Meadows Junior & Infant School, Bristol Road South, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2SW

Part demolition of existing buildings and construction of new single storey and two storey extensions and associated works.

Applicant: Birmingham City Council
Education & Skills Infrastructure, 1 Lancaster Circus Queensway, Birmingham, B4 7DJ

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Recommendation
Approve Subject To Conditions

1. Proposal

1.1. This application is for the part demolition of the existing building and construction of new single storey and two storey extensions with associated works at Meadows Junior and Infant School, Bristol Road South, Northfield. This would allow the school to increase the number of pupils from 420 to 630, over a 7 year period.

1.2. The proposed demolition would include an existing wing to the southern part of the existing main school building, the existing reception block, the boiler house and the removal of a number of sheds and a pergola.

1.3. A new single storey wing would be constructed to the north eastern side of the main school building. This would provide three new classrooms, a number of meeting rooms and offices, community rooms and new entrance to the school, which itself would have a covered canopy; ramped access and retaining wall. The extension would have a predominantly rectangular shape, with some curved and irregular walling. It would have a total length of 26.5m and would be 20m wide; it would be 5m in height with a part flat, part mono pitch roof. It would be constructed with brick and block work, with walls colour rendered or with timber effect laminate panels and timber/metal windows and doors.

1.4. A two storey extension would be constructed to the north west side of the existing building. This would provide six new classrooms and toilets on the ground floor, along with circulation areas and stairwells, with another six classrooms, toilets and store room at first floor. The extension would be rectangular in shape, be 30m in length; 19m wide and 8m in height with a shallow pitched roof. It would be constructed with brick and block work, with walls colour rendered or with timber effect laminate panels and timber/metal windows and doors. A new retaining wall would be constructed around the extension to create a pathway around it.
1.5. A proposed sprinkler tank and 2no plant buildings (one 5.5m x 2m x 2.4m; the other being 2.5m x 2.5m x 2.8m) and would be located to the north of the site between the proposed new two storey extension and the northern boundary. The tank and pump housing would be constructed of aluminium and powder coated to an approved colour. The tank itself would be circular in shape, with a diameter of 3.6m. It would have a height of 3.5m and would be screened by fencing.

1.6. The proposed development would result in an increase in the number of pupils from 420 to 630 over a 7 year period (equates to 30 additional pupils per year, from a 2 form to 3 form entry). This started with an intake of an additional 30 pupils in September 2013. The aim is for the proposed development to be completed in order to accommodate the next proposed intake of pupils in September 2014. The proposed development would also result in an increase in the number of staff (including cleaners and administrative staff) from 75 (49 full time and 26 part time) to 93 (59 full time and 34 part time). The School’s main operation hours are to remain the same as existing (i.e. 08:55-15:30, plus extracurricular activities between 07:30-18:00 hours).

1.7. The Applicant has explained that the proposed expansion of Meadows Primary School is one of a number of such expansions planned for schools across the City. The need for expansion has come about due to a sharp increase in the number of births in most urban areas of the country (in Birmingham there has been a dramatic increase of over 3000 births (21%) between 2001-2008).

1.8. The current site has 19 laid-out parking spaces, and a hard-surfaced area which is sometimes used for the more informal parking of a further 16 or so cars. The proposed site would have 37 laid-out spaces. Additionally, the re-developed site would have much more extensive areas of hard-surfacing also available/accessable for informal parking.

1.9. There are 74 trees on the site, the majority would be retained. They are predominantly located along the boundaries, particularly on the southern and western side. However, the development would necessitate the removal of 12 no. trees. These are 3no category U specimens; 5no category C specimens and 4no category B specimens.

1.10. In support of this application, the Applicant has submitted a Tree Survey, Ecological Assessment Report, Transport Statement and School Travel Plan, and Design and Access Statement.

Proposed site plan

Proposed elevations 1

Proposed elevations 2

2. Site & Surroundings

2.1. The application site relates to The Meadows Primary School located off Bristol Road South, Northfield.

2.2. Pedestrian access to the school is via an entrance on Bristol Road South with vehicular access from School Close. A public footpath runs parallel with the
northern boundary, with a route from the north west corner of the school linking to it to Bodenham Road to the west of the site.

2.3. There are residential properties bounding the school on all boundaries, with traditional semi detached housing along Bodenham Road and flatted developments within School Close and Bristol Road South. There is a retail parade further to the north along Bristol Road South.

2.4. The school has a mix of one and two storey elements and there are a number of buildings within the site. The site of the proposed extensions is within the existing playgrounds. The existing building is timber clad with a painted green finish.

2.5. The site is heavily landscaped around its boundaries and contains a high number of trees. Trees within the adjacent site at 1211 Bristol Road South are statutorily protected.

3. Planning History


3.2. 21/08/2009 – 2009/02674/PA Erection of single storey extension to existing staffroom. Approved subject to conditions.

3.3. 05/08/2013 – 2013/03606/PA Part demolition of existing buildings and construction of new single storey and two storey extensions and associated works. Withdrawn.

4. Consultation/PP Responses

4.1. Transportation Development – No objection subject to conditions for a construction management plan, parking management strategy, cycle storage and updated travel plan.

4.2. Regulatory Services – No objection subject to noise control conditions for plant and machinery.

4.3. West Midland Police – No objection, recommend that this proposal is developed to enhanced security standards initiative 'Secured by Design'.

4.4. Severn Trent – No objection subject to a drainage condition.

4.5. Letters of notification have been sent to surrounding occupiers, local residents associations, Longbridge Ward Councillors; Planning Committee members from the Northfield Constituency and the MP for Northfield. A site and press notice have also been posted.

4.6. Additional consultation was carried out during the consideration of the application due to slight changes to the design of the two storey extension.

4.7. Councillor Andy Cartwright objects to the proposal stating; “This traffic issue is not new and putting extra volume by taking on more pupils and extending the School will
increase the stress on local residents. I totally support an extension to a Longbridge Ward School if these issues are part of the planning procedure and application. The new families moving into Longbridge Ward need to school their children which I understand. There are two main issues 1) the on-going traffic issue, lack of parking and sensitivity to local residents and businesses from parents. 2) To deal with the issues as part of the new planning application, not do a reflective practice after when changes cannot be made. If these issues cannot be resolved I will not support it as the decision is putting children and existing residents and businesses at risk.

4.8. Further to the above, officers have been in contact with Councillor Cartwright and other ward members to discuss solutions in and around this site with regards to the parking problems and highway safety. However, Councillor Cartwright position with regards to the application has not changed.

4.9. 10 letters of objection have been received from surrounding occupiers objecting to the proposal for the following reasons.

- The application does not adequately address parking issues at the school.
- Twice daily sections of road adjacent the path to the school become impassable. The increase in pupil numbers will only make matters worse.
- Submitted travel plan does not make sufficient effort to deal with this problem.
- Emergency vehicles would not be able to get through when parents drop off and pick up.
- Cars park on the grass verges, churning the grass into mud; park outside driveways making it impossible to leave or enter private dwellings and double park on Bodenham Road.
- Large amount of litter is dropped by parents and children alike.
- More rigorous enforcement of parking restrictions in surrounding roads would also be helpful.
- The school will have a greater carbon footprint and create more air pollution.
- There will be overlooking of adjacent properties.
- Detrimental impact on the living condition of surrounding residents.
- The extension of the school will have a negative effect on the value and desirability of property.
- Existing view from property would alter.
- There would be disruption to residents during the construction. Assurances are needed that this does not happen.
- There would be a loss of many established trees.
- There would be a severe drainage impact.
- No green technology ideas being integrated, solar panel, rain water harvesting etc.
- There has been a lack of thought and lack of community engagement.

5. Policy Context

5.1. The following local policies are relevant

- The Birmingham Unitary Development Plan (2005)
- Draft Birmingham Development Plan (2013)
- SPG: “Places for All” (2001)
- The Birmingham (1211 Bristol Road South, Northfield) TPO 1971
5.2. The following national policy is relevant.


6. Planning Considerations

6.1. I consider the key planning issues to be assessed as part of this application are: the impact of the proposed increase in pupils and staff on car parking, traffic generation and highway safety; the design and appearance of the proposed extension; landscaping and trees; and the impact on the amenity of local residents.

6.2. Siting, Design and Appearance
I consider the siting of the proposed single storey extension to be acceptable. The extension would sit at the same level as the existing school building, and would be 0.5m lower in height. It uses the existing levels to ensure no adverse effect in terms of its massing when viewed in the context of the existing school building.

6.3. The single storey extension sits approximately 9m from the northern boundary of the site. Given this distance; the single storey nature of the building, the use of rooms and position of openings within the northern side of the building and that there is a good degree of hedging and tree planting along this part of the boundary, it is unlikely that this extension would appear particular visible from the gardens and windows of adjoining residential properties over and above that of the existing school buildings. It is considered that there would not be any overlooking or overshadowing to neighbouring properties that would harm their privacy and amenity.

6.4. I consider the appearance of the proposed single storey extension would be in keeping with the existing school building. It would introduce a modern addition to the school and would provide a roof design that picks up the mix designed roofs across the site being part flat and part pitched. I consider the extension would not have any detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the area.

6.5. The siting of the proposed two storey extension is also considered acceptable. This too would sit at the same level as the existing school and picks up on the two storey element of the main school building adjacent. At two storeys, with a shallow pitched roof it would sit approximately 2m higher than other two storey parts of the building. However, the building’s overall massing would sit comfortably when viewed in the context of the existing school building.

6.6. The two storey extension sits approximately 15m from the boundary to properties to the north and over 20m from the side elevation of the nearest house beyond this boundary 27c Torre Avenue. In addition, the extension is set 7m from the boundary to properties to the west and over 25m from the rear elevations of the nearest houses at 55, 57 and 59 Bodenham Road. Given these distances, the orientation of surrounding properties and that there is a good degree of hedging and tree planting along these parts of the boundary, it is unlikely that this extension would have any detrimental impact on surrounding residents in terms of overlooking or overshadowing sufficient to warrant the refusal of this application.

6.7. I consider the appearance of the proposed two storey extension would be in keeping with the existing school building. As above, it would introduce a modern addition to the school and would provide a roof design that picks up the mix designed roofs across the site. I do not consider the extension would have any detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the area.
6.8. The proposed sprinkler tank is located to the rear of the site close to the northern boundary. I do not consider it would have any significant impact upon views from the rear/side windows or gardens of the adjoining residential properties on Torre Avenue or Bodenham Road, and it would not be visible from the public realm.

6.9. Trees and Landscape
My Tree Officer has raised no objection to the proposed development. There would be no detrimental impact on the adjacent trees at 1211 covered by a TPO and the 12 trees suggested for removal to facilitate the development consist mostly of trees in C and U categories, or where they are B category trees, they are at the lower end of that group and have no wider public amenity value. The 3no U category trees are a Golden Cypress, Rowen and Apple; the 5no C category trees are Cherry, Cypress, Ash, Copper Beech and Beech and the 4no B category trees are Ash, Maple, Sycamore and Beech.

6.10. The removal of two trees to the rear of properties on Bodenham Road raise some concern as it would have an effect on views from the rear gardens. However, these trees would not be suitable for a TPO and trees in general cannot be relied on as a screen to new development. In addition, a suitable landscaping scheme secured through an appropriate condition should reinforce this boundary and suitable replacement tree planting can be secured. The tree survey does not contain a tree protection plan, therefore a condition requiring one is recommended.

6.11. Noise and Disturbance
Regulatory Services have raised no objection to the proposed development. Adjoining residential occupiers are likely to notice an increase in noise levels from the increased numbers of pupils travelling to and from the site on foot and using outdoor play areas, with the most significant activity and associated noise being concentrated around two limited periods, drop off and pick up times rather than a constant source throughout the day. I concur that this increase would be unlikely to materially adversely affect the amenity of these occupiers. Again, the proposed increase in the number of pupils would be spread out over a six year period, which would make for a smoother, less noticeable transition or increase in noise/disturbance, and residents who live near to a school should expect to receive a higher degree of noise/disturbance than would be expected in a normal residential area for five days of the week. A condition is however recommended to limit the cumulative noise from all plant and machinery from the site.

6.12. Traffic, Parking and Highway Safety
There are currently 19 car parking spaces formally laid out at the school. However, it has been confirmed that additional parking and provision is available within an unmarked area of tarmac and is managed on a daily basis to accommodate up to 27 spaces (using double/triple parking). This is in addition to the existing 8 visitors parking spaces identified to the east of the caretaker's house. The current on-site parking provision is therefore considered to be 35 spaces.

6.13. The proposal seeks to formally lay out a new, larger car park on the site, which would provide 29 spaces. This would be in addition to the retained area of 8 spaces to the east and therefore, there would be 37 independently accessible, formal car parking spaces within the site. Just like the current site, further, more informal parking, could be accommodated on other areas (typically hard play areas). The Car Parking Guidelines SPD suggests that 1 space per two members of staff be provided. A total of 59 full time members of staff are proposed equating to the need for 29.5 spaces. There are also potentially 34 part time members of staff including
cleaners and lunchtime supervisors, working at different times throughout the day. It is considered the total number of spaces would be sufficient to cope with this demand. It is also noted that managed double parking could be re-introduced if necessary. Given this, my Transportation Development officers raise no concern regarding on site parking provision. I concur that a condition should be attached to any consent that off-street car parking spaces are formally marked out and that a parking management plan is implemented. I also concur that secure cycle storage details and a construction management plan be required by way of condition if consent is forthcoming.

6.14. The main pedestrian, and the only vehicular, access to the school is located off School Close. There is an additional pedestrian access via a public footpath which links School Close with Bodenham Road. No additional pedestrian access points or amendments to the existing accesses are proposed as part of the development proposals.

6.15. School related parking issues have been observed by Planning and Transportation officers and the contents of all public participation responses are also noted, in particular relating to ongoing traffic issues and lack of parking for parents at the beginning and end of the school day.

6.16. The submitted Transport Assessment concludes that on street parking by parents dropping off/picking up pupils at school start and finish times can cause some congestion on local roads outside the school and which requires management to reduce the incidence of inappropriate parking. A total of 210 additional pupils would be joining the school over a seven year period. This equates to 30 additional pupils per year. Based on the existing data, the estimated additional car trips generated by the school in 2020 once all the additional pupil spaces have been filled would be 97. It is also estimated that an additional 109 pupils would walk to school (likely to be accompanied by a parent/guardian) and 4 additional pupils are estimated to use public transport in order to travel to and from the school.

6.17. The observations within the Transport Statement regarding the existing on-site parking demand have been confirmed by officer site visits. In view of the observations made, a mechanism to review and mitigate highway related impact associated with the proposed phased school expansion has been considered - a process that has included close liaison with the District Engineer. The outcome is referenced within the submitted Transport Statement at para 6.13, and also Appendix C (BCC Technical Note; October 2013) which has looked at options for the provision of additional parking facilities and management of existing parking on the A38 Bristol Road South.

6.18. In this instance a sum of £300,000 to enable ongoing monitoring and the implementation of mitigation measures (should the monitoring identify that these are required) has been offered. Such measures could include the construction of vehicular lay-by in the very wide footways along the northbound and southbound carriageway of Bristol Road South; construction of parking and drop off facilities on ground owned by the City Council adjacent to the southbound carriageway, and traffic speed reduction on this part of Bristol Road South from 40mph to 30mph. The allocation of these funds for this purpose was agreed by Cabinet on 17th February 2014.

6.19. This is a similar approach to that adopted on the University of Birmingham School, recently considered by members, and my Transportation Development Officers are happy with this approach. However, in this case, because the City Council is the
applicant, a S106 mechanism cannot be used. As such, it is proposed that the sum be secured through a requirement to follow the recommendations in the appropriate section of the Travel Plan (in respect of management and mitigation), which is to be updated yearly and this would be secured through the imposition of an appropriate condition.

6.20. **Ecology**
An Ecological Assessment has been completed and the site has been assessed for its potential to support protected species. None of the trees present contain features suitable for use by roosting bats, and no potential bat access points were noted on any of the buildings given their flat roof design. A pond within the site has been assessed as having low suitability for great crested newts and other breeding amphibians. No evidence of other protected species, such as badger or reptiles, was found; the site is considered to have low potential for these species.

6.21. My Ecologist suggests that given the existing pond would be removed, that a replacement pond should be accommodated within the scheme to compensate for this habitat loss. However, the applicant asserts that the safety implications associated with a pond at a Junior and Infant School would prohibit any replacement provision and that there would not be a suitable location within the school grounds. Furthermore, the Ecology Report states that the existing pond is “very shallow and filled with detritus, and has no connectivity with any semi-natural habitats”. It is no longer used for any educational purposes. Good practice mitigation measures are identified in the report to minimise harm to nesting birds and other wildlife during construction works. Implementation of these measures should be secured by condition.

6.22. **Other matters**
Local residents have raised concerns in respect of air pollution, litter, drainage and impact on property values. The latter is not a material planning consideration. My Regulatory Services Officer has raised no concerns in respect of air pollution. The control of litter, should a problem arise, would be addressed through the management of the school. The school is also located within Flood Zone 1 where there is a low risk of flooding or potential drainage issues, and Severn Trent have confirmed there are no objections subject to a drainage condition.

7. **Conclusion**

7.1. I consider the proposed extensions to be acceptable in terms of siting, design and appearance. The proposed development would likely result in an increase in traffic generation, however, given sufficient mitigation to be secured through appropriate conditions, I consider on balance, that there would not be any harm to the amenity of local residents or highways implication sufficient to justify refusal of this application.

7.2. **Recommendation**

7.3. Approve subject to conditions.

1 Requires the scheme to be in accordance with the listed approved plans

2 Requires the prior submission of a construction method statement/management plan
3 Requires the prior submission of hard and/or soft landscape details
4 Requires the prior submission of boundary treatment details
5 Requires the prior submission of sample materials
6 Requires the prior submission of a parking management strategy
7 Requires the parking area to be laid out prior to use
8 Requires the prior submission of cycle storage details
9 Limits the noise levels for Plant and Machinery
10 Requires the submission of a tree protection plan
11 Requires implementation of ecological mitigation measures.
12 Requires the development to carried out in accordance with an updated and approved Travel Plan.
13 Requires the prior submission of drainage plans
14 Limits the approval to 3 years (Full)

Case Officer: James Mead
Photo(s)

Figure 1: Location of single storey extension

Figure 2: Location of two storey extension
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