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## APPLICATION DETAILS

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**APPLICATION NO:** 3/2012/0110

**FULL APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:** **ERECTION OF THREE STOREY CLASSROOM BLOCK EXTENSION TO EXISTING NORTHERN ELEVATION**

**NAME OF APPLICANT:** **MR GERARD MORAN**

**ADDRESS:** ST JOHNS RC COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL WOODHOUSE LANE, BISHOP AUCKLAND, DL14 6JT

**ELECTORAL DIVISION:**

**CASE OFFICER:** **Paul Hopper**  
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## DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND PROPOSALS

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### The site

1. The school is located in a prominent position adjacent to Woodhouse Lane, Bishop Auckland and covers an area of 5.28 hectares including several playing fields, a sports hall and swimming pool. It has been extended and modernised since its original construction in 1946 and is characterised by a range of buildings of varying heights and styles.
2. The site is bounded to the north and south by residential dwellings along Woodhouse Lane and Waskerley Grove, and to the west by Bishop Auckland College. Bishop Barrington secondary school is located to the north east with a residential estate and allotments immediately to the east.
3. Boundary treatment comprises a mix of 1.8m high palisade steel fencing and hedgerows with some semi-mature tree planting along the northern boundary. Vehicular access is taken via two existing junctions onto Woodhouse Lane serving the main car park and a smaller visitor car park to the east. A pedestrian access is also situated in this location taking an access from Woodhouse Lane.

### The Proposal

4. The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of an existing single storey wing of the school located adjacent to Woodhouse Lane and the subsequent erection of a replacement three storey classroom extension. The proposal would involve remodelling the existing visitor car park and some incidental open space within the site.
5. The existing single storey wing currently incorporates a lecture theatre, store and kitchen and covers a total floor space of approximately 180m<sup>2</sup>.

6. The proposed replacement extension would be 18 metres wide by 27 metres long and have a dual pitched roof with a height of 12 metres to the ridgeline. It would also incorporate 6 ventilation chimneys increasing the overall height of the building to 13.5 metres.
7. Externally the proposed extension would be largely constructed from yellow buff brick walls with grey profiled aluminium panels to the roof. Windows and doors would be powder coated aluminium.
8. The extension would cover an area of 486m<sup>2</sup> and provide an additional floor space of 1,458m<sup>2</sup> spread over three floors. Offices, toilets and a sixth form library would occupy the ground floor with the first and second floors occupied by 10 additional classrooms and 2 seminar rooms. The building would incorporate a lift and two staircases located at the either ends of the building.
9. 3 temporary demountable classrooms, currently positioned on the school fields, would be removed as part of the proposal.
10. Some existing visitor parking spaces would be lost to accommodate the extension although 4 replacement parking spaces would be created within the site. These would occupy an area currently used as incidental green space immediately adjacent to the access onto Woodhouse Lane. No further changes are proposed to access arrangements at the school.
11. This planning application is being reported to Planning Committee because of the size of the development.

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## **PLANNING HISTORY**

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12. The school dates from around 1946 and has been altered and extended on several occasions since this time. More recent works include an extension to accommodate a science block, toilets and classrooms and a 3 storey link corridor in 2003, along with the erection of a sub station in 2011 and the installation of replacement windows and detached garage in 2012. Planning permission has also been granted for temporary demountable classroom accommodation which is currently located on the school playing field.

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## **PLANNING POLICY**

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### **NATIONAL POLICY**

#### **The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

13. On March 27th 2012 the Government published the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF). The framework is based on the policy of sustainable development and establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Three main dimensions to sustainable development are described as economic, social and environmental factors. The presumption is detailed as being a golden thread running through both the plan making and decision-taking process. This means that where local plans are absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory

status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved and proposed development that conflicts should be refused, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. The Regional Spatial Strategy remains part of the Development Plan until it is abolished by Order using powers within the Localism Act.

#### **REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY**

14. The North East of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS) July 2008, sets out the broad spatial development strategy for the North East region for the period of 2004 to 2021. The RSS sets out the region's housing provision and the priorities in economic development, retail growth, transport investment, the environment, minerals and waste treatment and disposal. Some policies have an end date of 2021 but the overall vision, strategy, and general policies will guide development over a longer timescale.
15. Policy 2 - Sustainable Development - requires new development proposals to meet the aim of promoting sustainable patterns of development.
16. Policy 8 - Protecting and Enhancing the Environment (which requires new development to maintain local distinctiveness).
17. Policy 38 – Sustainable Construction – planning proposals should seek to encourage sustainable design of new buildings and facilitate the generation of at least 10% of the Region's consumption of electricity from renewable sources.
18. Policy 39 - Renewable Energy Generation - planning proposals should, facilitate the generation of at least 10% of the Region's consumption of electricity from renewable sources.

#### **LOCAL PLAN POLICY:**

##### **Wear Valley District Local Plan**

19. *Policy GD1 General Development Criteria* requires that all new development within the District be designed and built to a high standard and should contribute to the quality and built environment of the surrounding area.
20. *Policy T1 General Transport Policy* requires that development fulfils Policy GD1 and provide adequate access to the developments, not exceed the capacity of the local road network,

*The above represents a summary of those policies considered most relevant in the Development Plan the full text, criteria, and justifications of each may be accessed at <http://www.cartoplus.co.uk/durham/text/00cont.htm>.*

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## **CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY RESPONSES**

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#### **STATUTORY RESPONSES:**

21. *The County Highway Authority* has no objections to the proposals.
22. *Northumbrian Water Limited* has confirmed that they have no comments to make on the application

#### **INTERNAL CONSULTEE RESPONSES:**

23. *The County Ecologist* is satisfied with the findings of the reasoned risk assessment for bats and that the potential impact is low. No objections are offered to the proposals.
24. *The County Landscape Officer* notes that the proposal locates a three storey building in a position where it would have maximum visual impact within close proximity to the road frontage along Woodhouse Lane and broadside to it. It is noted that part of the site is screened by existing semi mature trees and that some reshaping of the area immediately surrounding these trees is proposed. A reduction to the amount of visitor car parking is advised to safeguard the long term health of these trees which screen the site to some extent. No objections are offered subject to the submission and agreement of a Tree Constraints Plan prepared in accordance with British Standard 5837:2012 to ensure that any works do not damage these trees.
25. *The County Design and Conservation Officer* has no objections to the proposals subject to the inclusion of an appropriate planning condition requiring that sample details of external materials be submitted to and agreed by the Local Planning Authority.
26. *The County Tree Officer* has no objections to the proposals but notes that the group of existing trees to the north of the extension should be retained and protected from construction traffic both during demolition and construction phase. In this regard he advises the inclusion of a planning condition requiring that no construction or demolition work shall take place until all trees and hedges to be retained, as indicated on an approved tree protection plan are protected by the erection of fencing placed as indicated on the approved plan.

#### **PUBLIC RESPONSES:**

27. The application has been advertised in the local press, a site notice has been placed at the site and neighbour notification letters were sent to adjacent residents. One letter of objection has been received.
28. The objection raises concerns about the appearance of the building which is considered to be totally unsuitable for the site and neighbouring properties, as well as concerns about traffic conditions at the beginning and end of the school day, particularly that any further traffic generated at the site would have serious traffic consequences in terms of highway safety. Lastly it is noted that pupils currently gather in groups on both sides of the road along Woodhouse Lane during the school day to smoke and if the site is developed further this nuisance would only increase.

#### **APPLICANT'S STATEMENT:**

29. The Sixth form at the school has been very successful and pupil numbers have increased putting pressure on existing teaching accommodation. As a temporary measure the school has imported four mobile classrooms, but even with these, there is insufficient teaching space.
30. The proposal is to demolish the existing Lecture Theatre and to build a three storey extension in its place and this will provide eleven classrooms together with a sixth form library, increased area for the sixth form Cyber café, together with toilets, seminar rooms and offices.

## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT**

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31. In assessing the proposals against the requirements of the relevant guidance and development plan policies and having regard to all material planning considerations, including representations received, it is considered that the main planning issues in this instance relate to the Principle of Development, Design and Layout, Residential Amenity, Landscape, Access and Parking, and Ecology.

### **Principle of Development**

32. The proposed development would take place on an established school site within the settlement limits of Bishop Auckland and continued educational use is considered acceptable in principle in this location. Much of the new building work would occur on land currently occupied by a single storey building and would provide much needed additional classroom space at a school which is approaching maximum pupil capacity.
33. Existing temporary accommodation currently located on the school playing field would be removed upon occupation of the extension. These temporary buildings were originally installed onsite to accommodate rising pupil numbers while plans to extend the school on the adjacent Bishop Barrington site were progressed. With the cancellation of the Building Schools for the Future Initiative this is no longer planned and as a result the school now needs to develop a more permanent arrangement.

### **Design and Layout**

34. The existing school has been extended on a number of occasions since its original construction in 1946 and the site is characterised by a range of buildings of varying heights and styles. Recent extensions to the school have predominantly been finished in light buff brickwork and include the school's new main entrance to the northern elevation. Two three storey buildings also occupy the site and have a north-south linear arrangement. The proposed extension would be located in a prominent location immediately adjacent to the school's main entrance fronting onto Woodhouse Lane. For this reason it has been designed to compliment the external finishes of the modern extensions while also having regard to the height of the three storey elements already at the site. It is therefore considered that an extension of the scale and design proposed can be successfully accommodated at the site. The County Council's Design and Conservation Officer has no objections to the proposals.
35. The comments from local residents with regard to the suitability of design are noted, however it is considered that the extension would be an appropriate addition in terms of form, mass, scale and materials and would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the existing site and surrounding area.
36. The applicant has confirmed the intention to incorporate appropriate measures for sustainable energy generation as part of the scheme in accordance with the aims of the North East Regional Spatial Strategy and National Planning Policy Framework. The agreement and implementation of such measures can be satisfactorily ensured through the inclusion of appropriate planning condition.

## **Residential amenity**

37. The main amenity considerations arising from the proposed extension relate to residents of properties along Woodhouse Lane to the north of the site. The extension itself would be situated approximately 70 metres from these properties and while views of the development would be direct, they would be seen in the context of a well established school site. The appearance of the northern elevation would be broken by existing boundary planting and this would further reduce any potential overbearing impact upon those neighbouring properties. Properties to the east of the site, also at Woodhouse Lane, would be approximately 86 metres away and would not have any direct view of the extension, being partially screened by existing school buildings. The extension would therefore be appropriately located in relation to any nearby residential properties and there would be no adverse impact in terms of overshadowing or overbearing.

## **Access Parking and Landscape**

38. The proposal originally incorporated an extension to the existing visitor car park to provide 7 spaces including 1 disabled space. On the advice of the County Council's Landscape Architect the scheme has been amended to reduce the number of spaces from 7 to 4 in order to safeguard the long term health of several existing semi-mature trees which currently screen the site and would serve to reduce the visual impact of the extension post development. These trees could be further protected through the inclusion of an appropriate planning condition requiring the submission and agreement of a tree protection plan prior to the commencement of development. The County Councils Landscape Architect and Tree Officer have no objections to the proposal on this basis.

39. The removal of the 3 existing demountable classrooms would improve the overall visual appearance of the site and bring back into positive use part of the existing school playing field.

40. The objection from a local resident raises concern about traffic and highway safety, however, existing pupil and staff numbers would remain unchanged as part of the proposals and it is considered that sufficient parking exists elsewhere at the site to continue to provide adequate provision for both staff and visitors. No changes are proposed to the existing access arrangements and the County Councils Highways Engineer has no objections to the scheme.

## **Ecology**

41. A reasoned risk assessment for bats has been undertaken and submitted in support of the application which did not identify any signs of bats or roosting potential within the existing building and concluded that the proposed development would not have any impacts upon bats. The County Council's Ecologist is satisfied with the findings of the assessment and that the risk of impact on bats is likely to be low. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not have any adverse impact upon protected species and the Local Planning Authority can discharge its responsibilities with regards to the Habitat Directive.

## **Additional Matters**

42. The objection raised by a local resident in relation to nuisance caused by pupils congregating at the entrance is not a material planning consideration which can be

taken into account in this application and is a pupil management issue to be addressed by the school.

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## CONCLUSION

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43. The proposed development would provide much needed additional teaching space at a well established school site located within the settlement limits of Bishop Auckland, and would also facilitate the removal of existing temporary classroom accommodation.
44. From a detailed perspective it is considered that the extension and associated hard landscaping works could be satisfactorily accommodated at the site and would be of a design, form and scale that would relate acceptably to the existing site and surrounding area. The relationship of the extension to surrounding residential properties would be acceptable in amenity terms and the scheme would provide positive benefits in terms of the reinstatement of open space at the site. In addition, no harm would be caused to protected species and the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its highways impact.

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## RECOMMENDATION

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That the application be **APPROVED** subject to the following **conditions and reasons**.

### Conditions:

1. The development should not be begun later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

*Reason: Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 18(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.*

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in strict accordance with the following approved plans:

Plan Ref No.	Description	Date Received
	Site Location Plan	15/03/2012
903/3/8A	Part Proposed Site Plan	29/05/2012
900/2	Proposed Ground Floor Plan	15/03/2012
900/3A	Proposed Upper Floor and Roof Plans	30/03/2012
900/6	Proposed Elevations	15/03/2012

*Reason: In order to secure a satisfactory form of development in accordance with Policy GD1 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by Saved and Expired Policies September 2007.*

3. Prior to the commencement of development hereby approved the precise colours and details/samples of the external surfaces of the building shall be submitted to and

approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: In the interests of visual amenity in accordance with policy GD1 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by Saved and Expired Policies September 2007.*

4. Prior to the commencement of development a tree protection plan shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The tree protection plan shall include the erection of protective fencing comprising a vertical and horizontal framework of scaffolding, well braced to resist impacts, and supporting temporary welded mesh fencing panels or similar approved in accordance with BS.5837:2012.

*Reasons: In the interests of the visual amenity of the area and to comply with policy GD1 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by Saved and Expired Policies September 2007.*

5. Prior to occupation of the development hereby approved the 3 temporary demountable classrooms located on the existing school field adjacent to the main car park shall be permanently removed and the land thereafter restored to playing field.

*Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and in accordance with Policy GD1 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by Saved and Expired Policies September 2007.*

6. Prior to the commencement of the development a scheme to minimise energy consumption shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local planning authority. The scheme shall consist of energy from renewable or low carbon sources provided on-site, to a minimum level of at least 10% of the total energy demand from the development, or an equivalent scheme that minimises carbon emissions to an equal level through energy efficiency measures. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved scheme prior to first occupation and retained so in perpetuity.

*Reason: In the interests of sustainable construction and energy generation to comply with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework and Regional Spatial Strategy North East, Policy 38.*

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## **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

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45. The proposed development would involve the provision of replacement and enhanced facilities on part of a site that has been in use for this purpose for an extended period and is in principle acceptable for continued use on this basis. The proposed building and external works can be appropriately accommodated at the site in terms of size, siting, design and layout, would meet the needs of users and relate acceptably to the surrounding built and natural environment in visual, residential amenity, highway safety and landscape terms. The proposed development would therefore accord with Policies GD1 and T1 of the District of the Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by Saved and Expired Policies September 2007. With regards to protected species the development is considered to accord with the requirements of the Habitats Directive brought into effect through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.



46. This decision has been taken having regard to the policies and proposals of the North East of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS) July 2008 and the Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by Saved and Expired Policies September 2007 where it is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework.
47. The objections and concerns raised have been discussed and assessed within the report and officers consider the impacts of the revised development remain acceptable, in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan and NPPF.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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- Submitted Application Forms and Plans
- Wear Valley District Local Plan as amended by Saved and Expired Policies September 2007
- National Planning Policy Framework.
- Consultation Responses
- Public Consultation Responses
- Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East
- County Durham Plan Policy Direction Paper
- Assessing Development Proposals in a changing National Planning system - Council Policy Position Statement



**Planning Services**

**ERECTION OF THREE STOREY CLASSROOM BLOCK EXTENSION TO EXISTING NORTHERN ELEVATION, ST JOHNS RC COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL WOODHOUSE LANE, BISHOP AUCKLAND, DL14 6JT**

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**Comments**

**Date** June 2012

**Scale** 1:2500