

Agenda Item No. 8B

Committee: **Regulatory
Planning Committee**

Date: **21 February 2007**

Report by: **Director of Transport and Environment**

Proposal: **New 6 classroom base and ancillary accommodation for new special needs unit. Works also included - dedicated entrance area, external breakout spaces and 25 car parking places.**

Site Address: **Beacon Community College, Beeches Site, North Beeches Road Crowborough.**

Applicant: **Director of Children's Services**

Application No. **WD/2545/CC**

Key Issues: **(i) Siting and design**
 (ii) Traffic impact
 (iii) Waste Minimisation Statement

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. To grant planning permission subject to conditions**
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CONSIDERATION BY DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

1. The Site and Surroundings

1.1. Beacon Community College caters for approximately 1800 students and is located within a residential area of north-eastern Crowborough. Part of the campus, known as the Beeches site is between Crowborough Hill and North Beeches Road and accommodates about 1400 students, and another part is to the north-east, approached off Green Lane.

1.2. The College lies within a substantial site where the ground falls gently to the north-east. It is bisected diagonally by a public footpath with the Beeches site to the south and Green Lane to the north. The Beeches site is arranged with the main school buildings occupying the southern part with playing fields to the north. The public footpath is bounded by 1.8 metres high wire mesh fencing allowing views into and out of the site between dense hedging along the boundaries.

1.3. The College has predominantly 1950s and 1960s buildings comprising various linked, multi storey buildings with a mix of pitched and flat roofs, brown brick faced walls and generally, blue painted window frames; there are more recent extensions in the modern style adjacent to the footpath. The main vehicular access and exit is from North Beeches Road and there is also pedestrian access directly onto Crowborough Hill.

1.4. The focus of the application is within the existing building framework of Beacon College and an area to the rear elevation that comprises a steel framed library with glass roof and brick walls, walkways, low brick planters and paved courtyard areas with grassed banks.

2. The Proposal

2.1 The proposal is to re-locate Grove Park Special School, a school for children with learning difficulties, currently on Church Road, to Beacon College. Part of Grove Park will be relocated at the Beeches site and the remainder at Green Lane which is currently being extended to enable this. This proposal is to provide a new teaching facility for Grove Park children, aged 11-16 years, at the Beeches site.

2.2 According to the applicant over the last 15 years the number of students at Beacon College has declined significantly and the Sixth Form at Beacon has already been relocated to the Green Lane site. Each school would retain their own status but gain new facilities and resources. It is also claimed that by pooling resources and sharing expertise, pupils at both schools will benefit from a wider, more flexible curriculum. A Design and Access Statement has been submitted in support of the proposed development.

2.3 The proposal will provide six classroom bases, multi-sensory and therapy rooms, external break out spaces to the rear of the development allowing external access to the existing court and other external areas, a central learning resource area, ablution facilities, ancillary accommodation for teaching staff and an enclosed ramp linkway (providing access to other school areas within Beacon). Grove Park School will have a dedicated, separate ramped entrance and parking facilities for staff. The proposal principally involves the internal refurbishment of existing classrooms and covered areas. In addition to this a new main front entrance, single storey extension and seating area (providing a sensory garden) will be constructed within the existing buildings. The new entrance providing a secure reception area, disabled WC, small waiting area and administrative facilities and incorporates a ramp with a tensile canopy above, together with new cedar timber cladding, lettering and logo to an existing end elevation.

2.4 This proposal will result in 30 additional members of staff and 70 pupils at Beeches site and provision of 25 additional car parking spaces. The Grove Park unit will comprise 6 classrooms with 1 teacher and 2 teaching assistants (18) together with Head Teacher and 3 administrative staff (4). A number of peripatetic specialist teaching and health staff will be using 4 therapy/group rooms for whole days and some for specific appointments. The 25 additional car parking spaces comprise 17 at the main site entrance and the remaining 8 (including one disabled space) adjacent to the new Grove Park reception. The additional spaces increasing the number at the Beeches site to 77.

2.5 The development provides 618m² of additional floor area but includes replacement of a 3 sided, tiered courtyard and a library and replacement with new infill blocks. Internally there would be modification of the existing structure to accommodate the new centrally-based teaching hub for Grove Park.

2.6 The new infill blocks and main entrance extension will be single storey and be faced with a combination of chestnut cladding and white render. They will have grey single-ply membrane roofs and mid grey (RAL 7045) aluminium framed windows and doors, a palette of materials used on recent extensions elsewhere on campus.

3. Site History

- 3.1. 2005 – Granted – WD/2439/CC – 2 storey sports changing facility with changing / showers and WC facilities on both floors (phase 1).
- 3.2. 2001 – Granted – WD/2041/CC – Erection of single storey gymnasium adjacent to sports hall.
- 3.3. 2001 – Withdrawn – WD/2023/CC – Erection of single storey building for fitness room.
- 3.4. 1999 – Granted – WD/1909/CC – Demolition of geography block to form car park.
- 3.5. 1997 – Granted – WD/1849/CC – Development of sports facilities at Beeches site and minor extensions at Green Lane site. All weather pitch with 16m high floodlighting and low level floodlighting. New accommodation from Crowborough Hill and parking (Closure of existing access in North Beeches Road).
- 3.6. 1998 – Granted – WD/1888/CC – New sports facilities to include 2 number four court sports halls, table tennis centre, rock climbing centre, fitness suite, changing rooms, amenity area and new school reception.
- 3.7. 1995 – Granted – WD/1627/CC – Construction of an artificial grass pitch with 3m high galvanised chain link perimeter fence on existing college playing fields. No lighting to be provided.

4. Consultations and Representations

- 4.1. Wealden District Council: Raise no objections but state: a) parking alongside residential boundaries adjoining the main entrance would result in unacceptable noise and disturbance and possibly pollution from fumes; b) a condition requiring a contaminated land survey should be attached with remedial measures adopted should contamination be found.
- 4.2. Crowborough Town Council: Recommend approval of the proposal.
- 4.3. Sussex Police Community Safety Department: Raise no objection.
- 4.4. Southern Water Services Ltd: Recommends approval but states no public water surface sewers are available to serve the development and an alternative means of draining surface water is required. Also recommended is an informative for the submission of a formal application for connection to the public sewerage system and a condition requesting surface water disposal details be submitted prior to development.
- 4.5. Highway Authority: Comments that: a) adjacent residential roads are already congested at the beginning and end of the school day and with both legally and illegally parked vehicles causing significant problems; the proposed increase in vehicular traffic using these roads is not desirable; b) the location of proposed parking spaces could be hazardous due to vehicular manoeuvring in and out of spaces, but that as they are already used the formalisation of these spaces should aid quicker manoeuvrability; and c) the continued use of the existing “in” access for a short period of time is acceptable when considering the long term future of the site,

when the existing access from North Beeches Road will be permanently closed off and the new access is from Crowborough Hill.

4.6. Local Representations: One letter from a local resident raising concern over traffic impact, specifically that the sheer volume of traffic and numbers of students do not mix and that at times the roads are gridlocked.

5. The Development Plan policies of relevance to this decision are:

5.1. East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011: Policies S1 (sustainability); EN1 (environment) TR3 (f) (access for people with mobility concerns); W10 (construction waste); TR16 (parking standards for development); EN15 (noise control).

5.2. East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Waste Local Plan 2006: Policy WLP11 (reduction, re-use, recycle).

5.3. Wealden Local Plan Adopted 1998: Policies EN27 (scale and design), TR3 (transport impact)

5.4. Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan 2005: BE1 (design and impact on amenities); BE2 (access for people with mobility concerns), TR2 (transport requirements)

6. Considerations

Siting and design

6.1. Policy S1 (b) and (f) of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan establishes criteria that development must meet to minimise impact on the environment and protect and enhance the attractiveness and individual character of urban and rural area, whilst the focus of Policy EN1 is to conserve and enhance the built environment.

6.2. Policies EN27 of the adopted Wealden Local Plan and BE1 of the Non-Statutory Wealden Local Plan are concerned with developments and their impact in terms of design, surroundings and neighbours, and set out good design criteria. The identified policies in the adopted Wealden Local Plan and the more recent non-statutory Plan have similar objectives and therefore those in the latter are considered to carry some weight despite its non-adopted status.

6.3. The majority of the works proposed involve internal refurbishment. However the infill extensions are located discreetly, to the rear of buildings on campus and cannot therefore be seen from the public domain due to screening by existing buildings, fencing, boundary trees and shrubbery. It is appreciated that the site is constrained in terms of space for additional buildings, but the infill buildings have been sited so as to contain the impact of the development by utilizing existing school space and can be viewed against a backdrop of existing buildings. The majority of the construction is centrally located within the site, well away from adjacent residential properties and will not therefore affect their amenities. Its scale, appearance and design will complement the existing buildings. The new front entrance would improve the drab visual appearance of the current entrance giving it more prominence visually and a more inviting welcome. The proposal has sought to create an attractive and safe environment for children with learning difficulties. In this

context it is not considered the works will give rise to an unacceptable visual impact and is acceptable in terms of siting.

6.4 Policy TR3 (f) of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan and Policy BE2 of the Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan states that development will only be permitted where there is adequate provision for people with mobility impairment.

6.5. Beacon College is sited on sloping ground and the new facility has been designed to ensure that not only all areas within the new development but all areas within the school site are accessible for ambulant disabled and wheelchair users. The main entrance provides a canopied ramped access to the main reception and access throughout the new development is wheelchair compliant. In addition there is provision for a disabled parking bay adjacent to the main entrance.

6.6. Policy EN15 in the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan requires proposals, where applicable, to include measures to minimize noise. The new extension will not result in an increase in noise disturbance to residential properties in the area. The extensions are centrally located and well away from residential properties. The additional traffic created by the inclusion of Grove Park School will correspond with the hours of the College and given the relocation of the Sixth Form there should be less of an impact. The Design and Access Statement submitted with the application is considered satisfactory.

Traffic impact

6.7. It is proposed to form 25 car parking spaces (one for disabled use) as part of the proposal. Policy S1(d) of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan seeks to ensure that development does not create or perpetuate unacceptable traffic or transport conditions. As there is to be an increase in pupil and teaching staff numbers adequate car parking should be provided in accordance with Structure Plan Policy TR16. This seeks to ensure that development complies with the adopted parking standards by providing adequate car parking for additional numbers. As explained in paragraph 2.4 not every staff member is full time with some only requiring the use of parking facilities for a limited period of time and this together that with the possibility that not every member of staff will travel in their own car nor be on site at the same time means the number of proposed spaces is considered to be sufficient for this proposal.

6.8. The site has limited space for additional car parking facilities to be comfortably accommodated. 8 car parking spaces will be located adjacent to the new Grove Park entrance with the remainder on land either side of the College's vehicle entrance off North Beeches Road. Wealden District Council raise concern over the effect on local residents of unacceptable noise levels, disturbance and possible traffic pollution, whilst a local resident considers that the volume of traffic and student numbers do not mix with roads often being congested. The College has an established educational use with peak traffic corresponding to the typical school day. Whilst I acknowledge the views of the District Council and the local resident, there are particular circumstances in this case. The recent relocation of Beacon's Sixth Form to the nearby Green Lane site will have reduced local traffic, and there are plans to construct an access directly from Crowborough Hill and to close the existing access. Whilst the College adjoins a residential area it is considered that the proposed car parking would not have a significant detrimental impact on the surrounding environment.

6.9. The 18 proposed car parking spaces adjacent to the entrance would be on a 'grassy' area already used for informal parking. It is considered that the proposed formation of a hard surface on this area would improve the visual appearance of worn grass. Each development should meet its own needs and there is greater security and convenience with on site parking and the possibility of cars being displaced from the College site onto the surrounding roads is reduced. Furthermore the majority of the Grove Park students would be brought in taxis to the main school entranceway and would reduce the problem of illegal parking and unnecessary congestion.

Waste Minimisation

6.10 Policy W10 of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan seeks a reduction of the amount of waste materials being disposed at landfill and Policy WLP11 of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Waste Local Plan seeks to minimise the disposal of waste and encourage the recycling of materials.

6.11 The development includes demolition of the existing library, refurbishment of classrooms, covered areas, courtyard and landscaping. As the floor level of the new development will match that of the existing, the soil from the excavation will be reused during construction. Any old foundations or concrete slabs will be reused as hard-core material for any external works. The Waste Minimisation Statement does follow the right approach into satisfying the requirements of the above policies, but a suitable condition for the submission of a more comprehensive statement, that includes further investigation of the issue of contaminated land at Beacon College raised by the District Council, is recommended to be attached to any approval.

7. Conclusion and reasons for approval

7.1 In accordance with Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the decision on this application should be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.2. The proposal is for the construction of specialist teaching facilities for children with learning difficulties within an existing college facility. The proposal will not harm the amenity of neighbouring amenity by unacceptable noise or disturbance nor will it generate excessive or hazardous traffic movements. The Design and Access Statement submitted with the proposal is considered satisfactory. The proposal therefore complies with Policies S1, EN1, TR3 (f), W10, TR16 and EN15 of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan and Policy WLP11 of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Waste Local Plan. It also accords with Policies EN27 and TR3 of the Wealden Local Plan and Policies BE1, BE2 and TR2 of the Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan 2005.

7.3 There are no other material considerations and the decision should be taken in accordance with the development plans.

8. Recommendation

8.1 To recommend the Planning Committee to grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:-

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. Construction of the development shall not commence until details of the proposed means of surface water disposal have been submitted to, and approved by, the Director of Transport & Environment in consultation with Southern Water.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory drainage of the site and to prevent water pollution and to comply with Policy S1 (g) of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011.

3. Development shall not commence until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Director of Transport and Environment. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the appropriate appearance of the development in the area in accordance with Policies S1 and EN1 of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011.

4. A revised Travel Plan in accordance with the aims and objectives of PPG13 (March 2001) and the Government White Paper (July 1998), should be submitted to and approved in writing with the Director of Transport and Environment, reflecting changes in the travel patterns arising from Grove Park's inclusion in Beacon Community College, Beeches site. The Travel Plan shall be implemented when the approved development is brought in to use and thereafter maintained and/or developed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To increase awareness and use of alternative modes of transport for school journeys in accordance with policy TR2 in the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991 - 2011.

5. No works shall commence on site including the carrying out of any works of demolition until further investigation of the possibility of contaminated land is undertaken. Also that a detailed strategy and method statement for securing and demonstrating that the amount of construction waste resulting from the development has been reduced to smallest amount possible has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Director of Transport and Environment. The statement shall include details of the extent to which waste materials arising from the demolition and construction activities will be reused on site and demonstrating that maximum use is being made of these materials. If such reuse on site is not practicable, then details shall be given of the extent to which the waste material will be disposed of for reuse, recycling, composting or other method in accordance with the best practicable environmental option. All waste materials from the demolition and construction associated with the development shall be reused, recycled and dealt with in accordance with the approved strategy and method statement.

Reason: To minimise the amount of construction waste to be removed from site for final disposal in accordance with policy W10 of the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Structure Plan 1991 - 2011 and WLP11 of the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Waste Local Plan 2006.

6. No development shall take place until plans and full details of both hard and soft landscaping works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Director of Transport and Environment and these works shall be carried out as approved. These details shall include:

Hard Landscaping

- Proposed finished levels or contours
- Means of enclosure
- Car parking layouts
- Other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas
- Hard surfacing materials
- Minor artefacts and structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting etc)
- Proposed and existing functional services above and below ground (e.g. drainage power, communications cables, pipelines etc indicating lines, manholes, supports etc.)
- Retained historic landscape features
- Proposals for restoration, where appropriate
- Implementation Programme

Soft Landscaping

- Planting plans
- Written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment)
- Schedules of plants, noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate
- Implementation programme

The landscaped areas shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved management plan.

Reason: To integrate the development effectively into the surrounding environment and to comply with Policies S1 and EN1 of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011

7. No development shall take place until a schedule of landscape maintenance for a minimum period of 5 years has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The schedule shall include details of the arrangements for its implementation. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved schedule.

Reason: To integrate the development effectively into the surrounding environment and to comply with Policies S1 and EN1 of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011.

INFORMATIVE

1. A formal application for connection to the public sewerage system is required in order to service the development. To initiate a sewer capacity check to identify the appropriate connection point for the development contact Southern Water, Network Development Team (Wastewater), Otterbourn, Hampshire or online at www.southernwater.co.uk.

BOB WILKINS
Director of Transport & Environment
12 February 2007

Contact Officer: Kirsty-Ann Taylor Tel. No. 01273 481833
Local Member: Councillor Richard Stogdon

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Planning Application File
East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011
East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Waste Local Plan 2006
Wealden Local Plan Adopted 1998
Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan 2005