

# Development Control Committee

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<b>Site:</b>	<b>The Wye Valley School New Road Bourne End Buckinghamshire SL8 5BW</b>
<b>Proposal:</b>	<b>Retention of temporary classroom unit</b>
<b>Applicant:</b>	<b>Buckinghamshire County Council</b>
<b>Reference:</b>	<b>CC/16/13</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>4 November 2013</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Senior Manager – Planning, Policy, Infrastructure and Economy</b>
<b>Contact officer:</b>	<b>Nick Bowden 01296 387886</b>
<b>Electoral divisions affected:</b>	<b>Wooburn and Bourne End</b>
<b>Local Members:</b>	<b>Michael Appleyard</b>
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>The Development Control Committee is invited to REFUSE application number CC/16/13 for the following reason:</b>

**1. Temporary classroom unit no. 542 has been in situ for a period in excess of 12 years and has remained as an unauthorised structure in breach of planning control for the preceding year. Since its construction, the Wye Valley School has benefitted from two permanent extensions in order to provide additional capacity to the school. The temporary classroom room unit has now been in place for a period of time that is well in excess of that originally envisaged and in light of the age of the building is unlikely to provide an adequate standard of teaching accommodation. No justification or evidence**



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has been submitted with the application to demonstrate that the temporary building remains fit for purpose and provides a suitable teaching environment. The building erodes an area of the schools playing field in close proximity to the main complex of buildings and is of a substandard design and appearance which would not normally be considered acceptable as a permanent feature. Moreover, no details have been provided which demonstrate that any alternative accommodation has been considered or explored or to satisfactorily explain why the “temporary” spike in pupil numbers identified and catered for in the relatively recently approved and constructed extensions has not been addressed or resolved. Accordingly the temporary classroom building is considered to provide a substandard level of accommodation, erode available outdoor play space and be of a poor design standard to the detriment of the appearance and environment of the school. The proposal therefore fails to comply with policies G3 and G8 of the Wycombe District Local Plan and policies CS15 and CS19 of the Wycombe District Core Strategy.

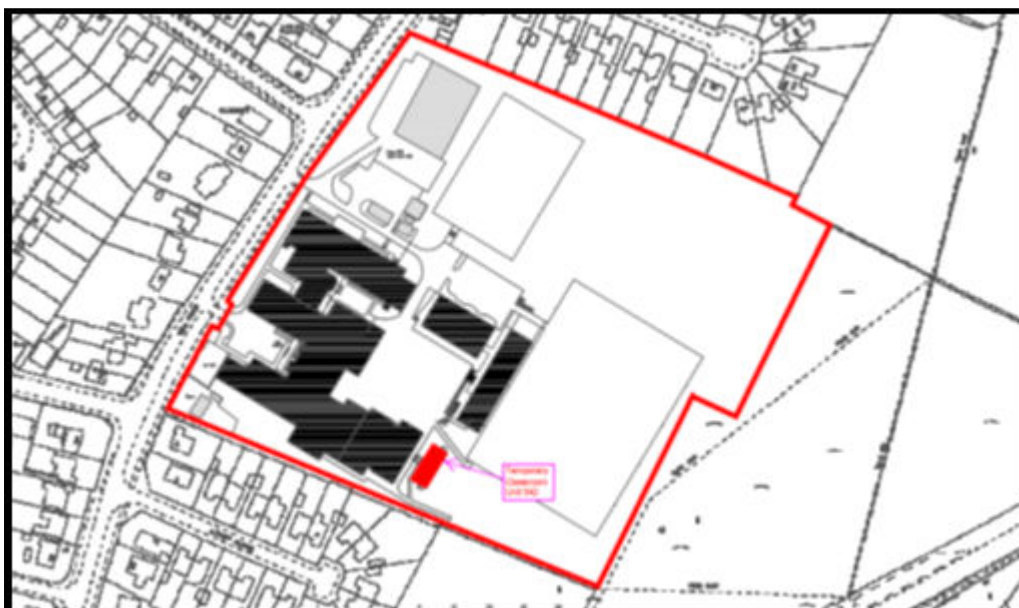
**Resources Appraisal:** None

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **Summary**

1. The County Council is in receipt of a planning application for the retention of an unauthorised temporary classroom unit at the Wye Valley School. The supporting statement to the application indicates that the unit is requested for a further three years. Consultation and neighbour notification was undertaken on 19 August 2013 to which no letters of representation were received. Determination of the application is required by 5 November 2013 in order to meet statutory time frames.

### **Site Description**



Site plan (not to scale)

2. The Wye Valley School is situated to the northeast of Bourne End railway station and takes access from New Road via the A4094 Cores End Road. Double temporary classroom unit 542 is located to the rear of the main school buildings and adjacent to the southwest boundary of the school grounds where it borders the gardens of the residential properties along Lower Ridge.

### **Site History**

3. The erection of temporary classroom unit number 542 was originally granted planning permission in 2001 under reference CC/25/01. Subsequent renewals were granted in 2004, 2007 and 2010 (CC/28/04, CC/29/07 and CC/23/10 respectively). The latter permission expired in August 2012. Planning permission CC/29/07 was initially recommended for refusal by Officers however, in light of evidence subsequently presented to the committee, members were minded to approve the application given the overriding educational need. Planning permission CC/23/10 was subsequently granted in 2010 in order to allow flexibility and surplus for the school. This permission was granted for a two year temporary period only as at that time it was indicated that the “temporary” spike in pupil numbers would have subsided in addition to the operational life of the building having reached the end of its lifespan.
4. A new accommodation block was erected at the school in 2008, which included six general teaching classrooms, food technology classroom, drama studio, library and dining room extension following the grant of planning permissions CC/42/05 and CC/12/09.

### **Proposal**

5. The application seeks to retain an existing temporary classroom unit which is located to the southeast of the main complex of established buildings. The building has dimensions of 18 metres in width, 7.2 metres in depth with a height to eaves of 2.4 metres and accommodates two teaching classrooms. The building was due for removal in August 2012 however has remained in situ since this time as an unauthorised structure.

### **Planning Policy**

6. Wycombe District Core Strategy policies CS3, CS15, CS16 and CS19.  
Wycombe District Local Plan saved policies G3, G8, G10, G11, G12, G15, G26, T2 and T16.  
Wycombe District Community Facilities Supplementary Planning Document  
Wycombe District Interim Guidance on the application of Parking Standards  
Buckinghamshire County Council Temporary Classroom Protocol April 2008  
Circular 11/95: The use of conditions in planning permissions  
National Planning Policy Framework

### **View of the District Council**

7. The [Wycombe] District Council would like to again draw the County's attention to the guidance given in circular [1]1/95 (para. 109) which states that “it is undesirable to impose a condition requiring the demolition after a stated period of a building that is clearly intended to be permanent”. In view of this advice it will be necessary as part of any permission granted, to ensure that the school or Local Education Authority has

made some progress towards finding a more permanent solution or to consider granting of a full permission. Given that this is the last temporary structure on the site no objection is raised to a further temporary consent on the understanding that a permanent solution will be sought in the next three years.

### **Consultations**

8. The **Highway Authority** raises no objections to the proposal.
9. No response has been received from either the **Ward member** or **Parish Council**.

### **Representations**

10. No submissions have been received in response to the Council's notification of the application.

### **Principle**

11. The application site is located within the settlement boundary of Bourne End and on the site of the long established Wye Valley School. Accordingly there is no objection in principle to the provision of a temporary building and its use for educational purposes subject to compliance with relevant Development Plan policies.

### **General history and background**

12. The existing temporary classroom building (no. 542) was originally granted a three year planning permission in 2001 and formed one of six temporary classroom buildings which were located on the site over the following decade. These buildings were all originally sited at the school in order to accommodate general increases in pupil numbers. The remaining five buildings have since been removed following the completion of extensions to the school to provide eight additional classrooms, library and dining room extension.
13. The most recent temporary permission for the this particular unit was in 2010 where approval was granted for an additional two year period mindful that at the time, it was shown that the building would be fit for purpose until the academic year ending July 2013. In addition it was shown that a spike in pupil numbers would have settled in the intervening period.
14. In 2006/07, it was indicated the school was operating with 825 (actual) pupils and had a capacity for 890. The pupil projections submitted with the 2010 application indicated a peak of 792 (actual) pupils in 2007/08 declining to 703 (projected) for the current 2013/14 with an overall school capacity of around 750 pupils. Conversely the present projections show the actual figures to have been maintained at around 790 pupils and that this trend is set to continue until 2017/18, notwithstanding that the current projections indicate that the actual school capacity has increased to around 850. The following table (table 1) summarises the pupil numbers given for the current and three preceding applications to retain the building each academic year. Full details are attached as appendix 1 to this agenda item.

**Table 1:** Actual (in bold) and projected pupil numbers by planning application reference number, school capacity and statistical analysis.

Pupil numbers	CC/28/04 Projected/ <b>actual</b>	CC/29/07 Projected/ <b>actual</b>	CC/23/10 Projected/ <b>actual</b>	CC/16/13 Projected/ <b>actual</b>
2000/01	<b>749</b>	~	~	~
2001/02	<b>794</b>	~	~	~
2002/03	<b>796</b>	~	~	~
2003/04	792	<b>751</b>	~	~
2004/05	781	<b>762</b>	~	~
2005/06	757	<b>781</b>	<b>781</b>	~
2006/07	739	792	<b>825</b>	~
2007/08	717	787	<b>792</b>	~
2008/09	702	795	790	~
2009/10	~	798	778	<b>790</b>
2010/11	~	792	756	<b>814</b>
2011/12	~	787	740	<b>787</b>
2012/13	~	~	719	795
2013/14	~	~	703	789
2014/15	~	~	~	784
2015/16	~	~	~	783
2016/17	~	~	~	780
2017/18	~	~	~	787
Stated school capacity	890	890	750	840
Average of actual number of pupils each year: 789				
Median of actual number of pupils each year: 790				
Mode of actual number of pupils each year: 790				

15. In 2010 it was also indicated that the building would cease its operational lifespan in the preceding academic year which, in part, informed the committee's decision to allow the building to remain for only this period. The current application now claims that the building has a general 30 year lifespan and would, presumably, be fit for purpose until 2031.
16. The extensions to the building which were constructed in 2008 were clearly intended to accommodate additional pupil numbers that were existing prior to its construction. Indeed, the extensions were granted permission on the condition that all the temporary classroom buildings were removed, albeit that this building escaped such treatment due to a "temporary bulge" in pupil numbers, notwithstanding that the school has maintained roughly this number of pupils consistently since 2001.
17. The building is presently unauthorised as no attempt was made to regularise the status of the building at the conclusion of its temporary permission and previously stated operational lifespan. The building has thus been in breach of planning control for the entirety of the preceding academic year.
18. The present application is broadly inconsistent with previously stated claims and is largely unsubstantiated. Moreover, it is apparent that given the inconsistent nature of information provided and clear on-going evidence that the pupil numbers are not a temporary "bulge or "spike", as demonstrated in the table above.

19. Overall it appears that the school had around 750 pupils at the start of the century, which rose to 790 pupils. During this time a total of eight additional teaching spaces together with a new library and dining room extension have been constructed to cater for an additional 40 pupils and, in any case, the school appears to have excess capacity to cater for notable increases in pupil numbers (ie. 2006/07 and 2010/11 with 825 and 814 respectively). The requirement for the continued retention of temporary classroom unit no. 542 therefore seems unjustified.

### **Design, appearance and visual impact**

20. The existing building is located well to the rear of the school and well screened from the nearby public footpath which abuts the southern boundary of the site. As such, it is not readily visible or apparent from adjoining land or the streetscape. The building nevertheless remains as part of the complex of buildings at the school, to which it makes a negligible contribution. Indeed, the building is a tired looking structure which contributes nothing to the general setting of the school.

21. As a permanent feature, the general design and appearance of the building would not form an acceptable contribution to an educational environment. Whilst the building has always been alleged to be a temporary building, the amount of time it has been in existence, in addition to the now projected timescale for its removal, it is quite clear that the unit is established as a permanent feature with no measures in place to secure its ultimate removal.

22. Government guidance does not support on-going renewals of temporary planning permissions and this unit has taken on the life of a permanent structure. Accordingly the assessment of the building must consider whether the County Planning Authority would be satisfied with this building as a permanent feature. Its appearance and design standard are not considered appropriate to a learning environment for young people as a permanent fixture.

### **Standard of accommodation**

23. Historical documents submitted in support of applications made in 2007 and 2010 suggest that the building would have reached its operational lifespan in July 2013. However the current application claims that the building now remains suitable for many years to come without any demonstration or justification for this.

24. Generally, temporary classroom buildings have been regarded as having a lifespan of around 12-15 years. Therefore this particular unit's ability to double this time frame is both inconsistent with previously stated times and an operational anomaly. No supporting detail has been submitted with this application to support the stated claims and it is not considered that sufficient information has been provided which would demonstrate that the building can continue to provide an adequate level of teaching accommodation for young people.

### **Neighbours amenity**

25. The building is well removed from neighbouring houses, well screened and clearly an ancillary element to the remainder of the school. Accordingly it is not considered to result in a loss of amenity for the occupants of nearby residential properties.

### **Flood risk and drainage**

26. The building is not located within flood zones 2 or 3 and in any case it is set above natural ground level as a consequence of its design. The building is not plumber in to mains sewerage or water supply and as such there are no issues relating to drainage.

### **Parking, access and travel requirements**

27. The temporary classroom unit is, as noted, an established feature of the school which does not appear to suffer from a substandard provision of vehicle parking. No objections have previously been expressed on the grounds of substandard parking provision to proposals to retain this building. The highway engineer raises no objections to access arrangements to the site. As an existing structure within the school site which has a travel plan and no proposed increase in floor area, an updated travel plan for the school is not required.

### **Positive and pro-active engagement**

28. In reaching this recommendation, Officers for the Local Planning Authority have attempted to work with the applicant in a positive and pro-active manner based on seeking solutions to matters arising in relation to dealing with the proposed development, in accordance with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (as amended). The application which is presented to this committee was initially registered as an invalid submission having been submitted with no pre-application discussion. The applicant was invited on several occasions to provide information to refute the conclusions reached in this report, but despite such requests, this information was not forthcoming.

### **Conclusions**

29. Whilst ordinarily, it would generally be considered fair to allow the building to remain until the end of this academic year, the building has been an unauthorised structure for in excess of one year already. With no substantiated reason for the buildings retention and in light of ample information that indicates the school has spare capacity; it is considered that the building is not required. It is not seen that there is any dis-benefit in requiring its removal forthwith.
30. The development is considered to be contrary to the provisions of Wycombe District Core Strategy policy CS19 and Local Plan policies G3 and G8 in that it is of a substandard design, inadequate for educational purposes and it is has not been demonstrated that there is any overriding need to provide additional accommodation at the school.
31. With regard to the removal of the building, it would be open to the District Council to issue an enforcement notice, however it is to be hoped that this would be undertaken voluntarily.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Supporting documentation to application CC/16/13  
Consultation responses dated September 2013  
Planning applications CC/28/04, CC/42/05, CC/29/07 and CC/23/10  
Wycombe District Core Strategy policies CS3, CS15, CS16 and CS19.

Wycombe District Local Plan saved policies G3, G8, G10, G11, G12, G15, G26, T2 and T16.

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