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Division(s): Woodstock

PLANNING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE – 15 FEBRUARY 2010

TEMPORARY (FOR A MAXIMUM OF 3 YEARS) SINGLE CLASSROOM (PORTAKABIN TYPE) SITED ON EXISTING PLAY PITCH AT GREAT TEW SCHOOL, THE GREEN, GREAT TEW

Report by Head of Sustainable Development

Location: Great Tew School, The Green, Great Tew

Application No: 09/1608/P/CD3

District: West Oxfordshire

Introduction

1. This is an application for a temporary classroom at Great Tew School. It is proposed that the building would remain in place for a maximum of three years to allow time for a planning application for permanent accommodation to be processed and time for this to be built.

Location

2. Great Tew is located approximately 6.5 miles (10.5 km) east of Chipping Norton and 8.5 miles (13.5 km) south west of Banbury in the north west corner of the county.

The Site and its Setting (see plan 1)

3. Great Tew School is situated in the centre of the village of Great Tew within the conservation area. The conservation area contains many listed buildings (a number of which have thatched roofs and all are built in the local ironstone). The school itself is a Grade II Listed Building. Immediately to the east of the site is the Falkland Arms Public House. A recently constructed Foundation Stage classroom building is located immediately to the south of the existing school building.
4. The proposed temporary building would be situated to the side and rear of the main school building (adjacent to the new Foundation Stage building) approximately 30 metres from the nearest residential dwelling to the south.

Details of the Development

5. The temporary classroom is required for a maximum period of 3 years until permanent accommodation at the school can be built. Supporting information submitted with the application indicates that the school is currently significantly overcrowded. Indeed access to one classroom is through another and there is now no school hall or inside space for wet weather play. An additional classroom is therefore essential and removing one classroom to a temporary building would address the overcrowding issues for the time being whilst the provision of a permanent situation is being pursued.
6. The building would be placed adjacent to the new Foundation Stage building on an area of playingfield which is too small to be used as a formal sports pitch. The site is currently grassed and although it is surrounded by trees, none would need to be removed.

Consultations

7. The following consultation responses have been received:
 - (a) West Oxfordshire District Council: Object – the building on account of its design, form, material and location will visually detract from the character and appearance of the street scene and wider Conservation Area to the detriment of the setting of the adjacent Listed Building. The application is therefore contrary to Policies BE2, BE5 and BE8 of the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.
 - (b) Environment Agency: No comments to make as the application is low risk.
 - (c) Sport England: No comments – the area is too small to accommodate a formal playing pitch.
 - (d) English Heritage: Do not wish to offer any comments. The application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance.
 - (e) Transport Development Control: The proposal would not have any significant highway impact; it is intended to accommodate existing pupils rather than increase capacity and so trips associated with the site would remain as existing.
 - (f) Ecologist Planner: No objection. However, if protected species are found during the works, all work should cease immediately. Before any further work takes place the Protected Species Officer at Oxfordshire County Council should be contacted immediately. Work should not recommence until a full survey has been carried out, a mitigation strategy prepared and licence obtained (if necessary) in discussion and agreement with Natural England.

Third Party Representations

8. Two letters of representation have been received from local residents.
9. Letter 1 – States concern that pupil numbers might increase leading to increased difficulty parking and an increase in cars using their driveway to turn. Also concerned about a precedent being set for a permanent building, increased noise from the school and traffic. States that this development would detract from the beauty of the village and be hazardous for visitors looking at old cottages. Would spoil the view to the rear of the property.
10. Letter 2 – Object strongly to the application. There would be an increase in noise at property. There was a recent expansion at the school for under 5s and as a result of this age group being moved out of the main building there should now be room for the older children. The temporary building is ugly and inappropriate in the conservation area setting. Private individuals would not be allowed to erect such a structure in the village. Increase in number of pupils would lead to an increase in traffic, which already causes danger. Children coming in from afar will reduce rolls at other schools. Screening associated with the previous development has not been done which has not helped problems of overlooking and noise. The school should not take on more pupils than it is safe to; there are other schools in the area with capacity. Temporary solutions invariably become more permanent.

Relevant Planning Policies

South East Plan (SEP)

11. SEP CC6 states that decisions associated with the development and use of land will actively promote the creation of sustainable and distinctive communities. This will be achieved by developing and implementing a shared vision which respects and, where possible enhances, the character and distinctiveness of settlements and uses innovative design processes to create a high quality built environment which promotes a sense of place.

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (WOLP)

12. WOLP policy BE2 states that new development should respect and, where possible, improve the character and quality of its surroundings. Proposals for new buildings should clearly demonstrate how they will relate satisfactorily to the site and its surroundings. It provides detailed criteria for new buildings to meet relating to the quality of development and impact on the area, crime and energy and resources.
13. WOLP policy BE5 states that the special architectural, historic and environmental character or appearance of conservation areas will be preserved and enhanced. Every effort will be made to ensure that this character or appearance is not eroded by the introduction of unsympathetic development proposals.

14. WOLP policy BE8 states that development should not detract from the setting of a listed building.
15. WOLP policy TLC1 states that permission will be granted for community facilities to meet local needs.

Comments of the Head of Sustainable Development

16. In my view, the main issues to be taken into account in the consideration of this application are:
 - (a) the need for the development
 - (b) the design of the proposed building and its impact on the setting of the adjoining listed building in particular and conservation area in general
 - (c) the acceptability of the proposed development in terms of its size, scale and impact on neighbouring properties.

Need for the Development

17. The supporting information submitted in this application indicates that there is a clear requirement for additional classroom accommodation at this school. The overcrowding problems currently experienced make it extremely difficult for the school to provide a proper education experience for the school children.
18. Policy TLC1 of the WOLP supports the provision of improved community facilities to meet local needs provided they do not have an adverse impact on the character or environment of towns and villages in the District. (These impacts are discussed below).

Impact on adjoining Listed Building and Conservation Area

19. The building proposed is of a temporary nature and I agree that it would not enhance the appearance of the conservation area nor the setting of the nearby listed building or the character and distinctiveness of buildings in the wider area. The development could therefore conflict with WOLP policies BE5 and BE8 and SEP policy CC6. However, the development is temporary for a maximum period of three years only to allow time for a permanent extension or building to be built. The location of the temporary classroom has been chosen to ensure that it does not detract from the street scene (it is located behind the existing school building which screen it from the historic centre of Great Tew). In addition it would be screened from views from the front of the school by an existing hedge and trees. The building's location behind the Foundation State unit is towards the bottom of a slope which should help to reduce the impact of the development when viewed from the road to the west.
20. The siting of this temporary building is clearly not going to enhance the character or setting of the nearby listed buildings or conservation area. However, the need for the building is essential and is for three years only. In

addition, the building has been sited in such a position as to significantly reduce any adverse impact on the street scene, the conservation area or listed buildings. For that reason I consider therefore that the proposal, is acceptable for a temporary period only and warrants setting aside local plan and South East Plan conservation policies. I would emphasise however that I would not wish to grant consent for any future proposals to extend the site of this temporary building beyond the three years applied for.

Impact on Neighbours

21. There have been two objections to this application from the two houses closest to the application site (see plan). One of the objections states concern over the consequences of any increase in pupils at the school. However, this application does not involve any increase in staff or pupil numbers. The development therefore should not lead to any increase in traffic to and from the school.
22. The proposed building would be located approximately 30 metres and 13 metres from the edge of the property's garden. I consider this to be sufficient to ensure that there would be no impact on these properties through loss of light. In addition, there are no windows in the south elevation of the new building facing the neighbours and so there should be no loss of privacy. The new building would be visible from the neighbour's property but they do not have any right to a view.
23. No new planting is proposed as part of this temporary development, as there is existing vegetation which would help to screen it from the front of the school. The boundary between the school site and the properties closest to this development has also been planted as part of a previous development on the site. One objector was concerned that this previously agreed planting had not been implemented. However, these details were approved in 2007 and trees and hedges have been planted.
24. The objectors have also raised issues relating to the impact of the development on the character of the village and the conservation area. These have been covered elsewhere in the report.

Conclusions

25. Great Tew School is experiencing significant overcrowding problems which are having a significant impact on the school's ability to provide a full and proper education to the children who attend it. This proposal seeks to address this problem by providing temporary classroom accommodation whilst a permanent solution is pursued.
26. The proposed development would be unobtrusively sited to ensure that its visual impact is minimal and as a result cause no significant impact on the local environment or neighbouring amenity. However, it would be incongruous in the conservation area adjacent to a listed building and therefore it would not be acceptable on a permanent basis. The building must

be removed once a suitable permanent solution to overcrowding at the school has been agreed and provided or within a maximum of three years whichever is the sooner.

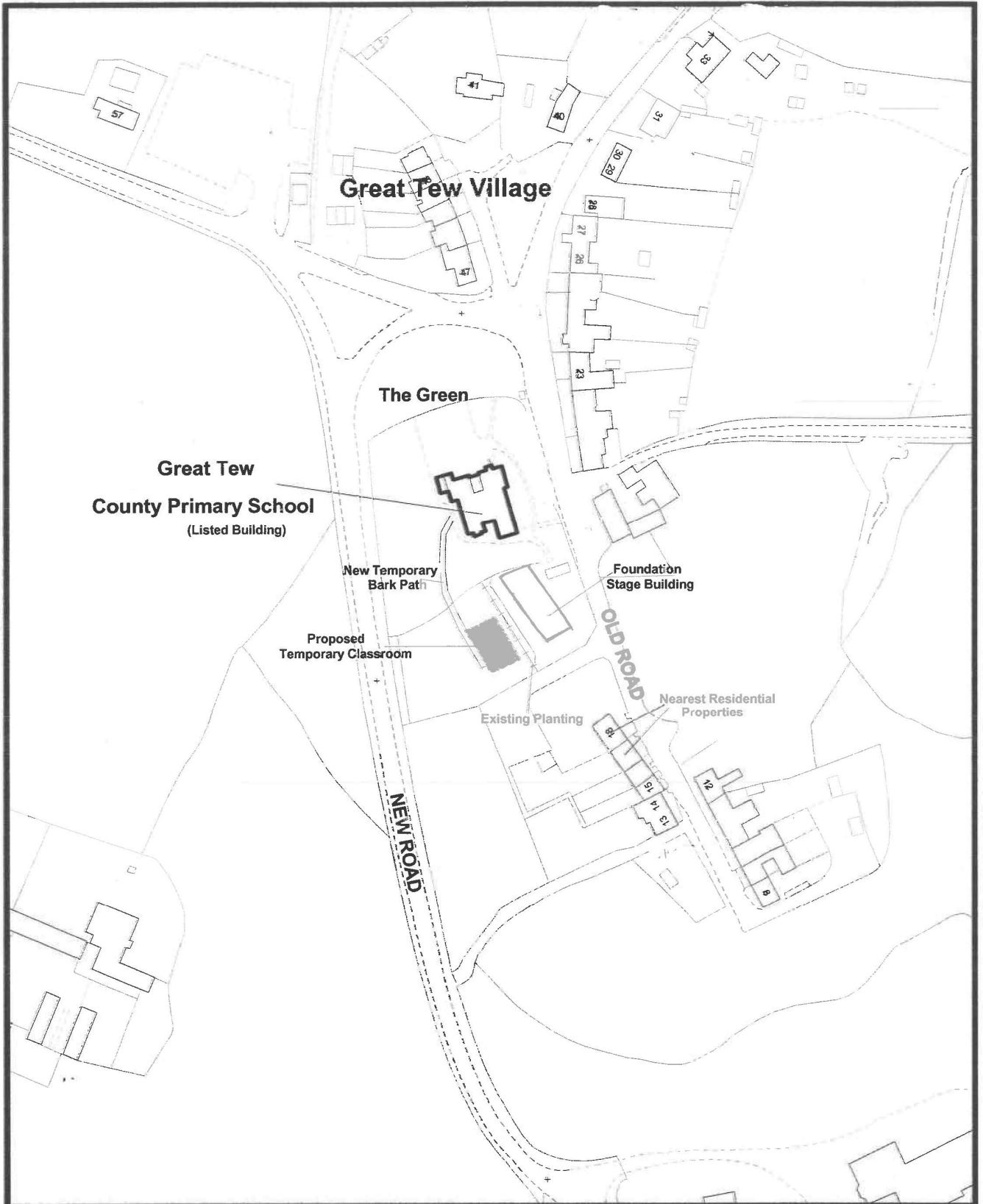
RECOMMENDATION

27. It is **RECOMMENDED** that application No. 09/1608/P/CD3 be approved, subject to the following conditions:
- (a) development in accordance with submitted plans and particulars;
 - (b) development to commence within 3 years of permission;
 - (c) temporary consent – 3 years or when a permanent extension/building is provided, whichever is the sooner; and
 - (d) tree protection during construction works.

CHRIS COUSINS
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Environment & Economy

Background papers: Planning file
February 2010

Plan 1 - Great Tew



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Scale:1:1500
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