

UTT/1591/12/FUL – FELSTED

PROPOSAL: Proposed erection of detached two storey student living accommodation with associated support facilities for temporary consent for five years

LOCATION: Felsted School, Felsted

APPLICANT: Felsted School

AGENT: Andrew Stevenson Associates

GRID REFERENCE: TL 670-207

EXPIRY DATE: 5 November 2012

CASE OFFICER: Mrs K Denmark

1. NOTATION

- 1.1 Outside Development Limits/Adjacent Conservation Area/Access adjacent to group Tree Preservation Order.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 2.1 The application site is on the western side of Stebbing Road at Felsted School. To the east, on the opposite side of Stebbing Road, is the main core of the school buildings. To the south of the site are Lord Riche Hall and other buildings associated with the school including the chapel. To the north and west are playing fields and tennis courts. Adjacent to Stebbing Road is a group Tree Preservation Order protecting those trees lining the road. The site utilises the existing access serving the car park adjacent to Lord Riche Hall.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The proposal relates to the erection of prefabricated portable units which will be laid in two rows back to back, separated by a row of units sideways on in the middle. The portable units will be stacked to form a two storey building which would provide accommodation for 60 students with ancillary accommodation such as day room, quiet room, staff bedrooms, offices and bathrooms. There would be two external staircases (one to serve each block) and there would be an internal staircase. The building would have a width of approximately 33m and a depth of approximately 37m and a total height of 7.25m. The buildings are to be off-white in colour.

4. APPLICANT'S CASE

- 4.1 Officers and Members are undoubtedly aware of the unfortunate incident that occurred on the 15th July at Folly Field House, Braintree Road, Felsted, which up until recently accommodated up to 60 student borders studying at the school and supervisory staff domestic accommodation. Extensive fire damage has rendered the building unsafe and in need of demolition and emergency transient temporary accommodation is required to maintain the residential service provision for the school's students and support staff.

- 4.2 The siting of the temporary building shall both during the construction and operational phases cause minimum disturbance to local residents and the general day to day running of the school. The site is accessed from an existing well established vehicle cross-over at the junction of Stebbing Road and the temporary structure will be partly positioned over an existing hard surfaced area for disabled parking and level access approach to the accommodation. Location of the building has also been set to respect the position of the mature tree belt and the forward part of the building's position relative to the trunk respects and complies with the relevant British Standards for building near protected specimens.
- 4.3 It is recognised that the site is beyond settlement boundaries. Alongside and during the life of the temporary permission, a feasibility study of how to efficiently accommodate the present and future boarding requirements on a permanent basis is being undertaken with a view to formally apply for a fully planning permission and procure a new building that satisfies the studies being undertaken within the five year life of the temporary consent requested.
- 4.4 The construction of the temporary accommodation, whose funding is managed through the insurance recovery process, maintains the school's ability to service their student client base that contributes greatly towards the sustainable viability of the village.

5. RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

- 5.1 There is an extensive planning history in relation to Felsted School. However, none of the history is relevant to this application.

6. POLICIES

6.1 National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

6.2 East of England Plan 2006

Policy ENV6: The Historic Environment
Policy ENV7: Quality in the Built Environment

6.3 Essex Replacement Structure Plan 2001

None relevant.

6.4 Uttlesford District Local Plan 2005

Policy S7: The Countryside
Policy ENV1: Design of Development within Conservation Areas
Policy ENV2: Development affecting Listed Buildings
Policy GEN1: Access
Policy GEN2: Design
Policy GEN4: Good neighbourliness
Policy GEN5: Light pollution
Policy ENV3: Open Spaces and Trees
Policy LC1: Loss of Sports Fields and Recreational Facilities

7. PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

- 7.1 Parish Council appreciates the urgent need for the School to provide alternative accommodation for the residents of Follyfield House. However it requests that in granting permission for this temporary accommodation, conditions should be imposed to ensure that (a) the buildings are removed as soon as a replacement permanent building is occupied, and (b) the land occupied by the temporary buildings is returned to its current green field status.

8. CONSULTATIONS

Landscaping

- 8.1 No objections.

9. REPRESENTATIONS

- 9.1 This application has been advertised and one representation has been received. Notification period expired 4 September 2012.

Whilst acknowledging the School's challenges following the fire at Follyfield on 15 July 2012 and, in principle, supporting the application for temporary accommodation, we are jointly of the opinion that the following fully-enforceable conditions should be contained in any attendant UDC responses to the Planning Application:

- 1 That any Planning Permission is granted on the express understanding that the residential and teaching accommodation is to be of a temporary nature and fully compliant with all relevant policies set out in the Uttlesford Local Plan.
- 2 That Planning Permission for the development and any associated works is to be for a maximum of five years from the first date of occupation, following which all temporary accommodation and associated works are to be removed from site.
- 3 That any such Planning Permission does not set a precedent for any subsequent development on the site of the temporary accommodation.
- 4 That further expansion of the project and encroachment onto the playing fields will not be permitted at any time.

10. APPRAISAL

The issues to consider in the determination of the application are whether:

- A the location and design of the development is appropriate (ULP Policies S7, ENV1, ENV2, ENV3, GEN2; LC1; EEP Policies ENV6, ENV7; NPPF)**
- B if any amenity issues would arise from the proposals (ULP Policies GEN2, GEN4, GEN5)**
- C access and parking are appropriate (ULP Policies GEN1, GEN8)**
- D other material considerations**

- A the location and design of the development is appropriate (ULP Policies S7, ENV1, ENV2, ENV3, GEN2; LC1; EEP Policies ENV6, ENV7; NPPF)**

- 10.1 The application site forms part of the environs of Felsted School, located adjacent to Lord Riche Hall and its associated car park and also forms part of the school playing field. The site is constrained by being located outside the development limits where Policy S7 has a presumption against development except that which needs to take place there. In addition, the principal school building is located approximately 100m to the south-east and this is a Grade II listed building. Whilst

not immediately adjacent to the proposed building the proposal has the potential to have an adverse impact on the setting of the listed building given its scale. The conservation area is located approximately 40m to the east and the proposal could have an adverse impact on the setting of this area. Furthermore there is a group of trees preserved by a Tree Preservation Order located approximately 20m from the proposed building and the proposals could potential have an adverse impact on the health and viability of these trees.

- 10.2 Whilst the application site is located adjacent to Lord Riche Hall it does not form part of the main built-up complex of the school. The site is rural in character and with the presence of the protected trees along the road frontage forms a soft edge to the school and appears clearly defined as being part of the school playing fields. Policy LC1 has a policy presumption against development which would involve the loss of sports facilities or spaces used for recreational purposes. There are two exceptions, these being that replacement facilities will be provided that better meet local needs or the need for the facility no longer exists. It is clear that the application site is required for recreational purposes related to the school and at the present time it is not envisaged that replacement facilities would be provided. Therefore this proposal would be contrary to Policy LC1.
- 10.3 As stated above, the site lies outside the development limits where there is strict control over new development, except that which needs to be located there, or is appropriate to the rural area. In policy terms this development does not need to take place here and furthermore the design of the building is not appropriate for the character of the rural area. The proposal would therefore be harmful to the character and setting of the rural area and would be contrary to Policy S7.
- 10.4 The design of the building is one of substantial footprint with a flat roof and the use of prefabricated blocks with a harsh off-white finish. This would not be in keeping with the general character of buildings in the locality. The design and finish of the building would not minimise the visual impact the proposal would have on the surrounding area. The proposal is therefore contrary to ULP Policy GEN2 and EEP Policy ENV7.
- 10.5 The proposed building is located approximately 100m from the Grade II listed principal school building. The relationship between the site and the listed building is such that it should not have an adverse impact on the setting of the listed building. However, the proposed buildings are likely to be visible behind the listed building when viewed from certain public vantage points along the Chelmsford Road. Given the inappropriate design and materials the proposal would detract from the setting of the listed building and would be contrary to ULP Policy ENV2 and EEP Policy ENV6 and policy guidance set out in the NPPF.
- 10.6 Whilst the proposed building would not be located within the conservation area it would be seen in long views with the adjacent conservation area to the east. Again, given the inappropriate use of materials and the flat roof design of the building and size and scale of the building, the proposal would detract from the setting of the adjacent conservation area. The proposal would therefore be contrary to ULP Policy ENV1 and EEP Policy ENV6 and policy guidance set out in the NPPF.
- 10.7 The proposed new building is located in close proximity to trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order. The nearest tree is approximately 20m from the nearest edge of the building. Tree protection measures are proposed to ensure the trees are not damaged during the construction period. The nature of the construction of this temporary accommodation is one of concrete pads and not full foundations. This

also limits the potential impact on the adjacent trees and it is considered that no adverse damage should arise from the proposals.

B if any amenity issues would arise from the proposals (ULP Policies GEN2, GEN4, GEN5)

10.8 The proposed building is located approximately 100m from the nearest residential properties not associated with the school. Due to the separation distance between the properties no loss of residential amenity would arise due to overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing. It is unlikely that the proposal would result in significant impacts on residential amenity due to noise over and above that already experienced from the school as a whole.

10.9 A lighting scheme is not included with the application scheme. However, it is understood that for safety reasons low energy bulkhead lights are proposed to the sides of external escape openings etc. These are unlikely to result in significant loss of residential amenity. Further floodlighting or general lighting can be controlled by condition if the application were to be approved.

C access and parking are appropriate (ULP Policies GEN1, GEN8)

10.10 The proposal relates to boarding accommodation in association with the existing school. As such no direct vehicular access and parking requirements are necessary. Notwithstanding this, the building is located adjacent to an existing car park which has suitable vehicular access from the Stebbing Road.

D other material considerations

10.11 Felsted School has about 1000 pupils, 520 seniors and 480 preparatory and employs about 400 staff, including ground staff and part time cleaners. It is therefore also dominant in terms of the local economy and provides support for the local services. The proposal has come about as a result of a fire at the existing boarding accommodation known as Follyfield House. This building has subsequently been demolished as the fire rendered the building unsafe. Demolition was also required to enable safe use of adjacent school buildings.

10.12 Failure to provide the required boarding accommodation would have a detrimental impact on the ability of the school to provide the services required. This would impact on the viability of the school and subsequently on the local economy.

10.13 Whilst personal circumstances are not normally sufficient to warrant a decision contrary to development plan policies, in this instance officers are of the view that the long-term viability of the school should be protected by the granting of consent for the temporary accommodation. This would help ensure that the school continues to play a pivotal role with providing employment and supporting the local economy. On this basis it is recommended that the application be approved for a period of 5 years.

11. CONCLUSION

The following is a summary of the main reasons for the recommendation:

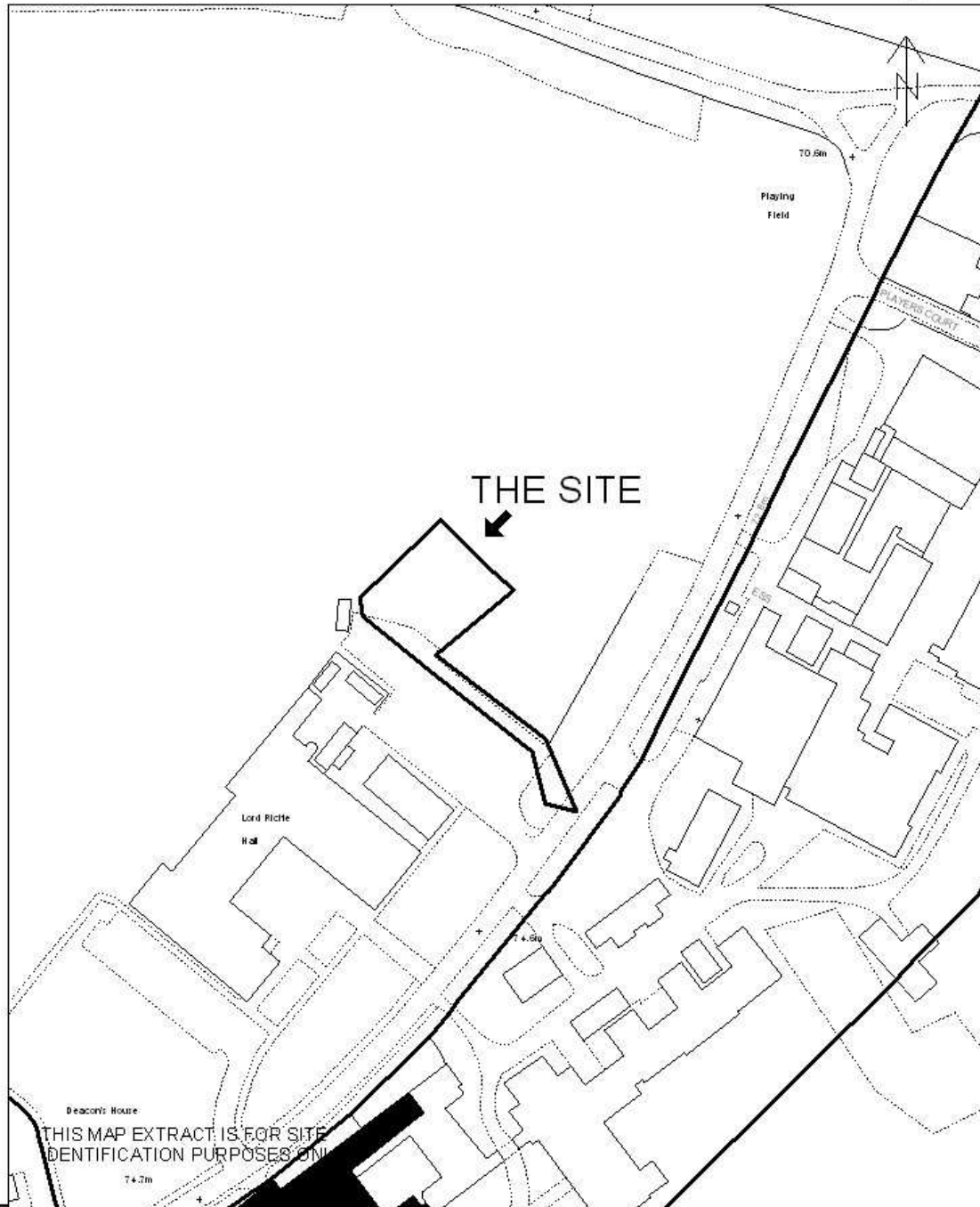
A The proposal would be detrimental to the character of the rural area due to scale and bulk. The use of inappropriate materials and the scale of the proposals would be

detrimental to the character and setting of the conservation area and adjacent listed building. This would be contrary to the relevant policies.

- B No adverse amenity issues would arise from the proposals.
- C Access and parking provision are appropriate for the proposal.
- D In this particular material circumstances outweigh the policy objections to the proposal and a temporary consent is recommended.

RECOMMENDATION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

1. The use of the temporary student living accommodation hereby permitted shall be discontinued on or before 19 September 2017, or one month following the first occupation of a building to replace Follyfield House. The temporary student living accommodation shall be removed on or before 19 December 2017 or within 3 months following the first occupation of a building to replace Follyfield House and the land shall be restored to its former condition on or before 19 March 2017 or within 6 months following the first occupation of a building to replace Follyfield House in accordance with a scheme of work submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing.
REASON: Planning permission is only granted for a temporary period given the personal circumstances of the applicant. Permission would not normally be forthcoming as the proposal would be contrary to Uttlesford Local Plan Policies S7, ENV1, ENV2 and GEN2 (adopted 2005) and East of England Plan Policies ENV6 and ENV7 (adopted 2008).
2. There shall be no floodlighting or other form of external lighting constructed within the application site without the prior written consent of the local planning authority.
REASON: To ensure the development does not adversely affect the rural character of the area, in accordance with Uttlesford Local Plan Policy GEN5 (adopted 2005).



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