

UTT/13/0388//FUL – FELSTED

PROPOSAL: Proposed erection of new boarding house, car park extension and associated landscaping.

LOCATION: Felsted School, Braintree Road, Great Dunmow, Felsted

APPLICANT: Felsted School

AGENT: Mr M Harrison, BHM Architects

GRID REFERENCE: TL 679-206

EXPIRY DATE: 14th May 2013

CASE OFFICER: Mrs M Jones

1. NOTATION

- 1.1 Part within Development Limits/Conservation Area and part outside both these areas. Tree Preservation Order to Lime trees and adjacent to three trees subject to tree preservation orders (Horse Chestnut, Sorbus and an Oak tree). Public Right of Way

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 2.1 The application site is on the north western side of Stebbing Road at Felsted School. To the south east, on the opposite side of Stebbing Road, is the main core of the school buildings. To the east of the site are Lord Riche Hall and car parking and to the west is Thorne House which is a boarding house (historic land use hospital). To the south are further boarding houses. The site comprises four grass tennis courts (two immediately adjacent to Thorne House and two adjacent to the car parking of Lord Riche Hall/ music school.) To the north are tennis/ netball courts, and two Astro turf pitches. Running through the site is a group of lime trees that are subject to a Tree Preservation Order. There are three further trees to the south east of the site (Horse Chestnut, a sorbus and an oak) that are subject to tree preservation orders. The site utilises the existing access serving the car park adjacent to Lord Riche Hall and the existing access serving Thorne House and the school sports facilities. There is a hedge between the northern boundary and the Astro turf (all weather) pitch. An access road runs along the south of the tennis courts to serve Deacons and the Gepp's boarding houses. There is a further mature hedge to the east of the Thorne House tennis courts

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The proposal relates to the erection of a girls boarding house building which would provide accommodation for 62 students with ancillary accommodation such as common room, kitchen facilities, a quiet room, staff accommodation offices and bathrooms. The building would be over three storeys and have a maximum width of approximately 34.7m and a depth of approximately 44.2m and a ridge height of 11m. The buildings are to be multistock brick under a predominantly clay tiled roof. The windows would be double glazed and have metal framed. The front lobby (extending over three floors) would be glazed

There would be ten additional parking spaces to the south of the new building which would be separated from the building by fencing and new landscaping. There would also be a bin store erected to the south of the building. Additional 30 parking spaces would be provided to the west of the existing car parking provision adjacent to the music block and to the south of the building. The proposal involves the planting of several new trees and other soft landscaping.

4. APPLICANT'S CASE

4.1 Design and Access Statement (summary)

Felsted School is situated at the heart of Felsted Village with the main Victorian buildings visible across playing fields. The school occupies many listed buildings within the village and the school grounds are an important feature of the village's landscape. Therefore any new building proposal, the new boarding house, must respect the context of the existing environment and make a positive contribution to the existing campus.

In September 2010 school numbers were increased from 483 to 520. In the summer of 2009 a new boarding annexe was constructed. The school embarked on a challenging vision to become the outstanding school of its type (co-educational, independent, boarding and day) in the region and nationally.

The strategic plan established that new facilities were required on the campus over the next ten years, such as a new indoor sports facilities and a boarding house. Drawing 2631 A003 shows the planning Constraints Plan and identifies the Felsted Conservation Area, the important trees within the landscape, the schools Listed Buildings and other Listed Buildings on adjacent sites. This gives a framework for the new development in order that new buildings compliment the character of Felsted Village.

The development priorities were dramatically changed when the Follyfield boarding house caught fire in 2012 and was completely destroyed. The school then needed to build a new girl's boarding house which would replace Follyfield which had 62 student beds plus staff living accommodation. In the short term temporary girls boarding accommodation has been erected on the school playing fields next to the Dining Hall.

Several sites were considered for the new girls boarding house. The school considered rebuilding the new girl's boarding house on the site of Follyfield. However, the Master Plan had identified that the traffic management and parking for the prep and pre prep school needed to be improved. The possibility of taking some of the Follyfield site for parking, to solve some of the traffic issues during delivery and collection times for children, was a great opportunity that the school wish to take. The Master Plan had identified a site for a new boarding house on the existing grass tennis courts adjacent to Thorne, Deacon and Gepp's boarding houses. The advantage of this site is it would concentrate the boarding accommodation in one area of the school campus.

The proposed site adjacent to Thorne House is vacant and can be developed without impacting upon the surrounding school facilities and most importantly, brings the Follyfield Boarding back into well-defined senior school campus adjacent to existing senior school boarding and much closer to the existing dining facilities. It will mean also that the girls will not have to cross the busy main road through Felsted, as with the old Follyfield.

Drawing number 2652/S100 indicates the existing arrangements, which are 3 grass courts adjacent to the school chapel, 2 grass courts on the proposed site of the new boarding house, 8 hard courts between the 2 all-weather pitches and 7 hard courts laid out on half of the top most all weather pitch.

The grass courts are only used during the summer term (weather permitting) and are not used for any other sport during the rest of the year. The 8 hard courts between the two all-weather pitches are again only used during the summer time, during the rest of the year these are marked out for 6 netball courts. The 7 hard courts laid out on the all-weather are again only marked out during the summer. During the rest of the year, this is for hockey, football etc. The other all-weather pitch is not used for any other sport other than hockey as this has a specialist surface only applicable to this sport.

The grass area between the proposed new boarding house site and the existing music school is used on an ad - hoc basis for tennis as well during the summer term, but is not formally set out for this and the ground has not been specially prepared for tennis, unlike the other pitches.

Drawing number 3652/S101 indicates the proposed arrangements, which are as the previous proposals in that the pitches are only laid out during the summer term and that the 2 grass courts are lost on the new boarding house site, but this loss is mitigated by the proposed construction of 1 new grass court adjacent to the proposed new car parking and 7 additional hard courts, which are to be added to the other half of the top most all weather pitch.

Thus, during the summer term, although the school has lost 1 grass court through the development, they in fact gain 7 additional hard courts.

- 4.2 A sustainable Energy Statement, An Arboricultural Report, An Ecological Report, Drainage Strategy Report and a Flood Risk Assessment have been submitted in support of the proposal.

5. RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

- 5.1 There is an extensive planning history in relation to Felsted School. However, the most relevant planning history is that temporary permission has been given for accommodation for 60 students with ancillary accommodation such as day room, quiet room, staff bedrooms, offices and bathrooms in 2012 under planning application UTT/1591/12/FUL

6. POLICIES

6.1 National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

6.2 Uttlesford District Local Plan 2005

Policy S3: Other Settlement Boundaries

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 No reply received.

8. CONSULTATIONS

Landscaping

8.1 No objections subject to condition.

Specialist Design Advice

8.2 No objections subject to appropriate material conditions.

Sport England

8.3 Insufficient information has been provided to allow me to make an informed assessment. In order to allow me to undertake a fully informed assessment, I would request the following information to be provided:

1. Grass Tennis Courts – Current Use. It is unclear from the submitted information whether the grass tennis courts that the development would be sited on are actually marked out and used as tennis courts in the summer season. Clarity is therefore requested of whether the courts are actually used and marked out and if so details of how the school uses the courts for the delivery of its PE curriculum and extra-curricular activities. This information is requested in order to help understand the impact of the development on the tennis courts.
2. Grass Tennis Courts – Replacement Provision. Reference is made in the design and access statement to the tennis courts being replaced by existing facilities. However, no detail is provided of the existing facilities. While it would appear that the school has tennis courts elsewhere within the campus, clarity is requested of the number, surface type (grass, macadam etc) and location (a plan showing the location of other courts within the campus would be helpful) of the existing tennis courts in order to provide sufficient details of this in order to demonstrate that there are sufficient alternative facilities. In addition, it is requested that confirmation is provided that existing tennis courts have the capacity to meet the school's needs during peak periods as curricular/extra-curricular use of the grass courts that would be displaced could only be met on other facilities if they are not already being used at the same time during peak periods. This information is requested to help assess the acceptability of the replacement facilities.
3. New Tennis Court Provision. The submitted site plan appears to show a new tennis court to the south of the new car park. However, as no reference is made to this in the planning application description or design and access statement, clarity is requested of whether a new tennis court is actually proposed to be developed and if so, further details in terms of its surface type, whether it would be fenced etc. This information is requested to help understand whether replacement provision is proposed as part of the development and the details of such provision.

This information has been requested from the applicant and Sport England response will be reported at the committee meeting.

Anglian Water Services

8.4 Section 1 – Assets Affected

There are assets owned by Anglian Water or those subject to an adoption agreement within or close to the development boundary that may affect the layout of the site. Anglian Water would ask that the following text be included within your Notice should permission be granted. "Anglian Water has assets close to or crossing this site or there are assets subject to an adoption agreement. Therefore the site layout should take this into account and accommodate those assets within either prospectively adoptable highways or public open space. If this is not practicable then the sewers will need to be diverted at the developers cost under Section 185 of the Water Industry Act 1991. or, in the case of apparatus under an adoption agreement, liaise with the owners of the apparatus. It should be noted that the diversion works should normally be completed before development can commence."

Section 2 – Wastewater Treatment

The foul drainage from this development is in the catchment of Felsted STW that at present has available capacity for these flows.

Section 3 – Foul Sewerage Network

The sewerage system at present has available capacity for these flows. If the developer wishes to connect to our sewerage network they should serve notice under Section 106 of the Water Industry Act 1991. We will then advise them of the most suitable point of connection.

Section 4 – Surface Water Disposal

The surface water strategy/flood risk assessment submitted with the planning application is not relevant to Anglian Water as the applicant is proposing to use soakaways and therefore this is outside our jurisdiction for comment and the Planning Authority will need to consider which the appropriate body to comment is. We request that the agreed strategy is conditioned in the planning approval.

Section 5 – Trade Effluent

Not applicable

Veolia Water

8.5 No reply received.

Environmental Health

8.6 No comments

Ramblers Association

8.7 No reply received.

Essex County Council Highways

8.8 The Highway Authority would not wish to raise an objection to the above application subject to the following:

The public's rights and ease of passage over public footpaths 55 and 58, Felsted shall be maintained free and unobstructed at all times.

Reason: To ensure the continued safe passage of the public on the definitive right of way and accessibility.

The above condition is required to ensure that the development accords with the Highway Authority's Development Management Policies, adopted as County Council Supplementary Guidance in February 2011 and Uttlesford Local Plan Policy GEN1.

Informative

The proposed boarding house is to replace Follyfield House which has burnt down. There will be no increase in vehicle movements and additional car parking spaces are to be provided with adequate space for manoeuvring.

Essex County Council Ecology

8.9 No reply received. Expiry date 11th March 2013

9. REPRESENTATIONS

9.1 This application has been advertised and no representation has been received. Notification period expired 21st March 2013

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 S3, ENV1, ENV2, ENV3, GEN2; LC1)**
- 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 S3, ENV1, ENV2, ENV3, GEN2; LC1)

10.1 The application site is located mainly within the development limits of Felsted where development compatible with the settlement's character and countryside setting will be permitted. Most of the site is also within the Conservation Area where development will be permitted where it preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the essential features of the Conservation Area, including plan form, relationship between buildings, the arrangement of open areas and their enclosure, grain or significant natural or heritage features.

The new building would be located completely within the Development Limits/ Conservation Area whilst the new parking to the east of the site would be outside both of these areas. The building would be located close to the other senior boarding accommodation and would concentrate the boarding accommodation in one area of the schools campus. The building would be close to existing buildings and has been sensitively designed to be compatible with the settlements character, with the height and materials being sympathetic to the surrounding buildings. The adjacent buildings Deacon and Gepps Boarding houses are of similar scale to the proposals, except Thorne Boarding House which is single storey.

The design of the proposal has been revised following specialist advice and revised plans have been received incorporating the advice given. This involved the omission of the close boarded fencing to the south of the building and its replacement with a more appropriate material within this Conservation Area. Specialist Conservation Advice is now in support of the scheme.

10.2 There are a group of lime trees that run through the centre of the site and the proposals could potentially have an adverse impact on the health and viability of these trees, however, the lime trees that are subject to a tree preservation order are to remain and provided that the mitigation measures within the submitted arboricultural report are implemented the Landscape Officer does not consider that the proposal would have any detrimental impact to these trees.

The existing tall hedges would be retained; however one tree would be felled. The loss of this tree is not considered to be significant. The Arboricultural report recommends that several trees that are protected by a tree preservation order would need to be pruned to reduce the risk of damage to their crowns from delivery vehicles and to allow ease of passage of vehicles from the compound to the development site. Full details of the extent of the pruning has not been submitted, neither have details of the full new landscaping been submitted, however the landscape officer is happy for this to be controlled by condition. The open character to the east of the site would be maintained by the omission of any built form. And the impact of the hard standing and new car parking would be minimised by the planting of new trees.

- 10.3 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. The two grass courts that would be lost on the new boarding house site would be mitigated by the proposed construction of a new grass court adjacent to the proposed new car parking and 7 additional hard courts, which are to be added to the other half of the all-weather pitch located to the north of the site.
- The existing grass courts adjacent to the parking area are not included on the plan 2652S100 as these courts are not used on a permanent basis and are not enclosed by any fencing. The proposal would result in an increase in the number of tennis court provision and as such the proposal would comply with policy LC1. The loss of the two tennis courts on the boarding site and the loss of the court on the proposed car parking site is considered to be acceptable subject to Sport Englands response being positive.
- 10.4 The design and finish of the building would minimise the visual impact the proposal would have on the surrounding area. The proposal therefore complies with ULP Policy GEN2.
- 10.5 The proposed building is located approximately 65m 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.
- 10.6 The proposed building would be located within the conservation area it would be seen in long views. Again, given the appropriate use of materials and the design of the building and size and scale of the building, the proposal would not detract from the setting of the conservation area. The proposal would therefore comply with ULP Policy ENV1 and policy guidance set out in the NPPF.

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

- 10.7 The proposed building is not located close to any residential properties not associated with the school. As such 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.

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

- 10.8 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 proposal would result in an improvement to car parking facilities of the whole school resulting in 30 new parking spaces. Residential Education

Establishments fall under class C2 within Essex County Council Highways Parking standards Supplementary Planning Guidance. The requirements are maximum standards and 1 space per full time equivalent staff is recommended.

As the new boarding house will replace old Follyfield, like for like, there will be no change to the vehicle movements generated by the proposal. In fact as the new boarding house would be away from the main road through Felsted it should ease the village traffic. Essex County Council Highways department have no objections to the proposal.

The building has been designed to be fully accessible with level access to main entrances. A lift to the main entrance gives access to all floors.

D Other Material Considerations

10.9 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.

10.10 The replacement boarding accommodation is only of a temporary nature and failure to replace the temporary building with a permanent building 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.

10.11 The proposed site is much closer to the existing dining facilities and would mean that the pupils would not have to cross the busy main road through Felsted. Parking adjacent to Braintree Road is an identified problem. The senior school principal teaching areas are also located to the north west of the school site.

10.12 The proposal includes forms of renewable energy in the form of an air source heat pump

10.13 In view of the content of the ecology report, and that the site of the new building is close mown grass, the proposal is unlikely to have any detrimental impact on biodiversity or protected species.

11.0 CONCLUSION

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

- A The proposal would not be detrimental to the character of the rural area or have a detrimental impact to the character and setting of the Conservation Area or adjacent Listed Building.
- 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 loss of open space and leisure facilities.

RECOMMENDATION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this decision.

REASON: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Prior to the erection of the development hereby approved (not including footings and foundations) full details of both hard and soft landscape works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. These details shall include [for example]:-
 - i. proposed finished levels or contours;
 - ii. means of enclosure;
 - iii. car parking layouts;
 - iv. other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas;
 - v. hard surfacing materials;
 - vi. minor artefacts and structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, etc.);
 - vii. proposed and existing functional services above and below ground (e.g. drainage power,
 - viii. communications cables, pipelines etc. indicating lines, manholes, supports.);
 - ix. retained historic landscape features and proposals for restoration, where relevant.Soft landscape works shall include [planting plans; written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment); schedules of plants, noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate; implementation programme].

REASON: The landscaping of this site is required in order to protect and enhance the existing visual character of the area and to reduce the visual and environmental impacts of the development hereby permitted, in accordance with Policies GEN2, GEN8, GEN7, ENV3 and ENV8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

3. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out before any part of the development is occupied or in accordance with the programme agreed with the local planning authority.

REASON: In the interests of the appearance of the site and area in accordance with Policies GEN2, GEN7, ENV3 and ENV8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

4. The roof to the development hereby permitted shall be clad with handmade clay plain tiles in accordance with samples that have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before development commences. Subsequently, the materials shall not be changed without the prior written consent of the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of preserving the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in accordance with policy ENV1 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005)

5. The windows hereby permitted shall be painted in a colour in accordance with details that have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before development commences. Subsequently, the materials shall not be changed without the prior written consent of the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of preserving the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in accordance with policy ENV1 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005)