

|                            |                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Application Number:</b> | P/FUL/2025/03818                                                                            |
| <b>Webpage:</b>            | <a href="https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/">https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/</a> |
| <b>Site address:</b>       | Blandford St Mary C Of E Va Primary School Birch Avenue<br>Blandford St Mary DT11 9QD       |
| <b>Proposal:</b>           | Single storey extension. (Demolish existing modular building).                              |
| <b>Applicant name:</b>     | Blandford St Mary C.E. Primary School                                                       |
| <b>Case Officer:</b>       | Claire Lewis                                                                                |
| <b>Ward Member(s):</b>     | Cllr Cooper                                                                                 |

### 1. Reason application is going to committee:

Part of the existing modular building to be demolished and proposed to be used as playground is built on Dorset Council-owned land.

### 2. Summary of recommendation:

GRANT subject to conditions as set out at the end of this report.

### 3. Key planning issues

| Issue                                                   | Conclusion                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Principle of development                                | Land was designated for educational use, and this application accords with that continued use.<br><br>Demolition of existing modular building and erection of single storey extension to main school building, with land on which modular building currently sits to be used as playground is acceptable as there is no net loss of play area or playing fields. |
| Scale, design, impact on character and appearance       | The scale and design of the proposed extension are appropriate to the setting and the existing buildings on site, with no harm to the character or appearance of the area.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Impact on the living conditions neighbouring properties | There is no demonstrable harm to the living conditions of neighbouring properties.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Impact on landscape or heritage assets                  | There is no demonstrable harm to landscape character or heritage assets.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Flood risk and drainage                                 | There are no known flood risk or drainage issues on the site.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

| Issue                                       | Conclusion                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Highway impacts, safety, access and parking | There is no demonstrable risk to highway safety, and no proposed changes to existing access or parking arrangements.                                 |
| Impact on trees                             | There is no demonstrable risk to trees on the site.                                                                                                  |
| Biodiversity                                | The proposal is exempt from providing biodiversity net gain as it falls below the de minimis requirement for existing on-site biodiversity features. |
| Financial benefits                          | There is the potential for longer term cost savings derived from removal of the existing energy inefficient modular building.                        |

#### 4. Description of site

Blandford St Mary C of E Primary School is located on a constrained site within an established residential area northwest of Birch Avenue.

The site is largely rectangular, with a curved boundary adjacent to Birch Avenue. The access, main school building and surrounding playground areas are found in the southeastern half of the site, with the remaining half of the site to the north and west predominantly laid to playing fields and additional playground hardstanding. To the north of the main school building lies a modular outbuilding, originally a temporary classroom, that is currently used by the Little Birch pre-school with its own access following the northeastern boundary of the school site, again leading from Birch Avenue.

The site is bounded by a combination of metal security fencing, trees and hedgerows.

The main school building has been extended several times since its initial construction following full permission granted in 1994 and, along with the large open space formed by the school playing field, is a prominent feature of the area which is otherwise comprised of dwellings forming the late 20<sup>th</sup> century housing estate north of the A354.

#### 5. Description of development

**The proposal seeks to erect a single storey extension and demolish existing modular building.**

#### 6. Background and relevant planning history

2/1989/0812 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 07/04/1993

Develop land for residential purposes and erection of school.

2/1997/0110 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 10/06/1997

Re-site existing mobile classroom to new school site

2/1994/0422 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 22/07/1994

Erect replacement First School, form vehicular access and parking area

|                                                                            |               |   |                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---|---------------------------|
| 2/2001/0544 -                                                              | Decision: GRA | - | Decision Date: 30/07/2001 |
| Erect extension                                                            |               |   |                           |
|                                                                            |               |   |                           |
| 2/2000/0307 -                                                              | Decision: GRA | - | Decision Date: 21/07/2000 |
| Erect new classroom                                                        |               |   |                           |
|                                                                            |               |   |                           |
| 2/2003/0515 -                                                              | Decision: GRA | - | Decision Date: 25/07/2003 |
| Erect information computer technology/resources/library area               |               |   |                           |
|                                                                            |               |   |                           |
| 2/2003/0512 -                                                              | Decision: GRA | - | Decision Date: 18/08/2003 |
| Erect village hall, form pedestrian and vehicular access and parking area  |               |   |                           |
|                                                                            |               |   |                           |
| 2/2005/0191 -                                                              | Decision: GRA | - | Decision Date: 11/04/2005 |
| Erect 1 no. double mobile classroom                                        |               |   |                           |
|                                                                            |               |   |                           |
| 2/2005/0332 -                                                              | Decision: GRA | - | Decision Date: 10/05/2005 |
| Install 1 no. free standing double pouch box (to replace single pouch box) |               |   |                           |
|                                                                            |               |   |                           |
| 2/2005/1182 -                                                              | Decision: GRA | - | Decision Date: 16/01/2006 |
| Erect single storey extensions and a two-storey extension                  |               |   |                           |
|                                                                            |               |   |                           |
| 2/2005/0906 -                                                              | Decision: REF | - | Decision Date: 14/10/2005 |
| Erect single storey extensions and two storey extension                    |               |   |                           |
|                                                                            |               |   |                           |
| 2/2006/0129 -                                                              | Decision: GRA | - | Decision Date: 09/03/2006 |
| Erect temporary classroom                                                  |               |   |                           |
|                                                                            |               |   |                           |
| 2/2007/0348 -                                                              | Decision: GRA | - | Decision Date: 05/06/2007 |
| Erect temporary mobile unit for use as a staffroom (Retrospective)         |               |   |                           |
|                                                                            |               |   |                           |
| 2/2012/0043/PLNG -                                                         | Decision: GRA | - | Decision Date: 06/03/2012 |
| Erect extension to Little Birch Pre-School building.                       |               |   |                           |

## 7. List of constraints

Within settlement limit; Blandford Forum

Wessex Water Treatment Works Catchment

Wessex Water Risk of foul sewer inundation 2023 High Risk of Foul Sewer Inundation

Dorset Council Land Freehold : Blandford St Mary CE Primary School, School Lane, Blandford St Mary - Reference FH000243

National Landscapes (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty): Dorset; - Distance: 308.59

Ancient Woodland: The Cliff; - Distance: 390.94

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) impact risk zone

## 8. Consultations

All consultee responses can be viewed in full on the website.

### Consultees

#### 1. Blandford St Mary PC

No comments received.

#### 2. –DC Winterborne North Ward

Cllr. Cooper – Welcome the proposed extension.

### Representations received

No representations were received for this application.

| Total - objections | Total - No objections | Total - comments |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 0                  | 0                     | 0                |

**Summary of comments of objections:** N/A

**Summary of comments of support:** N/A

## 9. Duties

s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the determination of planning applications must be in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise.

## 10. Relevant policies

### Development plan

In this case the development plan comprises:

#### **Adopted North Dorset Local Plan:**

The following policies are considered to be relevant to this proposal:

Policy 1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Policy 4: The natural environment

Policy 14: Social infrastructure

Policy 16: Blandford

Policy 24: Design

## Policy 25: Amenity

### **Made Neighbourhood Plans**

Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan (Modified), 2011-2033

Policy B1 – Blandford Forum & Blandford St. Mary Settlement Boundary

Policy B10 – Blandford + Design Code

### Material considerations

#### **Emerging local plans:**

Paragraph 49 of the NPPF provides that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant plan policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan are to the policies of the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

#### **The Dorset Council Local Plan**

The Dorset Council Local Plan Options consultation took place between January and March 2021, with further consultation between 18 Aug – 13 October 2025. Being at a very early stage of preparation, the relevant policies in the draft plan should be accorded very limited weight in decision making.

#### **National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (as amended 2025)**

Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date then permission should be granted unless specific NPPF policies protecting areas or assets provide a strong reason for refusal and/or any adverse impacts of approval would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF as a whole, with particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well designed places and providing affordable homes.

Other relevant NPPF sections include:

- Section 4 'Decision making': Para 39 - Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available...and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- Section 11 'Making effective use of land'

- Section 12 'Achieving well designed places' This indicates that all development to be of a high quality in design, and the relationship and visual impact of it to be compatible with the surroundings. In particular, and amongst other things, Paragraphs 131 – 141 advise that:

The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design.

- Section 14 'Meeting the challenges of climate change, flooding and coastal change'
- Section 15 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment'- Paragraphs 192-195 set out how biodiversity is to be protected and encourage net gains for biodiversity.

## **Other material considerations**

### **National Planning Practice Guidance**

Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan Design Guidance and Codes including Conservation Area Guides

Code 11. Respect massing, roofscape and height

Code 15. Architectural details, materials and colour palette

Code 17. Building fabric

### All of Dorset:

Dorset Council Interim Guidance and Position Statement Appendix B: Adopted Local Plan policies and objectives relating to climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable design and construction. December 2023.

## **11. Human rights**

Article 6 - right to a fair trial.

Article 8 - right to respect for private and family life and home.

The first protocol of Article 1 protection of property.

This recommendation is based on adopted development plan policies, the application of which does not prejudice the human rights of the applicant or any third party.

## **12. Public Sector Equalities Duty**

As set out in the Equalities Act 2010, all public bodies, in discharging their functions must have "due regard" to this duty. There are 3 main aims: -

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people

- Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where participation is disproportionately low.

Whilst there is no absolute requirement to fully remove any disadvantage the Duty is to have “regard to” and remove or minimise disadvantage and in considering the merits of this planning application the planning authority has taken into consideration the requirements of the Public Sector Equalities Duty.

The proposed extension to the school building directly relates to the protected characteristic of age, as it will primarily benefit children and young people. The development seeks to improve the educational facility and accessibility, including for less able persons, thereby helping to remove or minimise disadvantages experienced by younger age groups in accessing suitable learning environments. Furthermore, the extension would support the aim of meeting the specific needs of this age group, which differ from those of the wider population.

### 13. Public Benefits

The proposals would provide a number of financial and non-financial benefits, including public benefits. These are summarised in the table below:

| What                                                                                              | Amount / value                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Material considerations                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Improved classroom space for Primary School and much improved facilities for existing pre-school. | Non-financial public benefit for users of the school as an improved community facility.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Change to size of playground space within school grounds.                                         | Non-financial benefit – some playground will be lost due to the proposed extension but immediately regained through demolition of the existing modular building, resulting in neutral overall benefit. However, access to the existing playground area behind the demolished building will be improved, providing a more useable open space overall. |

### 14. Planning Assessment

#### Principle of development

Land was designated for educational use, and this application accords with that continued use.

The demolition of the existing modular building, and erection of single storey extension to main school building, with land on which modular building currently sits to be used as playground, is acceptable, as there is no net loss of play area or playing fields.

The proposal would comply with Policy 14 of the North Dorset Local Plan and NP Policy B1.

#### Scale, design, impact on character and appearance

The scale of the proposed development accords with the existing school building and earlier extensions on site. The ridge of the proposed pitched roof sits marginally lower than the adjacent pitched roof, with matching slope angle, with the remainder of the proposed extension having a flat roof.

The design has been carefully considered to ensure it accords with the existing building in terms of shape, materiality and overall appearance, ensuring it reflects the character of the existing building. The development proposal would comply with Policy 24 of the North Dorset Local Plan and NP Policy B1.

### **Impact on the living conditions of the occupants and neighbouring properties**

The proposed extension will be visible from the rear of the dwellings on the western side of Pigeon Close, with oblique views from Bryanston Court and some other properties on Beckett Close to the north.

It is considered that, given the manner in which the proposed design mirrors and reflects the existing school building, there will be little change to local residents' visual perception of the building, and it is too distant to cause any overlooking concerns or loss of light.

Due to its single-storey stature, demolition of the existing low-level modular building will have a neutral impact on the living conditions of neighbouring properties on Pigeon Close. The development proposal would comply with Policy 25 of the North Dorset Local Plan.

### **Impact on landscape or heritage assets**

The site is not within any protected landscape designation, being over 300m outside the boundary of the Dorset National Landscape and almost 400m from an ancient woodland site. It is not within a designated conservation area, and there are no listed buildings within the vicinity.

The proposed extension is designed to remain subservient to the existing school building with materials proposed to blend with the existing structure so it will appear a contiguous part of the existing building. The proposal would comply with Policy 4 and 5 of the North Dorset Local Plan.

### **Flood risk and drainage**

There are no flood risk or drainage issues on the site.

### **Highway impacts, safety, access and parking**

There are no changes proposed to the existing access or parking arrangements, with the proposed new pre-school location still utilising its separate access along the northeastern boundary.

### **Impact on trees**

There are no changes proposed to trees on the site, and there is sufficient access width and existing hardstanding areas to ensure that construction vehicles and equipment will not impact or harm any trees.

### **Biodiversity**

The site of the proposed extension and the existing pre-school site are areas of existing hardstanding. The only biodiversity features within the proposed development area are potted plants that will be removed for the duration of construction works and returned after.

The proposal is exempt from providing biodiversity net gain as it falls below the de minimis requirement for existing on-site biodiversity features.

### **Financial benefits**

Costs savings derived from removal of energy inefficient modular building and replacement with modern insulated extension.

## **15. Environmental implications**

The scheme will offer improved sustainability credentials on site, with the new extension built to current regulations providing a well-insulated space that is more energy efficient with far less heat loss than the current modular building to be demolished.

## **16. Summary of issues and the planning balance**

The scheme to erect an extension to the main school building, providing a new space for the existing pre-school operating on site, and demolition of the existing modular building used by the pre-school complies with the above-mentioned local and national policies and the development plan taken as a whole, with no material planning considerations to indicate that permission should be refused.

## **17. Recommendation**

GRANT, subject to conditions below.

### **The following conditions are recommended.**

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.  
Reason: This condition is required to be imposed by 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 following approved plans:  
4364-01 A Location/Block/Existing Plans  
4364-02 A Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. The external materials to be used for the walls and roof shall be similar in colour and texture to the existing building, in accordance with the materials listed on the 'Application Form' dated 17/06/2025.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory visual appearance of the development.

### **The following informative notes are recommended.**

1. Biodiversity Net Gain

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for development of land in England is deemed to have

been granted subject to the condition (biodiversity gain condition) that development may not begin unless:

(a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and

(b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan, if one is required in respect of this permission would be Dorset Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. These are listed in full in a subsequent informative below.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because one or more of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.

•Development below the de minimis threshold, meaning development which:

i) does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and

ii) impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).

Read more about Biodiversity Net Gain at <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/biodiversity-net-gain>

## 2. Statutory Exemptions and Transitional Arrangements in respect of the Biodiversity Gain Plan

1. The application for planning permission was made before 12 February 2024.

2. The planning permission relates to development to which section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (planning permission for development already carried out) applies.

3. The planning permission was granted on an application made under section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and

(i) the original planning permission to which the section 73 planning permission relates\* was granted before 12 February 2024; or

(ii) the application for the original planning permission\* to which the section 73 planning permission relates was made before 12 February 2024.

4. The permission which has been granted is for development which is exempt being:

4.1 Development which is not 'major development' (within the meaning of article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015) where:

- i) the application for planning permission was made before 2 April 2024;
- ii) planning permission is granted which has effect before 2 April 2024; or
- iii) planning permission is granted on an application made under section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 where the original permission to which the section 73 permission relates\* was exempt by virtue of (i) or (ii).

4.2 Development below the de minimis threshold, meaning development which:

- i) does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and
- ii) impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).

4.3 Development which is subject of a householder application within the meaning of article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. A "householder application" means an application for planning permission for development for an existing dwellinghouse, or development within the curtilage of such a dwellinghouse for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse which is not an application for change of use or an application to change the number of dwellings in a building.

4.4 Development of a biodiversity gain site, meaning development which is undertaken solely or mainly for the purpose of fulfilling, in whole or in part, the Biodiversity Gain Planning condition which applies in relation to another development, (no account is to be taken of any facility for the public to access or to use the site for educational or recreational purposes, if that access or use is permitted without the payment of a fee).

4.5 Self and Custom Build Development, meaning development which:

- i) consists of no more than 9 dwellings;
- ii) is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares; and
- iii) consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding (as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015).

4.6 Development forming part of, or ancillary to, the high speed railway transport network (High Speed 2) comprising connections between all or any of the places or parts of the transport network specified in section 1(2) of the High Speed Rail (Preparation) Act 2013.

\* "original planning permission means the permission to which the section 73 planning permission relates" means a planning permission which is the first in a sequence of two or more planning permissions, where the second and any subsequent planning permissions are section 73 planning permissions.

### 3. Informative: National Planning Policy Framework Statement

In accordance with paragraph 39 of the NPPF the council, as local planning authority, takes a positive approach to development proposals and is focused on providing sustainable development.

The council works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by:

- offering a pre-application advice service, and
- as appropriate updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and where possible suggesting solutions.

In this case: