

<u>APPLICATION NO:</u>	25/00169/FUL	<u>CASE OFFICER:</u>	Lee Osborne
<u>WARD:</u>	Roby	<u>PARISH:</u>	
<u>LOCATION:</u>	Lakeside, Naylors Road, Roby		
<u>PROPOSAL:</u>	ERECTION OF DETACHED SINGLE STOREY CLASSROOM TO REAR OF EXISTING SCHOOL TOGETHER WITH ERECTION OF 3M FENCE ALONG SIDE THE NEW CLASSROOM		

Site Description

The site is within the Green Belt and comprises a special needs primary school converted from farmhouse and associated building in 2000 and associated curtilage. A special needs secondary school is built on the former site of Wheat Hill Riding School with the buildings formerly on the site demolished to allow the new school building. Within the curtilage of the schools, which are linked, are outbuildings, modular building, accesses and car parks, play area(s), landscaped areas and a pond.

Proposal

The current application is to erect a single storey building to form a classroom between a playing pitch to the rear of a playing pitch which itself is to the rear of the primary school and south of the western part of the secondary school parking area. To the east are play areas of the secondary school. In effect the classroom would be sited between the upper and lower arms of a C.

The building would be L-shaped with a maximum outer width of approximately 14.9m and a maximum outer depth of approximately 14.3m; the inner dimension of the L-shape would be approximately 8.7m width and 8.3m depth. The building would comprise 2 classrooms, work room, quiet room, plant room, toilets and lobby. The building would be flat roofed with the external walls of cedar timber cladding.

From the north east corner of the building a small length of 3m paladin fencing would be erected to meet up with existing car park fencing, and from the south east corner of the building a longer length of 3m paladin fencing would run to meet up with existing pitch fencing. The rear elevations of the building would help form the boundary of this part of the school site together with the fencing. A footpath would be installed leading from the lobby entrance to an existing internal school footpath. The remainder of the site would be turfed.

Consultations

Environmental Sustainability - No objections, note that a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan secured by condition is advise and a Biodiversity Gain Plan secured by condition is required.

Merseyside Police HQ – No objections in principle, informative given.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority - No objections in principle, informative given.

Representations

This application has been advertised by Site Notice. No representations have been received.

Planning History

23/01698/FUL - ERECTION OF 3M HIGH BOUNDARY FENCING AND ACCESS GATES. Grated: 18.10.23.

22/00746/ADV - DISPLAY OF 2NO. ADVERTISEMENTS. Approved: 27.02.2023.

21/00398/NMA3 - APPLICATION FOR A NON-MATERIAL AMENDMENT FOLLOWING GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION 21/00398/FUL (DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS AND THE ERECTION OF A NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL BUILDING, MULTI USE GAMES AREA (MUGA) AND ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING AND LANDSCAPING) - AMENDMENTS SOUGHT FOR THE FOLLOWING: REVISED MUGA PERIMETER FENCING SPECIFICATION AND LAYOUT INCLUDING BASKETBALL HOOPS AND BOARDING BEHIND TO A HEIGHT OF 3.75M AT EITHER END OF MUGA PITCH TOGETHER WITH INCREASED HEIGHT OF FENCING TO 3.75M EITHER SIDE OF BASKETBALL HOOPS THE WIDTH OF THE MUGA PITCH; CHANGED DESIGN/SPECIFICATION OF BIKE AND BIN STORE; INCREASED FENCE HEIGHT FROM 2.4M TO 3M TO INNER PLAYGROUND BOUNDARY ONLY (NOT SITE PERIMETER); REVISED SIZE OF ROOFLIGHTS AND REVISED LOUVRE POSITIONS TO DINING HALL; REVISED POSITION OF FLUE AND LOUVRE ABOVE PLANT ROOM AND KITCHEN. Approved: 22.12.2022.

21/00398/NMA2 - APPLICATION FOR A NON-MATERIAL AMENDMENT FOLLOWING GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION 21/00398/FUL (DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS AND THE ERECTION OF A NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL BUILDING, MULTI USE GAMES AREA (MUGA) AND ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING AND LANDSCAPING) - AMENDMENT SOUGHT TO AMEND THE WORDING OF CONDITION 14. Approved: 25.04.2022.

21/00398/NMA1 - NON-MATERIAL AMENDMENT TO PLANNING PERMISSION 21/00398/FUL TO ALLOW THE INSTALLATION OF WATER TANKS. Approved: 04.02.2022.

21/00398/NMA – NON-MATERIAL AMENDMENT TO PLANNING APPLICATION 21/00398/FUL (DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS AND THE ERECTION OF A NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL BUILDING, MULTI USE GAMES AREA (MUGA) AND ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING AND LANDSCAPING) AMENDMENT SOUGHT TO ALLOW CHANGES TO APPROVED PLANS - WINDOW AND DOOR POSITIONS UPDATED TO REFLECT DETAILED DESIGN (WINDOWS IN FRONT OF STRUCTURAL STEELS), PV REMOVED FROM TWO STOREY BLOCK ROOF, ROOF MATERIAL CHANGED TO COMPOSITE SLATES ON TWO STOREY BLOCK ROOF TO MATCH SINGLE STOREY ROOF (P1 TYPE) AND TO CONDITION 21 TO ALLOW ESSENTIAL (INTERNAL) NON-NOISY WORKS TO TAKE PLACE ON SITE OUTSIDE OF THE IDENTIFIED HOURS OF OPERATION. Approved: 08.02.2022.

21/00398/FUL - DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS AND THE ERECTION OF A NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL BUILDING, MULTI USE GAMES AREA (MUGA) AND ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING AND LANDSCAPING. Approved: 18.11.2021.

16/00132/FUL - ERECTION OF 1NO. MODULAR BUILDING. Approved:

15/00185/FUL - VARIATION OF CONDITION NO. 2 ATTACHED TO PLANNING PERMISSION 14/00149/FUL. Approved: 04.06.2015.

14/00149/FUL - ERECTION OF TEMPORARY MODULAR CLASSROOM BUILDING. Approved: 04.06.2014.

00/00026/COU - CHANGE OF USE FROM DWELLING AND RESIDENTIAL CURTILAGE TO PRIMARY DAY SCHOOL FOR 32 CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OPERATING MONDAY TO FRIDAY FROM 8AM TO 5.30PM, ERECTION

Relevant Policy

Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where the development plan is absent, silent or out of date planning permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

Paragraph 12 of the NPPF clarifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not normally 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.

The development plan in Knowsley comprises the Saved Policies of the Replacement Unitary Development Plan, the Core Strategy Local Plan and the Joint Waste Local Plan. The following policies are relevant to the determination of this application.

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY

CS5 - Green Belt

CS8 - Green Infrastructure

CS19 - Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development

Article 35 Statement

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Assessment

The main considerations to take account with regard the proposal is the principle of development within the Green Belt together with visual and amenity considerations.

Harm to the Green Belt and Very Special Circumstances

The application site lies within the designated Green Belt. In accordance with paras 153 – 154 of the NPPF new buildings within the Green Belt are considered as inappropriate development unless the building falls within one of the listed exceptions. The proposed classroom building does not fall within the exceptions listed and is therefore by definition harmful to the Green Belt. NPPF para 153 confirms that such harm is given substantial weight and that planning permission should only be granted where very special circumstances exist which clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm.

With regards the proposed development there are a number of material considerations which amount to very special circumstances.

- *Educational Need:* The school provides secondary – age education for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), with the neighbouring school providing primary – age education for SEN children. The proposed classroom building is required to allow for a reduction in overall classroom sizes (e.g. reduced pupil numbers per class) as this ensures better therapy and educational outcomes with teachers and teaching assistants being able to provide for improved individual support. The absence of suitable facilities would compromise the quality of education offered on site in the future. Furthermore the children themselves respond better in classrooms which have more space due to pupil numbers. Furthermore NPPF para 100 states significant weight should be given in support for the improvement and extension of existing school sites to ensure the appropriate provision of school places is available to meet existing and future community needs.
- *Lack of Alternative Sites:* There are no suitable non-Green Belt sites available nearby or in proximity to the SEN schools, or within the existing buildings. Buildings are at capacity, and internal reconfiguration would not meet the specific spatial and environmental needs of SEN provision. Sites away from the schools would clearly not be suitable and lead to safeguarding and operational issues from a detached and remote facility.
- *Minimising Impact on the Openness of the Green Belt:* The proposed building would be sited between an existing fenced car park area, a fenced playing pitch and fenced play area on an area of gravelled over hardstanding, clearly within the school curtilage and with operational campus to three sides. It would not project the built footprint further into the open Green Belt and would occupy an area with an existing perception of being part of the school environment. The low rise single-storey design with timber clad walls combined with placement surrounded by established school form and campus would significantly reduce impact on openness.

Taken together these factors carry substantial benefit whilst there would only be very minor impact on openness of the Green Belt. The development would significantly improve the teaching environment for SEN children with only limited additional harm to the Green Belt. The classroom building would effectively function as infill development within the existing school layout Green Belt, avoiding encroachment not open countryside. The identified very special circumstances - the additional

classroom spaces needed for the SEN children, absence of appropriate alternative locations, minimal impact on openness, strong national policy support relating to school expansion – clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other identified harm. On this basis the proposal is considered to comply with the NPPF in that the proposal can be granted due to very special circumstances.

The application complies with NPPF para. 153 – 154 and Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy.

Design and Visual Amenity Considerations

The scale and timber cladding materials of the walls of the building will give the building the appearance of an agricultural building, appropriate for the semi-rural area the schools are set within, and the design concept of the secondary school building. The building will not be readily visible from the public footpath running adjacent and between fields to the north of the schools, and not visible from the road. No dwellings look out onto the site. The proposal would not be detrimental to the visual amenity of the locality.

The application complies with Policies CS2 and CS19 of the Core Strategy.

Amenity Considerations

The proposal is within the overall school site and is not near any residential property. The use of the building to provide additional class room space for SEN children who typically need more space than non-SEN children for development needs, and where teachers would be present, on school land and linked to the secondary school by footpath would not cause amenity issues to the area, and there are no residences nearby which would be impacted.

The application complies with Policies CS2 and CS19 of the Core Strategy.

Highways Issues

The proposal is not to provide extra space for extra children but to provide extra space for those children who need extra space in the classroom to develop and learn. As such no highways issues are raised.

BNG

The applicant has provided sufficient detail to determine that 10% BNG can be achieved. The submitted metric shows a gain of 0.02 habitat units (+16.15%). Therefore, the BNG condition can be met, the information is acceptable, and the planning application can be determined. The Council BNG Officer has no objections to the application although requests conditions for the submission of a biodiversity gain plan (as required by Government) and a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan covering the management of the site.

Conclusion

The proposed classroom represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt and is therefore harmful to the Green Belt and its openness. However the proposal would be sited within adjacent the operational school campus, surrounded on three sides by operational parts of the campus i.e. fenced car park, fenced playing pitch, fenced play area, causing only limited further impact on the openness of the Green

Belt. The identified very special circumstances clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and other identified harm. The proposal including the lengths of fencing proposed (the same as existing fencing which it extend to) would not be detrimental to amenity and would not be detrimental to highway safety. As such it is considered that the application complies with national and local planning policies and is recommended for approval.

Recommendation

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1) The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: In order to comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and documents listed in Schedule 1.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

- 3) Notwithstanding any details submitted, no part of the development shall be occupied until full details of both hard and soft landscaping works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The details shall relate to all land surfaces not built upon and shall include where appropriate:

- a) Land-levels and gradients resulting in the formation of any banks, terraces or other earthworks.
- b) Hard surfaced areas and materials.
- c) Planting plans, specifications and schedules, planting size, species and numbers/densities, trees to be retained and a scheme for the timing of work.
- d) A detailed regime for the ongoing and longer-term maintenance (30 year maintenance period) of all soft landscaping is also required to be submitted for approval.
- f) A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) to be submitted for approval; the LEMP to meet the stated habitat condition required to be agreed pursuant to Condition 4 of this planning permission.

The approved landscaping and LEMP works shall be implemented and completed prior to the first use of the building hereby permitted, or the first available planting season following first use if the building is completed and first used outside of the planting season.

Any trees or shrubs planted or retained in accordance with this condition which are removed, uprooted, destroyed, die or become severely damaged or become seriously diseased within 30 years of planting shall be replaced within the next planting season by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

Reason: To ensure that the site has sufficient habitat and is satisfactorily landscaped and having regard to its location and to comply with Policies

CS8 and CS19 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy adopted June 2006.

- 4) Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a biodiversity gain plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt the plan must include the following:
- (a) Information about the steps taken or to be taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the onsite habitat and any other habitat,
 - (b) The pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat.
 - (c) The post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat,
 - (d) Any registered offsite biodiversity gain allocated to the development and the biodiversity value of that gain in relation to the development,
 - (e) Any biodiversity credits purchased for the development.
 - (f) Such other matters as the Secretary of State may by regulations specify.

The plan will be informed by the landscaping scheme required pursuant to Condition 3 of this planning application.

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity and habitat and to comply with Schedule 7A of the Environment Act 2021 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended and Policies CS2 and CS8 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy adopted January 2016.

SCHEDULE 1

Date Received	Ref. No	Version	Drawing/Document Title
14/03/2025	25.002(9-)002	-	LOCATION PLAN
07/04/2025	25.002(2-)001	A	PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN AND ELEVATIONS
07/04/2025	25.002(9-)002	B	PROPOSED SITE PLAN
03/04/2025	25.002(9-)004	-	ELEVATION OF TYPICAL SECTION OF FENCE

Signed Case Officer¹: Lee Osborne

¹ I confirm that I do not have a personal relationship with the applicant, agent or other interested parties; I also confirm that I do not have a financial interest in the site or the development proposed

**Signed Authorising
Officer²:**

Jo Sheridan

Date:

31/07/2025

Informatives

- 1 Merseyside Police
- 2 Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

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