

<b><u>No:</u></b>	<b>BH2019/01385</b>	<b><u>Ward:</u></b>	<b>Withdean Ward</b>
<b><u>App Type:</u></b>	<b>Full Planning</b>		
<b><u>Address:</u></b>	<b>Varndean College Surrenden Road Brighton BN1 6WQ</b>		
<b><u>Proposal:</u></b>	<b>Retention of existing 8no temporary classrooms for a further temporary period of five years.</b>		
<b><u>Officer:</u></b>	Sonia Gillam, tel: 292265	<b><u>Valid Date:</u></b>	09.05.2019
<b><u>Con Area:</u></b>		<b><u>Expiry Date:</u></b>	04.07.2019
<b><u>Listed Building Grade:</u></b>		<b><u>EOT:</u></b>	24.07.2019
<b>Agent:</b>	NTR Planning	Clareville House	26-27 Oxendon Street London SW1Y 4EL
<b>Applicant:</b>	Varndean College	Varndean College	Surrenden Road Brighton BN1 6WQ

## 1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1. That the Committee has taken into consideration and agrees with the reasons for the recommendation set out below and resolves to **GRANT** planning permission subject to the following Conditions and Informatives:

### Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings listed below.  
**Reason:** For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

<b>Plan Type</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Date Received</b>
Location Plan	957/18/01	Rev F	9 May 2019

2. The temporary classroom buildings hereby permitted shall be permanently removed from the site within five (5) years of the date of this permission or when they are no longer required, whichever is the earlier. The land shall be restored to its condition immediately prior to the buildings being situated on the land within two months of removal of the buildings in accordance with a scheme of work to be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.  
**Reason:** The structures are not considered suitable as a permanent form of development and permission is therefore granted for a temporary period only to comply with policies CP12, CP16 and CP17 of the Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One.

### Informatives:

1. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy SS1 of the Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One the approach to making a decision on this planning application has been to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Local Planning Authority seeks to approve planning applications which are for sustainable development where possible.

## **2. SITE LOCATION & APPLICATION DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1. The application relates to a further education college site located in the north-west corner of the Surrenden campus, which it shares with Downsview Link College, Dorothy Stringer School, Varndean School and Balfour Primary School. The site is bounded by Surrenden Road to the north and west, Draxmont Way to the south and Friar Road and Friar Crescent to the east, all of which are residential streets.
- 2.2. The application seeks permission for the retention of the existing 8 no. temporary classrooms for a further temporary period of five years. 7 no. buildings are to the north of the main College building and 1no building is to the front of the College; the current temporary permissions (refs: BH2014/02176 and BH2014/02172) expire on 16 December 2019 and 29 October 2019 respectively. No increase in student numbers or alterations to the blocks or site layout is proposed.
- 2.3. It is noted that two further temporary classrooms currently exist on site, as part of the cluster of temporary buildings to the rear of the site but fall outside of the scope of this application. These are to be removed as part of the implementation of application (ref: BH2018/02404) for the STEM building. This is secured by way of planning condition 2 of the 2018 permission which requires for the classrooms to be removed within 18 months of the permission or within 3 months of commencement of use of the STEM building, whichever is sooner.

## **3. RELEVANT HISTORY**

- 3.1. There is an extensive planning history for additional and replacement college buildings and alterations on the site. Of greatest relevance to this application are the following:-
- 3.2. **BH2018/02404** Relocation of 2no modular classroom blocks and erection of a two storey Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) centre with associated cycle parking and landscaping alterations (retrospective).
- 3.3. **BH2015/01497** Erection of second floor extension to east attic to house fire escape stairs with associated alterations. (Retrospective). Approved 02.10.2015.
- 3.4. **BH2014/02176** Retention of existing temporary classrooms for a further period of five years. (Retrospective). Approved 16.12.2014.
- 3.5. **BH2014/02172** Retention of existing temporary classroom for a further temporary period of five years. (Retrospective). Approved 29.10.2014

- 3.6. **BH2014/01793** Installation of new classroom accommodation within section of roof space to East side of East quadrangle with associated. Approved 10.11.2014
- 3.7. **BH2013/03153** Erection of single storey extension to existing gymnasium. Approved 20.12.2013
- 3.8. **BH2012/00296** Installation of new classroom accommodation within the roof of the North facing slope of the quadrangles. Approved 26/03/2012.
- 3.9. **BH2011/03056** Installation of additional floor over existing hall incorporating pitched to flat roof alterations and associated works. Approved 06/02/2012.
- 3.10. **BH2009/02423** Provision of 7 No. temporary classroom blocks for 5 year period. (Retrospective). Approved 08/02/2010.
- 3.11. **BH2008/02854** Demolition of existing college with erection of replacement college and nursery (D1) with associated car parking and landscaping. Approved 08/05/2009.
- 3.12. **BH2007/02040** Erection of 2 temporary portacabins to the east of existing mobile classrooms in connection with educational (D1) use for 3 years. Approved 16/08/2007.
- 3.13. **BH2006/02084** Renewal of Planning Permission BH2003/02467/FP for temporary classrooms 43-45. Approved 22/08/2006 (for 3-years).
- 3.14. **BH2006/02082** Renewal of planning permission BH2003/02486/FP for temporary classrooms 48-50. Approved 22/08/2006 (for 3-years).
- 3.15. **BH2005/05154** Renewal of temporary planning consent for humanities huttred classroom (Hut G). Approved 28/09/2005 (for 5-years).

#### **4. REPRESENTATIONS**

- 4.1. Eleven (11) letters have been received. The main grounds for objection to the development are as follows:
  - Loss of open space
  - Loss of recreation/ teaching space
  - Overdevelopment
  - Unnecessary expansion
  - Increased traffic and impact on environment
  - Restriction of view
  - Design and appearance
  - Loss of biodiversity
  - Temp buildings not removed
  - Impact on property values

## 5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1. **Sport England:** No objection to the temporary classrooms on the basis that the area where they are sited is incapable of catering for a playing field.
- 5.2. **Education:** No objection Verbal comment:  
Predicted peak demand for spaces at Sixth Form level will be in 2020/21 and 2021/22
- 5.3. **Sustainable Transport:** Verbal comments No objection

## 6. MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1. In accordance with Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, this decision has been taken having regard to the policies and proposals in the National Planning Policy Framework, the Development Plan, and all other material planning considerations identified in the "Considerations and Assessment" section of the report
- 6.2. The development plan is:
- Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One (adopted March 2016)
  - Brighton & Hove Local Plan 2005 (retained policies March 2016);
  - East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Plan (adopted February 2013);
  - East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Sites Plan (adopted February 2017);
- 6.3. Due weight has been given to the relevant retained policies in the Brighton & Hove Local Plan 2005 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.

## 7. POLICIES

### The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

#### Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One

SS1	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CP9	Sustainable transport
CP12	Urban design
CP16	Open space
CP17	Sports provision

#### Brighton and Hove Local Plan (retained policies March 2016):

TR7	Safe Development
TR14	Cycle access and parking
SU9	Pollution and nuisance control
SU10	Noise Nuisance
QD27	Protection of amenity
HO19	New community facilities
HO20	Retention of community facilities

## **8. CONSIDERATIONS & ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1. The key issues of consideration in the determination of this application relate to the need for the temporary classroom accommodation; the impact on residential and landscape amenity; and the loss of open space. A neighbour objection refers to the potential impact on property values from the development; this is however not a material planning consideration.

### **Background:**

- 8.2. There have been numerous temporary consents for the initial construction of temporary classroom buildings and their subsequent retention (see relevant history). The existing buildings have been in situ for several years and provide valuable teaching accommodation for the college's current pupil numbers. The College is currently operating at capacity.
- 8.3. Planning Permission was granted by Planning Committee in 2009 for demolition of the existing college building and construction of a replacement college and day nursery (ref: BH2008/02854). As part of this application it was considered that existing college buildings were not fit for purpose and there was an educational need for the development. This permission was not implemented due to the Learning and Skills Council (the main Government funding body for the Further Education Sector), being in financial deficit and all major further education schemes were halted.
- 8.4. Varndean College has therefore sought to effectively manage its existing buildings and estate since this time and has been forced to adopt an incremental approach in meeting its accommodation needs as and when funding becomes available. There have also been a number of recent developments, which provide more suitable and permanent accommodation for the College, such as the roof extensions to the main building, the extension to the gymnasium and the permission for a new STEM building (approved 2018).
- 8.5. As part of the application for the STEM Centre, an indicative masterplan was provided to show a potential future development option involving the removal of all temporary accommodation to the rear of the site and its replacement with a permanent, horseshoe-shaped building which would provide all of the necessary teaching facilities to meet the College's needs.
- 8.6. The submission documents explain that this remains the College's long-term goal, and indeed the completion of the STEM building will result in the removal of two of the existing temporary units on site to begin to deliver the gradual replacement of temporary with permanent facilities. However, in the absence of any funding for the design and delivery of the masterplan project in the short term, the remaining existing temporary accommodation remains

crucial for the College to continue to provide the necessary teaching space for its students.

- 8.7. As a result of this uncertainty in delivering the replacement College facilities this application has been submitted seeking the retention of 8 no. temporary classrooms. The applicant has advised that the temporary accommodation on site provides critical classroom floorspace for Varndean College to meet its basic educational needs and this application seeks the renewal of the existing temporary permission to safeguard its retention and continued use pending completion of the College's long term masterplan objectives.

**Planning Policy:**

- 8.8. The area within the campus comprises a grassed area in the centre of the school grounds which is of a sloping nature and is at a lower level than the adjoining playing field. The area is designated as open space of the "schools grounds and sports pitch" typology. Policy CP16 supports better, more effective and appropriate use of existing open space. Policy CP17 seeks the enhancement and more effective use of existing sports facilities and spaces.
- 8.9. The presence of the temporary classroom buildings has meant that this part of the site has not served a visual or physical open space purpose for a significant number of years and is not required for open space use by the College.
- 8.10. The temporary classrooms are sited on sloping ground at an appreciably lower level than the adjoining sports fields. This creates clear separation that ensures the classrooms do not impact or restrict the range of uses which can take place on the sports fields. Sport England raises no objection to the temporary classrooms on the basis that the area where they are sited is "incapable of catering for a playing field".
- 8.11. The provision of temporary classrooms is therefore accepted, on the basis that, subject to funding, a permanent solution will eventually be secured which would allow for restoration of part of the land to an informal use.

**Visual Impact:**

- 8.12. The classroom buildings are constructed from powder-coated cladding and are of little architectural merit. By their nature they appear as detached incongruous elements of the site which do not make a positive contribution to the visual quality of the environment.
- 8.13. However it is noted that the land to the rear of the proposed building slopes steeply up towards the College playing fields. Within the context of the adjoining permanent college buildings they are not overly dominant and in medium to long views from the north the visual impact is reduced by their siting and changes in ground level across the site.
- 8.14. Furthermore it is recognised that two temporary classrooms would be removed on completion of the STEM building (ensured by condition relating

to the 2018 permission), lessening the visual impact of these temporary structures, which would be welcomed.

- 8.15. The classroom buildings are not considered to be suitable permanent solutions to the recognised shortage of teaching accommodation at the College. However in the immediate future, other than the STEM building, there is no likelihood of more permanent teaching accommodation coming forward and refusal of the application would result in a significant deficit at the College. This is a material planning consideration in itself. The visual impact of the classrooms is therefore considered to be acceptable on a temporary basis.
- 8.16. It is noted that there are objections from neighbours referencing that not all the temporary buildings have been painted green as per a condition on a historic planning permission. The classrooms colours range from muted green and brown tones and are reasonably low key in colour terms. There was no requirement under the previous planning permissions granted in 2010 or 2015 for the classrooms to be painted green, and this would not warrant refusal of the planning application.

**Impact on Amenity:**

- 8.17. Policy QD27 of the Brighton & Hove Local Plan states that planning permission for any development or change of use will not be granted where it would cause material nuisance and loss of amenity to the proposed, existing and/or adjacent users, residents, occupiers or where it is liable to be detrimental to human health.
- 8.18. The classroom buildings are located in excess of 40 metres from the boundaries of the rear gardens of the properties in Friar Walk and Friar Crescent, and 120 metres from the nearest houses in Surrenden Road. Given the distances involved no direct impact, with regard to overlooking, overshadowing, or loss of outlook, has resulted.
- 8.19. It is noted that the aim of the retention of the existing classrooms is not to increase student numbers at the College and therefore would not cause a heightened nuisance in terms of increased activity and noise.

**Sustainable Transport:**

- 8.20. It is recognised that the College generates significant parking demands both on and off site, in addition to demand for public transport and cycling infrastructure.
- 8.21. It is noted that a travel plan and details of cycle parking are requested by condition on completion, and prior to use, of the STEM building subject of application BH2018/02404.
- 8.22. However, retention of the existing temporary classrooms, as mentioned previously, would not lead to an increase in student or staff numbers at the College and as such the application would not create any additional demand for travel. On this basis the Council's Sustainable Transport Team do not

object to the application and it would not be necessary or reasonable to require contributions towards the provision of sustainable transport infrastructure.

**Other considerations:**

- 8.23. Several of the letters of objection from neighbours refer to the re-opening of Mid-Sussex College, Haywards Heath in 2020 and the potential reduction in student numbers at Varndean College as a result of this.
- 8.24. The College currently operates at capacity and there is no intention to increase student numbers at the present time, not until additional Government funding becomes available for the delivery of the masterplan.
- 8.25. The College does not consider that the re-opening of Mid Sussex College will have a significant impact on enrolments at Varndean College. Prior to the closure of Mid Sussex College, 7-9% of enrolments at Varndean College originated from this area. This increased as Mid Sussex College deteriorated and then closed with Varndean College receiving a peak of 12% of their enrolments from the Haywards Heath area in 2015.
- 8.26. It is reasonable to expect that not all of these students will be diverted away with the reopening of Mid Sussex College in 2020, although it is recognised that enrolments from this area could feasibly fall back to their base levels of 2012/13. The College estimate that they will lose no more than 20-30 students per year group as a result of the reopened Mid Sussex College.
- 8.27. Furthermore, this small loss is likely to be made up for by local demographic changes, notably the increased number of students currently in attendance at Brighton High Schools. The Council's Schools Officer has advised that predicted peak demand for spaces at Sixth Form level will be in 2020/21 and 2021/22

**Sustainability:**

- 8.28. City Plan Part One Policy CP8 seeks to ensure that all new development incorporates sustainable design features to avoid expansion of the city's ecological footprint. The modular and temporary nature of the buildings means there is little that could reasonably be done to achieve full compliance with this policy, as would normally be sought. This is reflected by the previous permissions for the buildings which have not sought any details in relation to sustainability. Whilst consent is now sought for a further 5-year period the same limitations are considered to apply and refusal of the application on sustainability grounds would not be warranted.

**Conclusion:**

- 8.29. The temporary classroom buildings provide essential teaching accommodation for Varndean College. It is acknowledged that they have been in situ for an extended period of time and are recognised as being an undesirable and temporary solution to a deficit of teaching accommodation. There is a proposed Masterplan in place to overcome the existing shortfall of



teaching accommodation. However, there is uncertainty as to when funding will be available to deliver the next phase of the Masterplan.

- 8.30. The continued use of open space and resulting visual impact of the existing classrooms is therefore considered acceptable on a temporary basis and would allow the continued provision of much needed teaching accommodation for students at the College whilst funding for permanent solutions are sought.
- 8.31. The classrooms do not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring amenity, due to their siting in relation to neighbouring and will not result in an increased demand for travel. A further 5 year temporary planning permission for the existing classrooms is therefore recommended.

## **9. EQUALITIES**

- 9.1. The classrooms benefit from either a front entrance ramp or level access from the rear where the ground level is higher. These access arrangements are considered sufficient to allow access for those with limited mobility.

