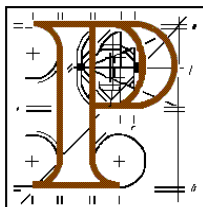


An Bord Pleanála



Inspector's Report

Development: Demolition of existing school buildings and provision of a thirty two classroom primary school at St. Pauls Primary School, Abbeylands, Navan, Co. Meath.

Planning Application

Planning Authority: Meath County Council

Planning Authority Reg. Ref.: NA151116

Applicant: Board of Management, St. Pauls Primary School

Type of Application: Permission

Planning Authority Decision: Grant

Planning Appeal

Appellant(s): Deborah and Donal Gaffney

Type of Appeal: 3rd Party

Observers: None

Date of Site Inspection: 07/04/16

Inspector: **Fiona Fair**

1.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The appeal site, which has a stated area of 2.77 hectares, is located on the site of the existing school (St. Paul's NS) which is set within a suburban setting on the outskirts of Navan. The site is bounded by the N51 to the south and the Ratholdren Road to the south west.

The appeal site is generally flat. There are no established trees on the site, save for along the southern boundary to the adjoining link road. There is a playing pitch to the north of the site.

The site is bounded by housing estates to the east, north and west. The Limes housing estate backs onto the northern boundary, Ivy Court housing estate backs onto the eastern boundary and Blackwater Abbey is located abutting the western boundary. There is a commercial premises (retail shop) adjacent to the entrance off the Ratholdren Road to the south west of the site.

The sites boundaries are well defined and comprise palisade fencing set back from block walls which define the rear gardens of adjoining houses. There is a pedestrian access gate to the north of the site, which provides access to the adjacent housing estates.

The existing school which contains 15 classrooms a general purpose room, staff room, administration and computer room, is built to the southern portion of the site, with staff parking, drop off area and external play areas directly adjacent. There are a number of prefabricated buildings which line the eastern boundary of the site containing an additional 11 classrooms and resource room accommodation.

2.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development, as per the submitted public notices, comprises:

- Demolition of the existing school buildings, including prefabricated buildings
- Construction of a new thirty two classroom primary school with a two classroom SNU/ASD unit,

- Associated ancillary accommodation,
 - external play area,
 - car parking spaces,
 - drop-off facilities,
 - gated vehicular access from the Ratholdren Road
 - associated landscaping

The stated floor area of the buildings proposed for demolition is 3313 square metres while the proposed school will have stated floor area of 5645 square metres.

Access to the proposed development will be via the existing entrance off the Ratholdren Road. As part of the development it is proposed to provide dedicated staff parking, student drop off and bus set down within the site.

The planning application is accompanied with a Planning Report and a Traffic and Transportation Assessment.

3.0 PLANNING AUTHORITY'S DECISION

Permission GRANTED subject to 9 no. conditions

Condition No. 2 relates to protection of hedgerow and additional planting.

Condition No. 3 relates to lighting of the area / car park

Condition No. 5 requires adequate off carriageway parking during construction phase

Condition No. 6 requires an on-site archaeologist

4.0 TECHNICAL REPORTS

Planner's Report: The Planner's report reflects the decision of the Planning Authority.

Road Design: No objection

Public Lighting: No objections, subject to conditions

HSE: No objections, subject to conditions

DoAHG: No objections, subject to conditions

4.1 Objections/Submissions

A number of objections were received, concerns raised are similar in nature to those raised in the third party appeal, summarised in detail below.

5.0 APPEAL GROUNDS

5.1 An appeal was lodged on behalf of Deborah and Donal Gaffney by bps planning consultants. It is summarised as follows:

- The appellant is the chair of the Residents Association
- The appeal is supported by residents of The Limes and Chestnut Grove
- Lack of any meaningful consultation / discussion with residents
- Scale of the building proposed – increase in existing school size by 59% unacceptable
- Siting of the building and impacts upon privacy, overlooking and overshadowing of adjoining residents
- The existing schools site layout causes no undue community concerns.
- Traffic Issues and Access at peak times

- Validation Issue. The public notice fails to refer to the fact that the proposed building is two storey in height.
- The proposal has no regard to:
 - 'The Provision of Schools and The Planning System – A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities'.
 - Department of Education & Skills – Technical Guidance on Schools
 - Technical Guidance Document TGD-020
- Section 1.3 'Typical School Size' of The Department of Education & Skills Technical Guidance Document states: 'Where more than 24 classrooms are required on a single site, the general approach (subject to site suitability and local circumstance) will be to have more than one school on a single shared site.' The proposed 32 classrooms is 6 no. classrooms above the number which would normally require a second school.
- There is no development management policy in either the County Development Plan 2013 - 2019 or the Navan Development Plan 2009 – 2015 which is relevant to the planning assessment of a school.
- Concern with respect to impact of the proposal on adjoining A1 zoned lands. Transitional nature of the site has not been taken into account in the design. The proposal is incompatible with adjoining land use zoning A1
- Requests that the Board consider the following:
 - Is the relocation of the school building to the rear of the site acceptable?
 - Is the increase in the size of the school (by 60%) acceptable in an existing and established suburban context?
 - Are the impacts on the amenities of the adjoining properties acceptable?

- Does the planning application offer enough by way of arrangements for dropping off and collecting children?
- Can local traffic conditions cope with the increased size of school?
- Revised site layout proposed does not have regard to adjoining residents, historical context / development of the site or consistency in approach or due reflection and analysis of the amendments.
- This is not a green field site each of the residents houses have been developed in the manner it has because the schools main green area / open space / playing field is where it is.
- The construction phasing proposal will have a detrimental impact on the residential amenities of residents.
- The Board of Management, the school Principle and the Architect told residents they preferred the option of retaining the school to the south of the site, it was the Departments decision not to proceed despite strong community opposition to the development of the school's green space / amenity space / playing pitch.
- Proposed building height (11.5m flat roof) is unsuitable in its context. Obtrusive and damaging.
- Design serves to maximise rather than minimise the visual scale of the building when viewed from outside of the site.
- Relocating the school closer to residential gardens will negatively impact upon residential amenity. Size of the school is growing, concerns of noise, nuisance and possible services located to the rear.
- Shadow study submitted is for one day of the year only, inadequate, A revised shadow study should be submitted which includes analysis for Dec, June and Sept.
- Loss of residential solar gain

- First floor windows directly face residential back gardens
- All day activities will cause all day overlooking.
- Overbearing Impact of the proposed scale
 - 111m wide on the north elevation
 - 110m on the south elevation
 - 81m and 83m wide on the west elevation and
 - 83m on the east elevation
- A first floor separation distance of 22m minimum is not relevant to the appeal case as it is not a residential dwelling. The subject proposal for an 11.5m tall building whose scale is far larger than any residential dwelling and will be used all day long by children is far more intrusive than would ever a dwelling.
- Proposed development due to its siting, its nature, its scale and positioning of its windows, some in sections which are 6.5m wide, will contrary to section 8.2 of the Meath County Council Planning Report, cause overlooking of existing residential properties.
- The 9.3m set back between the proposed east elevation at its closest point to the east boundary of the site would be unacceptable from a visual overbearing perspective for the residents of Chestnut Grove
- The 13.71m setback between the proposed west elevation – at its closest point to the west boundary of the site would be unacceptable.
- The northern elevation at 111m wide and between 8.733m and 11.572m high is a large building in terms of horizontal scale and massing. It is an unbroken elevation which is set back between 25.73m and 37.33m from the northern boundary. Set back not sufficient.

- The revised location gives rise to increased disturbance to properties to the north of the site, by way of noise, lighting
- Existing high volumes of traffic will be exacerbated
- Concern with respect to accuracy of the information contained in Atkins 'Traffic and Transportation Assessment', with respect to current volume of traffic and that which is predicted.
- Concerns with respect to traffic congestion and safety in Beaufort were not mentioned in the Traffic Report.
- The existing situation on roads surrounding the school is daily congestion.
- The pedestrian gate, located to the north eastern boundary causes significant traffic impacts, from parent dropping by car and parking anywhere, making it difficult and unsafe for residents to enter and exit their homes.
- Gardaí have been called but will not take action as there are no yellow lines. The estate is not taken in charge
- The School is not meant to be ignoring the traffic issues, in accordance with Guidance.
- Residents find it difficult to understand how the planning application does not set out proposals to address existing 'localised' traffic impacts.
- Relocation of the school closer to the existing pedestrian entrance will increase its use. The Limes / Maple Avenue is being use as a school car park.
- It is not acceptable to suggest that the impacts are local only and not worthy of consideration. The impacts will be exacerbated by the current application.

- A reduction in the required car parking standard should not be permitted.
- No mobility management plan has been submitted. No proposal to reduce car journeys into the area and Beauford Place.
- Existing roads infrastructure is deficient to accommodate increase in school numbers.
- Concern that construction traffic and activity would further erode the road network further.
- The green area is prone to flooding. Concern that relocation of the school building could lead to flooding issues.
- Construction access concerns – impact upon residents, protection of children. Construction management plan required.
- Proposal if permitted would devalue property in the vicinity.
- Insufficient evidence and insufficient planning basis to justify not developing the new school on the site of the existing site.

6.0 RESPONSES

6.1 Two number responses were received from the planning authority.

They are jointly summarised as follows:

- The p.a has nothing further to add and considers that the most appropriate decision in this case is to grant planning permission.

6.2 A first party response was received. It is summarised as follows:

- Sets out Policy Context
- A public information evening was held. It was attended by the designers, Coady Partnership Architects and a subsequent meeting was held with the residents.

- It is the role of the planning authority and the Board to act as mediator in planning matters. It would have been inappropriate to go outside of the planning system.
- Notwithstanding the objection by the appellants the proposal was carefully and considerately designed to protect the amenity of adjacent residents.
- The purpose of the public notice is to make the development known to potential third parties. The public was effective in this regard and validated by the p.a.
- The expectations of the residents to the north that playing fields / pitch to the north of the appeal site would remain sterilised and undeveloped are not founded in any factual matters, legal precedent, or planning principles
- Were it intended to preserve it as a visual amenity for their houses it would have been zoned with an appropriate zoning to indicate this.
- The proposal is compliant with following relevant development plans and guidance documents.
 - The Provision of Schools and the Planning System – A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities’.
 - Department of Education & Skills – Technical Guidance on Schools
 - Technical Guidance Document TGD-020

Guidance documents aim to aid identification of new sites for primary schools. The appeal site is not a new site. Nonetheless the scale is appropriate to its low rise context and is well set back within the site. The approx. site size given for a two storey 24 – 32 classroom school is 2.025 hectares.

- The residents’ fears of overlooking, overshadowing and visual impact are groundless
- The building has been site specifically designed to take account of its surroundings.

- The ridge height of the building is for the most part no higher than that of surround houses
- The tallest part of the building at 11.5m, the general purpose hall, is set well back within the massing of the building.
- The FFL of the school is 1.2 m lower than that of the existing houses to the north
- The reference to long unbroken elevations is not reflected in the design, as there is a mix of single and two storey elements and advance and recession of the façade.
- The building is recessed considerably from the northern boundary ensuring the amenity of houses and gardens on all sides is protected.
- Given the considerable separation distance to neighbouring houses and low height, neither overshadowing nor overlooking will arise.
- A number of improvements are being made to the site in anticipation of the relatively modest increase of 4.5% enrolment numbers per year over five years.
- Improvements to the site entrance and set down area will mitigate the slight increase in trips due to the increased enrolment and the provision of the special needs unit.
- Construction and general housekeeping can be dealt with by way of condition and compliance stage.
- Response accompanied with the following Drawings:
 - Drg. No. 511 Shadow Analysis June 21st
 - Drg. No. 512 Shadow Analysis December 21st
 - Drg. No. 513 Pedestrian Travel Distances
 - Drg. No. 515 Site Section
 - Note: It is submitted that September 21 shadow study has not been submitted as it is identical to March 21st.
- The applicant submits that the shadow study shows:

- There is no distinguishable increase in overshadowing in December, as residents properties are already cast in shadow due to low light.
 - There is no distinguishable increase in overshadowing of residents properties in three of the four studies on June 21st (9am, 12 noon and 3pm)
 - In the 6 pm study there is an increase in overshadowing in just three gardens, to the east of the building. It is submitted that these impacts are minor in nature, that the change is very slight and that the affected gardens still retain large areas of sunlight and that residential amenity is not impacted upon.
- There will be no loss of residential solar gain as no neighbouring houses are overshadowed.
 - The school currently has 26 classrooms, 15 in the main building and 11 in prefabs. The new building will have 32 classrooms and a SNU/ASD unit. The increase in enrolment will be in the line of 24% (from 724 to 896) over five years with one extra class per year.
 - The new building is of an appropriate scale and size for its suburban site and entirely acceptable.
 - The increase in enrolment capacity is much needed for both the school and the town.
 - The site is 2.77 hectares in area and there is ample scope to re-site the school building and leave generous setbacks as proposed.
 - The development option will not maximise the construction period and its impacts, as moving the school off site during construction is not an option. Moving the school would cause undue hardship to pupils and their families.
 - The existing building is entirely hidden behind the houses on Blackwater Drive. The building cannot be said to form part of the streetscape of Ratholdren Road.

- The layout proposed is most cost effective and efficient.
- The school predates the surrounding residential development.
- 22m separation distance between opposing first floor windows is widely adopted as a standard to provide adequate privacy to residential buildings. The window – to – window distance proposed here is well in excess of this standard.
- The children’s playground is unlikely to give rise to more noise than the playing pitch. The proposed set back with the car park and the playground providing a buffer, will mitigate the effects of any light coming from the school windows.
- The trips generated will be minimal. The car park will be for the use of staff.
- Given the suburban nature of the site the level of activity is not considered unacceptable.
- The applicant is happy to accord with a condition in respect of lighting.
- Traffic
 - The assumptions regarding modal split and passenger numbers in the TTA are robust
 - Drg. No 513 demonstrates that there would be no advantage to pupils being dropped off in the ad-hoc set down area to Beauford Place in comparison to the official set down area to the south-west, within the site.
 - The amendments to the site entrance and the creation of more efficient set down area within the site will increase the attractiveness of the set down area.
 - All traffic must observe a one way system
 - To mitigate against the existing issue of drop off and pick up related parking on the surrounding public roads, extensive reconfiguration of the access and internal roads has been proposed. These interventions include improved vehicular access, improved facilities for vulnerable road users, internal parking allocation,

upgraded internal road system and formalised set down areas.

- 3 m wide shared pedestrian / cycle-path facility within the school will encourage walking and cycling.
- 62 car spaces is adequate to cater for a school with 49 staff members.
- The site is not at risk of flooding, no history of flooding. It is not indicated as a flood risk in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for County Meath carried out as part of the preparation of the Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019.
- Construction traffic will be managed through the existing vehicular entrance at the south east of the site
- All necessary measures will be put in place to protect children during the construction phase.
- The development has been designed to create a high quality educational facility while protecting residential amenity.
- As there is no undue impact on surrounding properties there will be no resultant depreciation in the value of property.

6.3 A response to the first party response was received from bps planning consultants on behalf of Deborah and Donal Gaffney. It reiterates many of the points made in the 3rd party appeal and addresses some of the points made in the first party response. New points only are summarised as follows:

- Concern with respect to the size and scale of the proposed building relative to the stated increase in pupil numbers.
- Scale of the school suggests that two schools are required in the catchment area
- The residents are willing to work with the applicant to agree a mutually acceptable scheme and project schedule.
- The difference between a single storey building and a two storey building, is material, in the context of the description of the development set out in the public notice.

- Smaller school size is favoured over larger school, research indicates that performance is linked to school size, pupils in smaller schools do better. Smaller schools are favoured by pupils and teachers alike.
- Better distribution of primary school student numbers across Navan's primary schools would avoid the need to build a super-sized school building.
- Question whether the school building, at the scale proposed, is necessary to meet current demand for school places within the catchment, or whether Scoil Naoimh Eoin should meet this demand and or another suitably located school be built elsewhere in the catchment.
- The trend to supersize schools is not, as the ESRI has shown, a positive development for students.
- It is not uncommon for a schools students and teachers to re-locate while a new school is being built.

7.0 OBSERVATIONS

None

8.0 PLANNING HISTORY

NA141093: Permission Granted for retention of existing prefabricated modular unit.

NA120062: Permission Granted for prefabricated modular unit.

NA110065: Permission Granted for retention of existing prefabricated modular unit.

NA100085: Permission Granted for retention of existing prefabricated modular unit.

NA30251: Permission Granted for the erection of 2 Porto cabins to be used as classrooms.

Reg. Ref. 00123: Permission Granted for retention of 2 Porto cabins used as classrooms.

Reg. Ref. 991606: Permission Granted to demolish existing sheds and build a Montessori play school and crèche.

Reg. Ref. 991394: Permission Granted for the retention of porto-cabin for the purpose of Montessori School.

Reg. Ref. 982170: Permission Granted for the erection of new fence, gates and railings around St. Pauls N.S. and provision of car and Bus Park.

9.0 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 and the Navan Development Plan 2009 – 2015 (as varied in 2014 to bring it in line with the Development Plan) are the operative Development Plans for the area.

Zoning

The site is covered by the 'Objective GI' the objective for which is "to provide for necessary community, recreational and educational facilities".

Education (Primary or Secondary Level) is permitted in principle.

Chapter 5 sets out the social strategy for the Plan, including educational facilities.

Chapter 11 relates to development management guidelines and standards.

Policy ED Pol 1

'To ensure the provision of primary and secondary education facilities in concert with the planning and development of residential areas in order to maximise opportunities for walking cycling and the use of public transport.'

10.0 ASSESSMENT

Having examined the file and having visited the site and its environs I consider that the main issues in this case relate to:

- 10.1 Principle of proposed development
- 10.2 Impact on amenity of the area
- 10.3 Traffic/parking/access issues
- 10.4 Other issues

10.1 PRINCIPLE OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The subject site is located within an area, which is zoned 'Objective G1' within the operative Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 and Navan Town Development Plan 2009 - 2015, which seeks *“to provide for necessary community, recreational and educational facilities”*.

There is an established use of the lands for educational / community / recreational uses with an existing N.S. operating on the site, dating back to the 1980's. Saint Paul's Primary School currently has 26 classrooms, 15 in the main building and 11 in prefabs. The new building will have 32 classrooms and a SNU/ASD unit. The increase in enrolment will be in the line of 24% (from 724 to 896) over five years with one extra class per year. An increase in staff numbers from 41 to 49 is proposed.

The proposed development would result in the removal of temporary prefabricated buildings and replacement with a permanent purpose built school. The proposed development would serve to greatly enhance the facilities being provided within the school complex. The proposal would also be compatible with Development Plan policy in relation to the provision of school facilities, namely Policy ED Pol 1. I therefore consider that the proposal is acceptable in principle and consistent with the zoning objective for the area.

10.2 IMPACTS ON THE AMENITY OF THE AREA

The impact of the proposed development on both the visual and residential amenity of the area formed one of the main components of the appeal submission. In terms of impacts on amenity of the area, I acknowledge that the proposal is to construct the new school building, to the north, away from the location of the current school buildings to an area that is largely under grass and used as a playing pitch at the present time.

The buildings to be demolished comprise a stated area of 3313 sq. m. The proposed works comprise an area of some 5645 sq. m. The proposed school building is of modern idiom, two stories in height, with varying heights extending to 11.5m to accommodate the double height general purpose hall. The general purpose hall I note is set within the core of the structure to the northern façade and addresses the northern boundary.

The FFL of the structure is stated as 1.2 m lower than that of the existing houses to the north. I note the submission by the first party that the ridge height of the building is for the most part no higher than that of surrounding houses. This submission is supported by Drg. No.0515 Site Section submitted to the Board with the 1st party appeal response.

I also note the proximity of The Limes, Blackwater Abbey and Chestnut Grove housing estates, which back onto the location of the proposed school location. These comprise two storey dwellings with rear garden depths in the Limes, which backs directly onto the northern boundary of the appeal site, ranging from 15 m – 20m, in Chestnut Grove rear garden depths, to the eastern boundary range from 11m – 16m and in Blackwater Abbey rear garden depth, to the western boundary, range from 8m – 10m. In this regard it is of some significance that existing single storey school and prefabricated structures in use as classrooms, located centrally on the site and towards the southern portion of the site, are located right up to the eastern party boundary with houses in Ivy Court. The houses in Ivy Court have rear garden depths of only 10m.

The site has a stated area of 2.77 hectares in area and there is ample scope in my opinion, in agreement with the first party and the planning authority, to re-site the school building to the widest part of the site and leave generous setbacks as proposed. The proposed building would be built on the existing playing field to the north of the site, with a replacement playing field being provided to the south of the new building once the demolition of the existing buildings is complete. Cognisance is had that this option allows the existing school to continue to function without the need for new temporary accommodation during the construction. Despite the objection to the layout proposed and the submission by the appellants that this consideration should not define the layout option chosen, I consider this is a legitimate planning consideration.

The layout proposed proposes first floor windows facing to the north / rear of the site over 27 meters from the boundary. Proposed first floor windows facing east are over 37 meters from the site boundary. Proposed first floor windows facing west are over 40 m from the site boundary. The first floor plan indicated one window on the northeast end of the proposed building, facing east, within 10 m of the eastern site boundary, however this window serves a stairwell and I recommend that should permission be forthcoming from the board that this window be permanently comprised of obscure glazing.

I note the appellant's submission that 22m separation distance between opposing first floor windows relates to residential standards and is not of relevance in the subject appeal case. I do not agree and am of the opinion that the 22m separation distance is widely adopted as a standard to provide adequate privacy. In any case the window – to – window distance proposed here is well in excess of this standard.

Drg. No. 0510 'Shadow Analysis' for March 21st which indicates existing shadow and proposed shadow at 9am, 12 noon, 3pm and 6pm, was submitted with the planning application. The 1st party response to the appeal is accompanied with the following Drawings Drg. No. 511 Shadow Analysis June 21st and Drg. No. 512 Shadow Analysis December 21st It is submitted

that shadow study for September 21st has not been submitted as it is identical to March 21st.

From a review of the information submitted I agree with the following:

- There is no distinguishable increase in overshadowing in December, as residents properties are already cast in shadow due to low light.
- There is no distinguishable increase in overshadowing of residents properties in three of the four studies on June 21st (9am, 12 noon and 3pm)
- In the 6 pm study there is an increase in overshadowing in three gardens, to the east of the building.
- There will be no loss of residential solar gain as no neighbouring houses are overshadowed.

The proposed school building is located due south of The Limes housing estate to the north. It is my opinion the crucifix shaped building has cognisance to the dwellings located to the north, east and west of the site. I consider that overshadowing, in particular of rear gardens to the east, would not be excessive in this instance. I also consider the issue of overbearing impact of the proposal would not be so great as to warrant a refusal of permission.

Having regard to all of the information before me, and having conducted a visit of the site and its environs, I am of the opinion that the proposed development is generally acceptable in principle. I consider that the height of the proposed development, together with the separation distances involved and the orientation of the site is such that the impacts on amenity would not be so great as to warrant a refusal of permission.

The proposed development aims to improve the facilities available to the students and such facilities are generally to be welcomed in residential areas, subject to the proper planning and sustainable development. The existing school building is dated and as can be seen from the extensive planning

history attached to the site is formed by a succession of prefabricated units. This is not ideal and given the development rationale submitted by the applicants I am satisfied that the school size has been informed by census information with the intention to ensure there is adequate capacity for the local area. I note that there will be an increase in pupil and teacher numbers as a result of the proposed development. However, the increase in student numbers is to be phased over the course of five years, with one additional class at the start of each academic year. Regard is had that the proposed facility which represents a replacement of an existing primary school, would be in use, in the main, during the academic year, namely 167 days a year from 8.45 am to 14.30pm.

I do not accept that the proposed facility would detrimentally impact on the amenity of the area. I have no information before me to believe that the proposed development if permitted would lead to the devaluation of properties in the vicinity.

10.3 TRAFFIC, PARKING AND ACCESS ISSUES

The 3rd party appeal submits that as a consequence of the redevelopment of the school, traffic congestion on roads surrounding the school would be exacerbated. It is contended that the existing roads infrastructure is deficient to accommodate any increase in school numbers. Concern is also expressed with respect to the pedestrian gate, located to the north eastern boundary. It is submitted that this pedestrian access causes significant traffic hazards for the residential estates to the north of the appeal site. Due to parent's dropping by car and parking anywhere, making it difficult and unsafe for residents to enter and exit their homes.

Concern is raised that relocation of the school closer to the existing pedestrian entrance will increase its use. It is highlighted that no mobility management plan has been submitted.

A Traffic and Transportation Assessment (dated October 2015) was submitted with the application. It indicates that proposed expansion would result in additional trips in the am peak hour drop – off and pm pick-up periods. It is estimated that the development expansion would result in an additional 51 vehicular arrivals and 51 vehicular departures during the AM peak period. From the information on file and the predicted increase in pupil and teacher numbers I see no reason to dispute this information.

Currently there is one vehicular access to the existing school site from the south west corner. This will be upgraded as part of the school redevelopment. The original entrance does not provide sufficient width to allow for left hand turn from the Ratholdren Road for a van or school bus, and the width of the gates do not allow for two way traffic. To provide space for an adequate entrance, the boundary with the neighbour is proposed to be realigned and land transfer has been agreed.

It has also been agreed with the planning authority that vehicular access would, only, be permitted via the existing entrance, other proposed options from the north and south were discounted.

It is submitted that a 3.0m shared pedestrian / cycleway will provide a continuous path from the school access gates to the school building entrance and bicycle parking. To mitigate against the issue of drop-off and pick-up related parking on the surrounding public roads, extensive reconfiguration of the access and internal roads has been proposed. The proposal includes improved vehicular access, improved facilities for vulnerable road users, internal parking allocation (62 car parking spaces are proposed incl. 2 dedicated disabled parking bays), upgraded internal road system and formalised set down areas. It is submitted that the set down areas have been kept relatively short encouraging self-regulation of set down. The access road allows for a one – way circuit movement to facilitate patrons to orbit until a car parking space or set down space becomes available and it also seeks to negate problematic turning movements.

It is the opinion of the Road Design Office of Meath County Council that the new layout will improve matters considerably. It is noted, in their report on file

that consultants for the project liaised with MCC in the design, layout and traffic management and have taken on board all advice and suggestions in dealing with the existing problems.

Having regard to the foregoing I agree that the current proposal represents an improvement in current traffic management on site. I am cognisant that the Green Schools Programme encourages walking and cycling. I note the submission on file that school management also encourages sustainable modes of transport such as use of buses, carpooling and other initiatives to discourage car use. I also note that it is accepted that on-site management of traffic is necessary, on a daily basis, given the scale of the school.

It is clear from submissions on the file that the pedestrian access point from the adjacent housing estate is causing local residents serious disruption due to the area being used for drop-off. I note that the school have considered that the gate could be locked to prevent any drop-off within the adjacent housing estate. However, I am reluctant to go down this route. I consider severing pedestrian connectivity from adjacent housing estates to the north, would be counterproductive. I note the traffic improvements proposed and I am in agreement that improvements to the site entrance and set down area will aid to mitigate the increase in trips due to the increased enrolment and the provision of the special needs unit. However, I have some concern that the traffic issue to the north of the site would not be overcome. Given the nature of the complaints, in terms of disruption to residential amenity, I have considered some options such as suggestion of signage and a trial period post completion of the school for reassessment of possible closure of the access. However conditions in this regard, which arguable may be deemed necessary, would certainly not be precise or enforceable. Clearly the matter is the responsibility of the County Council and the Gardaí. It is the duty of any competent planning authority, this being Meath County Council in the subject instance, to resolve the traffic issues by taking the estate in charge and restricting parking and drop off by way of signage and double yellow lines. I note it is submitted that the estate to the north has not been taken in charge by the council.

I recommend that the applicant should liaise with the planning authority and local residents to seek to resolve the matter. There is a need for a workplace travel plan with monitoring to be put in place. Regard is had to Drg. No. 513 Pedestrian Travel Distances submitted by the first party at appeal stage. However given that the distance from Maple Avenue and from the proposed new school's set down area, to the student day time main entrance is practically identical I have concern that the existing pattern of drop off at the pedestrian access may continue.

In conclusion, I believe the current proposal represents an improvement in current traffic management on site and this will have a knock on effect to the wider area generally. I am of the opinion that the proposal, if permitted, would not lead to or exacerbate the obstruction of road users or the creation of a traffic hazard in the vicinity, it would not exacerbate the current situation from Maple Avenue and may even improve same. If the Bord is disposed towards a grant of permission, I recommend that a condition be attached which requires that a detailed workplace travel plan be put in place and that monitoring be carried out by the planning authority.

I note the no. and location of on-site car parking and consider same to be acceptable.

10.4 OTHER ISSUES

10.4.1 Site Notice

Cognisance is had that the onus for validation of planning applications is on the planning authority. The planning authority were satisfied with the description of the development. It is my opinion the description of the development clearly indicates the scale of the development. I do not accept the argument put forward by the third party that the description of the development, as per the public notice, does not accurately describe the development and therefore the planning application is invalid.

10.4.2 Flooding

The appeal site is not located within a Flood Zone. The lands are not indicated as flood risk in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for County Meath. The first party submit that the site has no history of flooding. The issue of flooding has been considered by the planning authority and no issues in this regard have been raised. It is my opinion there is no information before me to suggest that the proposed development should be refused planning permission on grounds of flood risk.

10.4.3 Construction Traffic

It has been confirmed that all construction traffic will be managed and accessed via the existing entrance from the south west. This is considered acceptable subject to a condition being attached to any grant of planning permission which requires a construction management plan being prepared and agreed in writing with the planning authority. Subject to good housekeeping by the developer no material issues in this regard should arise.

10.4.4 Public Lighting and Noise

Regard is had to the established use of the appeal site and the nature of the proposed redevelopment of the site. I agree that the layout proposed would not materially alter the existing noise emanating from the site. I note the condition (3) attached with respect to proposed on site / car park lighting. I recommend that should the Board consider permission should be forthcoming that conditions with respect to lighting and noise level be attached to the planning permission.

I am satisfied that issues raised can be adequately dealt with by way of condition and compliance stage.

10.4.5 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The proposed development is not located within or adjacent to any designated Natura 2000 site. The River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC / SPA is located 0.5Km due south. Qualifying Interests include River Lamprey, Salmon, Otter Alkaline Fen, Alluvial Forests and Kingfisher.

The application was accompanied with an AA Screening report. The Stage 1 Screening Statement concludes that the proposed development will have no likelihood of any significant effects on any European Sites arising from the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Therefore stage 2 AA is not required.

The AA screening report states that 'No records of rare or protected fauna are identified for the proposed development site, however, it is considered likely that Badger and Bat species may utilise the site. Bat species including common pipistrelle, Soprano pipistrelle and Leisler's bat are considered the most likely to use the site taking account of the site location and habitat features with regard to land use and landscape. Overall, the proposed development site is evaluated as being of low local importance with regard to fauna.'

The AA screening report recommends that a bat survey of the site be undertaken prior to works taking place. I would recommend a condition in this regard.

It is reasonable to conclude that on the basis of the information on the file, which I consider adequate in order to issue a screening determination, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC / SPA or any other European Site, in view of the sites conservation objectives and a stage two AA is not therefore required.

11.0 CONCLUSION

Having addressed the matters arising, I consider that the proposed development is acceptable in principle. Having regard to the established use of the grounds for educational facilities, I consider that the proposed development is consistent with the zoning objective for the area.

Having regard to all of the above, I consider the proposed development acceptable and consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION

I have read the submissions on file, visited the site, considered the provisions of the Development Plan and taken into account all other relevant matters. I recommend that planning permission be Granted subject to the conditions set out below.

13.0 REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Having regard to the provisions of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, the Navan Development Plan 2009 – 2015 and to the nature, height, scale and design of the proposed development, it is considered that subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not adversely affect the residential or visual amenities of the area nor would it give rise to the creation of a traffic hazard in the vicinity. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

CONDITIONS

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require points of detail to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

REASON: In the interest of clarity.

2. The first floor window serving the stairwell on the eastern elevation of the proposed building, to the north-east of the site, shall be permanently comprised of obscure glazing.

REASON: To protect the amenity of adjoining residents

3. Water supply and drainage arrangements, including the disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services.

REASON: In the interest of public health and to ensure a proper standard of development.

4. (a) A detailed workplace travel plan shall be carried out, submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority, prior to commencement of development.

(b) The workplace travel plan shall be monitored on an on-going basis.

(c) Traffic and parking arrangements, including cycle parking shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority.

REASON: In the interest of public safety and sustainable transportation.

5. 150 no. secure, covered, bicycle parking spaces shall be provided within the site. The layout and marking demarcation of these spaces shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development.

Reason: To ensure that adequate bicycle parking provision is available to serve the proposed development, in the interests of sustainable transportation.

6. The site development works and construction works shall be carried out in such a manner as to ensure that the adjoining streets are kept clear of debris, soil and other material and if the need arises for cleaning works to be carried out on the adjoining public roads, the said cleaning works shall be carried out at the developer's expense.

REASON: To ensure that the adjoining roadways are kept in a clean and safe condition during construction works in the interests of orderly development.

7. Site development and building works shall be carried only out between the hours of 07.00 to 18.00 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 08.00 to 14.00 on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays. Deviation from these times will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the planning authority.

REASON: In order to safeguard the amenities of property in the vicinity.

8. A bat survey shall be carried out, submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority, prior to commencement of development.

Any measures identified as necessary for the protection of bats shall be implemented as part of the development.

9. Any envisaged destruction of structures that support bat populations shall be carried out only under licence from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and details of any such licence shall be submitted to the planning authority.

REASON: In the interest of wildlife protection.

10. The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with a Construction Management Plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including hours of working, noise management measures and off-site disposal of construction/demolition waste.

REASON: In the interests of public safety and residential amenity

11. (a) During the operational phase of the proposed development, the noise level arising from the development, as measured at the nearest dwelling shall not exceed:-

- (i) An L_{AeqT} value of 55 dB(A) during the period 0800 to 2200 hours from Monday to Saturday inclusive. The T value shall be one hour.
- (ii) An L_{AeqT} value of 45 dB(A) at any other time. The T value shall be 15 minutes. The noise at such time shall not contain a tonal component.

At no time shall the noise generated on site result in an increase in noise level of more than 10 dB(A) above background levels at the boundary of the site.

(b) All sound measurement shall be carried out in accordance with ISO Recommendation R 1996 "Assessment of Noise with respect of Community Response" as amended by ISO Recommendations R 1996 1, 2 or 3 "Description and Measurement of Environmental Noise" as applicable.

REASON: To protect the residential amenities of property in the vicinity of the site.

12. Lighting shall be provided in accordance with a scheme, which shall include lighting of pedestrian / vehicular / cycle routes through the site and car parking areas, details of which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. Such lighting shall be provided prior to occupation of the school.

REASON: In the interests of amenity and public safety.

13. No further structures, plant or antennae shall be erected on the roof of the proposed building without a prior grant of planning permission.

REASON: In the interest of visual amenity.

14. Prior to commencement of construction of the building, details of the materials, colours and textures of all the external finishes to the proposed building shall be submitted to the planning authority for agreement.

REASON: In the interest of orderly development and the visual amenities of the area.

15. All existing hedgerows shall be retained and proposed landscaping as demarcated on drawing numbers 0504 and 0503 shall be carried out within the first planting season following occupation of the school.

REASON: In the interests of amenity.

16. The developer shall facilitate the preservation, recording and protection of archaeological materials or features that may exist within the site. In this regard, the developer shall -

(a) notify the planning authority in writing at least four weeks prior to the commencement of any site operation (including hydrological and geotechnical investigations) relating to the proposed development,

(b) employ a suitably-qualified archaeologist who shall monitor all site investigations and other excavation works, and

(c) provide arrangements, acceptable to the planning authority, for the recording and for the removal of any archaeological material which the authority considers appropriate to remove.

In default of agreement on any of these requirements, the matter shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

REASON: In order to conserve the archaeological heritage of the site and to secure the preservation and protection of any remains that may exist within the site

Fiona Fair

Planning Inspector

20.04.2016