

**For: PLANNING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE – 5 MARCH 2012**

**By: DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY (GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE)**

**Development Proposed:**

**Retention and continued use of a single temporary classroom unit (ref T2 E198) for a further period of 5 years.**

**Division Affected:** Bicester

**Contact Officer:** Naomi Woodcock **Tel:** Oxford 815708

**Location:** Longfields Primary School, Longfields, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX26 6QL.

**Applicant:** Oxfordshire County Council

**Application No:** R3.0010/12

**District Council Area:** Cherwell

**Recommendation:** The report recommends that planning permission should be granted subject to conditions.

**Location (see site plan Annex 1)**

1. Longfields Primary School is located on the Longfields housing estate just to the east of Bicester Town Centre.

**Site and Setting (see site plan Annex 1)**

2. The diamond shaped school site is bounded on three sides by residential development together with the Bicester to London railway line to the north east (the Bicester North station lies just to the north west).
3. A public footpath runs immediately adjacent to the school's northwest boundary.
4. The temporary building is located to the rear of the main school building.
5. Vehicular and pedestrian access is taken from Longfields to the west of the school site.

6. The nearest dwellings to the temporary building are located 75<sup>1</sup> metres to the west on Maple Road and 90 metres to the south on Moor Pond Close.
7. Views of the classroom are partially screened from the west by trees and from the south by a 2 metre hedge along the southern site boundary.

### **Background and Details of the Development**

8. The Childrens Education and Families Directorate argues that the classroom is needed because:
  - there is insufficient space within the permanent school building to accommodate the total number of pupils on the school roll; and
  - funding for a permanent replacement building has not been forthcoming.
9. The temporary building is of a standard prefabricated functional design with a mineral felt roof and upvc windows. The paintwork on the textured plywood walls and doors are faded. No alterations are proposed to the appearance of the building.
10. The applicant considers that the building is in sound condition and suitable for use for another five years.
11. No changes are proposed to staff or pupil numbers as a result of this proposal.

### **Representations**

12. There have been no third party representations.

### **Consultations**

13. Cherwell District Council – No objection subject to the removal of the building at the end of the five year period.

Bicester Town Council – Object. Although there is a clear need for the classroom, permanent facilities should be provided.

Transport Development Control – No objection.

Drainage Engineer – No objection.

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<sup>1</sup> All distances are approximate

**Relevant planning policies (see Policy Annex to the committee papers)**

14. Planning applications should be decided in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
15. The relevant development plan policies are:
  - The South East Plan (SEP) 2026 – Policies: S3.
  - The Cherwell Local Plan (CLP) 1996 – Policies: C28.

The Non Statutory Cherwell Local Plan (NSCLP) 2004 is also a material consideration in the determination of this proposal. Policy R11 is relevant in this case.

16. The SEP forms part of the development plan. However, the government has made it clear that it intends to abolish regional strategies. The Localism Act enables the Secretary of State to revoke the whole or any part of a regional strategy by order. Whilst no such order had been made at the date this report was drafted, the published intention to revoke is a material consideration to which substantial weight should be given.

**Comments of the Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth & Infrastructure)**

17. The key planning issues are:
  - (i) whether the renewal of planning permission in this instance is appropriate;
  - (ii) whether the external appearance of the temporary building is acceptable.

(i) Whether renewal of planning permission is in this instance appropriate:
18. Policy S3 of the SEP requires local authorities to ensure that there is an adequate provision of school facilities.
19. In this instance, although Bicester Town Council has indicated that it understands the need for the development, it considers that a permanent replacement building should be provided.
20. Although I appreciate the sentiment expressed by the Town Council regarding permanent accommodation and I accept that a more permanent solution is preferable, my view is that renewal of planning permission is in principle acceptable at this point because:
  - there is insufficient space within the permanent school building to accommodate current and future pupil numbers;
  - there are no funds currently available to provide permanent replacement accommodation; and
  - the proposal supports the aim of policy S3 of the SEP.

(ii) Whether the external appearance of the temporary classroom building is acceptable:

21. Policy C28 of the CLP requires the external appearance of any development to be sympathetic to the character of the urban context in which it sits and Policy R11 of the NSCLP looks to permit community facilities provided, amongst other things, they are appropriate in terms of scale, siting and design.
22. Temporary buildings are generally not particularly sympathetic to the site where they are located. However, in my view this building is not unduly obtrusive as it is located to the rear of the main school building. Views from the south and west are partially screened by existing landscaping and views from Longfields are obscured by the main school building.
23. The building itself, whilst structurally sound, has a rather tired looking appearance. A condition requiring the repainting of the external doors and walls would address this issue. I therefore consider that subject to condition the external appearance of the temporary building is acceptable.

**Conclusion**

24. Retention of this single temporary building would enable Longfields Primary School to continue to accommodate its current and future pupil population. Although not an ideal solution to the school's accommodation needs, the renewal of planning permission for a further five years is justified and consistent with policy S3 of the South East Plan.

**Recommendation**

25. **It is RECOMMENDED that Application No. R3.0010/12 be approved subject to conditions to be determined by the Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth & Infrastructure) but to include the following matters:**
  1. **The development must be carried out strictly in accordance with the plans and drawings submitted with the application.**
  2. **Building to be removed by 31 March 2017.**
  3. **Repainting of external doors, walls and railings within 6 months.**

**School Accommodation Informative:**

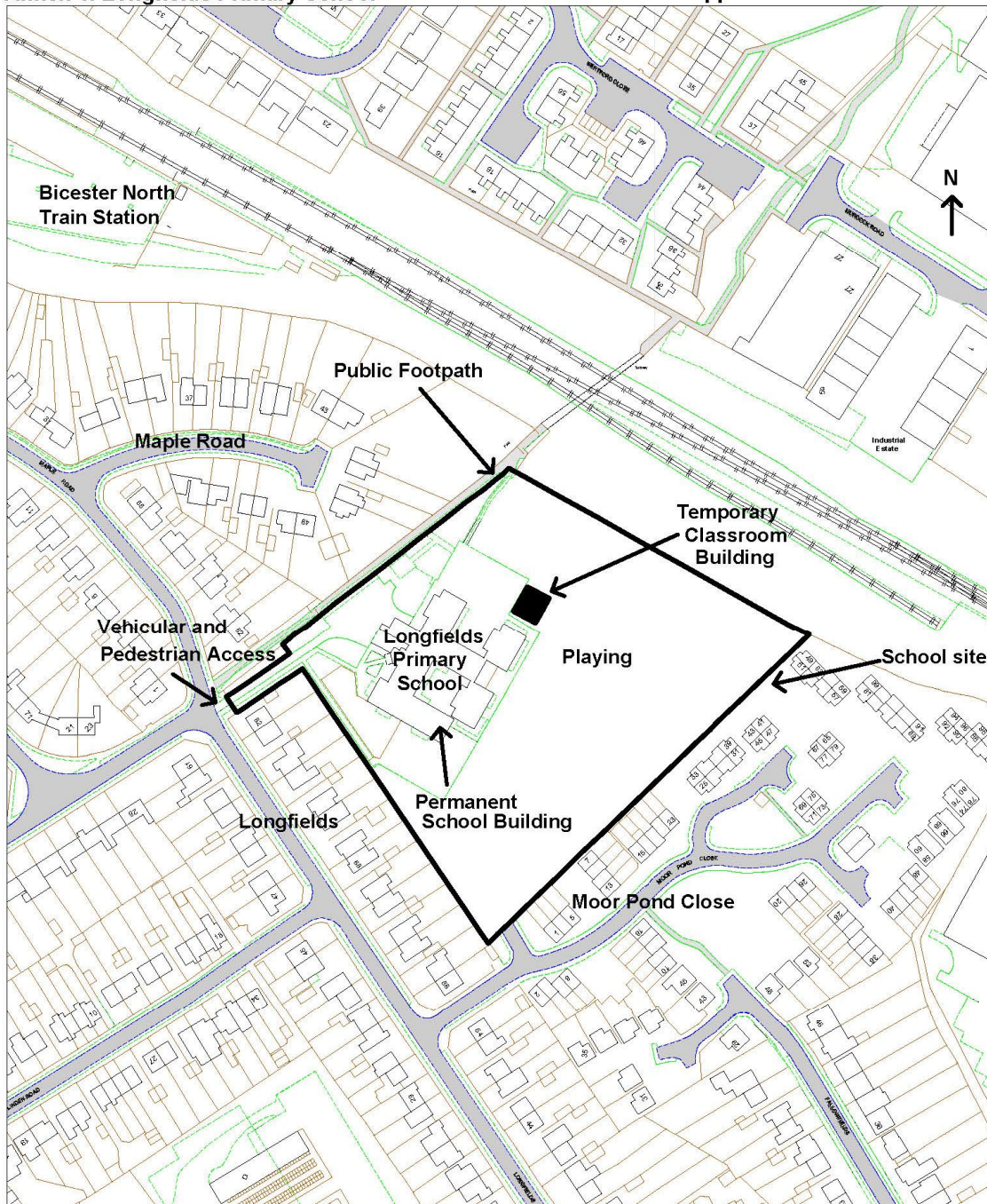
**The school is advised to investigate the provision of a more permanent solution to its long-term accommodation needs before this consent expires.**

MARTIN TUGWELL  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR for ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY (GROWTH &  
INFRASTRUCTURE)

February 2012

Annex 1: Longfields Primary School

Application No: R3.0010/12



This plan shows only an indication of the proposed development and should not be scaled from