

Planning application no.	21/00562/FUL	
Site	St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School, Sedgley Road, Wolverhampton, WV4 5LG	
Proposal	New build Early Years building, expansion of School Hall, minor elevation alterations to Nursery entrance and reconfigure car park.	
Ward	Penn	
Applicant	St Bartholomew's CE Multi Academy Trust (Katy Kent)	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Stephen Simkins Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy	
Accountable Director	Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration	
Originating service	Planning	
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1.0 Summary recommendation

1.1 Grant subject to conditions.

2.0 Application site

- 2.1 St. Bartholomew's CE Primary School is located off Sedgley Road on the outer skirts of the City, close to the boundary with South Staffordshire. The original school buildings sit along Sedgley Road, flanked by later additions to the west and north. The school playing field sits to the west of the site and hard play areas to the north and south of the site. Staff car parking and service access is located to the north of school buildings.
- 2.2 The school site is bounded by dwellings to the north and south, and farmland to the west. Directly opposite are dwellings, and the car park serving The Old Stags Head public house, which is currently vacant.
- 2.3 The school sits within the Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area and land designated as Green Belt.

3.0 Application details

- 3.1 Construction of a detached single storey building to create two new Reception classrooms and one new Nursery classroom and ancillary space. This would be located south of the existing school site, set between the school playing field and the southern playground.
- 3.2 There is a minor expansion of the existing school hall by 46.9 square metres, and minor elevation alterations to the Nursery entrance.
- 3.3 The planning statement confirms the proposal will accommodate its planned increase of pupil numbers by 105 pupils overall (from 1.5 forms of entry - 45 places per year group to 2 forms of entry - 60 places per year group). Over a seven-year period starting in September 2021, 15 additional pupils per year will mean permanent admission numbers increased from 315 pupils to 420 pupils.
- 3.4 Staff parking will remain as existing, though the car will be reconfigured to accommodate cycle and motorcycle parking, and disabled parking bay.

4.0 Relevant policy documents

- 4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- 4.2 The Development Plan:
Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (UDP)
Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS)

5.0 Publicity

- 5.1 The application was advertised by direct neighbour notification, site notice and local newspaper advert. 4 representations have been received and can be summarised as follows:
 - Increased traffic disruption at drop off and pick up times, particularly around Sedgley Road and Pennwood Lane.
 - Existing statutory enforcement or the school has failed to address thoughtless and dangerous parking (on pavement and junctions, blocking driveways), could cause serious accident/fatality.
 - Pre-submission consultation carried out by the school, noted 21 responses citing concerns about traffic/parking issues.
 - Expansion will not encourage cycle or walking.
 - Request yellow lines be placed along Sedgley Road
 - Uncertain future of The Old Stags Head car park

- Staggered times extend disruption
- Disruption during construction
- Playgrounds too small to accommodate pupil increase
- Questions around intake policy for local residents.

6.0 Consultees

Internal

- 6.1 Highways – No objection subject to conditions.
- 6.2 Environmental Protection (Land Contamination) – No objection.
- 6.3 Tree Officer – No objection subject to conditions.
- 6.4 Education – Supportive of proposal.

External

- 6.5 Severn Trent Water – No objections subject to conditions
- 6.6 South Staffordshire Council – No response received.

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 The legal implications arising from this report are set out below KR/0107201/E.

8.0 Appraisal

- 8.1 The main issues for consideration are:
 - Principle of development in the Green Belt
 - Consideration of Very Special Circumstances
 - Character and appearance
 - Highways and Parking
 - Residential amenity
 - Impact on protected trees

Principle of development in the Green Belt

Whether inappropriate development

- 8.2 Given that the main single storey extension takes place in an area where there are currently temporary buildings, it is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which by definition, is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the

Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. These are considered below.

Effect on openness

- 8.3 The addition of the single storey extension in place of poor quality but smaller wooden cabin and storage building marginally reduces the openness of the Green Belt. The impact would be mitigated by several factors in that views are partially screened by mature tree screening along the southern boundary and immediately north of the extension, especially when in leaf. The extension would be seen in the context of the existing school complex and the dwelling to the south, projecting out to the east in a similar position to existing school buildings. The planning authority are therefore satisfied that the building would not be visually prominent from the playing field, farmland or from Sedgley Road.
- 8.4 The changes to the hall have been designed to minimise the physical expansion of the building. Existing storage spaces to the rear of the building will be opened-up into the hall and these rooms extended to 'square off' the corner of the building, there will be a minimal increase in height.
- 8.5 The overall impact on openness would therefore only be marginally increased by this proposal.

Consideration of Very Special Circumstances

- 8.6 The main challenge the Local Authority faces in relation to the organisation of school provision is ensuring that sufficient high-quality school places are available to meet the needs of school communities across the City.
- 8.7 St. Bartholomew's CE Primary School is currently a 1.5 form entry primary school and is rated outstanding by Ofsted. As expected, it is very popular with the number of first preferences for the school, significantly exceeding the number of places on offer over the past five years.
- 8.8 As a result of this demand in the local area, the Council have requested that the Pupil Allocation Number (PAN) for the school is increased by 15 pupils a year over a 7-year period leading to a total increase of 105 pupils. The expansion of the school is already included in the Council's Primary School Expansion Programme 2021 and 2022. This expansion would be effective from September 2021.
- 8.9 It should be noted there was an increased (bulge) admissions intake in September 2015 and 2016 (a total of 30 children), these year groups will move back to normal sizes by the end of the school year in 2023. So, the increase in pupil numbers would be 75 pupils when compared to this baseline of 345 pupils, or 105 pupils if taken from the original PAN of 315.
- 8.10 The proposed extensions will help accommodate the permanent expansion from 1.5 forms of entry (45 places per year group) to 2 forms of entry (60 places per year group).

The planned school expansion is predicated upon additional classroom space to be created by this proposal.

- 8.11 In addition, the St Bartholomew's CE Multi Academy Trust met the factors that were considered when prioritising potential school expansion schemes including; schools which are popular with parents, those judged as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, attainment, stable and proven leadership and being located in an area of high demand. To conclude, the expansion of St Bartholomew's CE Primary will support the Local Authority's statutory duty in ensuring sufficient school places are available in the local area.
- 8.12 The considerations weighing against the harm to the Green Belt carry significant weight. The local planning authority is satisfied that the need for the proposal to provide additional accommodation at the school to accommodate school place demand has been clearly demonstrated. In accordance with paragraph 94 of the NPPF, LPA's must give great weight to any proven need to expand the school, and attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.
- 8.13 Taken together, the above considerations demonstrate there are very special circumstances which exist to justify the development.

Character and Appearance

- 8.14 The siting of the detached extension and high standard of design has been carefully considered so as to minimise the level of harm. The hall extension and minor nursery elevation changes are sympathetic to the school design. The magnitude of change to the Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area and the designated heritage asset (i.e. Grade II* Listed St Bartholomew's Church) is low due to the design proposals that reflect the vernacular form and historic interest.
- 8.15 The proposal would therefore preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Highways and Parking

- 8.16 The school expansion will not lead to an increase in teaching staff, but there will be part-time teaching assistant roles (two full-time equivalent) spread throughout the school day. The existing staff parking demand would not therefore significantly increase, and the minor changes to the car park layout would be acceptable. Implementation of more staff parking would harm either hard play provision or harm to the conservation area through loss of landscaping.
- 8.17 Residents are concerned that the expansion of the school would bring more pupils with the potential for being dropped-off and collected by car, exacerbating existing conflicts between parents and residents particularly on Sedgley Road, Vicarage Road and

Pennwood Lane. The Highway Authority acknowledge these issues given the increase of up to 35 cars anticipated in the submitted Transport Assessment. However, some of these issues can arise from inconsiderate driver behaviour and parking by those dropping-off or collecting children. As is evident at schools across the City, there are often competing pressures on the available street parking at drop off and pick up times.

- 8.18 An analysis of the most recent accident data suggests that there are no historic accident trends that might be exacerbated by the proposal.
- 8.19 St Bartholomew's School does benefit from a nearby local car park (opposite the church) and continue to encourage parents to utilise this. They also have had an informal arrangement to park on The Old Stags Head car park, however, this facility is currently vacant, and signage requires payment to park, the applicant continues to explore a more permanent arrangement for this to continue.
- 8.20 To alleviate some of the concerns about traffic movement and parking, the Education Authority has been in discussion with the applicant (and their highway consultant) about the introduction of funded mitigation measures. The scope of works to be secured by condition is likely to include the following:
- School safety zone 20 mph
 - Improvements to the crossing points
 - Traffic calming measures
 - Gateway signage to encourage lower vehicle speeds
- 8.21 The applicant has already introduced staggered start/finish times for all pupils. Key Stage 1 (Pupils aged between 3 and 7) are dropped off at 0830, the school day for these pupils will finish at 1500. Key Stage 2 (Pupils aged between 8 and 11) are dropped off at 0855 with their school day finishing at 1515. Children with siblings with conflicting schedules will be allowed to start / finish school early. The Transport Statement demonstrates the staggered times reduce the number of vehicles attending the school within any 15 minute period by up to 49 cars, improving parking capacity.
- 8.22 The submitted Travel Plan is orientated towards influencing travel behaviour of pupils/parents and staff. Including measures to encourage walking and cycling to the school, reduce single occupancy vehicle trips and encourage public transport use. A condition will be required for its implementation. It is also noted the school expansion would actually occur over several years (15 pupils per year) with the highway impacts distributed proportionally and benefitting from these interventions to address concerns.
- 8.23 A condition will require the submission of a construction management plan, which will include working hours, delivery times to avoid peak traffic hours, and construction staff vehicle parking.
- 8.24 In light of these above measures, and the relative short period of potential impacts at drop off and pick up times, the Highway Authority do not object. The proposed

development would not conflict with transport and parking development plan policies, nor would there be conflict with NPPF paragraph 109 which says that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Residential amenity

- 8.25 There would be some 29m between the rear elevation of the nearest dwelling at 2 Sedgley Road to the proposed front elevation of the single storey extension. In addition, trees on the boundary would be unaffected and therefore, the proposal would not result in any overlooking or loss of privacy. The hall extension would be well contained within the school grounds.
- 8.26 This ensures that nearby residential properties would not be adversely affected by this proposal.

Impact on protected trees

- 8.27 A Tree Report / Impact Assessment accompanies the application. It recommends protective measures, so that protected trees along the southern boundary which closely adjoin the building, are not harmed.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 In accordance with national policy, very special circumstances that clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt have been demonstrated. Having regard to all other issues, the proposed development is acceptable and in accordance with the development plan.

10.0 Detail recommendation

- 10.1 That planning application 21/00562/FUL is granted subject to following conditions
- Materials
 - Drainage
 - Tree protection measures
 - Landscaping plan
 - Construction Management Plan (including traffic control measures)
 - Transportation mitigation measures
 - Travel Plan
 - Parking layout implementation
 - Cycle/motorcycle parking
 - Accord with recommendations of ecology report

