

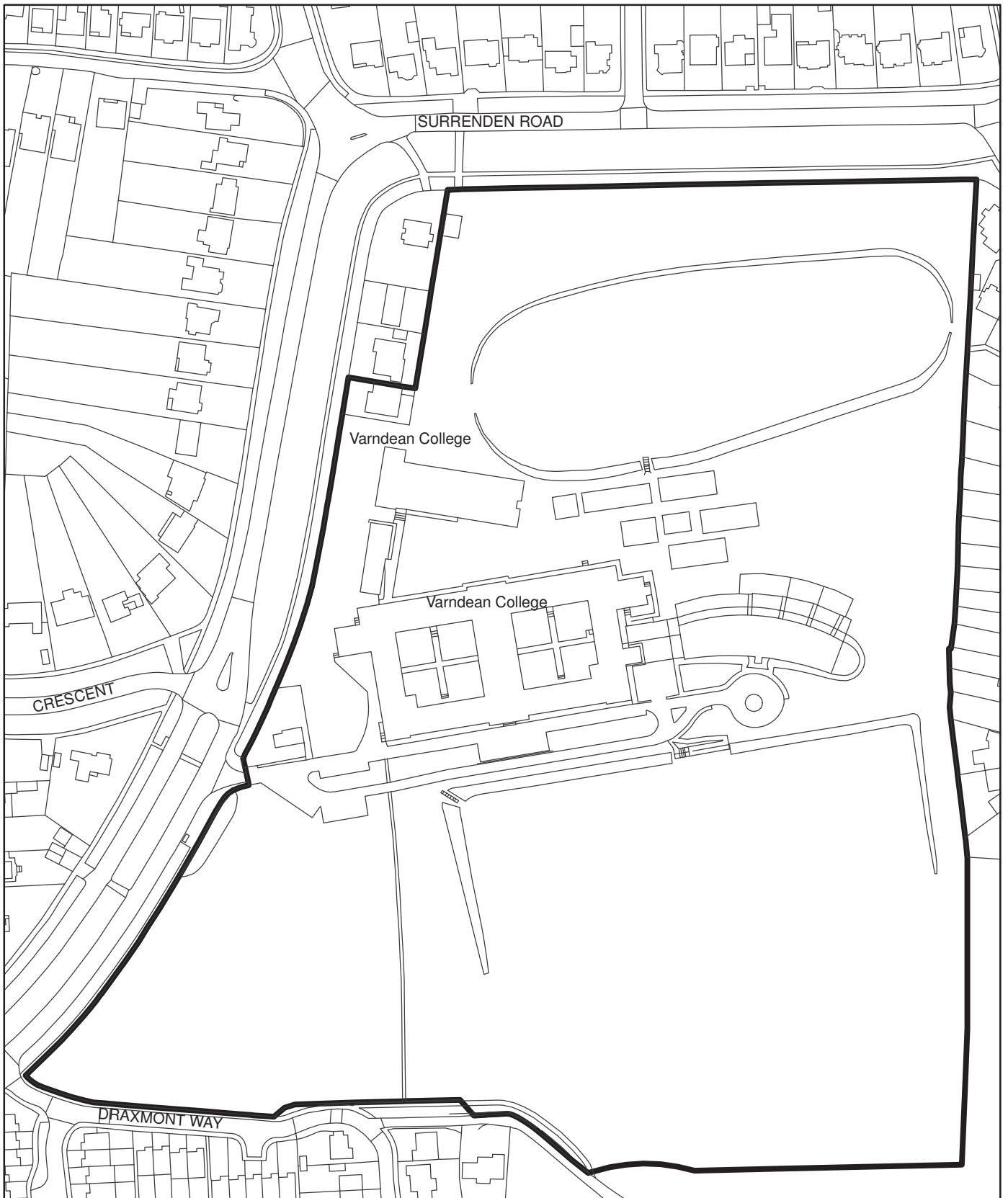
# **ITEM C**

**Varndean College, Surrenden Road,  
Brighton**

**BH2014/02176  
Full planning**

**10 DECEMBER 2014**

# BH2014/02176 Varndean College, Surrenden Road, Brighton



<b><u>No:</u></b>	<b>BH2014/02176</b>	<b><u>Ward:</u></b>	<b>WITHDEAN</b>
<b><u>App Type:</u></b>	<b>Full Planning</b>		
<b><u>Address:</u></b>	<b>Varndean College Surrenden Road Brighton</b>		
<b><u>Proposal:</u></b>	<b>Retention of existing temporary classrooms for a further period of five years. (Retrospective)</b>		
<b><u>Officer:</u></b>	Helen Hobbs Tel 293335	<b><u>Valid Date:</u></b>	04 July 2014
<b><u>Con Area:</u></b>	N/A	<b><u>Expiry Date:</u></b>	03 October 2014
<b><u>Listed Building Grade:</u></b>	N/A		
<b><u>Agent:</u></b>	NTR Planning, Clareville House, 26-27 Oxendon Street, London SW1Y 4EL		
<b><u>Applicant:</u></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 in section 11 and the policies and guidance in section 7 and resolves to **GRANT** planning permission subject to the Conditions and Informatives set out in section 11.

## 2 SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The application relates to the Varndean College site on the eastern side of Surrenden Road which, with the surrounding playing fields, covers an area of approximately 8.4 hectares. The site is bounded by Draxmont Way to the south, Surrenden Road to the north and west, and Friar Crescent, Friar Walk and Friar Road to the east.
- 2.2 The main College building, dating from the 1930's, is located centrally with its main elevation and entrance facing south across the playing fields. To the rear of this building are 9 detached single-storey teaching buildings: this application relates to 7 of these buildings.
- 2.3 The College site forms part of a larger educational campus containing Balfour Infant and Junior Schools, Varndean High School and Dorothy Stringer High School. The surrounding area is otherwise largely residential.

## 3 RELEVANT HISTORY

There have been numerous applications on the site. Of relevance to this application are:-

**BH2014/02172:** Retention of existing temporary classroom for a further period of five years (retrospective). Approved 28/07/14.

**BH2014/01793:** Installation of new classroom accommodation within section of roof space to East side of East quadrangle with associated alterations. Under consideration.

- BH2013/03153:** Erection of single storey extension to existing gymnasium. Approved 20/12/2013.
- BH2012/00296:** Installation of new classroom accommodation within the roof of the North facing slope of the quadrangles. Approved 26/03/2012.
- BH2009/02423:** Provision of 7 no. temporary classroom blocks for a 5 year period (Retrospective). Approved 08/02/2010.
- BH2008/02854:** Demolition of existing college with erection of replacement college and nursery (D1) with associated car parking and landscaping. Approved 08/05/2009.
- 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.
- BH2006/02084:** Renewal of Planning Permission BH2003/02467/FP for temporary classrooms 43-45. Approved 22/08/2006 (for 3-years).
- BH2006/02082:** Renewal of planning permission BH2003/02486/FP for temporary classrooms 48-50. Approved 22/08/2006 (for 3-years).
- BH2005/05154:** Renewal of temporary planning consent for humanities hutted classroom (Hut G). Approved 28/09/2005 (for 5-years).
- BH2004/01851/FP:** Renewal of planning permission BH2001/01009/FP for temporary classroom. Approved 12/08/2004 (for 3-years).
- BH2004/01848/FP:** Renewal of planning permission BH2001/01375/FP for temporary classroom. Approved 12/08/2004 (for 3-years).
- BH2003/02486/FP:** Renewal of planning permission (BH2000/01616/FP) for temporary classroom. Approved 25/09/2003 (for 3-years).
- BH2003/02467/FP:** Renewal of planning permission BH1998/00344/FP for temporary classroom. Approved 25/09/2003 (for 3-years).
- BH2002/01774/FP:** Erection of temporary classroom. Approved 05/09/2002 (for 3-years).
- BH2001/01375/FP:** Erection of temporary classroom. Approved 30/07/2001 (for 3-years).
- BH2001/01009/FP:** Renewal of temporary consent for one mobile classroom. Approved 27/06/2001 (for 3-years).
- BH2000/01616/FP:** Erection of temporary classroom (Retrospective). Approved 14/12/2000 (for 3-years).
- BH1998/00344/FP:** Renewal of temporary permission 95/0245/FP to allow further use of a temporary classroom. Approved 09/04/1998 (for 5-years).
- 96/0478/FP:** Renewal of temporary consent for one mobile classroom (previous reference 91/0516/CC). Approved 25/06/1996 (for 5-years).
- 95/0245/FP:** Retention of previously approved mobile classroom for a further temporary period of 5 years (renewal of application ref. 90/0877/F/CC). Approved 22/03/1995 (for 3-years).
- 91/0516/CC/FP:** No objections to the erection of mobile classroom unit 11/06/1991.

#### **4 THE APPLICATION**

- 4.1 The application seeks consent for the retention of 7 classroom blocks to the north of the main college building. The current temporary permission (BH2009/02423) expires on 28/02/2015. The classrooms provide approximately 1157 sq metres of additional floorspace. No alterations to the blocks or site layout are proposed.

## 5 PUBLICITY & CONSULTATIONS

### External

5.1 **Neighbours: One (1)** letter of representation has been received from **7 Friar Walk** objecting to the application for the following reasons:

- Site safety;
- Access;
- Traffic management and increase in levels of noise and traffic;
- Failure to comply with conditions on previous applications to paint the buildings green;
- The buildings are inappropriate in design and out of keeping with the original college buildings.

5.2 **County Ecologist:** No objection.

5.3 **Southern Gas Networks:** Comment

No mechanical excavations should take place above or within 0.5m of low and medium pressure system or within 3m of the intermediate pressure system in the proximity of the site.

5.4 **Sussex Police:** No objection.

5.5 **Sports England:** No objection.

The classroom blocks are sited on a grassed area in the centre of the school site. From aerial images it is understood the grassed area is incapable of catering for a playing pitch due to its sloping nature.

5.6 The proposal therefore meets an exception of playing fields policy in that:-

*“The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins), a reduction in the size of the playing areas of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting / ancillary features on the site.”*

5.7 **County Archaeologist:** No objection.

5.8 **UK Power Networks:** No objection.

5.9 **Southern Water:** No objection.

### Internal:

5.10 **Environmental Health:** No comment.

5.11 **Planning Policy:** No comment.

5.12 **Sustainable Transport:** No objection.

There will not be any increase in student numbers to the site. In light of this the proposals are not considered to have a negative impact upon the highway or increase trips to and from the site.

## **6 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that “If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”
- 6.2 The development plan is:
- Brighton & Hove Local Plan 2005 (saved policies post 2007);
  - East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Plan (Adopted February 2013);
  - East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Minerals Local Plan (November 1999); Saved policies 3,4,32 and 36 – all outside of Brighton & Hove;
  - East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Waste Local Plan (February 2006); Saved Policies WLP 7 and WLP8 only – site allocations at Sackville Coalyard and Hangleton Bottom and Hollingdean Depot.
- 6.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration.
- 6.4 Due weight should be given to relevant policies in the development plan according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.
- 6.5 The Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One (submission document) is an emerging development plan. The NPPF advises that weight may be given to relevant policies in emerging plans according to their stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies to the policies in the NPPF.
- 6.6 All material considerations and any policy conflicts are identified in the “Considerations and Assessment” section of the report.

## **7 RELEVANT POLICIES & GUIDANCE**

### The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

#### Brighton & Hove Local Plan:

- SU2 Efficiency of development in the use of energy, water and materials
- QD1 Design - quality of development and design statements
- QD2 Design - key principles for neighbourhoods
- QD5 Design - street frontages
- QD15 Landscape design
- QD16 Trees and hedgerows
- QD20 Urban open space
- QD27 Protection of amenity
- HO19 New community facilities
- HO20 Retention of community facilities
- SR20 Protection of public and private outdoor recreation space

#### Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One (submission document)

- SS1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

## **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 potential loss of open space.

### **Background:**

- 8.2 There have been numerous temporary consents for the initial construction of classroom buildings and their subsequent retention (see section 3). The buildings provide valuable teaching accommodation for the college's current pupil numbers.
- 8.3 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 consent 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. The college have been in discussions with the Local Planning Authority regarding a phased master plan. There have also been a number of recent applications, which will provide more suitable and permanent accommodation for the college, such as the roof extensions to the main building (approved in 2012 and works are currently underway) and the extension to the gymnasium (approved 2013).
- 8.5 As a result of the uncertainty in delivering the replacement college facilities this application has been submitted seeking the retention of 7 temporary classrooms for which temporary planning permission expires on 28/02/2015. 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.

### **Visual impact:**

- 8.6 Local plan policy QD1 requires all new buildings to demonstrate a high standard of design and to make a positive contribution to the visual quality of the environment; policy QD2 requires new developments to fit in with the existing grain and scale of the neighbourhood; with policy QD4 aiming to resist proposals that would restrict strategic views.
- 8.7 The classrooms are constructed from powder-coated cladding and are of little architectural merit and by their nature appear detached incongruous elements of the site. However, within the context of the adjoining college buildings they are not overly dominant and in medium to long views the visual impact is reduced by their siting and changes in ground level across the site (in views from the north). There was no requirement under the previous planning permission granted in



2010 for the classrooms to be painted green, as raised by the neighbour. The visual impact of the classrooms is therefore considered acceptable on a temporary basis.

- 8.8 The application site has significant areas of open space and together with the main College building forms an attractive feature seen for a considerable distance across the City. In this context, the classroom buildings are inappropriate features of the site and are not suitable permanent solutions to the recognised shortage of teaching accommodation at the college. However, in the immediate future 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.

**Open & recreational space:**

- 8.9 Local plan policy QD20 states that permission will not be granted for proposals that would result in the loss of important private or public open space; with policy SR20 aiming to protect important public and private outdoor recreation space.
- 8.10 The classrooms are sited on sloping land between the main college building and formal sports fields to the north. The 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. On this basis Sport England has raised no objection to the proposal and notes that the area on which the classrooms are sited is *'incapable of catering for a playing pitch'*.
- 8.11 There have already been temporary permissions for the classrooms subject of this application (see section 3) and the approved replacement college building (ref: BH2008/02854) encompasses land on which the temporary classrooms are sited. The retention of the existing classrooms on a temporary basis is not considered to result in the effective loss of important open space, or displace or reduce the amount of space currently available for informal recreation, and there is an expectation that a more permanent solution will be secured which would allow for restoration of the land to an informal use.

**Impact on neighbouring amenity:**

- 8.12 The classroom buildings are located approximately 75 metres from houses in Friar Walk and Friar Crescent, and 120 metres from the nearest houses in Surrenden Road. At this distance no direct impact, such as overlooking or overshadowing, has resulted. The buildings are viewed against the backdrop of the main school building and the impact on outlook is limited having regard to the significant long distance views that adjoining properties enjoy.
- 8.13 The classrooms subject of this application are a considerable distance from adjoining residential properties and uses within them do not appear to have led to undue noise disturbance that would warrant refusal of this application. It is also noted that retention of the existing classrooms would not increase student numbers at the college and would not therefore result in additional noise disturbance above that already existing.



- 8.14 The buildings have not attracted significant levels of graffiti or vandalism and appear to be well maintained. The building is raised above ground level, due to the sloping nature of the site, but there is no evidence that significant problems result from any use of the void below the building by wildlife.

**Transport:**

- 8.15 Policies TR1 and TR7 aim to ensure that proposals cater for the demand in traffic they create, and do not increase the danger to users of adjacent pavements, cycle routes and roads.
- 8.16 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. However, retention of the existing classrooms, as mentioned previously, would not increase student 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 either contributions towards the provision of sustainable transport infrastructure or a school travel plan.

**Sustainability:**

- 8.17 Policy SU2 requires development proposals to demonstrate a high standard of efficiency in the use of energy, water and materials. 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 initial, and later, consents 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:**

- 8.18 Although the classrooms have been in situ for an extended period of time they are recognised as being an undesirable and temporary solution to a deficit of teaching accommodation with the college. Pre-application discussions have taken place about a masterplan to overcome the existing shortfall of teaching accommodation. However, there is much uncertainty as to whether funding will be available to deliver this development.
- 8.19 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 more permanent solutions are sought. A further 5 year temporary planning permission for the existing classrooms is therefore recommended.

**9 CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The classrooms, although inappropriate as a permanent form of development, provide essential teaching accommodation for Varndean College. Having regard to their temporary nature and the limited visual impact the classrooms are acceptable in the short to medium term and will continue to provide a

needed community facility. The classrooms do not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring amenity, due to their siting in relation to neighbouring properties and the existing use of the site; and will not result in an increased demand for travel.

**10 EQUALITIES**

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

**11 PLANNING OBLIGATION / CONDITIONS / INFORMATIVES**

Regulatory Conditions:

1. The temporary classroom buildings hereby permitted shall be permanently removed from the site and the land reinstated to its former condition by 31 December 2019 or when they are no longer required, whichever is the earlier. A scheme of works setting out how the removals take place and the land reinstated shall be submitted to 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 QD1, QD2, QD20 and SR20 of the Brighton & Hove Local Plan.

2. 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.

Plan Type	Reference	Version	Date Received
Site location plan	GEN181/B-100		1 <sup>st</sup> July 2014
Elevations and floor plans	09.260		4 <sup>th</sup> July 2014
Aerial photographs			1 <sup>st</sup> July 2014

Informatives:

1. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy SS1 of the Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One (submission document) 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. This decision to grant Planning Permission has been taken:

(i) having regard to the policies and proposals in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Development Plan, including Supplementary Planning Guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents: (Please see section 7 of the report for the full list); and

## PLANNING COMMITTEE LIST- 10 DECEMBER 2014

(ii) for the following reasons:-

The classrooms, although inappropriate as a permanent form of development, provide essential teaching accommodation for Varndean College. Having regard to their temporary nature and the limited visual impact the classrooms are acceptable in the short to medium term and will continue to provide a needed community facility. The classrooms do not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring amenity, due to their siting in relation to neighbouring properties and the existing use of the site, and will not result in an increased demand for travel.

