

Case Officer's Report (Delegated Decision)

Regulation 3 Planning Application

Description of the Proposal: Proposed new single storey classroom block and associated external works. Alterations to existing car park to provide additional spaces and EV charging points.

Site Address: Downlands School, Dale Avenue, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 8LP

Application No: WSCC/012/23

Local Member: Cllr Kirsty Lord, Hassocks & Burgess Hill South

Local Council: Mid Sussex District Council

Site Location and Description

Downlands School caters for pupils aged 11-16 with accommodation for approximately 1,200 pupils. It is in a residential area in Hassocks in Mid Sussex District with the site bounded to the north and west by residential properties, in Dale Avenue and Windmill Avenue respectively. The main school buildings generally occupy the northern part of the site (and fall within the Built-up Area boundary), and playing fields to the south. Access to the school is taken from Dale Avenue at the north-western corner of the school, with formalised parking along the western boundary of the site. The school campus includes Hassocks Sports Centre with a sports hall used by both the school and wider community.

The proposed classroom would be sited alongside existing buildings on the northern side of the school campus, on the site of a current informal garden area utilised by pupils, 50m from the nearest residential properties in Dale Avenue to the north and separated by hard surfaced courts. The proposed car park alterations are located within/proximate to an established parking area to the southwest of the school alongside the sports centre and sharing its western boundary with residential properties in Windmill Avenue.

The school is not within a historic, landscape, or ecological designated area, and the application site is within an area at a low risk of flooding (Flood Zone 1). However, immediately to the south of the school is the South Downs National Park, which has elevated views over the school.

Relevant Planning History

WSCC/045/18/HA - Outdoor Performance Area (Application approved, 06/02/2019)

WSCC/054/16/HA - Partial demolition of the existing school building to allow the construction of a new three storey teaching block to provide a music suite and 10No.classrooms and an extension to provide new circulation and teaching support

areas. Further extension work to provide a new SEN area as well as new changing rooms and a new dance studio (Application approved, 14/10/2016)

WSSCC/071/11/HA - Variation of condition 2 of planning permission WSSCC/024/10/HA to allow extended operating times for the existing sports centre (Application approved, 20/01/2012)

WSSCC/026/10/HA - Existing courtyard to be infilled providing additional dining hall building and construction of car park to provide an additional 20 parking spaces (Application approved, 18/03/2010)

WSSCC/024/10/HA - Variation of condition 13 of planning permission HA/4/03 to permanently extend the hours of opening of the sports hall and ancillary accommodation (Application approved, 10/03/2010)

HA/2832/04 - Single storey extensions and alterations to provide enhanced reception and community room (Application approved, 26/04/2005)

HA/2733/03 - Proposed construction of a floodlit synthetic turf pitch and landscaping at Downlands Community School (Application approved 19/04/2004)

Proposed Development

Planning permission is sought for a single storey classroom block to provide two classrooms, toilet facilities and associated external works, to accommodate up to 60 pupils. The proposed building would be of modular construction, with a mono-pitched roof, and finished in composite cladding panels with a brick plinth, and aluminium fenestration. It would have a footprint of 150m², be approximately 5m in height and include a small entrance canopy. Supporting hard and soft landscaping proposals include rationalised circulation routes with hard standing, replacement planting for trees/hedges to be removed, and the relocation of the existing pupil garden area.

In addition, alterations are sought to an existing car parking area to provide additional spaces and electric vehicle (EV) charging points. In summary, this involves a southern extension of the bitmac parking area (onto an existing largely paved area), rationalisation of existing parking spaces, provision of three new spaces, the relocation of an existing cycle shelter and five new EV charging points.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The proposed development does not fall within Schedule 1 or 2 of the EIA Regulations, so that neither screening nor EIA are required.

Relevant Planning and Other Policies

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications are determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (as confirmed in paragraph 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the NPPF')).

The key policies in the development plan that are relevant to the determination of the application, are summarised below. In addition, reference is made to applicable national planning policy and other policies that guide the decision-making process and which are material to the determination of the application.

Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031 (2018) ('MSDP')

- Policy DP6 (Settlement Hierarchy)
- Policy DP21 (Transport)
- Policy DP25 (Community Facilities and Local Services)
- Policy DP26 (Character and Design)
- Policy DP28 (Accessibility)
- Policy DP37 (Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows)
- Policy DP38 (Biodiversity)
- Policy DP39 (Sustainable Design and Construction)
- Policy DP41 (Flood Risk and Drainage)

Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan 2014 – 2031 (2020) ('HNP')

- Policy 3 (Green Infrastructure)
- Policy 5 (Enabling Zero Carbon)
- Policy 9 (Character and Design)

National Planning Policy Framework (2021) ('NPPF')

Paragraphs 8 (Achieving sustainable development - accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities health, social and cultural well-being), 11 (presumption in favour of sustainable development), 47 (determining applications in accordance with the development plan), 55-58 (planning conditions and obligations), 92 (Healthy, inclusive and safe places), 93 (providing the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs), 95 (providing sufficient school places and giving great weight to the need to create, expand and alter schools), 110-113 (Transport and considering development proposals), 130 (well-designed places), 131 (trees), 167 (flood risk), 174 (natural and local environment), and 180 (biodiversity).

Consultations

Mid Sussex District Council: No objection subject to conditions to secure a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Hassocks Parish Council: Recommend approval.

WSSC Highways: No objection subject to conditions to secure delivery of proposed parking, an updated School Travel Plan, and a Construction Management Plan.

WSSC Ecology: No objection. Recommend informative setting out protection afforded to nesting birds.

WSSC Drainage and Flood Risk: No objection subject to a condition to secure a detailed surface water drainage scheme.

WSSC Arboriculturist: No objection subject to a condition to secure final details of proposed landscaping and maintenance.

WSSC Councillor Kirsty Lord: No comments received.

Representations

Two representations received (one directed to Mid-Sussex District Council and passed to WSSC for consideration) objecting to the proposal. The grounds for objection include the loss of green space and trees, overbearing impact on neighbouring properties, and the effect of the development on the appearance of the area.

Consideration of Key Issues

The main material considerations in relation to this application are:

- need for the development;
- siting, scale and design;
- impact upon trees/hedgerows;
- neighbouring amenity; and
- highway capacity and road safety.

Need for the Development

The NPPF gives great weight to the need to create, expand and alter schools to provide sufficient school places. This is echoed by the MSDP which seeks to ensure the provision of community facilities to meet local needs.

Supporting information identifies that due to increased demand for places, the school accepted 30 additional pupils in 2022, and that similarly 30 additional places will be required in September 2023 (60 pupil spaces in total). This is confirmed in the WSSC document 'Planning School Places 2023' which identifies the need for additional school places at the school to accommodate a short-term increase in admission numbers until planned new schools in the locality open. Although, at this stage accommodation is only likely to be required for a temporary period (i.e. whilst the temporary increase in pupils numbers moves through the school), the applicant advises that the building would thereafter provide space for ongoing support for the teaching and delivery of the curriculum.

In support of additional pupil numbers, the proposed development would also provide an extension to the additional parking area, providing additional spaces, EV charging points and relocation of accessible parking bays closer to entrances.

The proposed development would provide additional classrooms and further/improved facilities to accommodate an identified demand for secondary school places and delivery of the curriculum in the locality. Further it would provide EV charging points

supporting the use of lower emission vehicles. It is therefore considered that there is a genuine educational/community need for the development in accordance with the development plan and national planning policy, and which attracts great weight in the planning balance.

Siting, Scale and Design

The proposed building would be located adjacent to existing buildings within an established school campus, 50m from the nearest residential properties and separated by a hard-court area and tall boundary fencing/vegetation. It would be sited on an area currently used as a garden area for pupils, however, suitable replacement provision for this is identified immediately adjacent as part of proposed hard and soft landscaping. Given its limited scale and location within the school campus, it would have no impact on views into or out of the South Downs National Park.

The proposed building would be single storey, with a mono-pitched roof and finished in composite cladding. Although of a somewhat utilitarian design, subject to conditions to secure detailed materials/finishes and soft landscaping, it is considered that the building would be of commensurate design and scale to the range of existing school buildings, would integrate with the surroundings, and thus would not detract from the character or appearance of the locality.

The proposed parking area would form a limited southerly expansion of an existing car park, and in the most part would replace an area already laid to hardstanding. As a result, it would not give rise to any unacceptable impact on the character or appearance of the locality.

It is considered that the proposed development is of an acceptable siting, scale, and design, in accordance with the development plan. These matters therefore attract neutral weight in the planning balance.

Impact on trees/hedgerows

The proposed classroom building would result in the loss of a section of mature beech hedge and a mature field maple tree. This is required to both facilitate construction and ensure a building that meets operational needs. Although the age and size of the hedgerow and tree are features of some landscape/amenity value, the proposals include the provision of a new (narrower/lower) section of hedgerow, and the provision of new trees to compensate for that to be lost that. In time, it is considered that this will ensure that the development suitably compensates for any loss and would integrate into its surroundings.

In addition, the proposals involve the loss of a school garden area with several small trees/shrubs, however, it is proposed that this feature will be relocated, and trees transplanted where possible.

Subject to a condition to secure replacement of landscaping and suitable planting methods/maintenance provision, the County Arboriculturist raises no objections to the

proposals, recognising that the proposals provide for suitable replacement planting suited to the constraints of the site.

The proposed development would inevitably have some immediate negative impact upon existing landscape features. However, subject to suitable replacement planting being secured by condition, such impacts would be limited and, in time, would provide suitable compensation for any trees/hedgerows to be lost. Therefore, the proposed development is considered to accord with the development plan, and any negative impacts upon trees/hedgerows attract little weight in the planning balance.

Neighbouring Amenity

The proposed building would be single story and located within an established school campus, some 50m from the nearest residential properties and separated by a hard-court area and tall boundary fencing/vegetation. The proposed building would have windows on its northern elevation facing residential properties to the north, and thus some intervisibility may be possible, particularly given the loss of a section of mature hedgerow. However, given the separation distances and involved, intervening boundary treatments, and context of the established existing school uses it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to give rise to any unacceptable overlooking or overbearing affect upon neighbouring dwellings and /or their gardens.

There may be some temporary impact upon neighbouring amenity during construction, however, this would be temporary in nature, and a Construction Management Plan condition is proposed to secure hours and details of working practices further minimising any potential for disturbance.

The proposed development is considered to accord with the development plan, and any potential for negative impacts upon neighbouring amenity attract little weight in the planning balance.

Highway capacity and road safety

The proposed development would result in additional pupils and staff at the school, and thus has potential for an increase in vehicular trips. It is proposed that previous iterations of the school travel plan will be further reviewed, and an updated plan implemented, with a view to maximising sustainable transport modes for pupils/staff.

The highway authority notes that any increase in trips to/from the school are considered minimal above existing levels, that parking arrangements would provide enhanced access for disabled users, and that the overall level of parking and proposed changes are acceptable. Subject to conditions to secure the delivery of parking spaces as proposed, an updated school travel plan and a construction management plan to ensure any impact on the highway is suitably mitigated during construction, no objection is raised.

The proposed development is considered to accord with the development plan, and any impact upon highway capacity and road safety are of neutral weight in the planning balance.

Other Considerations

Other considerations in relation to this application are:

Flooding/Drainage: Subject to a condition to secure a final detailed surface water drainage design, WSSC Flood and Drainage advisors (LLFA) consider the proposals accord with relevant national policy.

Ecology: Given the proposals involve works to trees and a hedgerow, suitable measures should be adopted to ensure there would be no impact upon nesting birds. This will be conveyed to the applicant by way of informative.

Overall Conclusion

Overall, it is considered that the proposed development accords with the statutory development plan when read as a whole. Furthermore, there are no material considerations in this case that indicate a decision other than in line with the statutory development plan, that is, the granting of planning permission.

In favour of the proposal, the need for the development carries great weight. Against the scheme, the potential impact on trees/hedgerows carries little weight and the limited potential for impacts upon neighbouring amenity carries little weight. Therefore, on balance, it is considered that the educational benefits of the proposal significantly outweigh any disbenefits and, as such, the proposed development constitutes sustainable development (as defined in the NPPF).

Recommendation (Delegated Decision)

For the reasons given above, it is recommended that planning permission is granted under delegated powers subject to the conditions set out in Appendix 1.



Factors taken into account

Crime and Disorder Act 1998: No implications arise from this development.

Human Rights Act 1998: Article 8 of the European Convention safeguards the respect for family life and home whilst Article 1 of the first protocol concerns the non-interference with the peaceful enjoyment of private property. Both rights are subject to conditions and interference with these rights may be permitted if the need to do so is proportionate. In this particular matter, the interests of those affected by the planned development have been fully considered as have the relevant considerations which may justify interference with particular rights. All of these are set out within the body of the report and are examined in the context of relevant planning considerations.

Equality Act 2010: The County Council has a duty to have regard to the impact of any proposal on those people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. Officers considered the information provided by the applicant, together with the responses from consultees and representations made by third parties and determined

that the proposal would not give rise to unacceptable material impact on individuals or identifiable groups with protected characteristics. Accordingly, no changes to the proposal were required to make it acceptable in this regard.

Date of Report: 22/05/2023	Case Officer's Name: James Neave
	Case Officer's Signature: 
Date of Review: 23/05/2023	Reviewer's Name: Andrew Sierakowski
	Reviewer's Signature: 

Appendix 1: Conditions and Informative(s)

Conditions

Commencement

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be begun not later than the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission. Written notification of the date of commencement shall be sent to the County Planning Authority within 7 days of such commencement.

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

Approved Plans/Documents

2. The development shall not take place other than in accordance with the approved plans:
 - Site Location Plan (Dwg. 22048-HNW-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-1000 Rev P01)
 - Proposed Site Plan (Dwg. 22048-HNW-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-2100 Rev P01)
 - Proposed Floor Plan (Dwg. 22048-HNW-ZZ-00-DR-A-2200 Rev P01)
 - Proposed Elevations (Dwg. 22048-HNW-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-2300 Rev P01)
 - Proposed Site Sections (Dwg. 22048-HNW-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-2302 Rev P01)
 - Car Parking Proposals Plan (Dwg. 2417-TFC-XX-XX-DR-L-1003 Rev P01)
 - Landscape Proposals Plan (Dwg. 2417-HNW-ZZ-00-A-DR-2100 Rev P01)
 - Additional Tree Planting Plan (Dwg. 2417-TFC-XX-XX-DR-L-1006 Rev P01)
 - Tree Protection Plan (Dwg. 221012-TPP v2 Rev A)
 - Proposed Site Drainage Plan Surface Water and Foul Water (Dwg. 13133-HOP-XX-XX-DR-C-000 Rev P03)
 - Proposed Building Drainage Plan Surface Water and Foul Water (Dwg. 13133-HOP-XX-XX-DR-C-0001 Rev P03)

along with information submitted with the application, save as varied by the conditions hereafter.

Reason: to secure a satisfactory development.

Drainage

3. No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a detailed surface water drainage scheme (in general accordance with Proposed Site Drainage Plan Surface Water and Foul Water ref 13133-HOP-XX-XX-DR-C-000 Rev P03 and Proposed Building Drainage Plan Surface Water and Foul Water ref 13133-HOP-XX-XX-DR-C-0001 Rev P03) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to

occupation of the building hereby approved. The scheme shall address the following matters:

- a) Surface water discharge from the development shall be restricted to the pre-development q_{bar} rate or 2 l/s.
- b) Provision of surface water attenuation storage, sized and designed to accommodate the volume of water generated in all rainfall events up to and including the critical duration for the 3.33% and 1% annual probability rainfall events (both including allowance for climate change).
- c) Detail design, modelling calculations and plan for the proposed surface water drainage network for the 3.33% (with and without Climate Change) annual probability critical storm duration to show no above ground flooding on any part of the development site, and the 1% annual probability critical storm duration (with and without climate change) ensuring any above ground flooding is safe, does not affect any building and contained within the site boundaries (plans, showing location and depths with exceedance routes to be submitted and approved).

Reason: To prevent flooding in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 167 and 168 by ensuring the satisfactory management of surface water.

Construction Management Plan

4. No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Thereafter the approved Plan shall be implemented and adhered to throughout the entire construction period. The Plan shall provide details as appropriate but not necessarily be restricted to the following matters:
 - the hours of construction activities (which should restrict hours of all activities, including demolition, site clearance, construction, deliveries, loading and unloading, to 0800-1800 Monday to Friday, 0900-1300 Saturdays and no work on Sundays and Bank Holidays),
 - the anticipated number, frequency and types of vehicles used during construction,
 - the method of access and routing of vehicles during construction,
 - the parking of vehicles by site operatives and visitors,
 - the loading and unloading of plant, materials and waste,
 - the location of storage of plant and stockpiled materials used in construction of the development,
 - the erection and maintenance of security hoarding,
 - the provision of wheel washing facilities and other works required to mitigate the impact of construction upon the public highway (including the provision of temporary Traffic Regulation Orders),
 - details of public engagement both prior to and during construction works,

- details of best practice measures to be adopted to minimise noise and dust,
- confirmation that there will be no burning of materials/waste on site, and
- commitment that no construction vehicle movements shall travel to or from the site around school start and end times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and the amenities of the area.

Landscaping and Maintenance

5. No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a detailed landscaping, maintenance and management plan (in general accordance with the details contained within Arboricultural Method Statement ref 22101 AMS Rev 24/04/23, Tree Protection Plan ref 221012-TPP v2 Rev A, 2417-HNW-ZZ-00-A-DR-2100 Rev P01, and Additional Tree Planting Plan ref 2417-TFC-XX-XX-DR-L-1006 Rev P01) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The scheme shall include full details of the types, size and species of all trees and shrubs to be planted, details of translocation sites/methodology, soil preparation, measures for biosecurity, a maintenance schedule, and timetable for implementation at the earliest possible opportunity following commencement of the development.

Thereafter the approved scheme shall be implemented in full in accordance with the approved timetable. Any trees or shrubs which, within a period of five years from the date of planting, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the site, to provide suitable compensation for trees/hedgerows to be lost, and to ensure the planting of trees in compliance of the duty within S197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Materials and Finishes

6. No development above slab level shall take place until a schedule of materials and finishes to be used for external walls, roof, canopy and fenestration, of the proposed building has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be constructed in accordance with the approved schedule of materials and maintained as approved.

Reason: To ensure a building of high-quality design appropriate to its setting.

Travel Plan

7. Within 3 months of the first occupation of the development hereby approved an updated School Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The Travel Plan once approved shall thereafter be

implemented as specified within the approved document. The Travel Plan shall be completed in accordance with the latest guidance and good practice documentation as published by the Department for Transport or as advised by the Highway Authority.

Reason: To encourage and promote sustainable transport.

Parking Provision

8. No part of the development hereby approved shall be first occupied until the car parking, cycle parking and electric vehicle charging provision has been constructed in accordance with the approved plans. These spaces shall thereafter be retained at all times for their designated purpose.

Reason: To provide parking provision for the use

Informative(s)

- A. The County Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining the planning application by identifying issues of concern and considering whether planning conditions could be used to satisfactorily address them. As a result, the County Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.
- B. Birds in the act of nesting are protected under criminal law. The applicant is advised to carry out a check for breeding birds in any vegetation that is programmed for removal between March and September. If birds are breeding the vegetation should stay in place until the chicks have fledged or nests otherwise have been confirmed clear by a suitably qualified person immediately prior to removal.
- C. With regard to condition 5 the applicant's attention is drawn to the comments of the County Arboriculturist dated 09/05/2023, which set out arboricultural/landscaping matters that remain to be addressed and provides recommendations regarding proposed tree planting sizes.