



## Planning History

09/00170/FUL - Proposed temporary siting of a modular building (for a period of 5 years) to provide a GP surgery with associated car parking and new access to Norton Hill.

The school itself has had extensions (05/00447/HBCFUL) and has previously had mobile classroom units located within the grounds and was removed in the 80's.

### **1. THE APPLICATION**

#### Documentation

The application has been submitted with the requisite planning application form, a complete set of plans and supporting information including a design and access statement.

### **2. POLICY CONTEXT**

#### Unitary Development Plan (2005)

The site is designated as protected green space. The following policies are relevant to this proposal:

Policy BE1 - General requirements for development

Policy BE2 - General design requirements

Policy GE6 – Green space

Policy GE8 - Development within Protected Green Space

#### Halton Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)

The Core Strategy provides the overarching strategy for the future development of the Borough, in this particular case the following Policies are of relevance

CS18 High Quality Design

CS22 Health and Well-Being

### **3. CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION**

The application has been advertised as a departure by way of site notice, press notice, and letters have been sent to local residents notifying them of the application.

Sport England and Sabic have been consulted, as has the HSE through the PADHI+ system.

The HSE does not advise against the development.

Members will be provided with an oral update at the meeting including any further representations received.

#### **4. ASSESSMENT**

In 2009, planning permission 09/00170/FUL was granted for the temporary siting of a modular building to accommodate a GP surgery for up to a maximum of 5 years on land at Windmill Hill County Primary School, Runcorn. This proposal formed part of a large NHS initiative set up with £250m of government funding to provide at least 100 new general practices across the country, in areas identified as having particularly poor access to GP services.

The 300sqm2 building provides accommodation for a reception and waiting room, offices, GP consultation room, treatment room, staff toilets and store rooms. The surgery provides a link with Windmill Hill Primary School, as well as GP services to the wider Windmill Hill area as a whole.

In 2009, the applicant sought a temporary permission to enable them to carry on with a site search for a permanent facility within the Windmill Hill area. Unfortunately, no permanent site has been identified so the applicant is seeking permission to retain the site for a further three years.

The site is a former playing field, and located within an area designated as protected green space in the Halton Unitary Development Plan (Policies GE6, GE8 and GE812). Furthermore, as the site has formed part of a playing field within the last 5 years the application is considered to be a notifiable departure from the development plan under the Communities and Local Government Circular 02/2009. For this reason, Sport England has been consulted and the application has been advertised as a departure by site notice and local press. Under the Council's scheme of delegation, the application has to be determined by the Committee.

The building was constructed on the southernmost part of the playing field, in an area that was particularly underused. Siting the surgery in this location, allowed the junior football pitch and running track to be moved slightly northward. At the time of the original consent it was considered that the use of this location for a health centre would not lead to a loss of amenity or playing fields for local residents or for the school. On this basis, Sport England agreed the proposal on a temporary basis for 5 years and the proposal was considered to comply with the necessary criteria in part b of Policy GE12 of the UDP.

Sport England has been consulted again on the proposal to retain the surgery, and it is satisfied that this is acceptable provided it is only for another three years, confirmation that the junior pitch was relocated, and that a condition is attached for its removal and restoration of the land.

The Area Forum 5 Profile has the following statistics on health (<http://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/pdfs/CensusandStatistics/AF5.pdf>):

Windmill Hill is one of the most deprived areas in Halton. The area performs worse than the Halton average for most of the health indicators. Deaths under 75 years of age due to cancer are higher than the Halton and England averages. Windmill Hill Alcohol-attributable and specific hospital admissions are higher than the Halton and England averages in Windmill Hill.

Clearly there is a strong need for accessible health care within this community. This need should be given significant weight in making this decision.

## **5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The proposal to retain the GP surgery for a further 3 years would not cause a detrimental loss of playing field or green space. The permission would be temporary and the site restored once the unit is removed. Secondly, the building would provide community benefits by providing much needed GP services to the area.

The proposal complies with Policies BE1, BE2, GE6, GE8, GE19, GE23 and GE30 of the Halton Unitary Development Plan and CS18 and CS22 of the Core Strategy.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The application is recommended for approval, subject to officers writing to the Secretary of State providing him with 21 days to consider whether the application should be called-in.

If the application is not called in, the decision notice is to be issued subject to the the following conditions listed below: -

1. Time limits – 3 year temporary period.
2. Conditon in relation to reinstatement of the pitch.
3. Restoration of the site back to playing field following the cessation of use and the removal of the building.