

<b>Development Management Ref No</b>	<b>No weeks on day of committee</b>	<b>Parish of</b>	<b>Ward</b>	<b>Listed by:</b>
F/2014/2633	15/15	Shinfield	Shinfield South	Scheme of Delegation

<b>Applicant Location</b>	Wokingham Borough Council Shinfield C Of E Junior School Chestnut Crescent Shinfield Reading	<b>Postcode</b> RG2 9EJ
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**Proposal** Proposed erection of additional 860sqm floorspace to include 6 new classrooms, SEN/group room, improved library facilities and studio hall. Also the change of use of 8858sqm of agricultural land to non-residential institution for use by the school with parking and additional features.

<b>Type</b>	Full
<b>PS Category</b>	18
<b>Officer</b>	Ashley Smith

<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Planning Committee on 01/04/15
<b>REPORT PREPARED BY</b>	Head of Development Management and Regulatory Services

<b>SUMMARY</b>
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The proposal is for a number of alterations to Shinfield Junior School. The application will provide new classrooms, SEN facilities, studios and library as well as allow the reconfiguring of play surfaces, sports facilities and increased parking.

The need for the new classroom space has been identified in the on-going strategic review into primary school provision, which showed a likely shortfall in primary and infant school provision as a result of rising numbers of primary age children in Wokingham Borough. Shinfield has an urgent need for increased capacity and the proposed new classrooms and facilities will provide space for an additional form of entry required to meet the Borough's educational need.

The application is brought before the Committee as the site is owned by Wokingham Borough Council and the proposed development will result in additional staff and pupils attending the school.

## PLANNING STATUS

- Modest Development Location (All land with new buildings or hard surfacing is within settlement limits)
- Countryside (Area for replacement sports field)
- SPA 5km and 7km Mitigation Zone
- 5km Nuclear consultation zone
- Sand and gravel extraction
- Land liable to flooding (Existing and replacement sports field)

## RECOMMENDATION

**That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION by the Head of Development, subject to the ecological holding reasons being satisfactorily overcome, no objection being raised by the Environment Agency and conditions as follows (as well as any additional conditions required by the Environment Agency or Borough Ecologist):**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

*Reason: In pursuance of Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.*

2. Before any part of the development is commenced (with the exception of the construction of replacement play space and creation of additional playing field), samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the buildings shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory.*

*Relevant Policy: Core Strategy Policy CP3*

3. This permission is in respect of the following drawings:

Drawing No	Title

*Full schedule of all relevant plans to be included in Member's update.*

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

*Reason: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.*

4. No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations, shall take place other than between the hours of 7.00am and 6pm Monday to Friday and 8.00am and 1pm Saturday, and at no time on Sundays or Bank or national holidays, unless agreed in writing with the LPA.

*Reason: To protect the occupiers of neighbouring properties from noise and disturbance outside the permitted hours during the construction period. An earlier start time than usually permitted is recommended in this case in the interests of health and safety.*

*Relevant Policies: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3*

5. No development (with the exception of the construction of replacement play space and creation of additional playing field) shall commence until a surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydro geological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed.

*Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding, to improve and protect water quality, improve habitat and amenity, and ensure future maintenance of these.*

*Relevant Policies: NPPF*

6. No development of the new school buildings shall occur until the replacement sports field has been provided.

*Reason: To ensure the continued availability of sporting and play facilities at the site. Not replacing the field may have led to a different recommendation being made on the site.*

*Relevant Policies: NPPF*

7. No part of the new building hereby permitted shall be occupied or used until the vehicle parking and turning space has been provided in accordance with the approved plans, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The vehicle parking shall not be used for any other purpose other than parking and the turning space shall not be used for any other purpose other than turning.

*Reason: To ensure a satisfactory form of development and to avoid adverse impact on the public highway in the interests of highway safety.*

*Relevant Policies: CP6 and NPPF.*

8. No development shall commence (with the exception of the construction of

replacement play space and creation of additional playing field) until details of secure and covered bicycle parking shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall be implemented as approved before occupation and permanently retained.

*Reason: In order to ensure bicycle parking facilities are provided and encourage use of sustainable modes of travel.*

*Relevant Policy: NPPF, Core Strategy CP6*

9. Before any phase of the development is commenced (with the exception of the construction of replacement play space and creation of additional playing field), provision shall be made to accommodate all site operatives, visitors and construction vehicles loading, off-loading, parking and turning within the site during the construction period, in accordance with details to be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The provision should be maintained and used at all times.

*Reason: To prevent queuing and parking off site, in the interests of highway safety and convenience.*

*Relevant Policies: Core Strategy policy CP6*

10. Prior to the commencement of the development (with the exception of the construction of replacement play space and creation of additional playing field), a Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The travel plan shall include a programme of implementation and proposals to promote alternative forms of transport to and from the site, other than by the private car and provide for periodic review. The travel plan shall be fully implemented, maintained and reviewed as so-approved.

*Reason: To encourage the use of all travel modes.*

*Relevant Policy: NPPF, Core Strategy CP1 & CP6*

11. All vehicular access to the site shall be derived from Chestnut Crescent; no direct vehicular access shall be created to Millworth Lane.

*Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of highway safety.*

*Relevant Policy: NPPF, Core Strategy CP1 & CP6*

12. The development hereby permitted shall be constructed to the current relevant BREEAM requirements at the time of commencement of development. The development shall also meet and exceed the statutory requirements for water resource management.

*Reason: To encourage environmentally sustainable development.*

*Relevant Policy: NPPF, Core Strategy policy CP1, Sustainable Design and*

*Construction SPD.*

13. The planned number of children attending the school shall not exceed 360 unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

*Reason: To allow the LPA to assess whether or not the highway network and parking at the site can safely accommodate increase in pupil numbers.*

*Relevant Policies: NPPF, Core Strategy CP6*

14. No development (with the exception of the creation of the additional playing field), shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of hard and soft landscaping, which shall specify species, planting sizes, spacing and numbers of trees/shrubs to be planted. In particular the scheme shall include a replacement hedgerow on the perimeter of the new sports field and details of any bridging or fencing to be provided. The scheme shall also detail all boundary treatments to be provided on site. The works approved shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building(s). Any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the date of the planting, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

*Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.*

*Relevant Policies: Core Strategy policy CP3.*

15. Before the development hereby permitted (with the exception of the construction of replacement play space and creation of additional playing field) is commenced details of all boundary treatments shall first be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development or phased as agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be maintained in the approved form for so long as the development remains on the site.

*Reason: To safeguard amenity and highway safety.*

*Relevant Policies: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP6*

16. Vegetation removal on site shall only be conducted outside the bird breeding season, (March to August inclusive), or under the supervision and control of an ecologist if undertaken in the period March to August inclusive

*Reason: To ensure that the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended is complied with and breeding birds, their nests and eggs are not harmed or damaged.*

17. No development (with the exception of the creation of the additional playing field), shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local

Planning Authority a scheme to mitigate for the loss of Invertebrate Species habitat on the site. Once agreed the mitigation shall be implemented in full and retained for the lifetime of the development.

*Reason: To ensure the continues protection of protected species*

*Policy: NPPF, Core Strategy CP7*

**Informatives:**

1. The development accords with the policies contained within the adopted development plan and there are no material considerations which warrant a different decision being taken.

2. The applicant is reminded that this approval is only granted subject to conditions which must be complied with prior to certain elements of the development starting on site. The information required should be formally submitted to the Council, with the relevant fee, once the details have been agreed the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear please contact the case officer to discuss.

3. Should any great crested newts or evidence of great crested newts be found prior to or during the development, all works must stop immediately and an ecological consultant contacted for further advice and Wokingham Borough Council informed before works can proceed. All contractors working on site should be made aware of the advice and provided with the contact details of a relevant ecological consultant.

4. The requisite Travel plan would need to comply with the latest national and local guidance:

1) NPPF Section 4 (Sustainable Transport)

2) The Essential Guide to Travel Planning (DfT, March 2008)

3) Delivering Travel Plans Through the Planning Process (DfT, April 2009)

4) A Guide on Travel Plans for Developers (DfT)

5) Making Residential Travel Plans Work (DfT, June 2007) All accessible at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/travelplans/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-local-transport>

Also:

WBC Transport Plan 3 and Active Travel Plan 2011 – 2026

WBC Workplace Travel Plan Guidance and Residential Travel Plan Guidance

Documents, covering workplace travel plans and residential travel plans provide local guidance and are available on the Borough's website.

**RECENT PLANNING HISTORY**

- F/2008/0554 - Removal of existing prefabricated classroom and single storey extensions to create two classrooms and toilets. Approved 09/05/08

- F/2007/1683 - Proposed erection of a new building to be used as a childrens centre. Class D1. Approved 20/08/2007
- F/2005/4140 - Proposed extension to front elevation of school to provide additional office space medical bay and disabled WC. Plus canopy. Approved 25/04/2005
- F/2000/2853 - Proposed extension to school to form additional modular classroom with toilets and corridor. Approved 07/02/2001

### SUMMARY INFORMATION

Site Area	Approx. 2.65 hectares
Land use(s)	D1
Proposed increase in floorspace	860 m <sup>2</sup>
Proposed parking spaces	42 spaces (currently 17 spaces on site)
Existing School Capacity	240 pupils
Proposed increased pupil capacity	360 pupils
Proposed increase in Staff Numbers	11 additional full time equivalent (from 32 to 43)

### CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways	No objection (Subject to conditions 7-11 )
Tree and Landscape	No objection raised (subject to conditions 14-15)
Environment Agency	Formal response to follow in the members update.
Ecology	Holding objection, more information is required with regards bat and reptile mitigation, (the applicant is currently agreeing a mitigation strategy with the Ecologist this will be reported on in the members update). The Ecologist recommends conditions 16 and 17.
Environmental Health	No objection
Shinfield Parish Council	The parish council supports this application provided that officers agree a boundary treatment for the new south eastern perimeter of the site. The Parish also had significant feedback on travel plan and parking issues and requested that these be particularly considered in the travel plan. Full Parish comments are appended to this report.

### REPRESENTATIONS

- One letter of comment received the letter stated that whilst the author did not wish to formally object to the proposal they wished to highlight that the scheme might cause traffic and parking problems.

## APPLICANTS POINTS

- The proposal provides essential facilities required to meet the Borough's current and future educational needs.

## PLANNING POLICY

### National policies

National Planning Policy Framework  
NPPG

### Wokingham Borough Core Strategy:

CP1: Sustainable Development  
CP2: Inclusive Communities  
CP3: General Development Principles  
CP6: Managing Travel Demand  
CP7: Biodiversity

### MDD DPD Local Plan:

CC02: Development Limits  
CC04: Sustainable Design and construction  
CC06: Noise  
CC05: Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks  
CC07: Parking  
CC09: Flood Risk  
CC10: Sustainable Drainage  
TB21: Landscape Character  
TB23: Biodiversity and development

## PLANNING ISSUES

### Principle of Development

1. The land being used for the new buildings and hard surfacing are located within a 'Modest Development' settlement location and as such these elements of the development are acceptable in principle, providing that they comply with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy aims to ensure that new development contributes to the formation of sustainable and inclusive communities through the provision of community facilities (including educational buildings), and that the requirements of children are addressed. It is recognised that the provision of new school buildings would contribute towards addressing the requirements of children through the provision of an important community facility (as listed in Core Strategy

paragraph 4.17).

2. The proposed playing field extension is located outside of settlement limits. Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy indicates development should normally be located within settlement limits, however essential community facilities that cannot be accommodated within development limits or support leisure uses can be considered appropriate. It is considered in this case that the provision of replacement sports fields (facilitating the enhancement of a school) constitutes an essential community facility. The provision of the playing fields is a green and open use, that is broadly compatible with the leisure exceptions of CP11. The impact on rural character is considered later in this report.

3. Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy aims to ensure that new development contributes to the formation of sustainable and inclusive communities through the provision of community facilities (including educational buildings), and that the requirements of children are addressed. Policy CP3 states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

4. The Wokingham Borough Council Primary Strategy was agreed by Executive on 25th October 2012. This strategy established that Wokingham Borough requires additional primary school places to meet statutory duties set out in section 14 of the Education Act 1996. This area has been identified by the Education Authority as needing additional capacity and as such it is considered that there is a need for the development which can be assigned significant weight. This expansion is designed mainly to meet the needs of the existing population as well as future expansion expected in the area.

5. Paragraph 72 of the NPPF states that great importance should be attached to ensuring that sufficient choice of school places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Paragraph 72 states that Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and should look to approve development that will widen choice in education. The NPPF states that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools.

### **Impact on Character**

6. The main school building was erected in the early 1960s and is predominantly single storey in nature contained within a well vegetated site off Chestnut Crescent. Whilst the main school building is of 1960s single storey appearance there have been a number of modern additions to the site some of which have integrated more successfully than others.

7. The proposed siting of the new school building would be set far back in the extended site and would not be significantly visible from Chestnut Crescent due to the separation



is considered to be very limited. The land will effectively be in a leisure use as it will be used as a playing field. Although paraphernalia such as goal posts could have a slight urbanising effect upon the countryside this is considered acceptable in the context of a leisure use and due to the essential educational need of the school.

12. Educational development of this nature is common place within the Borough. Other classroom extensions and school hall buildings can be seen at many schools in the area and there will be no significant character impact on the school site especially given its appropriate positioning and good design. It is considered that the proposals are of an acceptable form in relation to the locality and the host site and as such the proposal complies with policies CP3 & CP11 of the Wokingham Core Strategy.

### **Trees and Landscape:**

13. The Tree and Landscape officer notes that parts of the scheme require removal of vegetation and are in relatively close proximity to boundary trees. Whilst not raising an objection to the scheme the Tree and Landscape Officer requires a scheme of additional planting including a replacement hedgerow around the new playing field in order to help offset any potential impacts of the development (Condition 14).

### **Impact on Neighbours**

14. In terms of increased noise and disturbance, the school is an established educational facility with other educational buildings situated with similar proximity to neighbouring sites as the proposed new developments. The creation of new educational facilities will lead to an increase in pupil numbers however this is not considered to significantly increase impact upon neighbours given the separation distance involved and mature boundaries. The provision of the car park adjacent to Millworth Lane is considered unlikely to cause significant noise and disturbance, and during the day this disturbance is likely to be less great than noise from the existing play space which is being relocated further away from the nearby residential dwellings.

15. The proposed building would be sited some 62m away from the nearest residential dwelling (Rangitiki). Due to the significant separation distance of the new built form from the nearest residential properties, it is considered that the proposals will not lead to any significant loss of light or overbearing to the detriment of adjacent properties. All other works are of a minor nature or are located a significant distance from properties and as such are not considered to cause harm with regards these issues. As such the proposals are considered to accord with CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy with regards loss of light and overbearing.

16. It is recommended that an 'hours of construction' condition be utilised on the scheme to avoid noise and loss of amenity at inappropriate times. Wokingham's standard hours of construction condition usually allows works to commence at 8am, it is however recommended in this case that work is allowed to commence at 7am on

weekdays (but not at weekends). This is to reduce conflict and health and safety issues from contractors and works deliveries arriving at a similar time to school children in the mornings. It is considered by officers that avoiding this conflict should be given more weight than the potential for slightly greater loss of neighbouring amenity during the construction period from earlier construction noise (Condition 4).

### **Access and movement**

#### **Access and traffic impact:**

17. It is proposed to continue to access the school via Chestnut Crescent. The Highway Authority has no objection to this in principle. The school's internal road layout has been amended to provide additional parking within the site and improved turning area for service and delivery vehicles. To minimise conflict between cars and pedestrians, the access will be restricted to staff and visitors of the school and adjacent Children's Centre. No drop-off will be provided within the school grounds.

18. In the interests of highway safety, the Highway Authority would not support any future access from Millworth Lane and have recommended that a condition be included on the permission to prevent vehicular access on to Millworth Lane (condition 11).

19. During school times, Chestnut Crescent operates as an informal one-way system with cars generally travelling in a clockwise direction. The continuation of this shall be monitored by the Council's Traffic & Road Safety team and outside of this planning application consideration would be given as to whether this would benefit from a formal one-way system. Although this would have some impact on residents it may allow for more formal on-street parking spaces to be created and minimise impact on residential access. Such a measure would require a Traffic Regulation Order and this is a separate process from planning with a separate highways consultation. In this instance it is not considered appropriate to link it to any planning consent.

20. An assessment of the Chestnut Crescent/Hyde End Road junction has been carried out and demonstrates that the junction will operate within capacity after the extension has been completed. The assessment has applied 2019 traffic flows to ensure that this is relevant at the time when the extension has been completed. It is acknowledged that there are wider measures being promoted by other parties to assist traffic flow on the A327 corridor and these would benefit all road users. The Transport Statement refers to proposed changes in school catchment areas and how the number of pupils coming from other areas such as Arborfield and South Reading should reduce once this takes place.

#### **Traffic Impact & Parking:**

21. The Transport Statement contains details on the number of pupils expected to come to school by car. If the school was operating at full capacity then potentially there could

be 234 pupils coming by car after the extension. This would be the equivalent of 78 additional pupils potentially travelling by car. This is not however the actual number of cars as it is acknowledged that there is likely to be a reduction in this figure due to car sharing and siblings. The Highway Authority recommends that the School Travel Plan contains specified targets to reduce the number of pupils coming by car and mitigate the impact of the development.

22. The parking survey indicates that approx. 68 spaces are available within Chestnut Crescent (in the form of a mixture of on-street and off-street spaces). The parking survey demonstrates that these spaces can be fully occupied during PM peak pick-up time. The development will create an additional 25 parking spaces for staff and visitors (secured by condition 7). This should help to alleviate some of the parking from staff/visitors on Chestnut Crescent therefore giving more capacity to parents and residents.

23. There are several areas that parents currently park for the Shinfield schools. Included in this is the use of existing business car parks. One such car park - former Royal Oak public house - is no longer available as this has been converted to a convenience store and it is likely that this will be restricted to customer parking. The School Green public car park should experience an increase in capacity due to a new staff car park associated with Shinfield Primary School being constructed. This would benefit parents, particularly those with children at both schools.

24. As part of the Shinfield village centre re-development there is likely to be some changes to parking in the area and it is hoped that arrangements can be made to accommodate additional parent's parking during school times. Through the School Travel Plan there should also be continual commitment to explore potential areas of parking and incorporate park and stride initiatives where appropriate.

#### Sustainable Travel:

25. The applicant proposes to produce a new School Travel Plan however further details are required by condition to ensure that this is acceptable (Condition 10). The success of the Travel Plan is considered to be a fundamental factor in encouraging and supporting journeys to/from school by modes of travel other than private car. It is important that the school takes ownership of the Travel Plan. It is also encouraged to work with Shinfield Primary and Nursery Schools to develop a comprehensive Travel Plan to cater for linked trips to the schools. This should include assessing school start/finish times for all schools to help minimise parking and traffic. Targets within the Travel Plan should be regularly monitored and it should also include measures to be taken if targets are not met. The Travel Plan will be subject to continual review and the Council's Travel Plan co-ordinator will work with the school to ensure that it is robust and effective.

26. New cycle parking areas have been proposed within the school grounds for both

staff and pupils (secured by condition 8). Detailed design of these storage areas will be required by condition ensuring that they are secure, covered and of sufficient size to cater for children's scooters as well as bicycles. The usage of the cycle storage provision should be monitored as part of the Travel Plan. It is suggested that the trigger for additional cycle storage should be when demand exceeds 85% of supply and this should be delivered at a level which corresponds with the target included in the Travel Plan.

### **Drainage & Flooding:**

#### **Drainage:**

27. The proposals will lead to an increase in built form on the site which would potentially increase surface run off, as such it is recommended that the development should incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and a condition is recommended to this effect. (condition 5)

#### **Flooding**

28. The existing & proposed replacement playing fields are located in Land Liable to Flooding. As the existing provision is located in land liable to flooding it is considered that there will not be any decrease in the quality of playing field provided (with regards flooding or drainage impact). The Environment Agency has informally indicated that it is unlikely to object to the playing field relocation as no significant development is located within the Land Liable to Flooding; the EA is hoping to provide a formal response by the committee date.

### **Provision of Playground/Playing field Space**

29. Due to the increase in the site size as a result of the acquisition of the additional land the amount of play space and playing fields on the site is actually increased. The proposal includes a new 0.8 hectare sports pitch, new multi-use games areas and a new studio hall and as such the proposal is considered to significantly increase the quality of the play facilities available at the school.

30. As the existing provision is located in land liable to flooding it is considered that there will not be any decrease in the quality of playing field provided (with regards flooding or drainage impact)

### **Atomic Weapon Establishment Zone (AWE)**

31. The site falls within the 5km of the Burghfield AWE. MDD Local Plan policy TB04 requires that potential impact upon safety with proximity of the AWE. Policy TB04 requires that schemes over certain thresholds require the production of additional information to demonstrate that there will not be an unacceptable impact upon safety and emergency response. This application does not trigger these thresholds as it will not increase visitors to the site by more than 500 people, and as such no further

information on the potential impact on the AWE off-site emergency plan is required at the planning stage.

### **Mineral extraction consultation zone**

32. The proposed development is located in an area of the Borough where extraction of minerals could be possible. The Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire sets out the approach to planning for minerals which states that Local Planning Authorities will oppose development that would cause the sterilisation of minerals deposits, unless:-

- the mineral deposit is of no commercial interest
- it can be demonstrated that there is an overriding need for development
- there is likely to such strong environmental or other objection that extraction of minerals would be unlikely to be permitted

33. There is evidence of historic mineral working in the wider area but there are no operational mineral workings in or adjacent to the site at present and there are no dormant mineral permissions or allocated preferred areas for future minerals working at this site.

34. The site is currently a school and the land surrounding it is identified as a strategic development location, as such it is unlikely to ever be utilised for mineral extraction. The proposal could affect access to potential mineral reserve if any were on site, however the proposal is considered to have a negligible potential significance to mineral provision in Berkshire and the modular classroom could be removed meaning the impact is only temporary. Given the above constraints and the demonstrated overriding need for the development it is considered that the proposal is not unacceptable in terms of impact on mineral extraction.

### **Archaeology:**

35. The Borough Archaeologist notes that Shinfield C of E School is in a location within an area of archaeological potential. There are numerous records in the Historic Environment Records that indicate the possible presence of archaeology within this area dating to the prehistoric, Iron Age, Roman and medieval periods.

36. Excavations to the east of the site revealed a number of undated ditches, whilst excavations slightly further away to the north-west at Hollow Lane/Church Lane uncovered evidence for prehistoric settlement, dating to Iron Age. The site therefore has the potential to contain buried remains which may be impacted by the proposed development.

37. In order to assess the potential for archaeology and the impact of the development the Borough Archaeologist recommends that a small scale scheme of archaeological work is undertaken in the form of trial trenching.

## Ecology

### Bats

38. The submitted report identified potential roost features in Building 3 and rates this building as having medium potential to support bats. In order to discount these features it is recommended in Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines to follow up the preliminary ecological appraisal with activity surveys – and this is a recommendation in the report. This preliminary ecological appraisal was undertaken at a time when bats are not active. Consequently needs to submit activity survey findings of the features identified made in the optimal season (May - August inclusive) and an outline bat mitigation strategy (including drawings to show any specific modification to the replacement dwelling to accommodate bats) should bats be discovered. The ecologist recommends that though the risk is relatively low this work is undertaken before formal planning permission is issued. As such it is recommended that the committee reach a resolution to delegate the application to the Head of Development Management to approve subject to know significant issues arising in the ecological surveys.

### Reptiles

39. The preliminary ecological appraisal has identified the site as having potential to support reptiles and identified specific features in the target notes that would be of interest to reptiles for hibernation, basking, and cover. The report classifies this potential as 'low' but then recommendations then include further survey work for reptiles in the active season in order to inform appropriate mitigation measures. The Ecologist notes that there has been little assessment of the scale and scope of the proposed work and the potential impact on reptiles if they are present. The ecologist states that, in order for the local planning authority to be confident that favourable conservation status can be maintained for reptiles and that the risk of injury and killing of reptiles is minimised, the fall-back position is for the survey work for reptiles to be undertaken and the results are submitted along with any relevant mitigation strategy. Similar to the bat issue above this will need to be done in the relevant survey period and as such it is recommended that the committee reach a resolution to delegate the application to the Head of Development Management to approve subject to know significant issues arising in the ecological surveys.

### Breeding Birds

40. The Borough Ecologist is satisfied that the preliminary ecological appraisal has accurately identified the level of risk to birds and that the protection of nesting birds can be secured by condition (Condition 16).

### Great Crested Newt

41. Whilst the terrestrial habitat on site may have the potential to support foraging great crested newt if it were in proximity to a suitable breeding pond the Borough Ecologist considers that it is unlikely that there is a local population present due to the remoteness of the site from any pond.

#### Dormouse

42. The ecologist considers that that the risk to dormouse from this development would be negligible and no further survey work is required for this species.

#### Invertebrate Species

43. A data search was undertaken to inform the preliminary ecological appraisal and has revealed that a species of principal importance, Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), has been recorded within 50 metres of the site. The removal of some mature trees, that are on their way to providing suitable saproxylic conditions, will be an impoverishment of habitat for this species in the area. The provision of invertebrate habitat although given as a potential enhancement, is a suitable compensation for the tree loss and could be secured by condition (Condition 17).

### **CONCLUSION**

It is considered that the creation of the new school facilities and additional teaching accommodation is acceptable in principle and is strongly supported by the current Planning Policy Context. The proposal would not be significantly harmful to the streetscene, countryside or the character of the area. Neighbouring properties will not be adversely affected by significant loss of amenity as a result of the proposal.

The Highway Authority is satisfied, subject to a travel plan, that the proposal will not have a significant unsatisfactory impact on highway safety and significant additional car parking is provided as part of the scheme.

The proposal therefore accords with the policies contained within the Core Strategy national and regional policy and this application is recommended for conditional approval subject to the resolution of the ecological matters and the Environment Agency raising no objection to the proposal.

### **CONTACT DETAILS**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Email</b>
Development Management	0118 974 6445	development.control@wokingham.gov.uk

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