

## DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

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**SMD/2021/0663**  
**Valid 14/10/2021**

**ST WERBURGHS CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND COUNTY  
PRIMARY SCHOOL HOLT  
LANE  
KINGSLEY**

**EXTENSION TO FORM  
SECURE SCHOOL ENTRANCE  
LOBBY AND DDA TOILET  
FACILITIES.**

**(FULL - MINOR)**

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### MAIN ISSUES

- Whether or not the proposal amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt
- The Impact on the character and appearance of the area
- Impact on residential amenity
- Highway safety

### DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site lies a short distance to south-east of the centre of Kingsley and comprises a school and playing fields to the north of Holt Lane which provides the entrance to the school. The part of the site where the school building, yards, car park and access drive are located are within the development boundary of the village. The playing fields lie to the north-east of the school, to the north of residential properties which front Holt Lane and to the south of dwellings which face Dovedale Road. The playing fields are outside of the village development boundary and within the Green Belt. There is open fields to the east of the playing fields and a public footpath also runs along the east boundary. A bowling green and further dwellings lie to the west of the playing fields and north of the school. There are dwellings off Holt Lane to the east and west of the school buildings and parking area. There is also a separate access to the school to the north-west of the school buildings also off Holt Lane.

### PROPOSAL

This is a full application for a small single-storey extension at the main entrance to the school building on the east elevation, at the end of the main access drive. This would provide a larger entrance area, secure lobby, disabled WC and a wheelchair access ramp would also be provided. This would be a flat-roofed structure with a modern design, large windows (some floor to ceiling) and a red brick finish, as shown on amended plans which replace original plans which show timber cladding panels on part of the walls but these have been dropped from the scheme.

There are other works included in the application as follows:

-The extension of the existing car park to add ten parking spaces at the southern edge of the car park to add to the 20 existing spaces.

-The erection of 2.4m green paladin mesh security fencing around the perimeter of the playing fields including a gate to access the land from the school.

-The same fencing is to be provided along the northern and southern edges of the school site and also along the southern edge of the proposed car park and the open area to the south of the north-west access and which would includes gates across the drive near the road access and also between the main entrance and the rest of the school open areas to the east and also across the other access drive to the north-west of the building.

-A brick bin store enclose next to the north-west access.

-Provision of 1.2m wide pedestrian path alongside the main access drive with 1.2m high metal safety railings between the access road and footpath.

The plans have been amended to show some alteration/correction of the fencing and gate positions in response to letters from neighbours.

## **RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES**

### **Local Plan (Adopted September 2020)**

SS8 Large Villages Strategy  
SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy  
C1 Community Facilities  
DC1 Design Considerations

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

Section 8 (Communities), 12 (Design) and 13 (Green Belts).

## **SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS**

None relevant.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **Publicity**

Site Notice expiry date: 8/12/2021  
Neighbour consultation period ends: 8/12/2021  
Press Advert: N/A

### **Public Comments**

Letters have been received from two nearby neighbours. Both letters claim that some of the fencing and gates is shown on incorrect boundaries and within land

belonging to the neighbours. One of the letters also considers that some of the fencing would damage trees not shown on the drawings.

### **Parish Council Comments**

No objection.

### **Staffordshire County Council Highways**

No objection.

### **Environmental Health**

No objection subject to standard conditions.

### **Tree Officer**

No objection subject to conditions relating to works to install the fencing and to protect all trees and shrubs except those necessary to allow all aspects of the development. With regard to the car park extension, the Tree Officer commented as follows:

*“It appears the proposed extended car park would continue past a mature Larch tree adjacent to and within the boundary of the neighbouring property 17 Holt Lane, but would be just at the outer edge of this tree’s crown spread which, in the absence of a detailed tree survey/arboricultural impact assessment report, may in this instance be reasonably taken to approximate to the likely extent of Root Protection Area. The proposed extended car park would be no closer to this tree than the existing car park, and would incrementally become further from the tree as it extends southwards. There are one or two smaller trees and mature shrubs on the grassed area near/within the proposed extended car park footprint, but these are not considered to be of significant wider amenity value and other than any directly within the footprint they are unlikely to be substantially adversely affected.”*

### **Severn Trent Water**

No objection subject to a drainage condition.

### **OFFICER COMMENTS**

The playing fields part of the site is in the Green Belt and Policy SS10 requires strict control over inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The NPPF outlines those forms of development which are exceptionally not considered to be inappropriate and harmful to the openness of the Green Belt. New 2.4m fencing is proposed for this part of the site and although this is not listed as not being inappropriate, the fencing would clearly not impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Furthermore, where a form of development is not listed, it can be allowed if there are very special circumstances which are considered to outweigh the operation of the Green Belt and the level of harm to its openness. I consider the security needs of the school would

amount to very special circumstances to the extent that they would outweigh the very minimal harm to the openness of the Green Belt in this case.

In appearance terms, although fencing is seldom a desirable form of enclosure which compliments a rural village and its surroundings, the paladin mesh design and green colour of the fences and gates do at least soften the visual impact and would blend into the surroundings where hedges, green areas and trees exist better than a close boarded fence which can be put up without permission if the height did not exceed 2.0 metres. The proposed fencing is only 400mm above the height restriction for fencing put up under permitted development and fencing of this type at a height of 2.4 metres would still be preferable to less appropriate fencing not exceeding 2.0 metres in height.

It is not considered the gates and fencing would harm trees close to and adjacent with the fencing including their roots due to the non-intrusive holes needed to install them, though conditions would be added relating to the method of installation and to retain all trees and shrubs other than those necessary to make way for the development and which are not deemed to be high quality. The car park extension whilst being close to a tree which is within a neighbouring property, would not be any closer to its root system than the current car park. The council Tree officer has examined the proposals and raised no objections

With regard to the extension, although flat-roofed extensions are generally contrary to the Council's Design Guide, this particular extension, due to its simple form and shape and detailing, including fenestration design and particular the height, low profile and absence of a pitched roof, helps to respect the dominance of the more traditional Victorian school appearance of the main original building. It would be visible from the main access but at a distance and from here would be seen against the backdrop of part of the original building particularly as it would have matching red brick finishes (and matching plinth) which help it blend in with the existing building. It would not be visible from anywhere else in the public domain and due to its footprint and relationship with the original building, a pitched roof would have an awkward arrangement which would be likely to clash with the traditional roof form of the original building and compete with it. There are other flat-roofed additions on the school and so the proposed flat-roofed extension would not be entirely out of keeping with the site and the removal of the original proposed timber cladding to allow more red-brick is an improvement.

It could be argued that the Victorian school building is a non-designated heritage asset and this being the case it could also be argued that the contemporary flat roofed extension on the front elevation causes harm to significance. That said, however, for the reasons set out above that harm would be less than substantial and the public benefits of providing improved security, inclusive access and educational facilities are considered to outweigh that harm.

The car park is already well screened from the road by hedges although parts of it are still visible from the access when it is full with parked cars. The southward enlargement of it would not harmfully increase its prominence due to the level of screening around it and a sufficient green area will still be maintained between the car park and the road. The highways authority has raised no objection to it.

Although the proposal will result in 20 of the 30 spaces being in a tandem arrangement, this part of the car park will be for staff only and with the right arrangements would not lead to inconvenience or staff members cars being blocked by other staff vehicles. The visitor car park comprises ten parallel spaces, a more convenient arrangement to allow constant egress/exit as appropriate as visitors are unlikely to be visiting for the duration of the school opening hours and vehicle movements would be more frequent. Conditions will be added to restrict the parking areas on this basis and avoid cars being parked on the road to the detriment of highway safety.

The bin store has an acceptable design of using brick to match the school buildings.

The safety railings are also an appropriate design.

An amended plan has been received to show corrected fence positioning within the school boundaries and which addresses the concerns of local residents who submitted letters claiming the works were within their properties. This is backed up with Land Registry maps which show the legal boundaries and I am satisfied that on this basis that the works would be within or on the legal boundaries of the school although any encroachment would be a legal or civil matter and not a planning consideration.

It is not considered necessary to add a drainage condition for the extension given the main buildings already has drainage installed which the extension can be linked into.

## **CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE**

The proposed fencing in the playing fields is not deemed to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would not harm the visual amenities of the area. The other works, within the development boundary would also not harm the visual amenities of the area and there are no highway safety concerns arising from the car park. The proposal would therefore comply with the Council's Local Plan (adopted September 2020) and is in line with the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION :    APPROVE**

**Case Officer: Chris Johnston**

**Recommendation Date: 28.1.22**

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Signed by: Ben Haywood

**On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council**

