

Development Control Committee

Report Title:	Retention of unit for Preschool/Wraparound cover between 07:30-18:00 hours Mondays to Fridays throughout the year. Nursery provision 07:30-18:00 hours. Wraparound provision 07:45-18:00 hours. Combs Ford Primary School, Glemsford Road, Stowmarket
Meeting Date:	14 September 2016
Lead Councillor(s):	Councillor Peter Beer
Local Councillor(s):	Councillor Stephen Searle
Director:	Geoff Dobson, Director of Resource Management
Assistant Director or Head of Service:	John Pitchford, Head of Planning
Author:	Mark Barnard, Planning Officer; Telephone: 01473 264755

Brief summary of report

1. It is proposed to use an existing temporary classroom unit on the school site for Preschool and Wraparound cover between 0730 and 1800 Monday to Friday throughout the year. Planning permission is required because of the extended hours of use, and the proposed use in the school holidays.
2. Three letters of objection have been received from local residents, voicing concerns about peak-time traffic and parking problems in the vicinity of the school, and the potential for these problems to be increased by the proposed development. One resident also mentions increased noise and light pollution.
3. Additional pupil numbers would be relatively small compared to the size of the main school. During the additional hours of operation for which planning permission is sought, the school car park has spare capacity and would be made available for use by parents for dropping-off and collecting children. This should prevent any increase in peak-time traffic and has the potential to marginally reduce it.

Action recommended

4. That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development shall commence within three years of the date of this permission.
Reason: Imposed in accordance with Section 91 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.
 - 2) The development uses and associated activities hereby approved shall

only be carried out in accordance with

- a) the application dated 19 July 2016 and accompanying Statement of Support;
- b) the approved plans:
 - i) 1:500 scale Block / Site plan.
 - ii) 1:1250 scale Location plan.

Reason: To ensure that new development is completed in accordance with the submitted details.

- 3) The nursery/wraparound facility shall only be used between 0730 and 1800 hours Mondays to Fridays. It shall not be used on Saturdays, Sundays or Bank Holidays/Public Holidays.

Reason: In the interest of residential amenity.

- 4) This permission shall expire on 30 September 2026 at which time the classroom block shall be removed and the site reinstated to its former condition.

Reason: To retain control over the provision of temporary builds and to ensure that the site is fully reinstated when such buildings are removed.

Reason for recommendation

5. The ability for children using the facility to be dropped off and collected from within the school grounds at the start and end of the day, and during school holidays, would reduce the impact of traffic on local residents. Given the modest scale of the nursery, it is considered any adverse impact on residential amenity would be very small and outweighed by the public benefits of this use on the school site.
6. The temporary classroom unit has recently been subject to comprehensive renovation work to extend its life and, in view of this investment, a consent for a ten year period is considered appropriate.

Alternative options

7. To refuse consent or approve with alternative conditions.

Main body of report

Site

8. Combs Ford Primary School is located on the Combs Ford estate, a modern residential suburb to the south of Stowmarket town centre. The school site is surrounded by residential development, and vehicular access is from Glemsford Road which is a cul-de-sac.
9. The nursery would be located in a temporary classroom unit in the north-west corner of the school site. It is reached by a footpath directly from the school car park, without a need to enter the main school building. The unit is sited on the edge of the school playing field. The nearest residential curtilages are 12m to the north, between which is a substantial tree belt which also extends to the west.

10. The temporary unit has been on the school site since 1999. The current planning consent expires on 31 March 2019. Latterly it has been used as an occasional classroom, an arts studio and school meeting room.

Proposal

11. The proposal is to use the temporary classroom unit as a nursery and wraparound facility (before and after school care). The nursery would operate between 0730 and 1800 hours Mondays to Fridays including during school holidays. Wraparound provision would be between 0745 – 0850 and 1520 – 1800 hours Mondays to Fridays in term time. At the request of parents it is planned to extend this facility throughout the day during school holidays.
12. The nursery – wraparound use would be new to the school site and would relocate from Cedars Park in the town. Considerable refurbishment work to the temporary classroom unit was completed in the first half of 2016 in anticipation of the new use for the building. This work did not require planning permission.
13. The maximum number of children to be accommodated in the nursery would be 15. The wraparound care would be for a maximum of 30 children, all attending the main school.

Policy

14. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 72 states ‘The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of new and existing communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:
 - give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools; and
 - work with schools promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.’

Consultations

Mid Suffolk District Council

15. None received at time of writing this report.

Stowmarket Town Council

16. No objection.

Representations

17. Three letters of objection have been received, from two different addresses. These raise concerns about the impact of the development on peak-time traffic and parking in the vicinity of the school. One resident, living directly behind the temporary classroom unit, is also concerned about increases in noise and light pollution.

Comments of Head of Planning

18. Planning permission is not required for a change of use from school use to nursery use as they are both within Use Class D1 (non-residential institutions). This application is necessary because of the extended hours of operation before and after the normal school day, and for use during the school holidays. The need for planning permission only became apparent at a relatively late date, after the refurbishment of the classroom unit for the intended use.

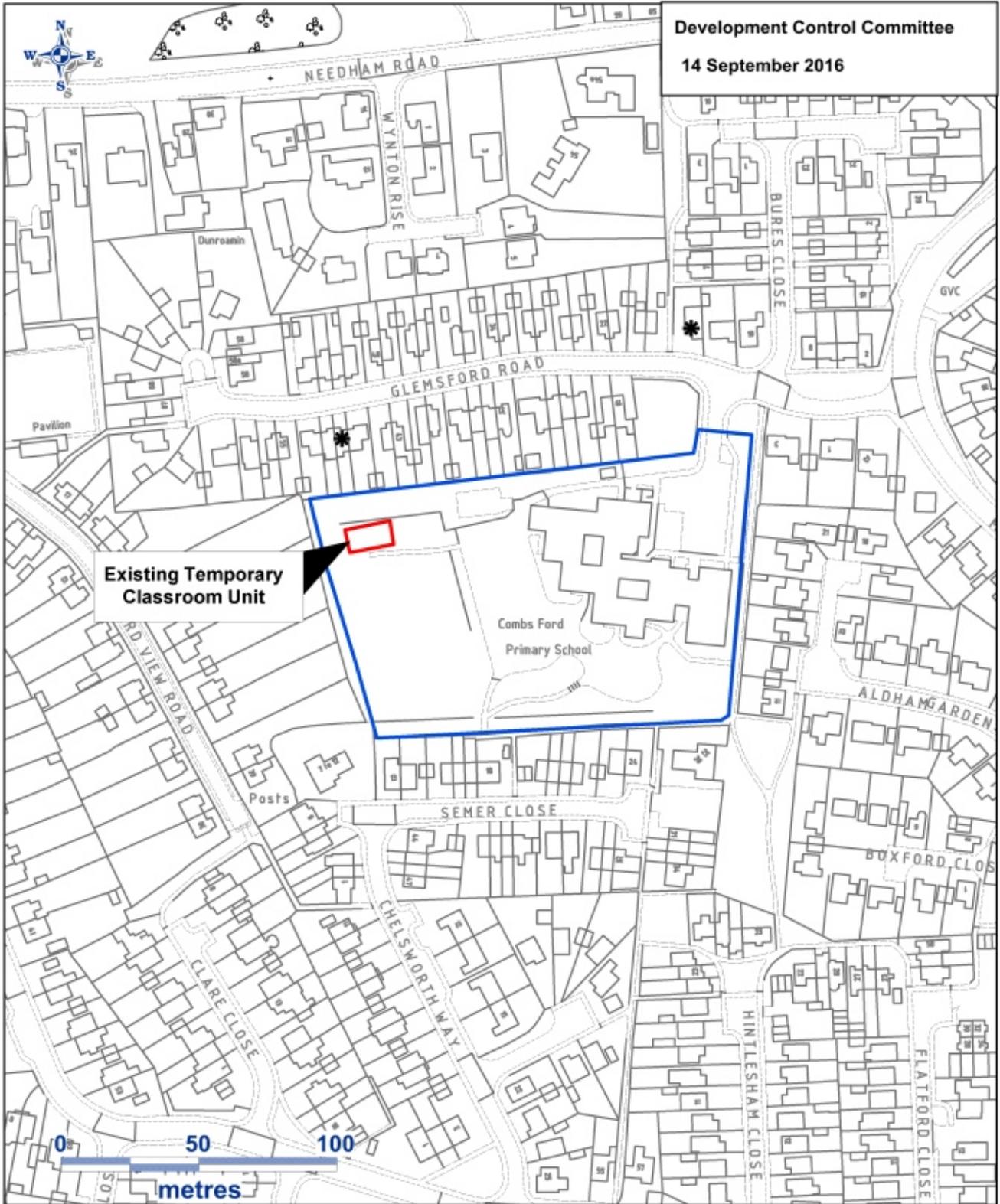
19. The maximum size of the nursery class is small in comparison with the main school which had 399 pupils in 2015-16 and is forecast to have between 402 and 404 in 2016-17.
20. It is anticipated that the nursery will function as a child care facility, for the whole of the working day, allowing parents to drop-off on the way to work, and pick-up on the way home after work. The head teacher has confirmed that the barrier to the school's car park will be raised at these times to allow parents to use this car park, when it will have spare capacity. Parents using the wraparound facility would similarly be able to park in the school car park at these times.
21. These measures should not result in pressure for further on-street parking, and by extending the hours during which some 30 children are dropped off and collected, have the potential to reduce peak hours traffic.
22. The enlargement of the school's car park from 25 to 36 spaces, to be completed by the start of the new school year in September 2016, will also reduce the need for parking on the local highway network.
23. The recent building works have included double glazing and sound insulation to the walls, as well as LED lighting. Given the substantial tree screen between the unit and the nearby back gardens, and the distance from the nearest houses (at least 25 metres), I do not consider residential amenity would be adversely affected by the extended hours of operation.

Conclusion

24. Peak-time congestion on roads close to schools is a widespread problem and Combs Ford Primary School is no exception. The additional hours requested for the nursery and wraparound facility would be outside these peak times, when it will be possible for parents to use the school's car park. In view of this, and the relatively small numbers of children using the nursery, I consider any adverse impact on traffic problems to be slight, and more than outweighed by the public benefit of the intended use.
25. Taking into account the distance from the nearest houses and the belt of trees between, the proposed use would not generate sufficient noise or light pollution to harm residential amenity.

Sources of further information

- a) File reference: SCC\0168\16MS
- b) The application and consultee responses can be viewed at:
<https://secure.suffolkcc.gov.uk/ePlanning/loadFullDetails.do?apllid=13641>



SCC/0168/16MS

COMBS FORD PRIMARY SCHOOL, GLEMSFORD RD, STOWMARKET. IP14 2PN

Retention of unit for Pre-school/wraparound cover between 07.30-18.00 hrs Mon to Fri throughout the year.



Suffolk
County Council

Scale 1:2000

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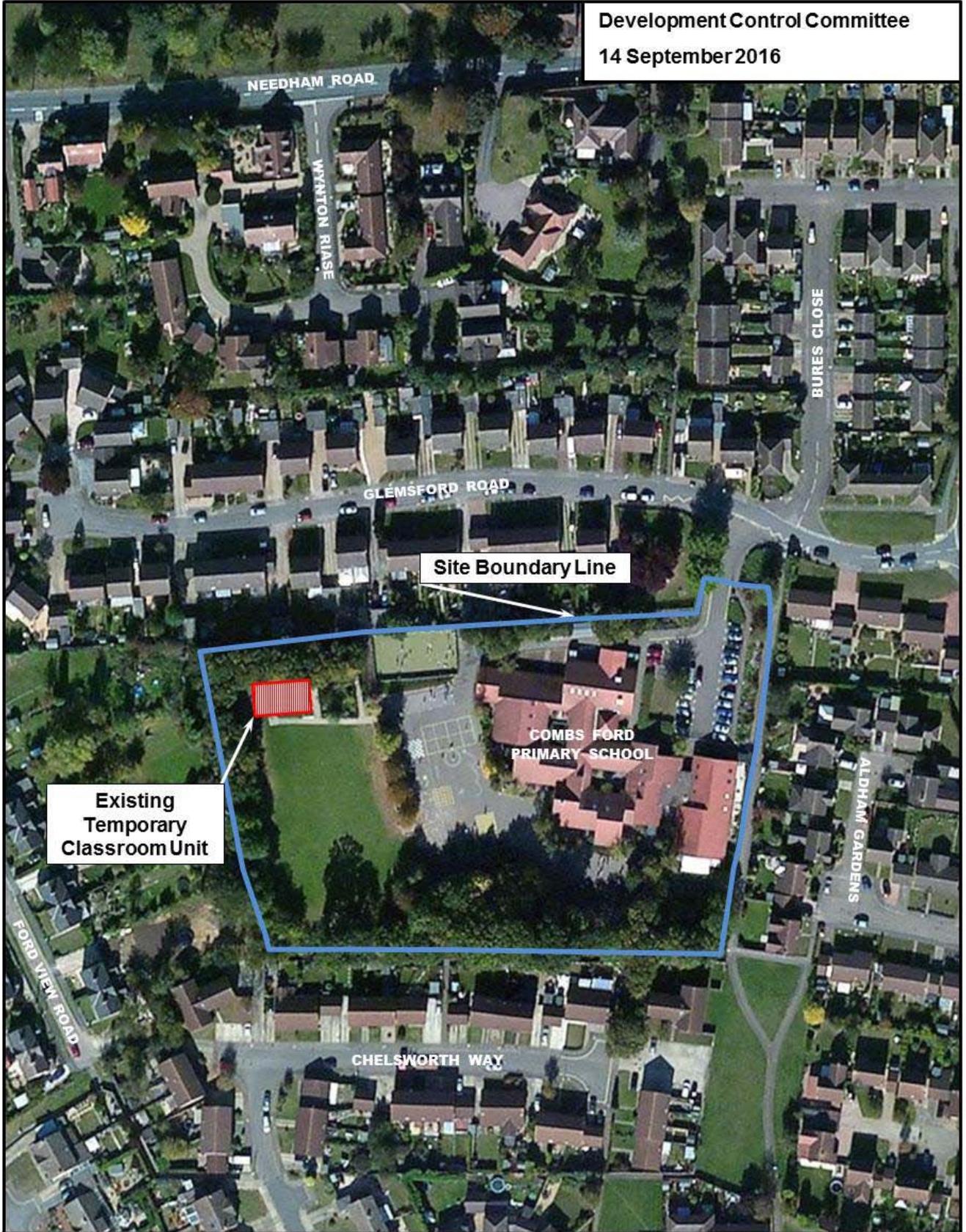
KEY



Boundary of School Site



Objector



Existing
Temporary
Classroom
Unit

Site Boundary Line

COMBS FORD
PRIMARY SCHOOL



Strategic Development
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AERIAL PHOTO – COMBS FORD PRIMARY
GLEMSFORD RD, STOWMARKET IP14 2PN

