

DR/19/14

committee DEVELOPMENT & REGULATION

date 23 May 2014

COUNTY COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT

Proposal: **New single and double storey annexe to accommodate an additional 210 pupil numbers, together with single storey extensions to the main hall and head teacher's room, the provision of a temporary classbase for a period of 12 months and the provision of 8 new cycle parking spaces.**

Location: **Holy Cross RC Primary School, Tracyes Road, Harlow, CM18 6JJ**

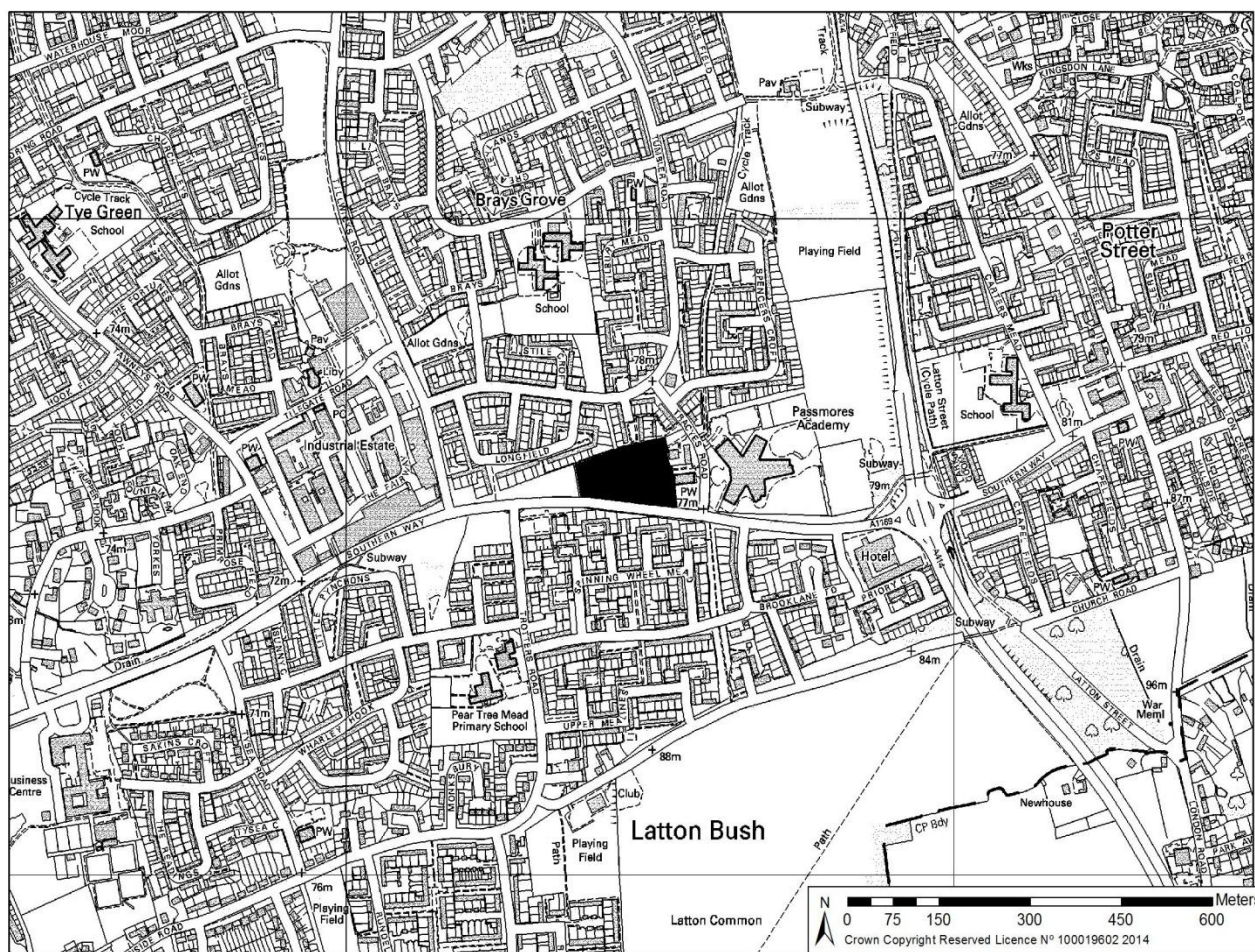
Ref: **CC/HLW/19/14**

Applicant: **Essex County Council**

Report by Director of Operations, Environment and Economy

Enquiries to: Shelley Bailey Tel: 03330136824

The full application can be viewed at www.essex.gov.uk/viewplanning



1. BACKGROUND & SITE

The 1.55ha application site is located north of the A1169 Southern Way in Harlow. It occupies a prominent frontage on the gateway to the Brays Grove estate. Pedestrian and vehicular access is currently provided via Tracys' Road, located off Southern Way.

The site is bounded to the east by the Holy Cross RC Church and Presbytery, to the west by the Longfield and Spencers Croft residential areas, to the north by the Spencers Croft residential area and to the south by Southern Way. The new Passmores Academy is located to the east of the church, across Tracys Road.

The southern and western boundaries are well screened by an existing manicured hedge. The northern and eastern boundaries are more sparsely vegetated.

The existing buildings associated with the Holy Cross Roman Catholic Primary School are a mix of two storey and single storey elements, located centrally to the east of the site, with the playing fields to the west. The buildings date back to the 1960's, with the most recent additions being built in 2003 and 2004.

The site is located within the Green Wedge according to the Adopted Harlow Local Plan.

Development at the school site has been historically permitted by Harlow District Council. The website does not show complete records; however, relatively recent permissions relate to the extension of the car park to provide 8 additional spaces; the erection of a single storey canopy extension and extended playground area; and a single storey extension to provide playground toilets.

2. PROPOSAL

The application is for the expansion of the existing school from a single form entry to two form entry school. Space for an additional 210 pupil numbers is proposed.

The proposed annexe would provide 7 new classrooms, with 2 of those located on the first floor of the proposed two-storey element of the building.

The building would be located to the south of the existing school buildings on an area currently used for informal play.

Extensions to the head teacher's office and main hall are also proposed, together with the location of a temporary classroom to the north of the existing buildings.

8 new cycle parking spaces would be provided.

3. POLICIES

The following policies of the Adopted Replacement Harlow Local Plan, (HLP), provide the development plan framework for this application. The following policies are of relevance to this application:

HLP

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Character and Identity | BE1 |
| Accessibility | BE4 |
| Green Wedge | NE1 |
| Trees and Hedgerows | NE11 |
| Vehicle Parking | T9 |

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012, sets out requirements for the determination of planning applications and is also a material consideration.

Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states, in summary, that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF. The level of consistency of the policies contained within the Harlow District Local Plan is considered throughout the report.

4. CONSULTATIONS

HARLOW DISTRICT COUNCIL – Objects due to insufficient car parking within the school site.

ESSEX FIRE & RESCUE – No objection. Notes that access for fire service purposes appears satisfactory, but that this will be considered further at Building Regulations stage. Reminds the applicant that additional water supplies may be required for firefighting. Strongly recommends the installation of automatic water suppression systems.

Comment: The consultation response has been forwarded to the applicant.

SPORT ENGLAND – No objection, subject to the imposition of a condition relating to the removal of the construction access road prior to the first occupation of the development and for the area to be subsequently reinstated to playing field use.

THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – No specific comments to make. Confirms that the development site lies in Flood Zone 1 and refers to the Flood Risk Standing Advice.

THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S NOISE CONSULTANT – No objection. Comments that the building would need to comply with Building Bulletin 93 (BB93) at Building Regulations stage. Considers it unlikely that the proposed development would give rise to elevated noise at residential receptors; however, seeks confirmation that music would not be played within the temporary classroom proposed in the playground.

HIGHWAY AUTHORITY – No objection subject to the submission of a School Travel Plan prior to occupation.

PLACE SERVICES (Ecology) - No objection subject to a condition restricting tree/shrub removal to outside of 1st March and 1st September unless an ecological assessment has confirmed no species would be adversely affected by such removal.

PLACE SERVICES (Trees) – No objection subject to compliance with the methodology set out in the application.

PLACE SERVICES (Urban Design) – Following confirmation of verge, windows and brise soleil details, raises no objection.

PLACE SERVICES (Landscape) - Following confirmation of plant species, sizing and density, raises no objection.

PLACE SERVICES (Archaeology) – No objection. Confirms that evaluation trenching has established that there is no archaeology on the site. No further work would be required.

LOCAL MEMBER – HARLOW – Harlow South East – Any comments received will be reported.

5. REPRESENTATIONS

42 properties were directly notified of the application. 3 letters of representation have been received. These relate to planning issues covering the following matters:

| <u>Observation</u> | <u>Comment</u> |
|---|--|
| No objection is raised; however clarification is sought on: | |
| - the location of the proposed temporary classroom; | The temporary classroom is proposed on the play area to the north of the existing building, as shown on the submitted drawings. |
| - provision for displaced staff parking and contractors' parking during construction; | Displaced staff car parking is proposed to be located in the playground if required. Contractor's parking would be within the proposed compound or in the playground if necessary. |
| - risk assessment for pupils during construction; | This has been fully considered, with the contractors' access fenced and manned at break times. |
| - consideration of a site entrance off Southern Way; | This was considered but discounted due to highway concerns. |

| | |
|--|--|
| - 7 spaces within the garaged parking area adjacent to the site should be discounted due to the proposed installation of a gate; | The adjacent garaged area does not form part of the application. |
| - Infrastructure changes proposed in the 'park and stride' option are not included in this application and there is no light controlled crossing at Tilegate Road; | Park and stride options would be investigated through a Travel Plan. |
| - Suggests that the parking opposite the Vicar's residence is used as a manned drop off zone rather than for parking. | A drop off zone does not form part of this application. |
| Parents currently park irresponsibly and there is potential for this to worsen. | See appraisal. |
| The last Holy Cross permission has not been adhered to – the front was supposed to be green and is not. | This permission was granted by Harlow District Council and is the responsibility of that Council if there are enforcement requirements. |
| Tracyes Road cannot cope with the current volume of traffic and there is potential for an accident. | See appraisal. |
| Direct neighbour notification was not carried out. | Direct neighbour notification was carried out in accordance with the Adopted Statement of Community of Involvement. The application was also advertised on site and in the local press, in accordance with statutory requirements. |

6. APPRAISAL

The key issues for consideration are:

- A. Need
- B. Policy considerations
- C. Traffic and highway impact
- D. Impact on the environment and amenity

A NEED

Paragraph 72 of the NPPF states :

'The Government attaches great importance to ensuring 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, 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.'*

Holy Cross is currently a 210 place school. The proposed development would allow a doubling of this number to 420 from September 2015 – allowing the school to become a 2 form entry (2FE) school (i.e. admitting 60 pupils per year).

There is a predicted deficit of 76 reception places at Harlow schools in 2014/15. This has potential to rise to 88 places with new housing being built. Essex County Council as the Local Authority has commissioned 60 places elsewhere, resulting in an additional need for between 16-28 places in 2014/15. The predicted need rises over the following years.

The proposed temporary classroom is required to house this additional intake scheduled for September 2014. The proposed new building would be in place by September 2015, thus allowing the temporary classroom to be removed.

The head teacher's room is currently below standard for a 2FE school. The proposed extension would also usefully allow meetings to take place within this room.

The Department for Education standard for hall provision for a 2FE school is 230m². Currently, the school has a useable hall area of 142m². The proposed extension would assist with provision for whole school assemblies.

It is therefore considered that there is an identified general need for expansion of schools in Harlow. Whether this need is specific to the Holy Cross school is considered further in the report.

B POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Holy Cross is located within the Green Wedge, as identified by the Adopted Harlow Local Plan.

HLP Policy NE1 (Green Wedge) seeks to protect the Green Wedge from inappropriate development. In summary, only small scale and replacement buildings will be permitted, and such development must not have an adverse effect on the roles of the Green Wedge.

It is not considered that the development would compromise the roles of the Green Wedge or would adversely harm the amenities afforded in this location.

Although Harlow District Council has raised an objection to the development, the

accompanying report confirms that the principle of this development in the Green Wedge is not objected to and it concurs with the statement above.

In addition to the need for reception pupil places identified previously in the report, the overall demand for primary school places across Harlow has also seen an increased demand for places at Catholic primary schools.

Holy Cross is a Roman Catholic School. The Diocese of Brentwood has confirmed its desire for the particular expansion of Holy Cross school, as well as the school's location in an area with overall need for additional primary school places.

The alternative to providing space at Holy Cross school would be the transportation of pupils across Essex to schools that do have capacity. This would have cost and journey time implications and could also affect the integration of the community with the school as a community asset.

The school shares close ties with the Holy Cross Church, the church hall and presbytery, thereby reinforcing its purpose of serving the local community.

The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with HLP Policy NE1.

C TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY IMPACT

HLP Policy T9 (Vehicle Parking), in summary, requires that vehicle parking shall be provided in accordance with the adopted Vehicle Parking Standards.

The adopted standards for Essex are the Parking Standards: Design and Good Practice dated September 2009. The maximum vehicle parking standards for primary education are 1 space per 15 pupils.

For a 420 place school such as that proposed, this would equate to a maximum requirement for 28 parking spaces.

A Transport Statement has been submitted with the application. It proposes the use of 60 car parking spaces, 3 of which are for disabled drivers.

Harlow District Council has objected to the development due to insufficient parking facilities within the school site.

It is acknowledged that the school site can only provide 24 vehicle parking spaces. The remaining 36 spaces are outside of the application site boundary. However, the applicant has confirmed that the land is under the same ownership of the school.

In light of this, the applicant has also confirmed that there would be sufficient parking for the proposed school expansion, the existing nursery and the church.

In addition, the application proposes staggered starting times so that there is not coincidental pressure with the opening times at Passmores Academy.

The Highway Authority has raised no objection, subject to the submission of a School Travel Plan prior to occupation. It is considered that this could be required by informative should permission be granted.

The Highway Authority also acknowledges that there are local issues regarding the short term parking by parents along Tracyes Road; however, this is for a limited period at the beginning and end of the school day, during term time.

The Highway Authority notes that the school will be updating and monitoring their travel plan as part of the application and it is clear from its content that the school is doing everything possible to promote sustainable modes of travel to and from school by encouraging parents and pupils to walk/cycle to school where possible and discourage inappropriate parent parking.

The provision of additional parking restrictions in the vicinity of the school has not been considered as part of this application, or required by the Highway Authority, as it is considered by the Highway Authority that this would do little to solve the short term school parking and there are already extensive existing parking restrictions in place in the vicinity.

The proposal to change the school starting time so as not to coincide with Passmores Academy is considered by the Highway Authority to greatly help alleviate the traffic impact to the benefit of all highway users.

Taking into account the fact that the parking standards are maximum standards which may be lowered where the educational establishment is located in an urban area with good access to alternative forms of travel, and considering the proposed Travel Plan, the use of parking space agreement and the proposed staggered start times, it is considered that the development would not have undue impact on highway safety or local amenity through traffic generation or parking.

The proposed development is therefore considered to comply with HLP Policy T9.

D IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITY

Design

HLP Policy BE1 (Character and Identity) requires, in summary, that all new and extended buildings should relate to their setting and strengthen, enhance, protect or create local character.

The proposed development is considered to be ideally located within the site, avoiding visual or noise impact on the residential properties to the north.

The design style would follow that of the extensions built in 2003 and 2004 in terms of form and material type. The roof would be constructed from zinc and would be mainly sloping, thereby reducing the impact towards Southern Way.

A mix of vertical timber cladding, buff yellow facing bricks to match existing, white

aluminium windows to match existing, blue grey zinc verges and soffits, and blue bricks on the window detailing, is proposed to reflect the existing building whilst remaining sympathetic to the surroundings.

It is therefore considered that the proposed building and extensions would not over dominate the existing building and would be appropriate in their setting, in compliance with HLP Policy BE1.

The proposed temporary classroom, whilst not of a design which would usually be considered acceptable for a permanent building, would be fit for purpose. It would be located in a suitable position on site to allow convenient access from the main buildings whilst avoiding impact on the sports facilities and adjacent residential properties. Given its temporary nature, it is not considered that it would result in any significant harm to the appearance of the school site, in compliance with HLP Policy BE1. It is considered that a condition could be imposed requiring its removal by 30th September 2015, in the event that permission is granted.

The location of the building would avoid undue impact on the existing sports facilities. The long jump area would be permanently relocated within the site to make way for the new building but the playing fields themselves would not be impacted upon except during construction. Sport England has requested the removal of the construction access prior to the first occupation of the development and for the area to be subsequently reinstated to playing field use. This is considered to be a reasonable requirement to ensure the playing pitch provision is not compromised in the long term, and it is therefore considered that an appropriately worded condition could be imposed, in the event that permission is granted.

HLP Policy BE4 (Accessibility), in summary, requires that educational buildings provide for access for people with disabilities.

The proposed development is considered to comply with this policy.

It is further noted that the Urban Design Officer has raised no objection.

Landscape

HLP Policy NE11 (Trees and Hedgerows), in summary, requires a tree survey, opposes the loss of important trees and may impose conditions to replace them or protect them during construction.

A Weeping Willow tree is located in the south east corner of the site. A Tree Survey has been submitted with the application and proposes that the tree would be protected during construction. The Tree Officer has no objection to this approach, subject to a condition securing the proposals within the Tree Survey. It is considered that such a condition would be appropriate, in the event that permission is granted.

The Ecologist has raised no objection, subject to a condition restricting tree/shrub removal to outside of 1st March and 1st September unless an ecological

assessment has confirmed no species would be adversely affected by such removal.

The applicant has confirmed that no trees or shrubs would be removed between 1st March – 1st September in any year; however it is considered that, for certainty, a condition could be imposed in the event that permission is granted.

It is therefore considered that the proposals would comply with HLP Policy NE11.

Amenity

The proposed location of the new permanent building would be to the south of the existing school building, between it and Southern Way. It is considered that this is the most appropriate location to ensure minimal impact on amenity, since the adjoining properties are located to the north.

In terms of noise, the County Council's Noise Consultant considers it unlikely that the proposed development would give rise to elevated noise at residential receptors; however, seeks confirmation that music would not be played within the temporary classroom proposed in the playground.

Taking into account the temporary nature of the classroom and considering the proximity of residential properties, it is considered that a condition could be imposed, in the event that permission is granted, to ensure that noise would not adversely affect residents.

It is therefore considered that the proposals would not have any significant undue impact on the surrounding environment or local amenity.

7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is considered that, not only is there a general need for additional school places across Harlow, there is an identified specific need at the application site. There is also a temporary need for a temporary classroom

It is recognised that there is local objection to additional traffic generation in the area. The applicant has proposed adequate vehicle parking spaces, in accordance with the adopted standards. The applicant has also proposed a School Travel Plan which actively encourages alternatives means of travel. It is considered that this complies with HLP Policy T9.

The design of the proposed building, extensions and temporary classroom are considered to be appropriate for the area, in compliance with HLP Policies BE1 and BE4.

The applicant proposes to protect the existing Weeping Willow tree and to plant additional vegetation across the site, in accordance with HLP Policy NE11.

Further, the overall impact on amenity is not considered to be significant.

In balancing the need for the development against the potential impacts, and taking account of the proposed mitigation measures, it is considered that there is no reason to refuse permission and the development would be suitable within the Green Wedge, in compliance with HLP Policy NE1.

The economic, social and environmental gains of the proposed development are considered to have been proven, thereby constituting sustainable development, for which there is a presumption in favour according to the NPPF.

It is further considered that the policies referred to in this report are consistent with the NPPF.

8. RECOMMENDED

That pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, planning permission be **granted** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiry of 5 years from the date of this permission. Written notification of the date of commencement shall be sent to the County Planning Authority within 7 days of such commencement.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the details of the application dated 03 March 2014, cover letter dated 07 March 2014, together with
 - Design Analysis for Proposed Extension and Alteration Works by Roffmarsh Partnership Ltd;
 - Supporting Planning Statement by Capita dated 28 February 2014;
 - Report to Cabinet Member dated 12 December 2013;
 - Statement of Community Involvement;
 - Consultation on proposals to increase primary provision in Harlow from September 2014 dated November 2013;
 - Sustainability Statement;
 - Statement of Utilities and Services;
 - Construction Statement;
 - Transport Statement by Robert West dated February 2014;
 - Noise survey and assessment by Adrian James Acoustics Ltd dated 14 February 2014;
 - Flood Risk Assessment by GTA Civils Ltd dated 09 April 2014;
 - Soft Landscape Specification by Wynne-Williams Associates dated February 2014;
 - Specification by Wynne-Williams Associates dated April 2014
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal by Essex Ecology Services Ltd dated January 2014;
 - Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Preliminary Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan by Hayden's Arboricultural Consultants dated 21 February 2014;

- Archaeological Evaluation by Trial-Trenching dated February 2014;
- Emails from Roffmarsh dated 08 April 2014, 09 April 2014, 10 April 2014, 14 April 2014, 16 April 2014, 17 April 2014, 01 May 2014, 06 May 2014;
- Email from the School Organisation Officer dated 15 April 2014

together with drawing numbers:

- 1401/LL/101 Rev A dated 04/14/14;
- 1401/LD/501 dated 04/04/14;
- 1401/LP/301 Rev A dated 08/04/14;
- HD/9254/03A dated 08/05/14;
- 3943-D dated 21/02/14;
- 3875-E-302 Rev P1 dated 19/02/14;
- DBS/13692/01 Rev P2 dated 20/02/14;
- M340/WD21/T1 dated March 2014;
- M340/F1 dated May 2013;
- M.340/F2 dated May 2013;
- M340/F3 dated October 2013;
- M340/F5 dated January 2014;
- M340/F6 dated January 2014
- M340/F7 dated January 2014;
- M340/F9 dated February 2014;
- M340/F10B dated 08/05/14;
- M340/F11 dated February 2014;
- M340/F12 dated February 2014;
- M340/F13 dated February 2014;
- M340/F14 dated February 2014;

And in accordance with any non-material amendment(s) as may be subsequently approved in writing by the County Planning Authority, except as varied by the following conditions: -

3. No removal of trees or shrubs shall be carried out on site between 1st March and 1st September inclusive in any year, unless an ecological assessment has been undertaken, submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority which confirms that no species would be adversely affected by the removal of trees/shrubs.
4. The temporary construction access shown on drawing ref M340/F10A dated 08/05/14 shall be removed and the land shall be reinstated to playing field use prior to the first beneficial occupation of the development hereby permitted.
5. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the tree protection methodology as set out in the Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Preliminary Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan by Hayden's Arboricultural Consultants dated 21 February 2014 and drawing ref 3943-D dated 21/02/14.
6. The use of the temporary classbase hereby permitted, as shown on drawing

ref M340/F10B dated 08/05/14, shall cease by 30 September 2015 and within 3 months of that date the unit shall be removed from site and the land restored to its former condition within a further 28 days.

7. Adequate control measures shall be applied to ensure noise emanating from the temporary classroom shown on drawing ref M340/F10B dated 08/05/14 does not result in adverse noise impacts to nearby residents. This may include, but is not restricted to, the closing of windows, aural observations at the site boundary and minimisation of the use of amplified music.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Consultation replies
Representations

THE CONSERVATION OF HABITATS AND SPECIES REGULATIONS 2010

The proposed development would not be located adjacent to a European site.

Therefore, it is considered that an Appropriate Assessment under Regulation 61 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 is not required.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This report only concerns the determination of an application for planning permission. It does however take into account any equality implications. The recommendation has been made after consideration of the application and supporting documents, the development plan, government policy and guidance, representations and all other material planning considerations as detailed in the body of the report.

STATEMENT OF HOW THE LOCAL AUTHORITY HAS WORKED WITH THE APPLICANT IN A POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE MANNER

The County Planning Authority has attended numerous pre-application meetings with the applicant and facilitated pre-application consultations where appropriate.

Throughout the determination of the application, the applicant has been kept up to date with consultation responses and progress. Additionally, the applicant has been given the opportunity to address any issues with the aim of providing a timely decision.

LOCAL MEMBER NOTIFICATION

HARLOW – Harlow South East