and is expected to reduce/limit impacts on climate emissions as a result of the development or its use.

Equalities Implications:

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:

- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

When making policy decisions, the Council must take account of the equality duty and in particular any potential impact on protected groups. It is considered that this application does not raise any equality implications

Conclusion:

Recommendation:

PERMIT ☒

REFUSE ☐

For the reasons set out above, the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions relating to the following:

- Approved plans
- Commencement within three years
- Drainage details
- Submission of updated tree protection details
- Submission of CEMP
- Working hours
- No burning
- Details of facing materials
- Details of hard and soft landscaping, together with boundary treatment
- Details of external lighting
- Implementation of biodiversity enhancements

- Removal of existing primary school building
- Provision of on-site parking as approved