

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
191651	14 th August 2019	Shinfield	Shinfield South;

Applicant	Wokingham Borough Council
Site Address	Silver Meadow School
Proposal	Full planning application for the proposed temporary use of the upper floor of school (D1) building to provide office accommodation (B1) for a 5 year period until the school is fully occupied.
Type	Full
PS Category	1
Officer	Kayleigh Mansfield
Reason for determination by committee	Wokingham Borough Council is the applicant

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 14 August 2019
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place

SUMMARY
The school was constructed in 2018 to provide capacity for the new housing developments however the development has to date not generated enough pupils to permit the school to open, sufficient capacity remains in the existing local schools. Therefore the Council has taken the decision to bring the building into use instead of mothballing. The proposal will provide temporary offices facilities for Wokingham staff

PLANNING STATUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South of M4 Strategic Development Location

RECOMMENDATION
<p>That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:</p> <p>A. Conditions and informatives:</p> <p><i>Conditions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission. <p style="margin-left: 40px;"><i>Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).</i></p> 2. The use hereby permitted shall be discontinued and the land/building restored to its former condition on or before 5 years from the date of the commencement, in accordance with a scheme of work that shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority <p style="margin-left: 40px;"><i>Reason: To allow the local planning authority an opportunity to assess the effect of the use hereby permitted on the [INSERT] of the surrounding properties.</i></p>

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3

Informative:

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

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application Number	Proposal	Decision
O/2010/1432	Outline application for a residential development of up to 1,200 dwellings, a further 150 units of specialist housing (including sheltered housing) for elderly persons, a local centre to include a foodstore (2,500 sq.m), and other retail and office uses, a community building, proposed extension of existing primary schools, erection of a new primary school, public open space, sports pavilion, suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG) and access and landscaping.	Approved
170035	Reserved Matters for the erection of a two form entry school	Approved

SUMMARY INFORMATION	
For Commercial	
Site Area	6.42 Acres
Previous land use(s) and floorspace(s)	n/a
Proposed floorspace of each use	n/a
Change in floorspace (+/-)	n/a
Number of jobs created/lost	n/a
Existing parking spaces	69 (including 2 disabled)
Proposed parking spaces	0

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
WBC Education (School Place Planning)	No objection
WBC Highways	No objection

REPRESENTATIONS
Town/Parish Council: No comments received
Local Members: No comments received
Neighbours: No comments received

APPLICANTS POINTS
The decision to use the upper floor of the school as temporary office accommodation was agreed by officers in consultation and agreement of the lead member of Children's Services. Since the upper floor accommodation for pupils is not required in the early years while pupil numbers are building up, it is considered that the proposed office use for a temporary period will not compromise the delivery of the primary school capacity. In addition, the use of the site for offices will ensure that the site is not mothballed. The temporary office will be used by education support service teams. These teams work closely with schools, making frequent visits to school sites, so make a good fit with the safeguarding requirements of the primary school operating on the ground floor.

PLANNING POLICY		
National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC07	Parking

PLANNING ISSUES
<p>Background of Development:</p> <p>1. The Alder Grove Primary School has been constructed to serve the Shinfield and wider community. The Keys Academy Trust have been appointed to run the school.</p> <p>2. The school is expected to open in September 2020 with the intake of a Reception class only. This Reception class progress through the school, with a new Reception intake each year. The school will therefore take a number of years until fully utilised, meaning that during the initial years following opening, large parts of the school building will be unused.</p> <p>3. The application for temporary use of the upper floor has been submitted to allow council officers to use parts in the initial period as offices. The proposal has been discussed and agreed with The Keys Academy Trust. The use will not impact on the operation of the school at any time, ceasing before the proposed areas are required for education purposes. There is therefore no loss of community facility at the point it is required.</p> <p>4. It should be noted that the proposal also delivers the benefit of utilising an under used building, helping to avoid wasted costs of maintaining an empty building. The flexibility afforded by the temporary office space also allows the council to relocate Officers accommodated elsewhere in the borough to enable improvements to another educational facility.</p>

Description of Development:

5. The proposal seeks to utilise part of the existing school building for Wokingham Borough Council staff – requesting a temporary permission for office accommodation (B1).

6. It is proposed that 55 council staff will occupy the first floor of the school in its first year (2019/2020), with up to 10 per cent more or less staff across the duration of occupancy. This will continue until 2023/2024, when the space will revert back to school accommodation on a permanent basis.

7. In accordance with the WBC Scheme of Delegation, the application is before Planning Committee as the applicant is Wokingham Borough Council.

Principle of Development:

8. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

9. The school since construction has been unable to attract sufficient pupil numbers to justify the opening of the school. The building therefore remains unused and Wokingham Borough Council have been looking at various options for the school to be brought into use until such time that the school use is required as opposed to mothballing it. Following this review it was determined that Council were placed to operate from the site as additional desk space for staff is required and can be easily accommodated within the school building itself without impacting upon the structure or main use of the building. The layout means that the ground floor can still be operated as a school without causing any operational or safeguarding issues.

10. The first intake of pupils is expected in September 2020 with pupil numbers expected to be increased on an incremental basis with an additional form of intake in each year of circa 30 pupils.

Character of the Area:

11. Silver Meadow Primary School was constructed as part of a larger development in Shinfield. The school construction is now complete but remains unused and empty.

12. The proposal does not seek to make alterations to the external elements of approved building. Nor does it propose changes to landscaping or access and parking. As such the impact on the character of the area is considered to be negligible.

Access and Movement:**Access**

13. Access into the site will be derived via a priority junction, connecting with the internal road network constructed as part of the Land West of Hollow Lane development. It is noted that the site access arrangement benefits from detailed planning consent and has been delivered.

Parking:

14. A total of 69 parking spaces are delivered on site, of which two are dedicated for disabled users. Thirty cycle spaces are additionally available. There are good bus links to the local area which will be increased in future years as part of the South of the M4 Bus Strategy. Since the school intake will grow incrementally, the parking available exceeds the requirements for the operation of the school in the early years. The additional staff numbers associated with the temporary office use will be limited by the physical size of the building. It is considered that on this basis there can be a dual use of the site and there is sufficient parking available, as such no objection is raised.

CONCLUSION

The application is compliant with the Council's adopted policies, including Core Strategy policies CP1, CP2, CP6 and CP9, and Managing Development Delivery policies CC01 and CC02. The proposal for a temporary use does not conflict with the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan or South of the M4 SDL development guidance. No objections have been received by the Council and the proposal does not alter the external elements of the building or its surroundings. Temporary use of the first floor of Silver Meadow school as office accommodation for a five year period is therefore recommended for approval.

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

1. In determining this application the Committee is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The duty is to have due regard to the need (in discharging its functions) to:

- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This may include removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; taking steps to meet the special needs of those with a protected characteristic; encouraging participation in public life (or other areas where they are underrepresented) of people with a protected characteristic(s).
- c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. The Council should give greater consideration to decisions that have a disproportionately adverse impact on a protected characteristic and this impact may be unintentional. In appropriate cases, this may involve an understanding of the practical impact on individuals so affected by the decision. Regard should be had to the effect of mitigation taken to reduce any adverse impact.

3. Silver Meadow School is unused school building completed in 2018. The application site provides two disabled parking spaces as well as lift for disabled access between the two floors. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation of the application) that groups sharing protected characteristics will be disproportionately affected in an adverse way by the approval of this planning application. In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

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