

ITEM 1

Application Reference	DC/075720
Location:	Gatley Primary School Hawthorn Road Gatley Cheadle SK8 4NB
Proposal:	Extension and internal alterations, with alterations to fenestrations of existing primary school
Type Of Application:	Full Application
Registration Date:	3rd February 2020
Expiry Date:	13 th November 2020 (Extension of Time Agreed)
Case Officer:	Rebecca Whitney
Applicant:	The Board Of Governors, Gatley Primary School
Agent:	Lancaster Maloney

DELEGATION/COMMITTEE STATUS

Four or more objections have been received, contrary to the Case Officer's recommendation.

The application was also called up by Councillor Greenhalgh.

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The application proposes extensions and alterations to the existing building. The proposed works would comprise the following:

- a. Rear single storey extension to provide three new classrooms (built on existing playground surface).
- b. Partial courtyard infill and internal remodelling on the northwest corner of the building to provide two further classrooms.
- c. Alterations to fenestrations on north, west and (to a lesser extent) south elevations in conjunction with the above.
- d. Extending the existing playground surface to replace the area lost due to the footprint of the new extension.

The proposed extensions and alterations would facilitate an increase in the school's pupil admissions from two-form to three-form entry, increasing pupil numbers by 210 (from 420 to 630) over the coming academic years.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The school is bound by Hawthorn Road to the north, a public footpath to the east, playing fields to the south and residential development and allotments to the west. There are two vehicular accesses to the site on Hawthorn Road and a designated pedestrian access is situated in the middle of the two vehicular access points. A second pedestrian entrance provides a connection between the school and the existing public footpath which connects Hawthorn Road with Beech Avenue and Foxland Road.

The school building is located within a Predominantly Residential Area as shown on the UDP Proposals Map, whilst the playground and playing fields are largely within an area of designated Open Space and Green Chain. Areas to the east and south of the site are located within Flood Zone 2.

POLICY BACKGROUND

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (“PCPA 2004”) requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan includes-

- Policies set out in the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review adopted 31st May 2006 which have been saved by direction under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; &
- Policies set out in the Stockport Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document adopted 17th March 2011.

Saved policies of the SUDP Review

NE3.1 Protection and Enhancement of Green Chains

EP1.7 Development and Flood Risk

EP1.10 Aircraft Noise

UOS1.3 Protection of Local Open Space

L1.1 Land for Active Recreation

CTF1.1 Development of Community Services and Facilities

CDH1.2 Non Residential Development in Predominantly Residential Areas

CDH1.9 Community Facilities In Predominantly Residential Areas

LDF Core Strategy/Development Management policies

SD-6 Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change

AS-2 Improving Indoor Sports, Community and Education Facilities and their Accessibility

SIE-1 Quality Places

SIE-3 Protecting, Safeguarding and Enhancing the Environment

CS9 Transport and Development

CS10 An Effective and Sustainable Transport Network

T-1 Transport and Development

T-2 Parking in Developments

T-3 Safety and Capacity on the Highway Network

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance does not form part of the Statutory Development Plan; nevertheless it does provide non-statutory Council approved guidance that is a material consideration when determining planning applications.

SMBC ‘Sustainable Transport’ SPD

National Planning Policy Framework

A Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on 19th February 2019 replaced the previous NPPF (originally issued 2012 & revised 2018). The NPPF has not altered the fundamental legal requirement under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations (such as the NPPF) indicate otherwise.

The NPPF representing the governments up-to-date planning policy which should be taken into account in assessing applications. If decision takers choose not to follow the NPPF, then clear and convincing reasons for doing so are needed.

N.B. In respect of decision-taking the revised NPPF constitutes a “material consideration”.

Para.1 *“The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied”.*

Para.2 *“Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.*

Para.7 *“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”.*

Para.8 *“Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):*

- a) an economic objective*
- b) a social objective*
- c) an environmental objective”*

Para.11 *“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.*

For decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. 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”.

Para.12 *“.....Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed”.*

Para.38 *“Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way..... Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”.*

Para.47 *“Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations*

indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing”.

Para 97 “Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless: a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use”.

Para.124 “The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”.

Para.130 “Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development”.

Para.153 states “In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should expect new development to:

a) comply with any development plan policies on local requirements for decentralised energy supply unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, that this is not feasible or viable; and

b) take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption”.

Para.213 “existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of this Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)”.

Planning Practice Guidance

The Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is a web-based resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place (launched in March 2014) and coincided with the cancelling of the majority of Government Circulars which had previously given guidance on many aspects of planning.

NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS

In relation to the application as originally submitted:-

86 letters have been received objecting to the application, with the grounds for objection summarised as follows:-

- a. Impacts upon the quality of education provided by the school.
- b. Increase in the number of children traveling from outside of the area by car, resulting in traffic and pollution.

- c. Traffic management and highway safety.
- d. Car parking.
- e. Measures to address congestion and parking have not been successful.
- f. Concerns raised regarding highways matters such as a one way system or parking restrictions.
- g. Existing “walking bus” scheme underused.
- h. Staggered start and finish times cause issues for parents.
- i. Impacts on the environment and air quality.
- j. Queries regarding internal arrangement.
- k. Lack of spaces such as halls and a library.
- l. Loss of playground space.
- m. Inadequate number of toilets, play space, dining space and space within classrooms.
- n. Inadequate circulation space causing concerns regarding evacuation in the event of an emergency.
- o. Anti-social behaviour.
- p. Impact upon the character of the school.
- q. Extent and nature of public consultation by the school.
- r. Queries whether the school could meet future legal disability access arrangements.
- s. Requests floor plans for the whole school (rather than the affected areas). Queries the need for expansion and the impact on other schools.
- t. Queries the motivation for the proposal.
- u. Use of public funds.

53 letters have been received supporting the application, with the grounds for support summarised as follows:-

- a. High quality of education provided by the school.
- b. The expansion is necessary and the school is able to expand.
- c. Social benefits for children.
- d. Choice for parents.
- e. More children can be educated at a high ranking school.
- f. More children can be educated within close proximity or walking distance of their homes.
- g. Measures to address congestion and parking have been successful.

Further to the amendment of the application to include a revised planning statement, transport assessment and travel plan:-

52 letters have been received objecting to the application on similar grounds to those listed above.

2 letters have been received supporting the application on similar grounds as those listed above.

1 neutral letter has been received which comments on the use of the William Scholes Playing Fields car park.

CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Highways Engineer

Comments dated 21st October 2020 (following the submission of a revised planning statement, transport assessment and travel plan, and discussion with the Applicant's Transport Consultant):

The application is for extension and alterations to the primary school to facilitate the provision of an increased number of classrooms and some ancillary space. The purpose behind the alterations and extension is to enable the school to expand from

a 2 form entry to 3 form entry, with the increase in role from 420 pupils to 630 pupils. As such my review of the proposal is based upon expanding school capacity and the consequent impact on the operation and safety of the surrounding highway of an additional form entry, that being 210 additional pupils attending the school.

I note that the school is already operating at a level which is over capacity with 30 extra pupils receiving education, a total now of 450 pupils. In addition there is nursery provision at 40 part time places with split attendance morning and afternoon.

The submission is accompanied by a transport assessment and travel plan, the scope of the assessment having been agreed to ensure full and due consideration is given to all the highway and transportation issues that arise with school proposals.

The school is bound by Hawthorn Road to the north, a public footpath to the east, playing fields to the south and residential development and allotments to the west. There are two vehicular accesses to the site on Hawthorn Road and a designated pedestrian access is situated in the middle of the two vehicular access points. A second pedestrian entrance provides a connection between the school and the existing public footpath which connects Hawthorn Road with Beech Avenue and Foxland Road. The school has 29 car parking spaces, 20 spaces in the eastern car park designated for use by staff and 9 spaces at the western car park available to parents as a drop-off and pick-up location for the nursery. The school currently provides 19 cycle parking spaces plus overspill cycle parking within an internal quadrangle.

The school operates staggered start and finish times for operational purposes and to spread the load in terms of vehicle movements on Hawthorn Road and surrounding streets at the start and end of the School day. Older Key Stage 2 pupils arrive at 8.40am and leave at 3.10am and the remaining KS2 pupils arrive at 8.50am and leave at 3.30pm. KS1 and Early Years start their day at 9.00am and finish at 3.25pm. The nursery's morning session is 9.00am to 11.45am and the afternoon session is from 12.30pm to 3.30pm. This arrangement would continue should expansion be permitted. In total, there are 56 staff members employed on site of which 35 work full-time and 21 work part-time.

The school provides a range of extended day childcare provision in the form of pre-school and after-school extracurricular activity clubs and on-site and off-site childcare provision which are run as separate organisations. The school operates a breakfast club and an afterschool club with currently, on average, 26 children attending the breakfast club each day and 32 children attending the after school provision. In addition, the local community centre which is located approximately 300m from the school also operates a breakfast and afterschool club with on average 30 children attending the before school care and 32 children attending the after school care. All children who attend are walked to and from school by adults who work at the community centre.

A number of before and after school extracurricular activities are also held at the school and data shows that that on an average day 20 pupils attend the before school extra-curricular clubs and 50 pupils attend the after-school clubs. These arrangements assist in reducing the impact of traffic and parking demand during the traditional drop off and pick up periods with a less concentrated pattern of movements at the school than might otherwise be the case. These arrangements would continue in the event of any expansion with additional capacity provided for the increase in pupil numbers and likely increase in demand.

To supplement on-site staff parking and facilitate remote drop-off/pick-up by parents the school uses William Scholes Playing Fields car park accessed from Beech Avenue and Gatley Hill car park for a chaperone service. These facilities enable parents who travel by car to drop off children, who are then chaperoned to school by staff or alternatively parents can park up and walk children to and from the school. At the end of the school day, children using the chaperone service are escorted back to the car parks for parents to collect. This service is growing in popularity with at least 65 families using this service over a school week. The school has also engaged with Bethany Church to utilise its car park which has 25 space and to establish a third site for a chaperone service. An informal renewable annual agreement would be in place in this respect. This initiative of off-site locations for parental parking helps offset the impacts of vehicle parking around the school during drop off and pick up periods. These sites have spare capacity for increased usage which could and indeed should be promoted by the school.

Expansion of the school and creation of a three form entry will inevitably give rise to additional traffic movements, increased demand for parking space and consequent issues arising from kerbside parking and a higher number of pedestrian movements along routes to and from the school. These matters are considered within the context of the proposal.

To establish background travel habits the school undertakes staff and pupil travel surveys on a periodic basis and the most recent survey shows the home postcodes and mode of transport that staff and pupils use to travel to and from school. The data shows that 45% of staff (25) live within a 2km catchment of the school and 67% of pupils (299) live within a 1km catchment of the school. The surveys also reveals that 33 staff travel by car, 21 walk and 2 travel by train. In terms of pupils travel modes the survey shows that on a daily basis 38.5% of pupils (173) travel to school and 28.5% (128) travel from school by private car and that 12.7% (58) pupils use the off-site parking arrangements in the morning and 4.6% (21) use the facilities in the afternoon. I note that afternoon usage is significantly less than the morning drop off which is a bit of a concern and probably needs more active promotion. In addition, 48.5% of pupils (218) walk or cycle to school and 66.9% (301) walk or cycle from school and 2 travel by train.

Furthermore, the survey shows that 54% of the current pupil role have at least one sibling who also attends the school. From this it is reasonable to consider that siblings will travel together and for those travelling by car 54% will travel with to and from school with at least one other pupil in the same vehicle, with the average car occupancy equating to 1.54 pupils per vehicle. There is no reason to consider that the sibling factor would depart materially from this sort of ratio in years to come and this factor should carry weight in predicting future modal splits and vehicle movements.

To establish background traffic levels and review any highway junction operational issues a number of reviews and queue length surveys were undertaken. The junctions reviewed are the primary entrances to the estate, Birch Road/Church Road, Elm Road/Church Road and Gatley Road/Cambridge Road. Reviews were undertaken for the periods 0815-0930 and 1500-1630 and show that these key junctions operate sufficiently with average queues of between 3 and 6 vehicles during the busiest periods. During the AM period the results showed a maximum queue of 12 vehicles were recorded between 08:40 and 08:45 along the northerly approach to the Gatley Road/Cambridge Road junction although this queue was only temporary in nature and soon reduced. In the PM period a maximum queue of 8 vehicles was recorded at the same junction although again this queue was only

temporary in nature with queues soon reducing back to typical levels. Queuing at this junction is reasonably expected as it is located on a major road and being a priority crossroads with drivers having to manage movement of up to 3 streams of traffic.

The other two junctions reviewed did not show and extra ordinary queuing issues with average queues of three vehicles and peaks of four or five vehicles. In conclusion the data does not indicate any significant pre-existing highway capacity issues or material concerns pertaining to the school and the short term impacts are typical of school operations and locations within primarily residential areas. Having undertaken my own observations at these junctions I concur with the findings and cannot see reason or justification to question the validity of the reviews undertaken.

As agreed within scoping discussions the submission includes parking beat surveys undertaken on a typical day between 0815-0930 and 1500-1615 across a study area which covers parts of the network likely to be subjected to parent kerbside parking within a 300m walk catchment the school. The survey covered Gatley Green, Birch Road, Acres Road, Hawthorn Road, Cedar Road, Burnside Road and Elm Road and initially established a kerbside capacity for a total of 171 vehicles, based upon kerb lengths and typical parking practices.

The surveys showed that during the AM peak period, there was spare capacity for 59 cars to park on the local highway network, recorded between 0845 and 0900 during the typical busiest drop-off period immediately before the school doors open for all pupils. In the PM peak period there is spare parking capacity of 63 spaces recorded between 1530 and 1545, typically the busiest pick-up period. The surveys show there is sufficient kerbside parking within the locality to meet the existing demands of the school and I have to acknowledge that the take up of kerbside spaces is generally only for a short term period, albeit parents do park and wait for longer during the pick-up period. Whilst I cannot reasonably question capacity I am aware from observation that incidences of indiscriminate parking arises, parking that inhibits junction operation and crossing points is evident, driveways have been observed to be temporarily obstructed by parked vehicles and parking occurs on footways. These are incidences that cause concern and will need review and address should any school expansion be permitted and I will discuss further later.

The proposal for creating 5 additional classrooms would enable expansion of the school from a two form entry to three form entry. I note that the school is already operating over capacity with 450 pupils in attendance and whilst it could be argued that this is not permitted it is nevertheless happening and establishes a base position. It is probably reasonable to presume that this excess of pupils would not be excluded from education when the time arrives for moving up through year groups and that the existing building facilities would be adequate for providing their continued education. That being the case the proposed expansion would be an additional 180 pupils to attend the school phased over a six year period with incremental increases of 30 pupils each year until full capacity at 630 pupils is reached. Whether the first increase in pupil number would occur in September 2021 or mid-year 2021 is unclear noting the initial proposal, pre the impact of the pandemic, was for the first increase to be September 2020. Nevertheless, appraisal of the whether the site is suitable for expansion is simply to be based upon full capacity being reached and ensuring that the highway network has sufficient capacity and is essentially safe for the consequent impact of a school operating at a revised full capacity.

It is understood that site access arrangements would not be changed, expansion would not give rise to any additional servicing demands and no additional car parking

within the site would be provided. Cycle parking would be increased, ultimately a matter capable of conditional control and staff numbers would increase by 11 full time positions, presumably incrementally as year groups expand each year. I also note that nursery provision will remain at 40 places.

With respect to staff car parking I have some reservations with there being no intention to increase the number of staff bays within the site to meet the likely increase in demand. From interpolation of the staff travel modal split data it is a reasonable likelihood that the parking demand would increase to a figure of 8 spaces above that which is available on site. I would support increased provision of parking within the site, there would be no breach of Council standards and this should ensure overspill parking is prevented. Nevertheless I have to note that no changes are proposed and I have to be minded that long stay parking is available off site within a relatively close proximity to the site. This leads me to conclude that additional staff demands can be accommodated off site and it would be unreasonable that vehicles would be left on street for a long period in any location other than fully in respect of traffic regulation orders. As such I feel it would be unreasonable and unsustainable to raise objection on the grounds that overspill staff parking is likely to cause highway operational and safety concerns.

In order to assess the traffic impact of expanding the school intake it can be reasonably assumed that the travel patterns of future pupils and staff will reflect the travel patterns of existing pupils and staff. The conclusion of the travel surveys and splits to be utilised in assessment are that 38.5% and 28.5% of pupils travel to and from school by car respectively and that 58.3% of staff travel by car. Furthermore, the sibling factor influences the assessment going forward and it is reasonable to accept, having been evidenced, that a ratio of 54% of pupils will travel with to and from school with at least one other pupil in the same vehicle, with the average car occupancy equating to 1.54 pupils per each car.

With respect to pupil trips by car, an increase of 180 places on the school role therefore reasonably generates an increase of 45 car trips in the morning period and 33 trips in the afternoon. Staff trips would increase by 6 movements during each period. As has been discussed earlier a number of pupils attend before and after school clubs and extra-curricular activity and this leads to trips to and from school outside of the traditional peak drop off and pick up periods. At present 17% of the current pupils attend clubs before school and 25% attend after-school clubs on average each day. Application of these percentages to the forecast increase in pupil car trips shows approximately 8 car trips associated with school drop-offs and pickups respectively will occur outside the peak periods of the school day.

The conclusion from this is that the proposed expansion of 180 places will give rise to an additional 37 one-way car trips during the main drop-off period and 25 one-way car trips immediately afterschool. The staggered start and finish times of the school may further influence the concentration of car trips and although it is unlikely that this will have a significant effect on predicted increases it may nevertheless assist in distributing these trips over longer periods of time, particularly during the afternoon pick up period when departures are more spaced.

With regard to staff, an additional 12 two-way car trips are forecast as a result of the proposed expansion (6 arrivals and 6 departures). This is not considered to be a concern noting that staff arrive at the school well in advance of the commencement of the school day and depart either earlier (part-time staff) or much later than the finish of the school day. As such, pupil and staff car trips will be highly unlikely to coincide.

The parking surveys undertaken within a 300m walking catchment of the school show space capacity of 59 kerbside spaces in the morning peak period and 63 spaces in the afternoon peak. This leads me to concur with the view and conclude that there is sufficient kerbside available within a reasonable walking distance of the site for parents to park whilst dropping off and/or picking up pupils.

Expansion of the school is forecast to give rise to an additional 37 one-way/74 two-way pupil car trips during the main drop-off period and 25 one-way/50 two-way pupil car trips in the main pick-up period and these trips need assessing in terms of impact on the local highway network. As has been considered and shown, the network and terminal junctions operates satisfactorily. Accepting that the school operated staggered start and finish times to the day it is reasonable to consider that the additional car trips associated with the expansion of the school would be spread across a 15 minute period in the morning (0835-0850) and across a 35-minute (1505-1540) period in the afternoon. A two-way total of 74 trips in the morning equates to typically 5 two-way movements per minute in the morning drop-off period, 50 trips two-way in the afternoon equates to typically 1 movement per minute in the afternoon pick-up period. This volume of additional traffic would be distributed across the three key-junctions that have been considered and at worst would be two additional movements through any junction during the period of one minute. Whilst these junctions do experience some queuing, the delay to journey times is negligible this would not be materially affected by the imposition of a small increase in traffic. I conclude it would be unreasonable and extremely difficult to justify an objection on the grounds of unacceptable highway impact and capacity issues given the short time periods involved during a week day and such influences only being during school term time.

A lot of focus has been on consideration of the impact of additional vehicular traffic movements on the local highway network and the consequent and likely parking demands for parents. Whilst acknowledging there is kerbside capacity for additional parking and welcoming the schools establishment of sites for park and stride and chaperone purposes, I have to be minded that short term parking around schools and this site being not really any different, does on occasion cause difficulties. Notwithstanding the best endeavours that are being made by the school I am aware and have observed bad parking behaviour, with vehicles being stopped indiscriminately in breach of traffic regulation orders, parking that inhibits junction operation and pedestrian crossing movements, driveways temporarily obstructed and parking on footways. Although these are not unusual practices around schools where parents try and get as close as possible and are in a hurry to drop off and pick children, this is clearly unacceptable and can cause operational difficulties and safety risk for all users of the highway network. With the best will it is not unreasonable to anticipate that undesirable practice will continue and indeed could get worse with an increase in the school role and more associated car trips. These concerns can be better managed by the school in communication and this is a matter that could be incorporated within the school's travel plan going forward. There is however also the need for measures to further dissuade such practices and this involves a review and amendment of traffic orders around the school and the provision and improvement of facilities for those walking and cycling to school.

The school travel survey data shows that 48.5% of pupils are currently walking or cycling to school and 66.9% walk or cycle home from school. Active travel planning will endeavour to see this modal split increase over time and inevitably any increase in the role will introduce more movements of persons on foot or cycle in and around the area. It is essential that the safe movement of vulnerable road users is prioritised

and enhancement of infrastructure with better routes will also help encourage an increase in sustainable travel choices and consequent reduction in car orientated trips.

The NPPF is clear in paragraphs 108 and 109 that opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes should be taken up, safe and suitable access to a site should be achieved for all modes of travel and there should not be an unacceptable impact on highway safety. Council Policy is also based upon such approach and assurance that the impact and design of development is considered and demonstrated to be acceptable.

In these respects I have reviewed, alongside the Road Safety Team, the highway infrastructure and traffic regulation orders around and within close proximity of the school. There are a number of deficiencies that need addressing to ensure that the school can expand in a manner that will not give rise to further highway operational difficulties and safety concerns plus ensuring the safest possible linkages exist to the school for pupils undertaking the journey on foot or cycle.

The school needs to undertake to cover the cost for the Council to progress and implement the measures (listed below), this being essential in mitigating for increased traffic, addressing operational and safety concerns on the highway and enabling for expansion of the school role. Agreement would also lead me to a conclusion of supporting the application. The cost of the measures is estimated to be £30,000, this should be committed to under the terms of a S106 Agreement.

Measures necessary:

- a. The provision of two new 'School Warning' signs, on approaches to the school crossing patrol on Church Road;
- b. Replacement of the existing peak time no waiting restrictions outside the shops off Church Road with no waiting at any time restrictions;
- c. Introduction of no loading at times shown (08:00-09:30 and 14:30-16:00) restrictions on Church Road outside the Prince of Wales public house;
- d. Proposed extension to the existing no waiting at times shown (08:30-09:00 and 15:15-16:30) restriction on Hawthorn Road up to Birch Road and amendment of the times covered by the restriction to 08:00-09:30 and 14:30-16:00;
- e. Replacement of the existing school sign on Hawthorn Road, close to the junction with Burnside Road;
- f. Tightening of junction radii at the Hawthorn Road/Burnside Road/Cedar Road junction with the building out of footways to reduce crossing distances and provision of dropped kerbs and tactile paving at crossing points.
- g. Give-way line markings at the junction of Hawthorn Road / Cedar Road.

In discussion with the applicant I have expressed some reservations about the longevity of the sites that are established for the park and stride and chaperone arrangements that the school has established. There is a risk that any arrangement could cease although there does appear to be reasonable assurances that this will not be the case. The playing fields site is Council owned and there is an annual licence in place. The Gatley Hill car park is a public area so there is sufficient comfort that this could remain for use. The school is also looking to formalise an agreement with the nearby Bethany Church site for the use of its car park for parents to drop off and collect children. Agreements, informal or otherwise, are welcomed and although they do not give any assurance of longevity I do feel that intentions are good, the risks are small and there is a strong willingness from the school to ensure these arrangements remain in place and are actively promoted. It seems reasonable that

the Council can exercise some form of control via a travel plan that will need to be formally approved under conditional control, within which there would need to be a commitment that the school will continue with such off site arrangements, will investigate alternative and complimentary arrangements and should circumstances change will ensure suitable alternative arrangements are put in place without delay. On this basis I feel there would be sufficient comfort and opportunity to ensure that these essential measures for reducing the concentration of vehicles around the school will remain in place and I would require the travel plan, which would be a matter for conditional control, to respect such.

In conclusion, I acknowledge that this proposal, as tends to be the case for any school expansion, is sensitive and difficult to evaluate in terms of ensuring it doesn't adversely and unacceptably affect the lives of residents and businesses in the surrounding area. I have to acknowledge that the school travel impacts are short term, concentrated on two periods at either end of a school day and not for an entire calendar year. The review shows that there is spare capacity kerbside for an increase in parental parking and that the consequent traffic movement will not give rise to operating conditions that are demonstrably unacceptable and indeed severe in terms of impact. It is essential that the applicant commits to addressing the deficiencies identified in the area. This will ensure that consequent parking is suitably managed and that better and safer connectivity exists for those walking and cycling to and from school and mitigates for the predicted increase in all form of travel that will arise.

One final comment is that I am unaware of any intention to provide community use of the facility beyond the normal education service offered. There is no reference to any community use within the submission and the impact of such has not been considered so I reasonably presume this is not being sought. It may be necessary for a condition to exercise control over this.

Initial comments dated 26th February 2020:

Whilst I note that a Transport Assessment (TA) and Travel Plan accompany the application these documents are not in a form that enable a robust assessment of the proposed school expansion and do not provide an accurate and truly representative picture of the existing school use of the site.

An accurate assessment of current travel demands and the impact of parking associated with the drop off and pick up periods needs to be undertaken and the scope of this work must be agreed in advance with the Council, it being expected that revision to the 2016 scope will be necessary to reflect the extended school day that I note is now in operation. Junction queue surveys are required with potentially capacity assessments being required for the same junctions. A detailed commentary on the findings is required along with an up to date review of accident records. Furthermore, a review of parking regulations and existing highway infrastructure is required.

The submitted TA contains survey data and observational reports from 2016 and there are discrepancies and concern that arise from using dated survey information and not refreshing any submission. For example the TA addendum refers to two off-site parking arrangements being in place whereas the Travel Plan only advises one such site is established. Parking beat survey data and commentary reports have not been fully refreshed to reflect the current position and I also note and am disappointed as it appears that car usage has increased by 7% in the last three years, which does not suggest sustainable travel initiatives or school travel plan promotion is proving as effective as it should be. A commentary and explanation on

reduced numbers at breakfast club and some after school events is necessary as reduced attendance does not benefit the school by assisting to reduce traffic impact.

It is probably the case that further measures are required to better manage car travel and reduce the impact on the surrounding highway network and I consider a comprehensive review is necessary. A submission that is not accurate and perhaps does not benefit or truly represent the current travel demands and highway impact of the existing school would not be suitable or enable a properly informed assessment of expansion of the school to be undertaken.

I have insufficient information to enable an informed and accurate assessment of the proposal to be undertaken and this leads me to a position where I cannot offer support at this stage to the proposed expansion. The submission is effectively flawed and does not have regard to accepted practices for Transport Assessment preparation. I feel the applicant has failed to demonstrate that expanding the school will not cause unacceptable risk of harm to highway operational and safety conditions and also that the potential mitigation measures will provide a meaningful and beneficial reduction in risk and ensure the increase in school role will not exacerbate existing difficult operating conditions on the highway. I would urge a thorough review of the submission and preparation of proper supporting documents, otherwise I would have no option other than to recommend refusal. Also I reiterate the need for a scoping exercise to be undertaken and agreed in advance of any survey work being undertaken to ensure a robust assessment.

Environmental Health Officer (Noise)

Comments dated 4th June 2020 (following the submission of a revised Planning Statement):

I have assessed the above application for the extension to the school, I do not have any objections to the above development.

Initial comments dated 21st February 2020:

I have assessed the above application and I do not object to the development on grounds of noise.

There is already a school in situ, therefore the extra 30 pupils would not increase noise levels unreasonably.

We may need a noise report to make sure that the internal noise levels within the proposed classrooms aids learning, especially given the location of the school under the flight path and near to major road networks. Details of recommended noise levels for classrooms are contained within 'BB93: acoustic design of schools'.

Lead Local Flood Authority

Comments dated 11th March 2020 (following the submission of a Flood Risk Assessment):

The LLFA has no comments at this stage. A condition to require the submission of a surface water drainage scheme prior to the commencement of development.

Initial comments dated 5th February 2020:

The site is located in Flood Zones 2 and has a medium surface water risk. The closest watercourse is located circa 50m away from the site and the site has a water table level of < 3m below ground level. There are no recorded historical flood events relevant to the development within the vicinity.

The site is to have bespoke opportunities for infiltration SuDS. The applicant should strictly follow and demonstrate the drainage hierarchy (infiltration, watercourse, SW

sewer and then combined sewer) with every stage looking to manage the surface water on site as much as possible.

An assessment of SuDS for the site would also be required. Should infiltration not be viable then an assessment of the pre development run-off rates should be provided and the proposed rates reduced by a minimum of 50%.

A Flood Risk Assessment should be undertaken for this site.

We currently recommend refusal.

Education Service

Comments dated 21st October 2020:

Our overall conclusion is that the demand for school places in the Kingsway SCAP area is stable and the birth rate does not start to increase until 2030 based on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) projections.

An expansion of Gatley Primary School is not justified as there are sufficient places in the area to meet current need. An expansion is likely lead to pupils from surrounding schools to apply for places at Gatley and therefore putting neighbouring schools at risk as they will not be full. This has funding implications and puts the viability of neighbouring schools at risk.

Sport England

Comments dated 15th May 2020:

Thank you for your further consultation on this application dated 14 May 2020 with reference to the revised travel plan, revised transport assessment and revised planning statement. Sport England has no comments to make on the revised information because it has no impact on the playing field.

Initial comments dated 3rd March 2020:

It is understood that the proposal prejudices the use, or leads to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field or has been used as a playing field in the last five years, as defined in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (Statutory Instrument 2015 No. 595). The consultation with Sport England is therefore a statutory requirement.

Sport England has considered the application in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (particularly Para 97) and against its own Playing Fields Policy, which states:

'Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of:

- all or any part of a playing field, or
- land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or
- land allocated for use as a playing field

unless, in the judgement of Sport England, the development as a whole meets with one or more of five specific exceptions.'

Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and Guidance document can be viewed via the below link:

https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport#playing_fields_policy

Having assessed the application, Sport England is satisfied that the proposed development meets Exception 3 of our playing fields policy, in that:
'The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

- reduce the size of any playing pitch
- result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
- reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
- result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; or
- prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.'

This being the case, Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to this application.

ANALYSIS

Principle of Development

Non-Residential Development in a Predominantly Residential Area

Saved policy CDH1.2 confirms that non residential development and community facilities will be permitted in Predominantly Residential Areas where it can be accommodated without harm to residential amenity, where there is adequate parking provision and no harm to highway safety.

The proposed extensions and alterations, taken alone, would result in minimal impacts upon amenity and highway safety by virtue of the scale, siting and nature of the proposed works. However it should be noted that the proposed works would enable the school to increase pupil numbers from a two-form entry to a three-form entry. The impacts of this in terms of highway safety, parking and residential amenity are assessed later in this report.

Open Space

A large part of the application site is designated as Local Open Space on the UDP Proposals Map. The school buildings and the siting of the proposed rear extension are outside of the designated Open Space and are instead located within a Predominantly Residential Area. The extension would be built on an existing area of hardstanding used as a playground, and a new area of permeable hardstanding is proposed to replace this. The new hardstanding would be sited at the transition from a residential area to open space within an area designated as Local Open Space, and would measure 281sqm.

UDP Review policy UOS1.3 confirms that:-

“Within areas of Local Open Space development will not be permitted unless:

- (i) It is clearly needed in connection with the outdoor recreational use of the land or is otherwise appropriate to the maintenance of the open nature of the land, and it would clearly enhance the overall quality of Local Open Space provision in the area”*

In response to this policy position Members are advised that whilst the proposed area of hardstanding would be positioned on designated open space, the hardstanding is proposed in order to ensure the ongoing provision of adequate play space which can reasonably be considered to be required in connection with the outdoor recreational use of the land and will enhance the overall quality of the local open space provision in the area through the enhancement of the recreational use of the land. It is reiterated that the proposed extension to the

building would be sited outside of the area designated as open space. On this basis the proposed development is considered to be in acceptable in relation to Saved UDP Policy UOS1.3.

Saved UDP Policy L1.1 also confirms that development of land used as playing fields will not be permitted unless one of a number of criteria apply, one of which being that the proposed development only affects land which is incapable of forming a playing pitch (or part of one) and results in the retention and enhancement of pitches. Sport England has assessed the proposal and its comments are set out in full under the “Consultee Responses” section of this report. In particular, Sport England concludes that the proposed development accords with its policy as it meets Exception 3 of its playing fields policy, in that the proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and meets the relevant criteria. On this basis, the proposed development is considered compliant with Saved UDP Policy L1.1.

Schools Development

The Education Service has provided comments on the proposed development, and its comments are set out in full under the “Consultee Responses” section of this report. It is concluded that an expansion of Gatley Primary School is not justified as there are sufficient places in the area to meet current need. An expansion is likely lead to pupils from surrounding schools to apply for places at Gatley and therefore putting neighbouring schools at risk as they will not be full. This has funding implications and puts the viability of neighbouring schools at risk. It is noted that a number of neighbour representations queried the need for the proposed expansion and the impact upon other nearby schools. This concern has been noted, and has been considered against the relevant planning policies.

A number of neighbour representations have been received which support the application and reasons for this include the availability of choice for parents, and the ability to educate more children at a high ranking school and within close proximity or walking distance to their homes.

Saved UDP Policy AS-2 seeks the provision of a comprehensive network of childcare provision, infant and primary schools. The supporting text states that the purpose of the policy is to facilitate improvements to the quality of indoor sports, education and community facilities (including health care facilities) and their accessibility.

Paragraph 94 of the NPPF states that it is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications.

It is also noted that there is not a requirement for the need for the development to be demonstrated in order to ensure compliance with planning policy.

Further, Members are advised that the Planning Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development (August 2011), is a material consideration in the assessment of this application, and states the following:

- a. “There should be a presumption in favour of the development of state-funded schools, as expressed in the National Planning Policy Framework.

- b. Local authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling the development of state-funded schools in their planning decisions. The Secretary of State will attach significant weight to the need to establish and develop state-funded schools when determining applications and appeals that come before him for decision.
- c. Local authorities should make full use of their planning powers to support state-funded schools applications. This should include engaging in pre-application discussions with promoters to foster a collaborative approach to applications and, where necessary, the use of planning obligations to help to mitigate adverse impacts and help deliver development that has a positive impact on the community.
- d. Local authorities should only impose conditions that clearly and demonstrably meet the tests set out in Circular 11/95. Planning conditions should only be those absolutely necessary to making the development acceptable in planning terms.
- e. Local authorities should ensure that the process for submitting and determining state-funded schools' applications is as streamlined as possible, and in particular be proportionate in the information sought from applicants. For instance, in the case of free schools, authorities may choose to use the information already contained in the free school provider's application to the Department for Education to help limit additional information requirements.
- f. A refusal of any application for a state-funded school, or the imposition of conditions, will have to be clearly justified by the local planning authority. Given the strong policy support for improving state education, the Secretary of State will be minded to consider such a refusal or imposition of conditions to be unreasonable conduct, unless it is supported by clear and cogent evidence.
- g. Appeals against any refusals of planning permission for state-funded schools should be treated as a priority. Where permission is refused and an appeal made, the Secretary of State will prioritise the resolution of such appeals as a matter of urgency in line with the priority the Government places on state education.
- h. Where a local planning authority refuses planning permission for a state-funded school, the Secretary of State will consider carefully whether to recover for his own determination appeals against the refusal of planning permission."

The full Statement is appended to this report for reference (Appendix 1).

The Statement sets out the Government's policy position in planning for schools development, and is clear in its approach which weighs heavily in favour of the proposed development.

For the reasons stated above, the proposed development is considered acceptable in principle subject to all other material planning considerations, as assessed below.

Highway Safety

The Council's Highway Engineer has assessed the proposal and their comments are set out in full under the "Consultee Responses" section of this report. It is noted that many neighbour representations raise concerns regarding traffic and congestion, car parking and highway safety.

Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Having taken all of the submitted information into account, as well as their own observations, the Highways Engineer concludes that there is spare kerbside parking capacity to accommodate an increase in parental parking and that the consequent traffic movements will not give rise to operating conditions that are demonstrably unacceptable and indeed severe in terms of impact.

As set out above, conditions are recommended, and Developer Contributions are required in order to address deficiencies in the local highway infrastructure and traffic regulation order around and within close proximity to the school. The Applicant has agreed to the principle of providing the measures that have been requested via a S106 Agreement.

In the absence of an objection from the Highways Engineer, and subject to the recommended conditions and legal agreement, the proposed development is considered acceptable in relation to car parking and highway safety.

A number of neighbour representations comment on highways matters such as a potential one way system or parking restrictions in the future. These do not form a part of the proposal or this assessment.

Flood Risk

The Lead Local Flood Authority has assessed the proposal and its comments are set out in full under the "Consultee Responses" section of this report.

The site is partially located in Flood Zone 2 and has a medium surface water risk. Following the submission of a Flood Risk Assessment and discussion between the Applicant and the Flood Risk Engineer, it is considered reasonable and necessary to attach a condition to any permission granted to require the submission of a surface water drainage scheme prior to the commencement of development in order to ensure compliance with Core Strategy Policy SD-6, Paragraph 163 the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance.

Impact on Amenity

The proposed extensions and alterations are not considered to result in adverse impacts in terms of overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impacts.

As a result of the proposed development, the pupil numbers would increase, which would give rise to potential impacts in terms of noise and disturbance both within the site and impacting upon the neighbouring residential properties. The Environmental Health Officer for Noise has assessed the proposal and raises no objections. Their comments are set out in full under the "Consultee Responses" section of this report.

The outdoor areas of the site used for play are relatively well separated from the nearest residential properties, and given the existing use of the site as a primary school, the proposed development is not considered to result in a level of noise and disturbance beyond that as existing and that which may be expected.

The impact of construction works in terms of noise and disturbance are likely to be minimal given the limited nature and small scale of the development proposed. In any event the hours at which the construction works take place can be controlled through Environmental Health legislation.

Due to the location of the site underneath the Manchester Airport flight path and close to major road networks, it is recommended that a condition is attached to require the submission of a noise report to ensure that the internal noise levels within the classrooms are suitable in order to aid learning, in accordance with BB93: acoustic design of schools, Saved UDP Policy EP1.10 and Core Strategy Policies SIE-1 and SIE-3.

A number of representations raise concerns regarding the impact of the proposed development upon air quality as a result of additional pupils requiring additional vehicle movements. The site is not located within or immediately adjacent to an Air Quality Management Area, and it is noted that measures are to be employed to discourage unnecessary car travel and waiting vehicles.

It is noted that a number of objections make reference to antisocial behaviour. If antisocial behaviour arises then this should be addressed through liaison with the Police.

Other Matters

Green Chain

The areas of the wider school site designated as Local Open Space are designated as Green Chain. Whilst this designation is not necessarily a barrier to development, it is important that the functionality of the Green Chain as a wildlife corridor is not compromised. The proposed works, by virtue of their scale, siting and nature, are considered unlikely to result in a significant adverse impact upon the Green Chain. An informative can be attached to any permission granted to remind the applicant of the legal requirements to report any presence of protected species during the course of the construction works and to seek advice.

Internal Arrangements

A large number of objections have been received which raise concerns regarding the internal arrangement, and in particular objections are raised in relation to there being an inadequate number of toilets, and a lack of spaces such as halls, library, dining space and space within classrooms. The internal arrangement is not a matter for planning control as this would not ordinarily require planning permission.

Neighbour representations have also requested that floor plans are provided for the whole school, whereas the submitted plans show only a partial plan view to include the affected areas. This is considered to be sufficient for the determination of this application.

It is noted that the Department for Education has guidance in place which may address these concerns to an extent. The submitted Planning Statement also

confirms that the proposed classrooms would comply with the area requirements of Building Bulletin 103 and Department for Education guidance.

Similarly, queries are raised regarding the amount of circulation space and the implications for evacuation in the event of an emergency, and whether the proposed development could meet future disability access requirements. As above, these matters are not assessed through the planning application process as they relate to the internal arrangement, however they may be addressed to some extent through other processes such as Building Regulations.

Representations

A large number of representations have been received which raise objections on grounds which are not material planning considerations such as the motivation for the expansion and the use of public funds, as well as concerns regarding the character of the school and the quality of the education provided in the future. These matters cannot be afforded significant weight in this planning assessment.

Similarly, a large number of representations have been received which express support for the proposal on grounds which are not material planning considerations such as the quality of the education provided by the school and the benefits of the proposal in terms of convenience. These matters cannot be afforded significant weight in this planning assessment.

Representations have been received which comments on the extent and nature of the public consultation by the school. Community engagement is encouraged, however any consultation undertaken outside of the Council's processes cannot be commented on in detail. It should be noted that the Applicant has submitted a Statement of Community Involvement in support of the application.

In relation to consultations undertaken by the Council, neighbouring residents and interested parties have been consulted by letter, and a site notice was displayed at the site.

SUMMARY

Overall, it is considered that the proposed extensions and alterations would constitute a sustainable form of development. The proposed development would not result in adverse impacts upon the character and appearance of the site or the wider area, and would not unduly impact upon residential amenity.

The increase in pupil numbers as a result of the proposed expansion has been assessed in terms of highway safety, parking, residential amenity and other material planning considerations, and has not been found to result in significant harm such that it would warrant refusal of the application.

In conclusion, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in relation to the relevant Saved UDP and Core Strategy DPD policies and does not conflict with the policies of the NPPF. As such, the application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the application is APPROVED, subject to conditions and a Section 106 legal agreement.