



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

25 FEBRUARY 2021

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 21/0005/08 (GH)
APPLICANT: Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC
DEVELOPMENT: Construction of traditional single storey three classroom extension, including toilet areas, plant room, storage areas, circulation and associated external works including new MUGA and four additional parking spaces onto existing school building.
LOCATION: CWM LAI PRIMARY SCHOOL, PENYGARREG ROAD, TONYREFAIL, PORTH, CF39 8AS
DATE REGISTERED: 06/01/2021
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Tonyrefail East

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS BELOW:

REASONS: The application would provide improved teaching, childcare and physical education facilities for children attending Cwmlai Primary School, to a modern and appropriate standard.

The new classroom block would be an attractive structure that would integrate well with the existing elevations of the school and neither this nor the MUGA would result in an intensity or type of use that would harm the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

The application has been submitted by the Council, on land within its ownership, and where the Council's interest is of more than a minor nature.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Full planning consent is sought to construct a three classroom extension and a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), at Cwmlai Primary School, Penygarreg Road, Tonyrefail.

Cwmlai Primary School currently accommodates two childcare settings on site, both of which share the former coal store in the school basement. The Applicant advises that this limited space is in need of significant refurbishment, therefore the relocation of both settings to separate spaces within a new extension to the existing junior block would provide them with fit for purpose facilities.

The School also requires expansion in order to alleviate pressure on existing facilities, so the extension would also include a new classroom. This would provide a flexible space to be used by the school during school core hours, and the after-school club outside of those hours.

Consequently, the proposal is to construct a three classroom extension with additional toilet facilities, associated storage areas, cleaner's cupboards and circulation space. The development would include external playground areas with separate access for childcare providers and the school. The scale, style and form of the development would replicate that part of the school from which it would project.

The extension would be constructed on part of the current playing field which has limited use and is sloping and poorly drained. As part of the external works, a new 18m x 12m MUGA pitch would be provided, together with an access path to enable play in all weathers, and this would replace the existing hard-surfaced playground that would be lost to the extension.

In addition to the plans and elevation drawings accompanying the application, the following supporting documents have been submitted:

- Preliminary Ecological Assessment
- Bat Activity Surveys
- Reptile, Amphibian and Hedgehog Method Statement
- Bat Activity Surveys
- Geo Environmental and Geotechnical Report
- Planning Statement
- Arboricultural Report and Survey

SITE APPRAISAL

The application property, Cwmlai Primary School, is located to the south of Tonyrefail between the areas known as Coedely and Thomastown.

The School occupies a wedge-shaped site and is bounded by Penyarreg Road to the north and Francis Street to the south. A further lane, Bethania Hill, forms the western boundary to the site. Most of the existing development surrounding the site is residential in nature.

The school consists of two buildings linked via a large circulation space with external access. The original two-storey Victorian part of the School was constructed in 1911

whilst the more recent single-storey extension was provided in 2006. The newer part has a low pitched roof above elevations of face brickwork and render.

The main vehicular and pedestrian entrance is on the southern side, and access is also provided to the School's car park, although there is a pedestrian gate within the northern boundary wall. The School benefits from hard-surfaced play areas with a larger grassed playing field to the west.

PLANNING HISTORY

The most recent or relevant applications on record associated with this site are:

05/1504/10: Single storey pitched roof classroom block extension & new car park with external play area. Decision: 27/09/2005, Grant

05/0191/08: Erection of Demountable Classroom Units (Double Unit). Decision: 11/05/2005, Grant

PUBLICITY

The application has been advertised by direct notification to twenty-nine neighbouring properties and notices were erected on site.

No letters of objection or representation have been received.

CONSULTATION

Highways and Transportation

No objection, subject to a condition requiring the submission of a Construction Method Statement

Natural Resources Wales

No objection, providing that Section 5 of the Bat Report is specifically included within the condition identifying approved plans and documents. The proposed development is unlikely to give rise to the need for a European Protected Species Licence.

Public Health and Protection

Conditions are recommended in respect of demolition, hours of operation, noise dust and waste. However, since these matters are controlled by existing environmental health legislation, it is considered that an informative note would be appropriate in this regard.

Western Power Distribution

Any new connection of service diversion will require consent from WPD.

Countryside, Landscape and Ecology – Ecologist

No objection subject to a condition to secure ecology mitigation and enhancement measures.

Dwr Cymru Welsh Water

No objection, subject to a condition and informative note.

The Coal Authority

On the basis of the information submitted and the professional opinion of the report author, the Coal Authority has no objection to this planning application.

Tonyrefail Community Council

The Community Council wishes to support this application to improve facilities at Cwmlai Primary School.

Flood Risk Management

No objection or recommend for a condition in relation to surface water flood risk since this will be adequately managed by both Building Regulations and Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

No other consultation responses have been received within the statutory period.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The application site lies within the settlement boundary for Tonyrefail

Policy AW2 - supports development in sustainable locations which are within the settlement boundary and would not unacceptably conflict with surrounding uses.

Policy AW5 - sets out criteria for new development in relation to amenity and accessibility.

Policy AW6 - requires development to involve a high quality design and to make a positive contribution to place making, including landscaping.

Policy AW8 - Seeks to protect and enhance the natural environment from inappropriate development.

Policy AW10 - supports development proposals which are not detrimental to public health or the environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Design and Placemaking
- Access, Circulation and Parking Requirements

National Guidance

In the determination of planning applications regard should also be given to the requirements of national planning policy which are not duplicated in the Local Development Plan, particularly where national planning policy provides a more up to date and comprehensive policy on certain topics.

Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 (PPW) sets out the Welsh Government's (WG) current position on planning policy. The document incorporates the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act into town and country planning and sets out the WG's policy on planning issues relevant to the determination of planning applications.

It is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the key principles and requirements for placemaking set out in PPW; and is also consistent with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's sustainable development principles through its contribution towards the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives of driving sustainable development and building healthier communities and better environments.

Other relevant national policy guidance consulted:

PPW Technical Advice Note 12 - Design

REASONS FOR REACHING THE RECOMMENDATION

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that, if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Furthermore, applications that are not in accordance with relevant policies in the plan should not be allowed, unless material considerations justify the grant of planning permission.

Main Issues:

Principle of the proposed development

The application site lies within settlement limits and within the curtilage of the school site, where the established land use includes primary and nursery education provision.

Consequently, it is considered that in principle the proposal is acceptable, subject to consideration of the material matters below.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area

Noting the scale of the proposal, compared to the size of the site and the existing building, the development is considered to be acceptable.

The single storey classroom extension would be constructed to adjoin the northern end of the more recent wing of the school building, so given the distance and fall in level from the street scene and residential properties, it would be unlikely to be readily visible from the public realm.

The form of the development would replicate that of the newer wing, both in profile and proportions, so that the long, low roofline would be a continuation of that already present. Therefore, it is considered the development would be acceptable in terms of its impact on both the appearance of the site and the local area.

Impact on neighbouring occupiers

Although the application site is located in an area which is mostly residential in character, the classroom extension would be sited on the opposite side of Penygarreg Road to the closest neighbouring dwellings.

In addition, the school site is at a much lower level than Penygarreg Road, to a degree that only the top part of the school extension roof would likely be visible.

Consequently, there is no concern that the enlarged structure would cause harm to the amenity or privacy of the neighbouring occupiers, or that it would be detrimental to outlook.

In respect of the part of the development described as a MUGA, the plans do not include any form of enclosure or external lighting, so this part of the development would have no greater impact than the existing playground and fields.

Therefore, and in the absence of any neighbour representations or objections to the contrary, the application is considered to be acceptable in this regard.

Highways and accessibility

The Council's Highways and Transportation Section has advised that the existing vehicular and pedestrian access arrangements to the site will remain, with primary access for the school served via Penygarreg Road and vehicular access from Francis Street. Both streets have satisfactory access for vehicles and pedestrians, with traffic management measures contributing to a reduction in vehicular speeds to the region of 20mph.

The Council's SPG for Access, Circulation & Parking indicates that the proposed 3 classroom extension would require a maximum of 6 off-street car parking spaces with 4 provided.

The Section has some concern that this would be 2 spaces short of the maximum standards, although taking into account the proposal is for an enhancement of facilities at an existing school, this would be acceptable.

Ecology

In terms of bats, the Bat Activity Survey Report identified a bat roost of common pipistrelles in Building 2, but no bat roost in Building 1. The report concludes that providing bat mitigation and enhancement measures as set out in Section 5 of the Report are enacted, the bat impact will be negligible.

With regard to other ecology issues the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal identifies a number of ecological features within the wider school grounds, and its recommendations also led specifically to a standalone Reptile, Amphibian and Hedgehog Method Statement, with a number of ecological mitigation and enhancement proposals.

The site has therefore had a detailed ecological assessment, the development is primarily affecting amenity grass of relatively low ecology value, although the Council's Ecologist notes that the wider school grounds/buildings and context do support a surprisingly rich species assemblage.

However, providing ecological mitigation and enhancement is delivered, the ecology assessment has shown that the development can be sufficiently mitigated and will therefore be acceptable and in accordance with Policy AW8.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Liability

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced in Rhondda Cynon Taf from 31 December 2014.

The application is for development of a kind that is not CIL liable under the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Conclusion

In addition to the improvements to the facilities and fabric of the school, it is considered that the proposal would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the site, and would not be harmful to the amenity of the closest neighbouring properties. The application is therefore considered to comply with Policies AW5, AW6 and AW10 of the Local Development Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS BELOW:

RECOMMENDATION: Grant

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

Reason: To comply with Sections 91 and 93 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby approved shall be completed in accordance with the approved drawings and documents:

- 5156-3594-B11
- 5159-3336-B12
- 5156-3594-B16
- 5156-3594-B21A
- 5156-3594-B40
- (60)001
- (60)002 P02
- (60)003 P03

and details and documents received on 4th January 2021.

Reason: To ensure compliance with the approved plans and documents and to clearly define the scope of the permission.

3. No development shall commence, including any works of site clearance, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to provide for:

- a) The means of access into the site for all construction traffic,
- b) The parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors,
- c) The management of vehicular and pedestrian traffic,
- d) Loading and unloading of plant and materials,
- e) Storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development,
- f) Wheel cleansing facilities,
- g) The sheeting of lorries leaving the site.

The approved Construction Method Statement shall be adhered to throughout the development process unless agreed otherwise in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the safety and free flow of traffic in accordance with Policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

4. No development shall commence, including any works of site clearance, until details of ecological mitigation and enhancement measures, as set out in the following reports, have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority:

- Section 7 of the Preliminary Ecological Impact Assessment Report (produced by TACP and dated June 2020)
- Section 5 of the Bat Activity Survey Report (produced by TACP and dated August 2020)
- Section 5 of the Reptile, Amphibian and Hedgehog Method Statement (produced by TACP and dated June 2020)

The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of nature and landscape conservation in accordance with Policy AW8 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

5. Prior to the beneficial use of the development, the additional four parking spaces shall be laid out in accordance with drawing number (60)001 and retained thereafter for the sole purpose of parking vehicles.

Reason: To ensure that vehicles are parked off the highway, in the interests of road safety, in accordance with Policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

6. Surface water run-off from the proposed development shall not discharge onto the public highway or connect to any highway drainage system unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to prevent overcapacity of the existing highway drainage system and potential flooding in accordance with Policies AW5 and AW10 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.