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2022/1296

Applicant: On behalf of Nexus Multi Academy Trust

Change of use to Class F1(a) - Provision of Education as a Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) school with external alterations to the building and to the external areas of the site including the car park and footpath layouts

Former Worsbrough Youth Centre, Ardsley Road, Worsbrough Dale, Barnsley, S70 4RE

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### Site Description

The application site relates to the former Worsbrough Youth Centre, located off Ardsley Road in Worsbrough Dale, with the wider site previously being used for Elmhirst School, prior to it being demolished in 2019. The building is rectangular in shape measuring 21m x 18m, with the front elevation facing South into an area used as a hard surfaced parking area, which is bounded by metal palisade fencing. The access into the site is from Ardsley Road, running North to South, and previously served the youth centre and the former school. The access is to the North-West of the building itself, lead to a fork which serves the youth centre to the East and existing residential properties to the West. There is a North to South slope from Ardsley Road meaning that the building and the site in general is at a lower level than Ardsley Road.

The site is located in the Green Belt, in a fairly remote location, off the main part of Ardsley Road which is in the Urban Fabric and is primarily residential.







### Relevant Site History

B/95/0549/WB – Erection of 2.4m high palisade security perimeter fencing (Historic)

B/02/0541/WB – Installation of security roller shutters (Historic)

2007/0463 – Erection of temporary classrooms (Approve with temporary period)

### Proposed Development

The applicant seeks approval for the change of use of the building and site from a Youth Centre (Class E (d)) to an Education Facility (Use Class F1 (a)). Specifically, the proposed use is a school which would cater for 24 x Key Stage 3 children with SEND Autism, communication and interaction needs. The facility will be open Monday-Friday, excluding bank holidays from 08:30am to 15:30pm daily. The agent has provided a Planning, Design & Access Statement which outlines the details of the proposed use, as follows.

1. The school will require 12 full-time members of staff:
  - 1 headteacher
  - 1 assistant head
  - 3 full time teachers
  - 1 higher level teaching assistants (TA)
  - 1 receptionist
  - 5 teaching assistants
2. It is expected that many of the pupils will qualify for free school transport, which would be subject to confirmation by the education authority. As such, it is envisaged that the pupils would arrive in the following arrangements:
  - One dedicated School minibus;
  - One minibus or minibus-sized taxi; or

- A mixture of 1 minibus and taxis.
3. There is a dedicated 'No parking' parent drop off zone outlined in the site plan, to the West of the building, with parent drop-off and pick-up happening within two waves in the same manner as the minibus and taxi arrangement.
  4. Staff and visitor parking spaces will be accommodated within the main car park where there are 28 car parking spaces available, as well as two disabled parking spaces, and a dedicated parking space for the school owned minibus within the main car park.
  5. Deliveries would be managed where possible to occur outside of school drop-off and pick-up times.
  6. The car park will also be amended to be made pedestrian friendly with a new pedestrian crossing point from the car park in the South to the building, leading to a new footpath and a pedestrian access gate.

The majority of the works to the building will be internal with an internal layout reconfiguration to facilitate the change of use, and the existing structure of the building, when viewed externally will largely remain unaltered. However, there are a few exceptions to this:

1. North elevation – addition of glazed fire exit door to replace existing window; replacement of lower UPVC panels on windows with standard double-glazed glass
2. West elevation – Addition of school sign to replace existing youth centre sign (not covered under this application); replacement of lower UPVC panels on windows with standard double-glazed glass
3. South elevation – New aluminium entrance doors; new UPVC double glazed window and new UPVC double glazed windows and fire exit door
4. East elevation – no external changes.

## **Policy Context**

Planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. The Local Plan (adopted January 2019), alongside the Joint Waste Plan and relevant neighbourhood plans, form the statutory development plan for Barnsley. It establishes policies and proposals for the development and use of land up to the year 2033 and will be used when considering planning applications and to coordinate investment decisions that affect the towns, villages and countryside of Barnsley. The Local Plan supersedes the remaining saved policies from the Unitary Development Plan (adopted in the year 2000) and the Core Strategy (adopted in 2011).

The Local Plan review was approved at the full Council meeting held 24th November 2022. The review determined that the Local Plan remains fit for purpose and is adequately delivering its objectives. This means no updates to the Local Plan, in whole or in part, are to be carried out ahead of a further review. The next review is due to take place in 2027 or earlier if circumstances, require it.

### Local Plan

The Local Plan was adopted by the Council in January 2019 and the Council has also adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents which are other material considerations. The National Planning Policy Framework represents up-to-date government planning policy and is a material consideration that must be taken into account where it is relevant to a planning application.

In reference to this application, the following policies are relevant:

SD1: Sustainable Development

GD1: General Development – Development will be approved if there will be no significant adverse effect on the living conditions and residential amenity of existing and future residents.

D1: High Quality Design and Place Making – Development is expected to be of a high quality design and will be expected to respect, take advantage of and reinforce the distinctive, local character and other features of Barnsley.

T4: New Development and Transport Safety – New development will be expected to be designed and built to provide all transport users within and surrounding the development with safe, secure and convenient access and movement.

Poll1: Pollution Control – Development will be expected to demonstrate that it is not likely to result, directly or indirectly, in an increase in air, surface water and groundwater, noise, smell, dust, vibration, light or other pollution which would unacceptably affect or cause a nuisance to the natural and built environment or to people. Developers will be expected to minimise the effects of any possible pollution and provide mitigation measures where appropriate.

BIO1: - Biodiversity and Geodiversity – Development will be expected to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geological features of the borough. Development will be expected to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geological features of the borough

GB1: Protection of Green Belt – The detailed boundaries are defined on the Policies Map. Green Belt will be protected from inappropriate development in accordance with national planning policy.

GB2: Replacement, extension, and alteration of existing buildings in the Green Belt - Provided it will not have a harmful impact on the appearance, or character and will preserve the openness of the Green Belt, we will allow the following development in the Green Belt:

Replacement buildings where the new building is in the same use and is not materially larger than that which it replaces.

Extension or alteration of a building where the total size of the proposed and previous extensions does not exceed the size of the original building.

Dividing an existing house to form smaller units of accommodation.

All such development will be expected to:

Be of a high standard of design and respect the character of the existing building and its surroundings, in its footprint, scale and massing, elevation design and materials; and

Have no adverse effect on the amenity of local residents, the visual amenity of the area, or highway safety

GB3: Changes of use in the Green Belt - We will allow the change of use or conversion of buildings in the Green Belt provided that:

The existing building is of a form, scale and design that is in keeping with its surroundings;

The existing building is of a permanent and substantial construction and a structural survey demonstrates that the building does not need major or complete reconstruction for the proposed new use;

The proposed new use is in keeping with the local character and the appearance of the building; and

The loss of any building from agricultural use will not give rise to the need for a replacement agricultural building, except in cases where the existing building is no longer capable of agricultural use.

All such development will be expected to:

Be of a high standard of design and respect the character of the existing building and its surroundings, in its footprint, scale and massing, elevation design and materials;

Have no adverse effect on the amenity of local residents, the visual amenity of the area, or highway safety; and

Preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

RE1: Low Carbon and Renewable Energy – All developments will be expected to seek to incorporate initially appropriate design measures, and thereafter decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy sources in order to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and should at least achieve the appropriate carbon compliance targets as defined in the Building Regulations.

Poll1: Pollution Control and Protection - Development will be expected to demonstrate that it is not likely to result, directly or indirectly, in an increase in air, surface water and groundwater, noise, smell, dust, vibration, light or other pollution which would unacceptably affect or cause a nuisance to the natural and built environment or to people. The Council will not allow development of new housing or other environmentally sensitive development where existing air pollution, noise, smell, dust, vibration, light or other pollution levels are unacceptable and there is no reasonable prospect that these can be mitigated against.

## NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

At the heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, unless the application of policies in the Framework 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 of the Framework taken as a whole.

### 12 Achieving well designed places

Paragraph 134 requires that development that is not well designed be refused, but conversely: '*significant weight should be given to:*

- a. *development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or*
- b. *outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit with the overall form and layout of their surroundings'.*

### 13 Protecting Green Belt Land

Paragraph 147 states that, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 148 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. "Very special circumstances" will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 149 states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are :

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;

d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

e) limited infilling in villages;

f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:–

not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development;  
or–

not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

## 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Para 174 states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

Para 180 states that when determining a planning application, local authorities should apply the following principles a) if significant harm to biodiversity, resulting from development, cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts) adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

## **Consultations**

Education Services – No comments

Forestry Officer – Initially requested further information in relation to the impact on the trees on the access road, but no objection was made subject to confirmation that the trees on the access were not going to be affected by the development. Upon receipt of further information, no objection was raised,

Highways DC – The site is located off the B6100 Ardsley Road, a single carriageway road subject to a speed limit of 30mph and having a general carriageway width in excess of 6m. Within the vicinity of the site access there are footways and street lighting present on both sides of the road. The site access has an initial width of approx. 4.5m then varies between 3.5m to 5.7m along the 140m distance to the former Youth Centre building and car park. With regard to visibility, the site access has ample visibility to the left (south-west) and can just achieve the required 43m to the right (north-east). The proposals include 28 car parking spaces plus 2 disabled bays, a minibus parking space and a drop-off/pick-up point; this level of provision is sufficient. The proposed car park layout incorporates a one-way system of operation and includes adequate manoeuvring space. It is evident that the new layout would allow all spaces to be adequately accessed/egressed and that cars, minibuses and delivery vehicles would be able to satisfactorily turn within the site. It is therefore not envisaged that there would be any problems in terms of access and the operation of the site. In view of the above and taking into account the previous use of the site as a school (Elmhirst School/Barnsley Academy) along with the current use as a Youth Centre, the proposals are considered acceptable from a highways point of view. No objection raised subject to condition in relation to hard surfacing of the parking spaces.

Pollution Control – No objection

Public Rights of Way – There does not appear to be any definitive public rights of way affected by the proposed development and no objection is raised subject to an informative adding to the decision notice.

Ward Councillors – No comments

## **Representations**

Neighbour notification letters were sent to neighbouring properties and a site notice placed nearby; one comment was received outlining general support for the provision of educational requirements but raised some concerns:

1. The narrow access (4.5m) into the site means that only one vehicle can enter/exit at any given point.
2. There are two semi-detached dwellings who utilise the same access road as the proposed use and the start/end times of the proposed opening times could lead to conflict and blocking up the access road.
3. Lack of sufficient information as to how pedestrians will access the site. A query raised as to whether the existing pathway will be renovated, or a new path formed providing pedestrian access to the site.
4. Lack of street lighting within the site.
5. Lack of double yellow lines in the site.
6. Lack of signage within the site.
7. Drainage concerns.
8. Concerns with unauthorised access into the site for fly tipping etc. Queries as to how the site will be secure to ensure that this does not happen in the future.

## **Assessment**

### Principle of Development

The site is located within the Green Belt, with Local Plan Policy GB1 and NPPF paragraph 147 protecting the Green Belt from inappropriate development. Local Plan Policy GB3 allows for changes of use in the Green Belt provided that the following criteria are met:

The existing building is of a form, scale and design that is in keeping with its surroundings,

The existing building is of a permanent and substantial construction and a structural survey demonstrates that the building does not need major or complete reconstruction for the proposed new use,

The proposed new use is in keeping with the local character and the appearance of the building.

All such development will be expected to be of a high standard of design, have no detrimental impact on the amenity of local residents, visual amenity of the area or highway safety and preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

The proposed development is for a standard change of use of the building with the vast majority of the works being internal. Structurally, the building is not being altered and the external changes will be very limited (see list in the proposed development section above) and refer primarily to replacement windows, a new double glaze windows (x 2) and fire door on the front elevation and replacement signage – which will be covered under a separate advertisement consent.

The proposed changes do not increase the footprint and make very minor alteration to the external appearance of the building, with the new features (such as windows) being of a size and appearance which respects the existing design characteristics of the building and utilise similar materials to those used in the existing.

Local Plan Policy I2 states that the Council will support the provision of schools, educational facilities, and other community facilities where they are located centrally to communities they serve, in places where they will be accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Clearly, the development is in line with this Policy as it seeks to convert an unused building to support an educational facility.

It is considered that the proposed development complies with the limitations of Local Plan Policies I2, GB1 and GB3 and is acceptable in principle.

### Residential Amenity

There are residential properties nearby, primarily on Ardsley Road, but the access road also leads to 2 x semi-detached properties to the West of the building/site (Nos. 1 and 2 School House). However, the building itself is at a significant distance away from properties on Ardsley Road – measuring 100m to the

nearest residential property (no. 43) and c.125m from the properties to the West (nos. 1 and 2 School House). The proposal is for a change of use with no extension or significant alterations being made to the building which would lead a direct impact on the neighbouring properties through overshadowing, overlooking or loss of outlook. The proposed use will clearly increase the activity in the area, as the building is currently disused. It is appreciated that education facilities can lead to significant noise and general disturbance, particularly when children/pupils walk to the facility unaccompanied. However, the proposed is for the provision of 24 Key Stage 3 Children with SEND autism, communication and interaction needs and as stated within the Design & Access Statement will likely qualify for free school transport. It is therefore indicated that pupils would arrive by the following means (paragraph 26 in the D&A Statement):

- One dedicated West Riding School minibus.
- One minibus or minibus sized taxi; or
- A mixture of, say 1 minibus and taxis.

There is clearly the intention for pupils to reach the site at similar times, accompanied by either staff or parents with paragraph 28 of the D&A Statement indicating that parent drop-off and pick-up will also happen within two waves. There is a dedicated parent drop off and pick up area within the site and a minibus parking area. This will reduce the burden on neighbouring residents through the mixture of group drop-off/pick-up, and parents arriving in different waves. It is considered that this, alongside the fairly significant distance to neighbouring properties, will ensure that neighbouring properties are not significantly affected by noise and general disturbance.

The provision of educational facilities is supported through Local Plan Policy I2, where they are located centrally to the communities they serve, in places where they would be accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. The proposal seeks to reestablish and renovate an existing building which is accessed by the former access to the Elmhirst school site yet is a significant distance from neighbouring properties on Ardsley Road (North) and School House (West). The proposed development is in compliance with Local Plan Policies I2 and GD1 and is acceptable in terms of residential amenity.

### Highways Safety

The proposed change of use utilises an existing access which formerly served Elmhirst School prior to it being demolished in 2019. The main part of the access into the site is from Ardsley Road (North to South) and measures between 4.5m and 5.5m, before leading to a fork, providing access into the site/building to the East and residential access for the two dwellings to the West. The Access into the site from the fork (West to East) narrows to 3.5m The main section from Ardsley Road will therefore be two-way, with the section leading into the site being one-way but there is a no parking/drop off zone to the West of the building which could be used as a passing place if required.

The proposals also include 28 car parking places plus 2 disabled bays, a minibus parking space alongside the aforementioned drop-off/pick-up point. Highways DC have been consulted on the proposal and have not objected to the development indicating that the level of provision is sufficient. The site access has ample visibility to the Left (South-West) and can just about achieve the required 43m to the Right (North-East). It is appreciated that there have been concerns raised by a resident in terms of intensifying the access, but due consideration must be given to the fact that this is an existing building which has previously been used for similar purposes and no additional access is being formed to the site. A detailed D&A Statement has been provided which provides information as to how pupils and staff will reach the site which is accepted by Highways DC.

No changes are being made to the access itself, but the access is being cleared of any overgrown vegetation such as dead leaves, mud, and mulch etc. This will essentially widen the access by 0.5m-1m in parts and improve visibility.

The proposed development is considered to be in compliance with Local Plan Policy T4 and SPD: Parking and is acceptable in terms of highways safety.

### Visual Amenity

The majority of the works to the building are internal, with some minor modifications to the external elevations which are limited to changes to openings (replacement and addition of windows/fire doors), replacement of UPVC panels and signage. All of these alterations do not detrimentally impact the character of the building, and it does not form part of a formal street scene, being 85m from Ardsley Road and set



down from the street/public area to the North. The impact on visual amenity is very minor and in compliance with Local Plan Policy D1 and is acceptable in terms of visual amenity.

#### Impact on Trees

There are several trees located to the immediate sides of the access road which leads from Ardsley Road to the site. No alterations are being proposed to the access itself, with only remedial/clearing works occurring to take out smaller vegetation (by hand), and removal of dead leaves, mud and mulch from the access itself. The Forestry Officer has been consulted on the proposal and initially sought clarification as to whether any works were proposed to the trees themselves with the agent confirming that this wasn't the case. The site plan was further detailed to clearly indicate what work was proposed for this application with the access road itself being cleared rather than works to any trees. The Forestry Officer confirmed that no objection is raised to the development with the proposed works having very little impact on the trees.

#### Conclusion

The proposed development seeks to change the use of the building/site from a Youth Centre (Use Class E(d) into educational (Use Class F1(d)) for the provision of a SEND education facility for 24 key Stage 4 Children, supported by 12 full time members of staff.

The site is located within the Green Belt and meets the criteria of Local Plan Policies GB1 and GB3 in that it is a change of use which does increase the floorspace or footprint size of the building and does not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity, highways safety or the openness of the Green Belt and is acceptable in principle. The nearest residential properties are 100m to the West and 125m to the West, meaning that the proposed development will not have a direct impact on the residential amenity enjoyed by neighbouring properties. A detailed Design and Access Statement has been submitted which outlines the business plan to get pupils to school safely and with the least impact on neighbouring properties.

The access to the site is shared between the Youth Centre and the neighbouring properties to the West (nos. 1 and 2 School House), with supplementary maintenance works being undertaken on the access which would effectively make it wider by 0.5m-1m as the dead leaves, mulch and mud will be removed. There is an existing parking area to the South of the building, which is being retained hosting 28 parking spaces, with an allocated space for the minibus, 2 disabled bays and a 'no parking, drop off zone'. Other improvements to the car park include a safe pedestrian crossing, new footpath, and access gate, with highways not raising any objection to the proposal which is in line with Local Plan Policy T4 and the Council's SPD for Parking. There are several trees on the access road to the site which will not be worked on through the development with the Forestry Officer raising no objection to the scheme.

The proposed development is in line with relevant local planning policies and is recommended for approval.

#### **Recommendation**

**Approve with conditions**