

**Erection of temporary school buildings on playing field,
with site compound.**

High Cliff Academy Primary School

Planning Statement



**Prepared on behalf of Kier Construction
March 2024**

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 High Cliff Academy Primary School is a school serving approximately 250 children through the whole primary stage of education, and includes a nursery. The school is a part of the STEP Academy Trust, a multi school trust.
- 1.2 The school was constructed following the grant of permission in January 2015 under planning application reference number LW/3226/CC, described as "Construction of a one form entry primary school with associated car parking, Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and sports field on land adjacent to Seahaven Academy".
- 1.3 The new building approved in the application above has experienced difficulty in terms of water ingress, and repeated attempts at remedial works of the fabric of the building have been unsuccessful. It has been determined now, as a result of the continuing issues with the buildings and the impact this has on the learning environment for the pupils at the school, that more radical interventions are required.
- 1.4 The works required are sufficiently extensive that they can only be completed with a level of disruption that cannot be done alongside the continuing use of the building, and would require a period of time for completion that cannot be achieved outside of the school opening times. Consequently, the proposal submitted here is for the erection of new temporary school buildings, on the existing playing field area to the east of the school, allowing for the existing school to be 'decanted' into the temporary buildings.
- 1.5 In this way the permanent building can be retained while the detailed remedial work required is carried out, while education continues for the children on the same site, which results the least disruption possible to their education.
- 1.6 The proposed temporary classrooms and refurbishment works to the existing buildings will not result in or facilitate any alterations to the long term management or capacity of the school. On completion of works, the school would provide for the same level of pupil access as at present, with no changes to building footprint.

- 1.7 The site compound required to support the erection of the temporary classrooms and to carry out the works on the permanent building would be located on an additional area of the playing field towards the northern boundary of the site.

2.0 Site Location and Access

- 2.1 The school is located at the southern end of Southdown Way, where the road terminates, and with a small spur off Haven Way, jointly provides access direct to the entrance of both High Cliff Academy and Seahaven Academy on an immediately adjacent plot. The school is located adjacent to Seahaven Academy to the south, with an area of open space to the east of the school boundary, currently undeveloped, but allocated as part of Spatial Policy SP7 of the Lewes Core Strategy (2016) for mixed use of employment and residential. To the north, there is existing residential development along Hanson Road. The school site is on elevated land compared to the housing on Hanson Road.
- 2.2 The wider area in the locality of the school is dominated by residential development, although there is an industrial estate (Quarry Road) to the east, with harbourside facilities beyond that.
- 2.3 The school is accessible by public transport with a bus route along Gibbon Road to the north, However, being in the midst of a residential area, it can also be easily accessed on foot, and as a primary school, it is likely that most of the children attending live nearby.
- 2.4 Limited car parking is available on site – no changes are proposed for the car parking provision as part of this application. Onsite cycle storage is provided, and no changes are proposed for this as a result of the current application.

3.0 Planning History

- 3.1 As has already been stated, the most relevant planning history was the approval given under LW/3226/CC, for "Construction of a one form entry primary school with associated car parking, Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and sports field on land adjacent to Seahaven Academy". A non material amendment relating to the siting of solar panels was granted in November 2015 under LW/3226/CCNM/1.
- 3.2 No other subsequent planning history has been identified, and all planning history prior to the approval of the new school related to the previous Tideway school which had occupied the same site before High Cliff was constructed.
- 3.3 The current application is linked to another application yet to be submitted. The temporary school buildings at High Cliff Academy are required to enable a continuity of education for the students at the school while works to refurbish the existing school building take place. The works required are so extensive that the building will be unusable for that period. It is anticipated that an application for the remedial works themselves will be submitted imminently, while this application is still under consideration.

4.0 Proposed Development

- 4.1 As introduced above, this application forms the first of two applications which it is anticipated will result in refurbishment of existing buildings at High Cliff Academy. The refurbishment works required will be subject to a separate application at a later stage, specific to the works required on the buildings themselves.
- 4.2 The current application is focussed on enabling works, by providing new temporary school buildings within the grounds, into which the existing school can be 'decanted'. This would take place during school holidays so that would cause no disruption to the children's education. Once the temporary buildings have been constructed and occupied by the school, this would allow for the works to take place on the main school buildings, alongside the ongoing teaching activity taking place in the temporary school.
- 4.3 The proposal also includes the provision of a site compound into which work vehicles and materials would be directed and stored. This would be located at the north side of the playing field, at the top of the slope that leads down to the properties on Hanson Road.
- 4.4 Once the works to rectify faults in the existing school building have been completed, the school would be decanted back into the original site, and the temporary buildings removed and the ground restored. There would be no long term changes to the layout, footprint, or size of the school as a result of the proposals set out here.
- 4.5 The school building constructed under application reference LW/3226/CC centred on the erection of a new building on land adjacent to Seahaven Academy. Since completion of this work, the building has experienced difficulty in terms of water ingress, and repeated attempts at remedial works of the fabric of the building have been unsuccessful. It has been determined now, as a result of the continuing issues with the buildings and the impact this has on the learning environment for the pupils at the school, that more radical interventions are required.
- 4.6 The proposed temporary buildings would allow for teaching to be decanted out of the existing buildings for the period required to complete the refurbishments. These temporary buildings would be located on an area playing fields to the rear

of the existing school site. The access and site compound would be at the top of the slope adjacent to the residential properties on Hanson Road.

- 4.7 The location of the buildings has been selected as being the most suitable position, after assessing other locations within the school grounds. The chosen location presented the only viable location based on a range of issues including ensuring suitable space around the existing buildings for the remedial works to be carried out with minimal disruption to lessons, available space within the grounds, minimal loss of play area for the children, and preservation of fire safety/emergency vehicle access arrangements. Alternative locations would have compromised one or more of these considerations, such that the location set out represents the option which causes the least harm across a range of issues
- 4.8 Planning permission is being sought for a temporary period for the proposed building, which it is anticipated would be required until November 2026. At this point the building and the other parts of the site (site compound, access) would be removed and the land on which they are to be sited would be returned to its current condition.

5.0 Planning Policy Context and Consideration

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the policies in the development plan, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (September 2023) is a material consideration.
- 5.2 East Sussex County Council development plans are not relevant to the current application, as the principle responsibilities as an upper tier Authority are related to Waste and Minerals Planning and Transport Planning. ESCC responsibility for this application derives from their role as the Local Education Authority, and as freeholders of the land on which the application site is located. Consequently, there are no County level planning policies relating to detailed matters for the application.
- 5.3 As a result of the background of ESCC involvement in the application, and as the determining body, it can be considered that the relevant policy framework against which this application should be considered is in fact that of the District in which the school is located. In this case that is Lewes District Council. The current development framework for Lewes comprises the Lewes District Council Core Strategy (May 2016) and the Lewes District Council Local Plan (February 2020).
- 5.4 The particular circumstances of this application are for temporary measures to facilitate improvements to existing infrastructure that would not result in any change to the level and nature of education provision. As a result many of the policies in the NPPF which refer to schools in the context of long term planning and ensuring adequate provision are not relevant to this application. The substantive issues here are for design and impact on the immediate local area, but even this view is impacted by the understanding that the proposed development is temporary.
- 5.5 Section 4 of the NPPF considers the decision making process, with advice in paragraph 38 that decisions should be made in a positive and creative way. Paragraph 47 highlights that decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, and stresses that decisions should be made as quickly as possible.

- 5.6 There are no matters of principle of development relevant to the application with regard to the provision of educational facilities, or associated matters such as sustainable transport, as the proposals are not related to fundamental issues of provision and operation. The considerations for this application relate to the impact of the temporary buildings, and the infrastructure related it, primarily in terms of amenity and design, and any associated concerns arising, such as the impact of construction traffic or ecological considerations.
- 5.7 The Lewes District Local Plan Part 2 includes policy DM23 "Noise" which addresses the potential harm to existing sites from noise generating development and sets out measures to protect against harm, and mitigate where appropriate. Policy DM25 "Design" considers the impacts of design on issues such as appearance, setting, privacy and other amenity impacts.

TRANSPORT

- 5.8 Vehicle movements for the development will be carried out consistent with the approach set out in the Construction Environment Management Plan submitted with this application. A site compound will be provided at the north of the site for all construction traffic, and for the delivery and storage of materials. The route to the school is shown on the CEMP, linking the school site via Gibbon Road, Fort Road and South Road to the A259 and A26, minimising traffic through the residential streets around the school.
- 5.9 Access for site traffic will be via the existing school entrance. To ensure safety of children and parents at peak times for school drop-off and pick-up, the movement of works into the site will be restricted to between the hours of 09:30 and 14:00 on schooldays.
- 5.10 There are no proposals to amend, remove or add to any of the existing car parking/cycle storage spaces and facilities at the school during the proposed development.
- 5.11

IMPACT OF TEMPORARY CLASSROOMS

- 5.12 The proposed temporary buildings would be two storey buildings at the eastern end of the school site, on existing playing fields, with residential properties to the north on Hanson Road.
- 5.13 The design of the temporary buildings would be similar to the appearance of the existing buildings on site, and would not be out of character with the local area. The temporary nature of the proposed buildings means that any concerns for appearance should be considered as a minor concern with no long term impact on its setting.
- 5.14 The temporary buildings and site compound would be located in a position set back from the top of the slope that separates the school field from residential properties on Hanson Road. The height of the temporary buildings would be higher than the nearby properties but due to the set back from the edge of the slope, sightlines between the school buildings and residential properties would be largely/exclusively interrupted by the topography, and the temporary buildings would be only partially visible from the upper parts of the houses.
- 5.15 As a result of the temporary buildings being largely obscured from view, there would be limited to no opportunity for overlooking from the school buildings into the private dwellings, and as a result the potential for any harm to amenity through loss of privacy is considered to be negligible. The risk of harmful overlooking is further reduced when considering that the buildings would be used only during school hours – i.e. restricted times within the day, and for only a restricted number of days a year. To the extent that any overlooking may be possible, the temporary nature of the development should mitigate any harm, and the evident public benefit from improvements to the permanent educational facilities that are enabled by this proposal would outweigh any harm.
- 5.16 There are unlikely to be any noise impacts from the proposed temporary buildings as they will house contained classrooms. The site compound may produce some noise that could impact on the occupants of nearby houses, but the site is open and elevated above the properties so would be largely dissipated by the

environment, and so unlikely to be heard at a level that would be harmful to the amenity of neighbours.

- 5.17 Use of the classrooms, and the site compound would be restricted to daytime house during weekdays only, thereby avoiding more sensitive evening and weekend timings. During the most sensitive times from the perspective of occupants of the neighbouring dwellings – evenings and weekends – the buildings will be unused.
- 5.18 In summary, there is potential for very minor amenity impacts in terms of impact on outlook of neighbours with parts of the proposed temporary buildings being visible above the slope from limited parts of the existing residential area. There may be some additional noise from the site compound, but this will be of limited impact. Any harms arising as a result of the erection of the buildings and location of the site compound are mitigated by the fact that this is for a temporary period and so would not cause long term harms. Any harms arising should also be weighed against the very clear public benefit that this proposal brings.

ECOLOGY

- 5.19 A preliminary Ecological Assessment of the site identified the potential for habitats in the school grounds to support reptiles and wild mammals, but highlights that these are not within the development boundary. The recommendation was to leave a buffer zone between the principle habitat area (the scrub bank at the north of the site) and the development area. The site compound fencing will be located 7.5m from the edge of this habitat, allowing ample clearance for the protection of any biodiversity interest on the site.

ARBORICULTURE

- 5.20 There are no trees that would be affected on the development site, so no arboriculture surveys were undertaken.

6.0 Summary

- 6.1 Consideration of the details included in this application should be given in the knowledge that all the proposals are for temporary measures designed to facilitate essential refurbishment on the modular classrooms built following the 2015 application. The temporary buildings proposed for the playing fields would be required for one year, and the site compound would only be in use until the works to rectify issues with the existing school building, and remove the temporary buildings, have been completed.
- 6.2 The temporary buildings would not be out of character with the area being similar in appearance to other recent buildings within the school site. The impact on neighbours would be minimal in terms of overlooking and noise. Again, it is important to recognise that the development would be temporary, and that as an enabling development, these any harms arising would be outweighed by the public benefits.