

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

27 JANUARY 2022

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 21/1480/08 (RP)
APPLICANT: Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC
DEVELOPMENT: Installation of a demountable classroom unit.
LOCATION: YSGOL TY COCH, BUARTH-Y-CAPEL, YNYS-Y-BWL,
PONTYPRIDD, CF37 3PA
DATE REGISTERED: 03/11/2021
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Ynysybwl

RECOMMENDATION: Approve

REASONS: The introduction of a demountable classroom at the school would provide improved services for both students and staff.

The proposal would be consistent and compatible with the existing educational use of the site whilst the building itself is considered to be acceptable in terms of its siting, scale and design.

Whilst a number of objections have been received in relation to the proposal, it is not considered that the building would have an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area, the amenity and privacy of surrounding residential properties or upon highway safety in the vicinity of the site. The application would therefore comply with relevant policies of Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

- Three or more letters of objection have been received.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Full planning consent is sought for the erection of a demountable building within the grounds of Ysgol-Ty-Coch, Buarth-y-Capel, Ynysybwl.

The modular building would have an internal floorspace of 85.4m² and would contain one classroom, changing and washroom facilities and circulation space that would provide the school with additional facilities to support those students with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

The proposed building would be sited to the north-east of the main school at the site of an existing grassed area. The building would sit on ground sunk foundation pads so that level access is provided for students and staff from the school yard and access path from which it would be aligned.

The building would measure 12.5 metres in width by 7.4 meters in depth and would extend to an overall height of 3.1 metres, being a flat roofed structure.

With regard to its external finish, the wall and roof panels would be of a grey, powder coated galvanised steel construction. Two, powder coated white steel doors would be positioned on the southern elevation of the building, whilst white coloured, aluminium framed double-glazed windows would occupy the southern and east and west facing side elevations respectively.

As alluded to above, the school currently provides facilities for children with additional needs. The applicant has confirmed that the whole school site, as it currently stands, never takes more than 15 students on any given day and that it is proposed to increase student numbers by a maximum of 10 via the provision of the SEN friendly building.

The application is accompanied by the following:

- Design and Access Statement

SITE APPRAISAL

The application site relates to the former Glanffrwd Infants School that is located within the village of Ynysybwl. The school now operates as a satellite site to the main Ysgolty-Coch educational establishment located in Tonteg, Pontypridd and meets the needs of students aged 14-19 years with a primary need of autism.

The school building itself is of single storey, modern construction and is set within grounds measuring 0.678 hectares, within which are grassed areas and areas of tarmacadam providing playground space and a car park.

The school is accessed from Buarth-y-Capel to the north-west, with off street parking spaces located to the front of the site. The site is relatively flat in profile and is bound by the rear boundaries of residential properties in Leighton Rees Close to the south-east, whilst the estate road also serves properties at Buarth-y-Capel to the north and north-west of the site.

The site is enclosed by a bank of mature trees and hedging on its southern, northern and eastern elevations.

PLANNING HISTORY

None on record.

PUBLICITY

The application has been advertised by means of direct neighbour notification and through the erection of site notices.

A total of 4 letters of objection have been received from local residents in relation to the proposal and are summarised as follows:

- Noise pollution will be increased via the addition of extra facilities at the site;
- The word 'demountable' suggests that the building is not permanent and so a timescale will need to be specified for the length of time it is to be there;
- Whilst I appreciate the need for additional places for these young adults, it is proving to be extremely difficult for the older people living in close proximity to the school, to the point that some are having to leave their homes during the day to avoid the noise, screaming and shouting and also seek medical help for the stress;
- The building will be an eyesore;
- We already suffer from parking issues with the number of people working and visiting the premises. Any additional staff and visitors would place an unreasonable strain on the limited space available.

CONSULTATION

- Countryside, Ecology and Landscape – no objection.
- Flood Risk Management – no objection, subject to conditions.
- Highways and Transportation – no objection, subject to conditions.
- Ynysybwl Community Council – no objection.
- Public Health and Protection – no objection, subject to conditions.
- Welsh Water – no objection, subject to conditions and advisory notes.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The application site lies within the settlement boundary for Ynysybwl but is not allocated for any specific purpose.

Policy CS1 – sets out the criteria for development in the Northern Strategy Area.

Policy AW2 – supports development in sustainable locations and includes sites that are accessible by a range of sustainable transport modes and would not unacceptably conflict with surrounding uses.

Policy AW5 – sets out criteria for new development in relation to amenity and accessibility.

Policy AW6 – requires development to involve a high-quality design and to make a positive contribution to place making, including landscaping.

Policy AW10 – does not permit proposals where they would cause or result in a risk of unacceptable harm to health and/or local amenity.

Policy NSA12 – identifies the criteria for assessment of development proposals within and adjacent to settlement boundaries.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Design and Placemaking;
Access, Circulation and Parking

National Guidance

In the determination of planning applications regard should also be given to the requirements of national planning policy which are not duplicated in the Local Development Plan, particularly where national planning policy provides a more up to date and comprehensive policy on certain topics.

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (FW2040) and Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (PPW) sets out the Welsh Government's (WG) current position on planning policy. The document incorporates the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act into town and country planning and sets out the WG's policy on planning issues relevant to the determination of planning applications.

It is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the key principles and requirements for placemaking set out in PPW; and is also consistent with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's sustainable development principles through its contribution towards the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives of driving sustainable development and building healthier communities and better environments.

It is also considered the proposed development is compliant with FW2040, with the following policies being relevant to the development proposed:

- Policy 2 – Shaping Urban Growth – Sustainability/Placemaking

Other relevant policy guidance consulted:

PPW Technical Advice Note 11: Noise;
PPW Technical Advice Note 12: Design;
PPW Technical Advice Note 18: Transport;
Building Better Places: The Planning System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures: Placemaking and the Covid-19 recovery; and
Manual for Streets.

REASONS FOR REACHING THE RECOMMENDATION

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that, if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Furthermore, applications that are not in accordance with relevant policies in the plan should not be allowed, unless material considerations justify the grant of planning permission.

Main Issues:

Principle of the proposed development

The proposal relates to the siting of a demountable building within the grounds of a well-established educational facility, that is located within the defined settlement boundary of Ynysybwl. The building would facilitate a purpose-built, specialist classroom unit to accommodate pupils with additional educational needs. It is therefore considered that the proposal would make a productive use of the site that is consistent and compatible with the surrounding educational and residential land uses.

As such, the proposal would comply with the objectives of Policy AW2 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan and is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle. However, this would be subject to an assessment of the criteria set out below.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area

The proposed building is of a modest scale that would be suitable and acceptable within the context of the wider school site. It would be sited towards the north-east of the main school building and would utilise the existing vehicular and pedestrian accesses which are located within the northern portion of the site.

In terms of siting, the applicant has confirmed the proposed location for the demountable building was identified as it offered the most sensible approach in terms of logistics (handling / delivery of the proposed modular unit) and also in terms of connections to existing services (water / drainage). In addition, the need to have direct access from the proposed new setting onto the external yard area was identified as a must to suit the learning needs and wellbeing of the students expected to be sited there.

Furthermore, whilst the building would be visible from Buarth-y-Capel and also from the rear garden areas of properties at Leighton Rees Close, and would contribute very little to the appearance of the area, it is not considered the finishing materials proposed would be so visually intrusive or out of context with what is a modern school building. The mature trees and hedging that enclose the site would also lessen the visual impact of the development on the school and those residential properties which surround it.

As such, it is not considered that the classroom structure would form an overly prominent feature within the context of the school grounds or result in a detrimental impact upon the character of the immediate area.

However, it is acknowledged that demountable buildings, such as this proposal, are of a temporary appearance and provide a short-term solution to a permanent problem, i.e., the lack of teaching space at the site. On this basis, it is considered that the building should only form a temporary addition to the site and that this be secured by a temporary consent requiring its removal from the site. The applicant has agreed that a maximum timescale of 5 years is reasonable and would allow for any permanent accommodation solution to be achieved. Should a further period be required, a new planning application would be necessary, and the Council would consider that on its own merits.

The application is therefore considered to comply with Policies AW5 and AW6 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

Impact on residential amenity and privacy

Whilst the application site is located in an area where the majority of adjacent properties are residential in character, the demountable building would be sited over 38 metres from the nearest residential properties at Leighton Rees Close and would be located approximately 59 metres and 38 metres away from the nearest properties at Buarth-y-Capel to the west and north-west of the site respectively.

Consequently, notwithstanding the objections raised, it is not considered that the addition of the demountable classroom unit to the existing school site would compromise the amenity or privacy of the surrounding residents or represent an incompatible land use. Therefore, the application is considered to be acceptable in this regard.

Impact upon highway safety

The Council's Transportation Section have been notified of the proposals in order to provide comments on the suitability of the scheme with regard to highway safety and have made the following comments in relation to access and parking.

Access

The proposal is served off Buarth-y-Capel which has parking restrictions between 8:00 – 17:00 Monday to Friday. Buarth-y-Capel has restricted traffic flow due to the high-on-street parking demand and substandard carriageway width, causing vehicles to give way to oncoming traffic to the detriment of highway and pedestrian safety.

The proposal is located at the end of Buarth-y-Capel where the school entrance is likely used as a turning head to allow vehicles to access and egress Buarth-y Capel in a forward gear.

Parking

The proposal will provide 1 additional classroom which has a total floor area of approximately 85 square metres and has potential to increase student numbers by up to a maximum of 10 with 2 additional staff members in an area with high on-street parking demand. However, it is noted the applicant has confirmed all students would be transported to and from the school and that the former infants school housed many more pupils than the current school capacity.

In accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance relating to Access, Circulation & Parking (2011) the proposed additional classroom requires 2 off-street car parking spaces.

Consequently, a condition has been suggested for 2 spaces to be laid out within the site to accommodate for the additional parking required.

In light of the above highway's assessment, it is not considered the proposed development would have any adverse impact in regard to pedestrian or highway safety in the vicinity of the site.

Public Health

No objections have been received from the Council's Public Health and Protection Division. They did however suggest a number of conditions be attached to any consent in relation to construction noise, waste and dust.

Whilst these comments are appreciated, it is considered that construction noise, waste and dust matters can be more efficiently controlled by other legislation. Therefore, given the nature and scale of the proposed development, it is considered the conditions suggested in this respect are not necessary and an appropriate note highlighting them would be sufficient instead.

Other Issues

It is noted that no objections have been received from the Council's Flood Risk Management and Countryside, Landscape and Ecology Sections subject to standard conditions and advice.

Comments received from neighbouring residents

The concerns raised by the neighbouring residents are acknowledged and are appreciated

With regard to the comments received in relation to increased noise and disturbance, the building would be sited on a grassed area that is located adjacent to the main school yard. The application details that the building would be fitted with sound-bloc boarding and double-glazed windows and whilst it is acknowledged the increase in the school roll would have the potential for the school yard to be utilised on a more frequent basis, it is not considered this would intensify the use of the site to a significant degree, especially noting the site's historical use as an infant school. It is therefore not considered that the siting of the additional classroom facility in this location would give

rise to significantly greater levels of noise and disturbance than that which already occurs, or which has been previously experienced at the site.

Furthermore, no objection has been received from the Council's Public Health and Protection Department in this respect, nor has a noise impact assessment been requested.

In respect of the concern shown towards parking issues in and around the site, the applicant has confirmed that all students are transported to and from the school, whilst a condition has been suggested for a further 2 parking spaces to be laid out within the site prior to its beneficial use which would offset the additional staffing levels required for the unit.

To conclude, whilst the residents' concerns are understandable, the school is a long-established facility within the heart of a predominantly residential area and it is acknowledged that, as with most schools and educational facilities, it inevitably results in some degree of noise and disruption, with specific reference to traffic, parking and noise during drop-off/pick-up and break times.

Consequently, the provision of a purpose-built, specialist unit within the grounds of an existing school is not considered unreasonable or unacceptable.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Liability

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced in Rhondda Cynon Taf from 31 December 2014.

The application is for development of a kind that is not CIL liable under the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Conclusion

The introduction of a demountable classroom at the school would provide improved services for both students and staff. Furthermore, the new unit would have no undue impact upon the character and appearance of the site or the surrounding locality; the amenity and privacy of the surrounding neighbours; or upon highway safety in the vicinity of the site.

The application is therefore considered to comply with the relevant policies of the Local Development Plan and is recommended for approved, subject to the conditions detailed below.

RECOMMENDATION: Grant

1. The demountable building hereby approved shall be removed from the site and the land restored to its former condition on or before five years of the date of this decision.

Reason: To define and limit the extent of the permission and to protect the visual amenity of the site and surrounding area, in accordance with Policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drawing numbers and documents received by the Local Planning Authority on 3rd November 2021, unless otherwise to be approved and superseded by details required by any other condition attached to this consent:

Drawing No. 11502/P2/001 (General Arrangement)

Drawing No. 5230-B01 (Site Layout)

Reason: To ensure compliance with the approved plans and documents and to clearly define the scope of the permission.

3. No development shall commence until all relevant matters outlined on the attached Planning Requirements Relating to Flood Risk Management including full drainage details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall indicate how the development is to comply with the requirements of Section 8.3 of Technical Advice Note 15.

Reason: To ensure that drainage from the proposed development does not cause or exacerbate any adverse condition on the development site, adjoining properties, environment and existing infrastructure arising from inadequate drainage.

4. Notwithstanding the submitted plans, the development shall not be brought into beneficial use until space has been laid out within the site for 2 additional off-street parking spaces, in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that vehicles are parked off the highway, in the interests of highway safety and in accordance with Policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.