

 Nottinghamshire County Council	Report to Planning & Licensing Committee
	10th January 2012
	Agenda Item:10
REPORT OF GROUP MANAGER PLANNING	
LONG TERM STRATEGY FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF TEMPORARY MODULAR BUILDINGS AT SCHOOL SITES	

Purpose of Report

1. To feedback to Members on the outcome of discussions held with Officers as to the County Council's strategy for the replacement of temporary modular buildings at school sites. The report is for noting.

Background

2. Members will recall at the meeting of 8 November 2011, in considering a planning application for the retention of a temporary modular classroom at Lowes Wong Junior School, Southwell, that a meeting was being planned between Chair and key Officers from the Planning Group with the Service Director, Planning Support and Improvement, Children, Families and Cultural Services. That meeting was organised with a view to understanding the County Council's long term strategy for the replacement of temporary modular buildings on school sites with permanent facilities where appropriate and where finances allowed. The meeting took place on 8 November 2011.
3. It was explained that the meeting had been called with a view to understanding the County Council's long term strategy given that Planning and Licensing Committee continued to see a steady stream of planning applications seeking the renewal of temporary planning permissions for modular buildings at school sites. Whilst often modular buildings provide a useful and cost effective means of resolving a short-term accommodation deficiency, such as a blip in pupil numbers, in other cases such buildings have been the subject of several applications to extend the temporary periods for which they are permitted to be retained on school sites. It was argued that in such circumstances, where there continues to be an on-going need for such accommodation, steps ought to be made to provide more suitable permanent facilities subject to the obvious tight financial constraints within which County Council must operate.

Strategy

4. The Service Director, Planning Support and Improvement, was able to confirm that a strategy is in place and noted that currently 139 modular buildings are under consideration. A bid has been put in for a £100M refurbishment programme including an element set aside for replacing modular buildings. The strategy firstly categorised the use of the buildings as either 'classroom' or 'other' (such as wrap-around care) and then established the owner such as the school, Diocese, Sure Start etc. The list was then prioritised with regards to planning approvals and the modular buildings ranked by NCC Property according to their condition.
5. Education Area Officers were asked to comment on basic need and where it was considered that a school no longer required a modular building, the school was asked to justify its use. In the absence of suitable justification a building was listed for removal along with possible transfer locations.
6. NCC Property were asked to assess the potential for transferring modular buildings identified for removal and the costs associated with such transfer and any necessary upgrading. The schools were notified that, where a modular building belonged to them, they were responsible for securing planning permission. Members will recall recently being previously advised of a review of modular buildings at school sites which led to small proportion being the subject of applications to regularise the planning position where permission had lapsed.
7. Given that the strategy has identified more sites requiring modular buildings than there are such buildings available for transfer, Education Area Officers have drawn up a priority list.
8. In responding to the central issue of providing a permanent solution, the Service Director explained that the expression of parental preference makes it difficult to assess long-term need and, in such cases, felt a permanent building inappropriate given this fluctuating need. It was also highlighted that often the need for the accommodation is immediate and modular buildings represent the obvious short-term solution.
9. Whilst such comments were recognised, it was reiterated that it is those instances whereby modular buildings seek multiple renewals of temporary permissions which need to be addressed and it is hoped that the strategy in place, together with any future funding successfully secured, enables those sites which have clearly identified on-going needs to have that accommodation of a suitably appropriate design for permanent retention. A good example of that would appear to relate to the application reported elsewhere on this agenda where the proposed renewal of a modular building is required to ensure that the school's year groups are taught separately.

Other Options Considered

10. The report is for information.

Human Rights Act Implications

11. The relevant issues arising out of consideration of the Human Rights Act have been assessed in accordance with the Council's adopted protocol and it appears that no human rights under Article 8 and Article 1 of the First Protocol are affected.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, Crime and Disorder and users. Where such implications are material, they have been brought out in the text of the report.

RECOMMENDATION

13. It is RECOMMENDED that the report be noted and Members support the proposed approach.

SALLY GILL
Group Manager (Planning)

Constitutional Comments

Because this report is for noting only no constitutional comments are required.

[SHB.20.12.11]

Comments of the Service Director - Finance

The contents of this report are duly noted, there are no financial implications.

[DJK 20.12.11]

Background Papers Available for Inspection

None.

Electoral Division and Member Affected

All.

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For any enquiries about this report please contact the report author.

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