

**For: PLANNING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE – 28 MAY 2012**

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

**Development Proposed:**

**Installation of a modular classroom building for a temporary period of 5 years.**

**Division Affected:** Didcot All Saints

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

**Location:** Manor School, Lydalls Close, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 7LB

**Application No:** R3.0048/12

**District Council Area:** South Oxfordshire

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**Recommendation**

The report recommends that the planning application be approved subject to conditions (see paragraph 37).

## **Part 1 - Facts and background**

### **Location (see site plan)**

1. Manor School is located on the western side of Didcot just off Lydalls Close.
2. The school is divided into two sites. The infant school site is situated on the northern side of Lydalls Close and the junior school site directly opposite the infant school.
3. The infant school site lies within Didcot Old Conservation Area. The classroom building is proposed on the junior school site.

### **Site and Setting (see site plan)**

4. On the junior school site, the main school building is located in the northern section of the site. Two existing temporary buildings are located to the east of the main building and close to the eastern site boundary.
5. The school site also comprises a hard play area which is located to the west of the main school building and the main school car park which is situated to the north of the hard play area. The school playing field lies in the southern section of the school site,
6. Immediately east of the main building is a 1 metre high curved wall and an amenity grassland area. Two pathways cross the grassland to provide access to the existing temporary buildings.
7. Vehicular and pedestrian access is from the northern end of the school site.
8. The junior school site is bounded by allotments to the south, the Meadows retirement home and sports pavilion to the east and residential dwellings to the west and north, alongside the infant's part of the school.
9. A public footpath runs immediately adjacent to the school's eastern site boundary.
10. A 2.5 metre hedgerow along the school's northern site boundary and the eastern site boundary is lined with trees.
11. The nearest dwellings to the proposed temporary building are located 80 metres to the north on Lydalls Close and the residential home (The Meadows) is located 50 metres to the east.

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

12. At present the junior school has 10 classrooms for 270 children. For the last five years Manor School has consistently admitted its maximum annual admission number of 75 pupils into the infant school. This intake results in a

junior school role of 300 children. The consequence therefore as the pupils' progress through the school, will be insufficient space in the junior school buildings to continue to accommodate single year groups in classes of 25 children.

13. The school explain that they have two options: i) to provide mixed age classes of 30 pupils; or ii) to provide two additional classrooms which would enable them to continue to teach single age groups in classes of 25.
14. The school want the additional teaching accommodation because they consider that teaching would be less effective in mixed age classes and parents may feel that children are being held back by younger children.
15. As the school do not currently have the funds to provide two permanent classrooms, they are seeking planning permission to install a double modular classroom building for a temporary period of five years.
16. The new temporary building would be erected where the two footpaths meet on the amenity grassland area between the main school building and the existing temporary buildings.
17. The steel frame flat roof temporary building would be finished in glass reinforced plastic cladding.
18. To facilitate the works it would be necessary to demolish the exiting 1 metre high circular wall and to reconstruct the existing pathways around the building.
19. No trees or significant vegetation would be removed as part of the works.
20. There would be no increase in pupil numbers as a result of this proposal. One additional member of staff would be required from September 2013.

## **Part 2 – Other viewpoints**

### **Representations**

21. One letter of objection signed by six local residents has been received. A copy of the letter is available in the Members' Resource Centre. The key points of which are:
  - local residents are affected by congestion and parking at the beginning and end of the school day;
  - suggest that parking is prevented at the eastern end of Lydalls Close;
  - additional classrooms with less than 30 pupils provides scope for expansion.

### **Consultations**

22. South Oxfordshire District Council – No objection.

Didcot Town Council – Although no increase to pupil or staff numbers are proposed, there are currently problems with parking at the start and end of the school day. As there is no turning circle for motorists on Lydalls Close, pedestrian safety is put at risk. Suggest that a condition is imposed requiring the school to update its travel plan.

English Heritage – The application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance.

Protected Species Officer – No objection. The potential for protected species is very low.

Transport Development Control – No objection. Safety consequences are not considered to be significant. Suggest that the school update its travel plan.

Drainage Engineer – No objection. Request submission of full drainage details (including soakage tests).

County Archaeologist – The building lies within an area of some archaeological interest. However it seems unlikely that the small scale nature of the proposals would justify an archaeological response. Request an informative advising appropriate action that should be taken in the event of archaeological finds.

**Part 3 – Relevant planning documents and legislation (see policy Annex attached to committee papers)**

23. Planning applications should be decided in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
24. The relevant development plan documents and policies are:
  - The South East Plan (SEP) 2026 – policies S3.
  - The South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) 2011 – policies CF2, T1, T2, CF2.
25. 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.
26. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 is a material consideration.

**Part 4 - Assessment and conclusions**

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

27. The key planning issues are:
  - (i) The acceptability of this temporary development;
  - (ii) Level of activity as a result of the development.
  
- (i) The acceptability of this temporary development:
  
28. Policy CF2 of the SOLP2011 encourages new community facilities, provided there are no amenity objections.
  
29. In this case the proposal is fairly small in scale, centrally located in the school site and well screened by boundary hedges and existing school buildings. The proposal would have minimal ecological impacts and the boundary trees and vegetation would be retained around the wider site. I consider that the visual amenities of nearby residents should not be adversely affected. However, a condition requiring the submission of final details of the design of the building should be imposed to ensure that the detailed design of the classroom is appropriate.
  - (ii) Level of activity as a result of the development
  
30. Policy S3 of the SEP2026 seeks to ensure adequate provision of school facilities. The NPPF advises that great weight should be given to meeting the need to alter and expand schools and deliver sufficient community facilities and services to meet local needs.
  
31. Policy T1 of the SOLP2011 seeks to ensure that new development is served by an adequate road network which can accommodate traffic without creating traffic hazards. Policy T2 of the SOLP2011 requires development proposals to put measures in place to reduce the need for vehicle parking where possible.
  
32. Local residents have expressed concern that the provision of the extra classrooms could provide scope for the school to expand in the future by increasing class sizes, particularly because of the potential traffic/parking consequences. They are already concerned about existing traffic and parking on Lydalls Close at the beginning and end of the school day. They are particularly concerned that at the eastern end of Lydalls Close it is too narrow for cars to pass easily and this makes it difficult for larger vehicles to gain access to their properties. The residents comment that a solution should be found to prevent parents parking at their end of the road.
  
33. Didcot Town Council has commented that pedestrian safety may be put at risk and suggest that the school travel should be updated. Transport Development Control has raised no objections but have suggested a travel plan informative to address the concerns of local residents.

34. In my view the proposed development should have little effect on the level of activity around the school site as there is at this point no intention to increase school numbers through the temporary classrooms. However, I do agree with Transport Development Control's suggestion as a travel plan would encourage the school to do what it can to better manage traffic and parking around the school site and promote sustainable travel.

## **Conclusions**

35. Installation of a double temporary building would enable Manor School to continue to accommodate pupils in single year groups of classes of 25. Although a temporary classroom building is not an ideal solution to the school's accommodation issue, it would meet the immediate need and allow the school to consider how best to meet its long term accommodation needs.
36. Permission with conditions to cover the final design of the development is therefore recommended.

## **Recommendation**

37. **It is RECOMMENDED that Application No. R3.0048/112 be approved subject to conditions to be determined by the Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth & Infrastructure) 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. Temporary building to be removed by 31 January 2017.**
  - 3. Submission of final design details of temporary building (including material finish).**
  - 4. Prior submission of full drainage details (including soakage tests).**

### **Informatives:**

**Encourage school to update school travel plan.**

**The school is required to notify the county archaeologist if any archaeological finds occur.**

MARTIN TUGWELL  
Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth & Infrastructure)

May 2012

