

Agenda Item	A9
Application Number	23/00982/PAD
Proposal	Prior approval for the demolition of former Skerton High School, caretakers house and bunker
Application site	Former Skerton High School Owen Road Lancaster Lancashire
Applicant	Mr Andrew Whittaker
Agent	Mr Steven Healey
Case Officer	Mrs Petra Williams
Departure	N/A
Summary of Recommendation	Prior Approval of Further Details is Required.

(i) Procedural Matters

This form of development would normally be dealt with under the Scheme of Delegation. However, the application has been applied for by Lancaster City Council, and as such the application must be determined by the Planning Committee.

1.0 Application Site and Setting

1.1 The site that forms the subject of this application comprises of buildings associated with the former Skerton Community High School located between Mainway and Owen Road. The main school building closed in 2014 however, two blocks (one to the south of the application site and one to the east) have subsequently been re-occupied as Chadwick High School. These buildings would be unaffected by the proposal.

1.2 The site is surrounded by predominately residential properties other than Ryeland's Park which is situated to the west of the site. The extensive playing fields to the front of the site are designated as Open Space as are the tennis courts to the east of the main building. The access driveway from Owen Road is lined with mature cherry trees and to the front of the building there is a substantial amount of overgrown shrubs and tree planting. A single tree adjacent to the northern part of the site (within the rear garden of 1 Pinfold Court) is subject to a Tree Preservation Order.

1.3 The site is within an Air Quality Management Area Zone 1 and within the Morecambe Bay Duddon SPA Buffer zone for residential development.

2.0 Proposal

2.1 This application seeks a determination as to whether prior approval is required for the demolition of the former Skerton High School building, caretakers house and bunker. The site is subject to emerging redevelopment proposals, and the demolition of the redundant buildings would help accelerate site enabling works and subsequent delivery of new development.

3.0 Site History

3.1 A submission for pre-application advice relating to the future re-development of this site has previously been received by the Local Planning Authority.

4.0 Consultation Responses

4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory and internal consultees:

Consultee	Response
County Highways	No comments received at the time of writing this report. A verbal update will be provided at the Committee meeting.
Environmental Health	No comments received at the time of writing this report. A verbal update will be provided at the Committee meeting.
Arboricultural Officer	No comments received at the time of writing this report. A verbal update will be provided at the Committee meeting.

4.2 The following responses have been received from members of the public:

- No comments received at the time of writing this report. A verbal update will be provided at the Committee meeting.

5.0 Analysis

5.1 The key considerations in the assessment of this application are:

- Whether the proposal benefits from permitted development rights under GPDO Schedule 2, Part 11, Class B Demolition
- Protected species
- Method of demolition and restoration of the site

5.2 **Whether the proposal benefits from permitted development rights under GPDO Schedule 2, Part 11, Class B Demolition**

5.2.1 The purpose of an application Under Class B, Part 11, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (GDPO) is for the Local Planning Authority to determine whether prior approval will be required for the method of demolition and any proposed restoration of the site. The purpose of this control is to give local planning authorities the details of demolition in order to minimise the impact on that activity in the local amenity.

5.2.2 The demolition of a building is subject to five conditions, development is not permitted if:

- A) The building has been rendered unsafe through the actions or inaction of any person having an interest in the land on which the building stands and it is practicable to secure safety or health by works of repair or works for affording temporary support.
- B) The demolition is classed as relevant demolition
- C) The building was last used as a drinking establishment
- D) The building was last used as a concert hall/venue hall/theatre
- E) The demolition relates to a statue, memorial or monument which has been in place for a period of 10 years.

5.2.3 The building appears to be in a structurally sound condition albeit with cosmetic issues which could be rectified. The building has not been rendered as unsafe. The demolition does not constitute relevant demolition as the site is not located within a Conservation Area. In addition, the building while currently not occupied was last in use as a dwelling and agricultural barn, not a drinking establishment, concert hall/venue hall/theatre or statue, memorial or monument.

5.2.4 As such, it is considered that the proposed demolition is permitted development and it is only the manner in which the demolition is to be carried out and the restoration of the land upon which the building stands which determines whether prior approval will be required.

5.3 **Protected species**

5.3.1 Although protected species are not specifically referred in Schedule 2 Part 11 Class B of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO), Regulation 9 of 'The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010' still applies. This states that the "competent authority must exercise their functions which are relevant to nature conservation... so as to secure compliance with the requirements of the [Habitats] Directive". Accordingly, competent authorities must consider the Directives in making decisions relating to any of their planning functions. Therefore, even though there is no 'reminder' in the GPDO, protected species must still be considered.

5.3.2 This application is accompanied by a bat survey which has assessed the subject buildings. This survey included an emergence survey undertaken on the May 2023 which identified no bat activity arising from the subject buildings. Bats were seen foraging over the site. It was concluded that there were no indications of use of the site by bats for roosting or barn owls for nesting. It advises that the site should be rechecked for nesting birds if demolition work is to commence in the period March-September inclusive.

5.4 **Method of demolition and restoration of the site**

5.4.1 This application is accompanied by a Method Statement, a Programme of Works, an Environmental Management Plan and covering letter. The details contained within the submitted documents set out the way in which the proposed demolition will take place in a safe manner. Although the submitted Method Statement sets out that "No trees to be removed or roots damaged unless specifically marked on tree protection plan" (this intention has also been confirmed by the applicant), no Tree Protection Plan or Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been provided. As such the submission has failed to show that the method of demolition will not result in detrimental impact on the surrounding trees. Consequently, further details will be required in this regard.

5.4.2 The Environmental Management Plan sets out that working hours of 07.30 to 18:00 Monday to Friday will be strictly adhered to with no noisy operations commencing prior to 08:00hrs or after 18:00hrs. No machines will be started up or demolition works commenced before the hours of 08.00hrs. Demolition will not occur, or machines operated after the hours of 18.00hrs Monday to Friday. Welfare and temporary parking facilities are to be located to the rear of the former school building with all demolition traffic taken off Mainway to the east of the site. There would be no deliveries or collections at peak school drop off and pick-up times to avoid conflicts with Chadwick High School. The submitted Environmental Management Plan also sets out how dust will adequately be dealt with.

5.4.3 Following demolition waste material and concrete will be crushed and recycled on site. Where material cannot be recycled it will be removed from site and recycled in an appropriate manner. As set out in section 2.1 of this report it is anticipated that the site will be redeveloped. In terms of restoration, in the intervening period the submission sets out that it is intended to utilise crushed material and aggregate to level the site and the footprint of the former school and caretaker's house. The bunker located to the north of the former school building would also be filled with the material. This is acceptable but it is considered that further details are required with regard to how the site will be enclosed following demolition and prior to the anticipated development commencing. As such details of boundary treatments will be required.

6.0 **Conclusion**

6.1 Although the planning authority would have no objections to the demolition of the building (and the subsequent redevelopment of the site), the submitted application fails to address matters relating to tree protection during demolition and how the site will be screened following demolition. Given the time scales of a prior approval for demolition application and the lack of detailed information within the submission it is considered that further details are required.

Recommendation

That **PRIOR APPROVAL OF FURTHER DETAILS IS REQUIRED** and shall include the following details:

Condition no.	Description	Type
1	An Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan needs to be submitted to assess potential of demolition on trees and how these will be protected during demolition works.	
2	Details of boundary treatments to the site following the demolition process.	