

27 May 2011

FROM:

TO:

Susan Leeson
Planning

**LAND ADJACENT TO WALBERTON VILLAGE HALL, THE STREET, WALBERTON –
WA/37/11. RESUBMISSION FOLLOWING WA/12/11/**

Context and Visual Impact

The application proposes to site a new pre-school building on a linear strip of land, north of the existing village hall, designated as public open space in the Arun Local Plan. Given that the site is also outside the built-up area boundary consideration must be given on reducing the visual impact of the development in this rural location. Views from the car park will be unaffected however the building will be clearly visible from the rest of the recreation ground and by nearby residents. Although some landscape planting is incorporated along the west side of the building in the form of a hedge, no enhancements have been proposed to the east.

Public Open Space and Play Facilities

Policy Area 5 aims to protect public open space and children's play facilities from development. The amount of open space will not significantly be reduced, however the location of the building will mean that the existing basketball area will be removed and no information has been provided on creating a replacement elsewhere. Although the proposed pre-school may satisfy a social need, the loss of a play facility must be compensated for.

Trees and Proposed Planting

It is noted that the resubmission shows the new building at a reduced size however the Tree Retention and Protection Plan and the Landscape Proposal – Planting Enhancement Scheme Plan have not been updated to reflect this submission. New plans must be submitted which take the new building outline into account.

A number of existing trees are proposed for removal including most notably a black poplar tree. This has been identified as an 'A' grade specimen in the Tree Schedule and Arboricultural Assessment, highlighting its significance on the site. It is one of the largest and most prominent trees on the public open space and is also recognised to have potential for bats. To fell the tree would be detrimental to the amenity value of the area. Other trees proposed for removal, categorised grade 'B' and 'C' also form part of the existing boundary and are an important feature of the recreation ground. The proposed planting, while sensitive to the rural location, does not compensate for the status of the existing trees. It appears that the line of an existing footpath is restricting the available space for the development and creating unnecessary risk to the trees. If the building was to be relocated this problem would not occur.

These views are shared by Ian Brewster, ADC's Arboricultural Officer who is also commenting separately on this application.

Ecology

The Ecology Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey did not identify particular habitats of interest within the site or immediate surroundings, but did conclude there was potential for protected species such as bats and reptiles and additional surveys should be carried out at the appropriate time of year.

Conclusion

It will be necessary to seek compensation for the loss of the basketball facility on the development site. The conclusion of bat and reptile surveys will need to be taken into account when determining the application. While the building has been positioned to minimise visual impact, it is being constrained by the line of the existing footpath which is resulting in the unacceptable removal of a significant tree. On this basis the application should not be approved or at a minimum seek mitigation which incorporates compensatory planting to the east of the development and which reflects the importance of the trees intended for removal. New Tree Protection and Landscape Proposal drawings are required which show the current building proposal.

Regards

Rachel Alderson
Principal Landscape Officer