PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

TO:	Planning Committee North
BY:	Head of Development and Building Control
DATE:	4th February 2025
DEVELOPMENT:	Erection of a single storey extension to school building and replacement of prefabricated nursery building.
SITE:	St Andrews Church of England Primary School Nuthurst Street Nuthurst West Sussex RH13 6LH
WARD:	Nuthurst and Lower Beeding
APPLICATION:	DC/24/1585
APPLICANT:	**Name:** The Governors **Address:** Nuthurst Street Nuthurst West Sussex RH13 6LH

REASON FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA: More than eight persons in different households have made written representations within the consultation period raising material planning considerations that are inconsistent with the recommendation of the Head of Development and Building Control.

RECOMMENDATION: To approve planning permission subject to appropriate conditions

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 To consider the planning application.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

1.2 The application seeks planning permission to erect a single storey extension to the north-west corner of the main school building, which would create additional staff facilities for the school.

1.3 Permission is also sought for the replacement of an existing prefabricated nursery building which sits towards the south of the site, against the eastern boundary fence and close to the school entrance.

1.4 The applicant has confirmed that the current permanent teaching and admin staff is 19 and that this would not be increased as a result of this application. In addition, the pupil roll at the start of the academic year was 164. The pupil admission number for Autumn 2025 is 20, which corresponds to the number of pupils leaving in summer 2025. Therefore, no significant changes are predicted in pupil and staff numbers. The nursery covers from ages 2-4. The wrap-around care, the pre-school day and post-school day, covers all ages 2-11.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

1.5 The application site relates to St Andrews CofE School, which is located to the south of the Grade II listed St Andrews Church on Nuthurst Street within the Nuthurst Conservation Area. The site is located outside of any defined built-up area but lies within a cluster of ribbon development along Nuthurst Street. The main access to the school site is to the south side of the school, off Harriots Close.

2. INTRODUCTION

STATUTORY BACKGROUND

2.1 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES
The following Policies are considered to be relevant to the assessment of this application:

2.2 **National Planning Policy Framework:**

2.3 **Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF 2015):**
Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
Policy 34 - Cultural and Heritage Assets
Policy 38 - Strategic Policy: Flooding
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking
Policy 42 - Strategic Policy: Inclusive Communities
Policy 41 - Community Facilities, Leisure, and Recreation

2.4 **Nuthurst Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2015-2031):**
Policy 11: Community Facilities
Policy 12: Education Uses

2.5 **Nuthurst Parish Design Statement (2016)**

2.6 **Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):**
Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development
Strategic Policy 8: Sustainable Design and Construction
Strategic Policy 9: Water Neutrality
Strategic Policy 10: Flooding
Strategic Policy 13: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Strategic Policy 17: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Strategic Policy 19: Development Quality
Strategic Policy 20: Development Principles
Policy 21: Heritage Assets and Managing Change within the Historic Environment
Strategic Policy 24: Sustainable Transport
Policy 25: Parking
Strategic Policy 27: Inclusive Communities, Health, and Wellbeing
Policy 28: Community Facilities, Leisure, and Recreation

2.7 PLANNING HISTORY AND RELEVANT APPLICATIONS

DC/19/2390	Erection of a single storey extension to south elevation, refurbishment to existing main entrance and offices and installation of windows and doors to existing early years classroom	Application Permitted on 22.01.2020.
DC/20/2366	Retrospective application for the installation of a free-standing storage container.	Application Permitted on 27.01.2021.
DC/21/2691	Retrospective application for the installation of a free-standing storage container. Application to extend temporary permission granted under DC/20/2366 to temporarily remain in place a further 12 months until January 2023.	Application Permitted on 04.02.2022.
DC/23/0285	Erection of an outbuilding for storage purposes.	Application Permitted on 06.06.2023.
DC/23/1384	Erection of a single storey extension with associated external works	Application Permitted on 10.10.2023.

3. OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS

3.1 Where consultation responses have been summarised, it should be noted that Officers have had consideration of the full comments received, which are available to view on the public file at www.horsham.gov.uk.

INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

3.2 **HDC Arboricultural Officer:** No Objection: -

The proposed classroom extension is partially within the minimum recommended root protection area (RPAs) of a belt of three protected pine trees and an early mature beech tree that all make a positive contribution to the character of the village Conservation Area.

The submitted tree report proposed that the extension will be built utilising specialist construction method and foundations, specifically comprising of a structure supported above the existing ground level with a ventilation void beneath, supported by screw piles, to limit the potential for significant tree root disturbance.

Provided an acceptable specification of engineering is provided in this respect and the submitted methods of tree protection and Arboricultural supervision of construction are adhered to, the extent of potential root disturbance could be kept to a minimum.

3.6 **HDC Conservation:** No Objection: -

The historic school buildings illustrate a nineteenth century sensitivity towards children's education and a national building scheme for village schools. It is a non-designated heritage asset and positively contributes to the character of the conservation area.

The existing covered play area and temporary classroom do not contribute to the historic interest of the school or the character of the conservation area. The proposed replacement building is not attractive, it does not reinforce or enhance the character of the conservation area. However, on balance its siting will not draw attention from the principal elevation of the Victorian school, I am satisfied that the proposed building will have a neutral impact within the conservation area. The proposed staffroom extension is acceptable.

3.9 **HDC Environmental Health:** No Comment.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

3.10 **Southern Water:** No Objection (summarised): -

Southern Water determined the flow rate for the site will remain consistent, so capacity is not an issue, and no Southern Water assets will be affected.

Surface water should not be disposed of into a public foul sewer and must comply with the Hierarchy of H3 of the Building Regulations.

Note that any new connections to the public sewerage system will require a New Sewer Connection application (also known as a Section 106) to be submitted and approved by Southern Water.

3.14 **WSCC Highways:** No Objection (summaried): -

The site is accessed from Nuthurst Street, via Harriots Close. Nuthurst Street is a 'C' classified road subject to a speed restriction of 30 miles per hour. There are no changes proposed to existing access arrangements. WSCC maps have been checked for visibility splays which seem adequate for the posted speed limit. An inspection of data supplied to WSCC by Sussex Police over a period of last five years reveals no reported incidents of personal injury. This indicates the site access junction has been operating in a safe manner in its current form within no highway safety concerns related to road layout or geometry.

The proposed extension appears relatively small in scale, providing spacious environment to accord with modern teaching, as outlined in the Planning Statement. The proposals do not appear to include an increase in student or staff numbers, whilst existing vehicular access and parking arrangements will be unaffected.

The Highway Authority (LHA) do not consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network; therefore, is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraphs 114-117, as revised December 2023. Therefore, there are no transport grounds to resist this proposal.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

3.18 22 representations have been received (from 21 individual addresses), objecting to the application on the following grounds: -

- Increased traffic on Nuthurst Road
- Lack of parking provision
- Increased number of pupils from outside catchment area
- Additional classroom to increase capacity is unacceptable
- Inappropriate development
- Overdevelopment
- Increased risk to safety of children due to increased traffic
- Air and noise pollution
- Lack of need
- Loss of amenity

3.19 **Nuthurst Parish Council**: Support

4. HOW THE PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION WILL PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS

4.1 The application has been considered having regard to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out a person's rights to the peaceful enjoyment of

property and Article 8 of the same Act, which sets out their rights in respect to private and family life and for the home. Officers consider that the proposal would not be contrary to the provisions of the above Articles.

4.2 The application has also been considered in accordance with Horsham District Council's public sector equality duty, which seeks to prevent unlawful discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people in a diverse community, in accordance with Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. In this case, the proposal is not anticipated to have any potential impact from an equality perspective.

5. HOW THE PROPOSAL WILL HELP TO REDUCE CRIME AND DISORDER

5.1 It is not considered that the development would be likely to have any significant impact on crime and disorder.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development:

6.1 Policy 43 of the HDPF states that the provision of new or improved community facilities or services will be supported. This is supported by Policy 11 of the NP, which state that proposals to improve the viability of an established community use (by way of the extension or partial redevelopment of existing buildings) will be permitted.

6.2 The application seeks to erect a single storey extension to the school building and replace the existing prefabricated nursery building. A single-storey extension was approved as part of a preceding application on the site and continues to benefit from an extant planning permission, ref: DC/23/1384. As part of this existing permission, it was considered that the extension would support and supplement the existing space available on the site. The current application seeks to increase the depth of the single-storey extension (by approximately 1.7m) and would continue to be supported by the above polices.

6.3 The current application also includes the replacement of an existing nursery / reception building. The application sets out that the existing building is too small for existing pupil numbers and provides a cramped and unsatisfactory learning environment. The purpose of the replacement classroom is to provide more space and flexibility, to separate the different ages of existing pupils for core curriculum learning. As with the single-storey extension, this element of the scheme would enhance and support the existing use of the site and would be supported by the above policies.

Design and Appearance:

6.4 Policy 32 of the HDPF states that good design is a key element in sustainable development and seeks to ensure that development promotes a high standard of urban design, architecture, and landscape. Policy 33 of the HDPF states that development proposals should make efficient use of land, integrate effectively with the character of the surrounding area, use high quality and appropriate materials, retain landscaping where feasible (and mitigate loss if necessary) and ensure no conflict with the character of the surrounding town or landscape.

6.5 Policy 34 of the Horsham Development Framework aims to sustain and enhance the historic environment through positive management of development affecting heritage assets. By reassuring development preserve and ensure clear legibility of, locally distinctive vernacular building forms and their settings, features, fabric, and materials.

6.6 The proposal includes a single-storey rear extension (which would increase the depth of a previously approved extension by approximately 1.7m). The proposed extension would be a modest extension with external materials and a roof pitch which would match the existing building. The extension is considered to be sited in an appropriate location which together with the scale, design and form would ensure a sympathetic addition which would preserve the character and appearance of the main school building and wider conservation area. This element of the proposal would therefore have no adverse impact on surrounding heritage assets and would accord with the above policies.

6.6 The replacement nursery building would replace an existing prefabricated building which is of no particular design merit, does not contribute to the historic interest of the site and is not worthy of retention. As there is an already lawful flat roof building in situ, there would arguably be a neutral impact with its replacement, and the timber cladding would make the appearance more sympathetic to the surroundings.

6.7 The replacement building would represent an increase in floor space (from 78sq m to 167sq m), with the building flat roofed and externally clad in timber. The building would be visible on the approach to the school, would be well contained within the site, would not draw undue attention from the principle elevation of the Victorian school, and would not appear out of place or inappropriate in respect of the existing educational use of the site. Whilst it is disappointing the opportunity hasn't been taken to provide a building of a higher design standard in this sensitive location within a Conservation Area and close to listed buildings, given there is already a similarly designed building on the site which this is replacing, and therefore there is a neutral impact, this does not justify a reason for refusal in this instance.

6.8 The visual impact of the proposal is therefore considered acceptable, and there would be no adverse effects on the setting of surrounding heritage assets, in accordance with the above policies.

Landscape and Trees:

6.9 The Arboricultural Statement submitted with the application states that the proposed classroom unit is a lightweight structure and will sit above the existing ground level, with the building erected onto ground screws to keep ground disturbance to a minimum and resulting in low impact on nearby trees. The new classroom will extend to within the Root Protection Area (RPA) of a linear group of offsite pine trees. Due to the low-intensity construction of the classroom structure which will sit above ground level and erected onto ground screw-type foundation, it is not considered there would be any further detriment to the trees as a result of building installation.

6.10 The Arboricultural Officer highlighted that the pine trees situated outside the fenced playground are subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and are considered to make a positive contribution to the landscape setting. The submitted tree report proposes the extension to be built using specialist construction method and foundations, supported by screw piles to limit potential for significant tree root disturbance. They were content that provided an acceptable specification of engineering is provided, and the submitted methods of tree protection and Arboricultural supervision of construction are adhered to, that the extent of potential root disturbance could be kept a minimum. For this reason, it is considered that, subject to conditions, the proposed development would be acceptable.

Residential Amenity:

6.11 Policy 33(2) of the HDPF states that permission will be granted for development that does not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of the occupiers/users of nearby properties and land.

6.12 It is acknowledged that there have been over 20 objections to the proposed development, raising concerns which include the impact on noise and increased student numbers. It is though considered that taking into account the nature and scale of the proposal within the surrounding built form, the proposal would not result in unacceptable to neighbouring amenity. The proposed extension and building would be well-contained within the plot and would create improved facilities rather than additional capacity at the site. The nursery building is also a replacement of an existing building and does not increase the existing numbers of pupils. It is not therefore considered that the proposal would create any significant potential for increased or harmful levels of noise or disturbance for adjoining properties or land. The amenity impacts of the proposal are therefore considered acceptable and in accordance with the above policy.

Highways Impacts:

6.13 Policy 40 of the HDPF states that transport access and ease of movement is a key factor in the performance of the local economy. The need for sustainable transport and safe access is vital to improve development across the district. Policy 41 of the HDPF states that adequate parking facilities must be provided within the developments to meet the needs of the anticipated users.

6.14 The proposal seeks to improve existing facilities provided in connection with the lawful established use of the site. The proposal would not result in increased pupil or staff numbers at the site, with no evidence to suggest this would be an inevitable consequence of the development. On this basis, the proposal would not result in increased trips to or from the site and would not result in any adverse impacts on the local road network or affect highway safety. The Local Highway Authority has raised no objections to the proposal, noting that there are no changes to the existing access or parking arrangements.

6.15 It is noted that a number of objections have been received raising concerns in respect of highway safety and parking provision, with these primarily deriving from the educational use of the site. While these are acknowledged it cannot be demonstrated that the proposed development would exacerbate any existing problems in the locality, and it would not be appropriate or reasonable to seek to address any existing issues as part of the current proposal (which is not causing any such issues).

Water Neutrality:

6.16 Horsham District is situated in an area of serious water stress, as identified by the Environment Agency. In September 2021, Natural England released a Position Statement which advised all local authorities within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone that it cannot be concluded that existing water abstraction within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone is not having an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC/SPA/Ramsar sites near Pulborough. The Position Statement advises the affected local authorities that developments within the Sussex North Supply Zone must not therefore add to this impact, and to achieve this, all proposals must demonstrate water neutrality. The definition of water neutrality is the use of water in the supply area before the development is the same or lower after the development is in place.

6.17 In assessing the impact of development on protected habitat sites such as those in the Arun Valley, decision makers must, as the competent authority for determining impact on such sites, ensure full compliance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the Habitat Regulations). The Regulations require that a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) be carried out to determine if a plan or project may affect the protected features of a habitats site before the grant of any planning permission. Section 70(3) of the Regulations requires that planning permission must not be granted unless the competent authority (Horsham District Council) is satisfied that the proposed development

will not adversely affect the integrity of the affected habits site. Section 63 of the Regulations sets out the process by which an HRA must take place.

6.18 The application seeks to improve the quality of facilities provided at the site and there is no evidence to suggest that this would increase water consumption (as pupil and staff numbers would be unchanged). The applicant has however indicated that the existing baseline water consumption is 11.15 l/p/d. The applicant proposes to fit water efficient basin taps in the proposed classroom, reducing the demand to 9.4 l/p/d. This represents a more efficient use of resources and is welcomed.

6.19 The information available and the mitigation measures proposed are considered to provide the necessary certainty to demonstrate that the proposed development would be water neutral. Appropriate mitigation measures have been demonstrated and are considered sufficient to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the interest features of the Arun Valley SPA, SAC, and Ramsar site from the development either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, in accordance with Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), Paragraphs 192 and 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority habitats and species).

Flood Risk and Drainage

6.20 The application site is within a flood risk area and an assessment has therefore been submitted as part of the application. Given the nature of the proposal, the sequential and exception test does not need to be applied, as this is classed as minor development.

6.20 The proposed staff room extension would be constructed over the existing impermeable hard standing area and therefore would not result in an increase in the total contributing surface area or surface water runoff at the site. The proposed finished floor levels (FFL) of the proposed infill extension are set to be no lower than the existing floor level. The drainage strategy is to utilise and maintain the existing drainage on site. A number of mitigation measures have been proposed within the flood risk and drainage strategy report to reduce the effects of flooding should an event occur, such as; introducing removeable flood gates and air brick covers to all doors and air bricks of the property and external surfaces where possible, fall away from the entrance points into the building, with a minimum gradient of 1 in 100.

6.20 The assessment concludes that the development can be constructed without being at an unacceptable risk of flooding and without increased risk to the site. It is considered that the proposal would not result in any increased risk of flooding to users of the site or surrounding properties and land.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):

6.21 Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) mandates that every development must achieve at least a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), unless the development qualifies as exempt under the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

6.22 The applicant has demonstrated that the development is exempt from the requirement to achieve a minimum 10% BNG, as it qualifies as ‘de minimis’ under Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024

Conclusions:

6.23 The proposal is considered to comply with relevant local and national planning policies and is therefore recommended for approval.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to appropriate conditions as detailed below.

1 **Approved Plans**

2 **Standard Time Condition**: The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3 **Pre-Commencement Condition**: No development shall commence, including ground clearance or the bringing of equipment, machinery, or materials onto the site, until details for the classroom extension have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority of the proposed engineered above ground foundation to be supported on screw piles above existing ground levels to be used for the development. The development shall thereafter be carried out in strict accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: As this matter is fundamental to ensure the successful and satisfactory protection of important trees on the site in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

4 **Regulatory Condition:** The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in strict accordance with the Arboricultural Method Statement (by Duckworths Arboriculture, dated 30/09/2024, ref: AMS 06503), including the employment of an on-site arboriculturist to oversee all excavations and works potentially affecting the adjacent protected trees.

Reason: To ensure the successful and satisfactory protection of important trees on the site in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

5 **Regulatory Condition:** The materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall strictly accord with those indicated on the application form and approved plans.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in detail in the interests of visual amenity and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

6 **Regulatory Condition:** The development hereby approved shall be implemented in accordance with the Flood Risk & Drainage Strategy Report (May 2023).

Reason: To ensure that the development is properly drained and protected from flooding to comply with Policy 38 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

Background Papers: DC/24/1585
DC/23/1384