

Parish:	King's Lynn	
Proposal:	Proposed Change of Use of part of existing building from Community Centre to New Sixth Form Centre, minor internal alterations, external areas to consist of new asphalt play surface, new sail type canopy, replacement boundary fencing and screening.	
Location:	Community Centre Centre Point King's Lynn Norfolk	
Applicant:	Children's Services Department	
Case No:	21/02391/CU (Change of Use Application)	
Case Officer:	Olivia Luckhurst	Date for Determination: 1 February 2022 Extension of Time Expiry Date: 2 March 2022

Reason for Referral to Planning Committee – Called in by Councillor Wilkinson

Neighbourhood Plan: No

Case Summary

The application seeks permission for the proposed change of use of part of an existing building from a community centre to a new sixth form centre with minor internal alterations, external areas to consist of new asphalt play surface, new sail type canopy, replacement boundary fencing and screening.

The application site is located within Kings Lynn which is identified as a Sub Regional Centre and a Key Centre for Development and Change within the Core Strategy and SADMP where major growth will be focused to enable the town to deliver the services and facilities necessary for a sub-regional centre.

The site is located within precinct including shops serving the wider Fairstead estate, with an existing parking area located next to the precinct.

Key Issues

- Principle of Development
- Impact on Amenity
- Design and Form
- Highways and Parking
- Other Materials Considerations

Recommendation

APPROVE

THE APPLICATION

Planning permission is sought for the change of use of part of an existing building currently used as a Community Centre to become a new Sixth Form Centre in connection with Churchill Park Academy. Minor internal alterations are proposed with some changes to the external areas including the installation of new asphalt play surface, new sail type canopy, replacement boundary fencing and screening.

The application site is located within the Fairstead Estate in Kings Lynn. The town is identified as a Sub Regional Centre and a Key Centre for Development and Change within the Core Strategy and SADMP where major growth will be focused to enable the town to deliver the services and facilities necessary for a sub-regional centre. The site is positioned in the middle of the residential estate and is adjacent to a mixture of shops, takeaways and a nursery to the east.

A total on 10no. existing employees from Churchill Academy will occupy the site, parking at the existing Academy with the 20no. students being transported to and from the site via a minibus. To the north of the site is a public carpark and therefore, the proposal does not require any additional parking spaces.

SUPPORTING CASE

Unity Education Trust oversee and are responsible for the activities of Churchill Park Complex Needs School as well as six other schools in the King's Lynn area and 18 further sites across Norfolk.

The reason behind the proposal to move sixth form students from the school to Centre Point is to provide more placements for children with complex needs within King's Lynn and the surrounding areas of West Norfolk – an area of significant need. The proposal has been agreed and is supported by Norfolk County Council and the Department for Education.

I wish to support the application on the following grounds:

1. The site is currently used as a Community Centre run by Alive West Norfolk on behalf of the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. The application site occupies a regularly shaped part of the existing building with its own dedicated external area. The site is in use as a Community Centre and the proposal will involve change of use of part of this site to educational use, as a Sixth Form Centre (Annex).
2. It is proposed to convert part of the existing building to form the new Sixth Form Centre and improve the existing dedicated external areas. No new buildings will be created as part of this application, external works will be limited to replacement boundary fencing, new sail type canopy, new asphalt playground and associated improvements to the external areas.
3. The proposal to provide a much needed Sixth Form Centre (Annex) for Churchill Park School is of paramount importance for the continued high-quality provision that is required for some of the most vulnerable and needy young people / adults from Kings Lynn and West Norfolk surrounding areas. The application centres on the desire to make use of communal building that would place our young people at the centre of the community in which they are part of every day and will provide a strong base for partnership working for those young people, the school and the community whilst offering the support of the central site close by.

4. The creation of the annex provision in the Community Centre will enable the school to increase capacity for children attending the school in other years to respond robustly to the increased need of children in the area.

5. As outlined in the Parking Statement 2.0 and 3.0 supporting document. Careful assessment of the site, its features, the surrounding built form have been considered alongside the policy context and the requirements and management of parking of the school. We would confirm that the comments made within the Parking Statement issued in respect of the proposed development are correct and would reiterate that 10 parking spaces will not be required for our use.

6. The Young people will be transported to and from the centre by minibus accompanied by some of the staff members who will man the centre. The minibuses will not remain on site during the day. Many of our staff live locally and will continue their normal practice of walking to work. No new employees will be recruited as part of the development. Parking will continue to be available to all staff on the main school site which is a short 400m walk away.

7. We note that the application site was previously used as a Nursery (an educational use) and was well attended and used prior to its closure. The local parking and transportation routes have not changed since that education use was in place.

8. The remainder of the building is used by a number of external providers throughout the week, both during the day and night who all make use of the existing parking in the area without significant disruption.

9. We believe NPPF is also relevant. Our review with staff promotes sustainable travel choices and outlines in para 111 that 'Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

In view of the above, no additional car parking is necessary. There will be no increase in staff numbers and pupils arrive at the site by minibus. This factor coupled with the extent of existing car parking at the main school (and that this parking will be effectively managed by the school to ensure staff park here) will ensure that there is an acceptable level of car parking. NPPF advise suggested that developments should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety. In this case the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety. Whilst we understand parking and highways must always be considered in any planning application we are immensely saddened that anyone would put parking as a priority before the provision of education and support for vulnerable young people and would welcome and request the opportunity to speak at the Planning Committee meeting. Perhaps you would be kind enough to confirm this and also the date and time of the meeting.

PLANNING HISTORY

2/02/0859/F - Permitted – Delegated 26.06.2002 - Extensions to community centre

2/03/2099/F – Permitted – Delegated 09.12.2003 - Extensions to community centre

06/02304/F - Permitted – Delegated 30.11.2006 - Proposed platform lift

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Highways Authority:

Having reviewed the submitted information I note from the Parking Statement that there would be up to 20 pupils and 10 staff, under normal circumstances 11 spaces should therefore be available to comply with the adopted parking standards. I observe this application is promoted as part of Churchill Park and that all pupils would be transported via minibus which will not be kept at the site. I do observe that no cycle storage is to be provided but I accept that as the Minibus is to be utilised and there are areas in which to secure a cycle if needed at this site or Churchill Park this lack of new provision is not considered to be significant. It is also of considerable note that teachers are most likely to walk to the site as they are currently employed at Churchill where they could and would be expected to park.

Ultimately I am mindful that the application is in very close proximity to a public car parking facility which I observed to be around half capacity at the time of my visit, I am also aware of the public car park through historical applications has not been at full capacity. Therefore, on balance, I believe that it would be difficult to substantiate an objection to the application on highway safety grounds given that has close ties to an existing school and with the surrounding area having very good links to sustainable transport modes and a public car park.

Water Management: NO OBJECTION

Environmental Health & Housing – Environmental Quality: NO OBJECTION

Community Safety and Neighbourhood Nuisance Officer: NO OBJECTION - Subject to a condition construction management scheme

Councillor: SUPPORT

County Councillor Colwell has confirmed his support for the application and providing the following:

I do note the comments of the Community Safety and Neighbourhood Nuisance Officer and share his concern that prior to commencement of any future development that a detailed construction management scheme is submitted. Minimising impact on local residents for noise etc would be my main concern during any works undertaken. I do not share concern over parking provision, which has now been adequately explained in the circumstances.

REPRESENTATIONS

No representations received

LDF CORE STRATEGY POLICIES

CS01 - Spatial Strategy

CS02 - The Settlement Hierarchy

CS03 - King's Lynn Area

CS11 – Transport

CS13 - Community and Culture

SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES PLAN 2016

DM1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

DM2 – Development Boundaries

DM9 - Community Facilities

DM15 – Environment, Design and Amenity

DM17 - Parking Provision in New Development

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
National Design Guide 2019

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principal of Development and Policy Considerations

In term of the Local Plan, the application site is located within Kings Lynn which is identified as a Key Service Centre where major development will be focused in order to continue to meet its obligations as a Growth Point and Key Centre for Development and Change and develop as a Sub-Regional Centre.

Policy CS01 amongst other things states that support will be given to development that seeks to establish a strong educational base.

Policy CS13 seeks to enable development which will deliver strong communities, well-being, and enhanced quality of life through good design. Developments should be accessible and inclusive and by being locally distinctive whilst contributing to a sense of place and identity.

Policy DM9 confirms that the Council will encourage the retention of existing community facilities and the provision of new facilities, particularly in areas with poor levels of provision and in areas of major growth. Development leading to the loss of an existing community facility will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated that either:

- a) the area currently served by it would remain suitably provided following the loss, or if not
- b) it is no longer viable or feasible to retain the premises in a community facility use.

DM17 confirms the required parking provision for new developments and states that with developments other than dwellings car parking provision will be negotiated having regard to the current standards published by Norfolk County Council.

Paragraph 95 of the NPPF states that it is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement,

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and to development that will widen choice in education. They should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

The proposal seeks permission for the change of use of part of the existing building from Community Centre to a New Sixth Form Centre with minor internal alterations. The external areas will consist of new asphalt play surface, a new sail type canopy, replacement boundary fencing and screening.

Whilst the proposal will result in the partial loss of a community facility in the form of a community centre, the proposed new use is also considered to be an acceptable and essential community facilities providing a new sixth form centre and will help to establish a strong educational base. The remaining section of the community centre will continue to function as a community facility. The proposed alterations and additions are considered to be of an acceptable scale and design and will not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity.

Impact on Amenity

The application site is located at Centre Point within the Fairstead Estate which is host to a mixture of uses including shops, a takeaway restaurant and is surrounded by residential properties with the Fairstead Primary and Nursery School located to the east. The site currently comprises of a community centre with amenity space to the east and south. The proposed change of use will have a minimal impact on the appearance of the building and will function in a similar way to the existing use. It is not considered that the new use as a sixth form centre will result in any issues relating to noise disturbance, impact on visual amenity, overlooking or loss of privacy given the minor alterations, surrounding uses and the fact that the building will still remain as a community facility.

Design and Form

The majority of the changes connected to the proposed change of use will be internal with the installation of a galvanised steel post and frame structure, with a fabric style canopy to the south. A new 2m, powder coated anti-climb fence with internal privacy netting is also proposed and minor alterations to amenity space to the east and west. Overall, the proposed changes are considered to be inconsequential and will appear in keeping with the surrounding area.

Highways and Parking

The application site will provide a sixth form centre in conjunction with Churchill Park Academy. The site will accommodate a total of 10no. employees and 20no. students at any one time. The staff who will be working at the new sixth form centre are existing employees of Churchill Park Academy and will park at the existing carpark at the academy which provides a sufficient amount of parking for staff. The students will be brought to and from the site by a minibus organised by the academy and will park off site during the day. Staff will also have access to the minibus and will be encouraged to walk to and from the sites given that the school is located just 400m from the application site. Access is provided by pedestrian paths between the site which are provided with street lighting. To the north of the site is a public car park positioned some 57m away and provides over 20 parking spaces. Whilst the carpark is not within the applicant's ownership, spaces could be used by members of staff if required. The Parking Standards for Norfolk 2007 states that for uses of schools (higher education and further) there should be 1no. parking space for every 2 daytime teaching staff and 1no. parking space per every 15 students.

No additional parking is proposed for the site however, given that staff will have access to the existing car park at Churchill Park Academy and will be encouraged to walk to site, there is also access to the public carpark and students will be transported to and from site by a minibus, it is not considered that additional parking is required for the proposed change of use. Paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport should be identified and pursued.

Paragraph 111 goes on to explain that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. In this case, it is considered that given the scale of the use and its users, along with the existing parking already provided by the academy and public car park, additional parking would not be required and the development would not have a detrimental impact on the highway.

The Highways Authority have been consulted on the application and confirmed that a proposal of this scale would normally require 11no. additional parking spaces, however, given that the new sixth form has close ties to an existing school carpark and with the surrounding area having very good links to sustainable transport modes and a public car park, the addition spaces are not required and the proposal complies with policy DM17.

It is also of note that the current community centre use does not have a dedicated area set aside for parking, rather it utilises the existing adjacent public car park. It could be argued that there will be less call on the public car park given this.

Other Material Considerations

Flood Risk and Drainage

The application site has been identified using the Environment Agency as being in Flood Risk Zone 1, an area which is at low probability of flooding. Nonetheless a flood risk assessment has been compiled and is accompanying this application. The new hardstanding will be provided with surface water soakaways to form a sustainable drainage system and will not be connected into any existing onsite surface water system. This proposal will therefore not materially increase flows into existing systems.

Crime and Disorder

There are no specific crime and disorder applications associated with this application.

CONCLUSION

The application seeks permission for the part change of use from a community centre to a new sixth form centre in connection to Churchill Park Academy. Whilst the proposal will result in the loss of one community facility, the new proposed use is also considered to be an essential, educational, community use and therefore complies with the requirements of policies DM2, DM9 and DM17 of Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan and policies CS02, CS03 and CS13 of the Core Strategy. The proposal is also strongly supported by government policy set out in the NPPF.

The proposed development consists of minor works to the existing outdoor space including new fencing and a canopy with the majority of the works being internal. The changes are not considered to have any material impact on residential amenity or have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the building and surrounding area. Whilst the development does not

propose any new parking, staff will have access to the public car park located to the north of the site and will also be encouraged to walk or cycle from the nearby academy which also offers adequate onsite parking. Students will be transported to and from site by a minibus which will be parked off site during the day. Therefore, it is considered that no additional parking is required, and the development will not have an adverse impact on the highway or existing parking.

Given the above the application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE subject to the imposition of the following condition(s):

1 Condition: The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

1 Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004.

2 Condition: The development hereby permitted shall be carried out using only the following approved plans:

NPS-00-00-DR-B-001 P2 - LOCATION PLAN Received 14.12.2021

NPS-00-00-DR-B-002 P2 - EXISTING FLOOR PLAN Received 14.12.2021

NPS-00-00-DR-B-003 P2 - EXISTING SITE PLAN Received 14.12.2021

NPS-00-00-DR-B-004 P2 - PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN Received 14.12.2021

NPS-00-00-DR-B-005 P2 - PROPOSED SITE PLAN Received 14.12.2021

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

3 Condition: Prior to commencement of development a detailed construction management scheme must be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority: this must include proposed timescales and hours of the construction phase, deliveries/collections and any piling. The scheme shall also provide the location of any fixed machinery, their sound power levels, the location and layout of the contractor compound, the location of contractor parking, the location and layout of the materials storage area, machinery storage area and waste & recycling storage area, proposed attenuation and mitigation methods to protect residents from noise, dust and litter and communication methods to the wider community regarding the construction phases and likely disruptions. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

3 Reason: In order that the Local Planning Authority may retain control over the construction activities in the interests of the amenities of the locality in accordance with the NPPF.

This also needs to be a pre-commencement condition as this issue relates to the construction phase of the development.

4 Condition: No works shall commence in relation to the new canopy, replacement boundary fencing and screening until details of their height, colour, material and positioning have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

- 4 Reason: To ensure a satisfactory external appearance, scale, positioning and grouping of materials in accordance with the principles of the NPPF.