

Agenda Item 8.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
210805	23/06/2021	St Nicholas Hurst	Hurst;

Applicant	Mr Adam Hurst
Site Address	"Dolphin School", Waltham Road, Hurst, Wokingham, RG10 0FR
Proposal	Full application for the proposed erection of a two storey building to create additional classrooms, toilets and library facilities, with associated roof terrace.
Type	Full Planning Application
Officer	Adriana Gonzalez
Reason for determination by committee	Major Application

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 9 June 2021
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place

SUMMARY
<p>This planning application is before the planning committee as it is a major application given the site area is in excess of 1Ha (1.8 Ha).</p> <p>The application proposes the erection of a two storey detached building of contemporary architectural appearance, which will comprise 2no classrooms, music room and WC facilities at ground floor, as well as a new library and art room within the first floor. A rooftop terrace will complement the proposal whilst allowing for events and viewing of team matches on the adjoining playing field.</p> <p>The proposed scheme offers the opportunity for positive improvements in visual terms, whilst providing a much needed new educational unit for Dolphin School. The building's location, scale and design will respect the character and appearance of the site and countryside setting. Likewise, the proposal will be respectful to the setting of the adjoining Hinton House, a grade II*listed building, preserving the significance of this heritage asset.</p> <p>Paragraphs 1-40 provide further details to these material considerations, and subject to conditions 1-9 the application is recommended for approval.</p>

PLANNING STATUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designated Countryside• Within the Edge of Green Belt – North-East Boundary• Listed Building Curtilage – Hinton House• Ground Water Consultation Zone• Bat Roost Habitat Suitability• Green Route – Waltham Road

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:

Conditions:

1. Timescale

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

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).

2. Approved details

This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered 1065-PL01; 1065-PL02 Rev A; 1065-PL03 Rev A; 1065-PL04; 1065-PL05; 1065-PL06; 1065-PL07; 1065-PL08 Rev A; 1065-PL09; 1065-PL01 Rev A (volumes); Drainage Plan 20-057-51-P1; Travel Plan (TTP Consulting Ltd, February 2021); Design And Planning Statement Including Sustainability Statement (trace architects, March 2021); Tree Survey (Arbtech, February 2021); Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment Survey (Arbtech, January 2021); Drainage Design Document Rev P1 (Creative Side Structures, February 2021) received by the local planning authority on 08/03/2021; eDNA Results Technical Report (SureScreen Scientifics, April 2021) received by the local planning authority on 26/04/2021; Arbtech TPP 01 (March, 2021); Arbtech AIA 01 (March 2021) received by the local planning authority on 10/05/2021; Construction Method Statement Rev P4; Construction Method Statement Plan 20-057-51-P2 & Revised Heritage Statement (March 2021) received by the local planning authority on 19/05/2021. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. External materials

Before the development hereby permitted is commenced, samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building/s shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the so-approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3.

4. Landscaping details

Prior to the commencement of the development, full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include, as appropriate, proposed finished floor levels or contours, means of enclosure, car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas, hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and structure (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, external services, etc). Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the

development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

5. Protection of trees

- a) Prior to the commencement of the development there shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority a revised Arboricultural Method Statement and Scheme of Works, which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent to the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012. No development or other operations shall take place except in complete accordance with the details as so-approved (hereinafter referred to as the Approved Scheme).
- b) No operations shall commence on site in connection with development hereby approved (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) until the tree protection works required by the Approved Scheme are in place on site.
- c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.
- d) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site, unless the prior approval in writing of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence
Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

6. Landscape and Trees Management

Prior to the commencement of the development a landscape and tree management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas and trees on site, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape and tree management plan shall be carried out as approved.

Reason: In order to ensure that provision is made to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping (including trees) hereby approved. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

7. Construction Method Statement

No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a revised Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:

- i) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors,
- ii) loading and unloading of plant and materials,
- iii) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development,
- iv) the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate,
- v) wheel washing facilities,
- vi) measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction,
- vii) a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety & convenience and neighbour amenities.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

8. Travel Plan as agreed

No part of the development shall be occupied until the approved travel plan (Travel Plan (TTP Consulting Ltd, February 2021) has been implemented. The travel plan shall be implemented, maintained and reviewed as approved.

Reason: To encourage the use of all travel modes. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 9 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policy CP6.

9. Ecology details as agreed

The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the ecology details and recommendations as identified in "Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment Survey, Arbtech, January 2021" received by the Local Planning Authority on 08/03/2021. The scheme shall be implemented prior to the occupation of development, in full in accordance with the approved details and for the lifetime of the development unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: to secure wildlife enhancements and biodiversity net gain on site within the course of the development. Relevant policy: paragraph 170 of the NPPF and TB23 of the MDD Local Plan.

Informatives:

1. The applicant is reminded that this approval is granted subject to conditions which must be complied with prior to the development starting on site. Commencement of the development without complying with the pre-commencement requirements may be outside the terms of this permission and liable to enforcement action. The information required should be formally submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once the details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear please contact the case officer to discuss.
2. The applicant is reminded that should there be any change from the approved drawings during the build of the development this may require a fresh planning application if the changes differ materially from the approved details. Non-material

changes may be formalised by way of an application under s.96A Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3. This permission does not convey or imply any approval or consent that may be required for the display of advertisements on the site for which a separate Advertisement Consent application may be required. You should be aware that the display of advertisements without the necessary consent is a criminal offence liable to criminal prosecution proceedings through the courts.
4. The applicant is advised that the fitting of a sprinkler system should be considered at the premises prior to the operation of the building as approved.
5. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the applicant in terms of:
 - a full pre-application process was undertaken by the applicant;
 - addressing concerns relating to trees on site;
 The decision to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF is considered to be a positive outcome of these discussions.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY		
Application Number	Proposal	Decision
F/2011/2040	Installation of 33 solar panels on south-west elevation of dormer roof	Approved 09/01/2012
F/2006/7432	Additional staff car parking in school grounds	Refused 16/06/2006 Appeal Allowed
VAR/2002/8005	Variation to condition 10 of 43595 to increase pupils from 250 – 275	Conditionally Approved 02/12/2004
F/2001/3254	2 storey extension – use as classroom, library, I.T. and science	Conditionally Approved 06/09/2002
971433	Proposed Variation to Conditions 12 And 13 on Approval 43595 To Allow Commencement Of Development Without provision of car parking	Approved 09/10/1997
961591	Proposed retention of temporary building for classroom	Approved 21/10/1996
961590	Proposed provision of two additional temporary buildings	Approved 21/10/1996
44580	Single storey extension and sewage treatment plant	Conditionally Approved 07/08/1995
43595	2 storey extension to form additional classrooms, staff rooms, offices above, hardstanding. Variation of condition 2 on 11451 and condition 6 on 15767 (from 120 pupils to 250 pupils)	Conditionally Approved 31/07/1995
38434	Single storey extension and retro application for further 22 parking spaces	Refused 15/01/1992

38433	Redevelop and extend ex. School	Refused 15/01/1992
25947	Extend covered way re-roof existing	Conditionally Approved
23550	Car park on part of playing field	Conditionally Approved
20772	Implementation of 15767 without compliance to condition7	Refused 08/03/1984
15767	General purpose hall	Conditionally Approved 02/07/1981
13964	General purpose hall	Refused 25/09/1980
11451	Use of School on permanent basis	Conditionally Approved 25/10/1979
11449	Retention of pavilion structure	Conditionally Approved 25/10/1979
11453	Retention of art room	Conditionally Approved 25/10/1979
09706	Use of School on permanent basis	Refused 18/01/1979
09704	Alterations to front wall and increase number of pupils from 25 – 120	Conditionally Approved 08/06/1979
09702	General purpose hall	Refused 18/01/1979
04664	Playing field	Conditionally Approved 17/06/1975

SUMMARY INFORMATION	
Site Area	1.8 Ha
Existing land use(s)	Learning & Non-Residential Institution (Use Class F1)
Proposed floorspace	268sqm (total)
Number of pupils	220 students (no increase proposed)
Number of jobs created/lost	No increase (currently 50 employees total)
Existing parking spaces	120 car spaces
Proposed parking spaces	120 car spaces

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
WBC Environmental Health	No objection
WBC Drainage	No objection
WBC Highways	No objection subject to conditions (7, 8)
WBC Education (School Place Planning)	No comments received
WBC Economic Prosperity and Place (Community Infrastructure)	No objection
WBC Biodiversity	No comments received
WBC Tree & Landscape	No objection subject to conditions (4, 5, 6)
WBC Cleaner & Greener (Waste Services)	No comments received
WBC Heritage & Conservation	No objection subject to additional information (further details below)
WBC Health and Wellbeing	No comments received
Historic England	Stated they have no comments
Thames Water	No comments received
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue	No comments received
Crime Prevention Design Officer	No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Town/Parish Council: No objections

Local Members: No comments received

Neighbours: No comments received

APPLICANTS POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application supported by a Planning Statement and Heritage Statement • The proposal will provide new educational space for the school whilst providing a bold new entrance building to improve the profile of the school and express its core values. • proposal uses modern methods of construction to create a building that is highly energy efficient, economical to build and, of great importance to a working school, quick to erect.

PLANNING POLICY		
National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development-
	CP2	Inclusive Communities
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP4	Infrastructure Requirements
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP7	Biodiversity
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	CP11	Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC02	Development Limits
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC04	Sustainable Design and Construction
	CC06	Noise
	CC07	Parking
	CC09	Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB02	Development adjoining the Green Belt
	TB21	Landscape Character
	TB23	Biodiversity and Development
	TB24	Designated Heritage Assets

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	BDG	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance
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PLANNING ISSUES

Description of Development:

1. The application site is located within the grounds of a private school campus, that is Dolphins School, in a countryside location within the settlement of Hurst. The school grounds comprise of approximately 1.8Ha. The school's eastern boundary adjoins the curtilage grounds of Hinton House, a Grade II* listed building since 1952. To the south and west, the site adjoins open fields whilst the Waltham Road runs along the northern boundary.
2. The proposal involves the erection of a new two storey detached building to accommodate 2no classrooms, music room and WC facilities at ground floor, as well as a new library and art room within the first floor. A rooftop terrace will complement the proposal whilst allowing for events and viewing of team matches on the adjoining playing field.
3. The new building itself would be located in front of the existing two storey building to the east of the sports field. It would have a T-shape layout given by the mixed of flat-roof, rectangular forms, and would measure approximately 23.7 metres in width, 20.3 metres in length and 6.3 metres in height. The footprint of the building would be approximately 202sqm for a total internal floor space of 268sqm (as measured off submitted plans).
4. The design is formed from two rectangular blocks at right angles linked by a staircase and walkway. The two-storey building will have a contemporary architectural appearance with simple palate of materials and flat roofs. Elevations are simple clad in cedar slats and flush full height glazing.

Principle of Development:

5. 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.
6. The application site is located outside the settlement boundary and in the countryside, where the restrictions of Core Strategy Policy CP11 are applicable. Policy CP11 indicates that new development should normally be located within the settlement limits; however, essential community facilities that cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of existing buildings may be appropriate.

7. The restrictive countryside policy should also be weighed against the advice contained within the NPPF. Paragraph 92b of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should *“take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community, and deliver sufficient social, recreational and cultural facilities and services to meet the community needs.”* Paragraph 94 of the NPPF urges local planning authorities to *“give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools.”*
8. Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy also 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.
9. It is considered that the enhancement of the school constitutes the provision of an essential community facility, and accords with Policy CP11. The new building will provide improved teaching spaces for the benefit of both children and teachers, whilst providing a positive welcome for visitors. As such, the proposal would be acceptable in principle subject to further assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the character of the area, street scene, neighbouring amenity, highway safety as well as compliance with other local and national planning policies.

Character of the Area:

10. Section 12 of the NPPF states that ‘permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions’ and ‘the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people’.
11. Policy CP1 states that development should maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high quality design. CP11 of the Core Strategy refers to maintaining the quality of the environment and restricting development within the countryside. R1 and RD1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area, and R11 requires a coherent street character, including in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion and height.
12. It is noted the site is located close to the Metropolitan Green Belt (opposite Waltham Road). Policy TB02 of the MDD Local Plan states that proposals outside the Green Belt but conspicuous when viewed from it, will only be acceptable where it is not detrimental to the visual amenity and openness of the Green Belt in terms of scale, form, siting, materials or design.
13. The proposed new building would be located towards the front of the school site, forming a gateway with the tennis courts and access from the car park into the school campus. The building would be two storey in height, represented by a mix of simple volumes which would follow same landform and orientation already established by other buildings and facilities within the school (tennis court). Whilst located to the front of the school, the new building would have very limited views from the main

road, given its significant set-back from the road (approximately 31 metres), and the presence of very high boundary hedgerows at the entrance of the school's grounds. As such, it is not considered there would be any significant impact on the street scene and character of the area. Furthermore, the height, bulk, massing and siting of the new building is considered sensible to its surroundings, as it would adjoin existing buildings/facilities within the school, therefore reducing potential harm from spread of development across the site, nor would it detract from the visual amenity and openness of the Green Belt, in line with the principles set within Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy and TB02 of the MDD Local Plan.

14. In terms of design, whilst the new building would introduce a more modern design on site, it is considered that its proportions would match the form, scale and shape of other buildings within the school. The combination of simple volumetric forms with substantial glazing and timbered facades, would be considered visually sympathetic and in keeping with the distinctive character of the rest of the site, and would not detract from the character of the countryside setting. In support of the design approach, the applicant has commented that the proposal uses modern methods of construction to create a building that is highly energy efficient, economical to building and, of great importance to a working school, quick to erect. It is therefore considered that overall, the proposal would meet the requirements of the NPPF, Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP3, and the principles of the Borough Design Guide.

Heritage and Conservation:

15. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that development must ensure the preservation of any nearby listed building, including its setting, Paragraphs 192-196 of the NPPF requires consideration of the harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset and Policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan requires the conservation and enhancement of Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas, including their views and setting. In this respect, the school's eastern boundary directly adjoins the curtilage of the Hinton House, a grade II*listed building, and the brick boundary wall along Waltham Road, which is also grade II designated curtilage structure.
16. Following initial comments from the WBC Conservation Officer, the applicant has submitted an updated Heritage Statement, which provides additional justification and assessment of the historical and architectural significance of the setting of the heritage asset, as well as visualisations showing the spatial relationship of the proposed development with the listed building. The proposal would sit behind well-developed / mature trees and hedge line, which would act as screening providing only limited views between the new building and the heritage assets, and the flat roof design and reduced height would also provide no visual interruption to viewing from Hinton House. Added to this is the fact that the proposed development would be located approximately 50 metres from the nearest part of the listed building, thus it is unlikely that there would be any negative impact upon the heritage assets and its setting, in accordance with the NPPF and policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan.

Neighbour Amenity:

Loss of light, Overbearing and Overlooking:

17. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity and R23 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that extensions relate to neighbouring properties. Given the school's isolated location within countryside, the nearest residential properties are currently found towards the south side of the school's grounds, and well over 50 metres from the location of the proposed new building. Likewise, the Hinton House is also at a considerable distance (50 metres) from the proposal site, and the site visit confirmed there are several mature trees and vegetation which would screen this house from the new building. As such, it is considered unlikely there would be any detrimental impact upon neighbouring residential amenities as a result of proposed development.

Noise disturbance:

18. Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impact. The submitted Planning Statement refers that no noise generating plant is included within the proposed development. Moreover, given the nature of the proposal and separation distances from nearest noise sensitive receptors, it is considered unlikely there would be any negative impact upon neighbouring amenities. The WBC Environmental Health Officer has evaluated the proposal and has raised no objections to the proposal on this ground.

Highways Access and Parking Provision:

19. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum off street parking standards, including provision for charging facilities. P3 of the Borough Design Guide SPD notes that parking spaces should be safe and convenient and sited to minimise impact upon safety.
20. The proposal would result in the loss of 4-5no parking spaces due to the proposed location of the new building. However, the site visit confirmed there is ample parking space within the curtilage of the school, and the supporting information refers that there would be no increase in student number or members of staff, therefore it is unlikely there would be any negative impact on parking grounds. The WBC Highways Officer has raised no objections to the proposed development on parking grounds.
21. Access to the site would remain unaltered and this is considered acceptable.
22. Following initial comments from the WBC Highways Officer in regard to the submitted Construction Method Statement, a revised document been submitted in support of the application. The WBC Highways Officer has evaluated this but has indicated that additional details are still required, including a plan showing the route for construction vehicles to the site from the strategic road network. These details can be secured via planning condition (condition 7), so that no objections are raised on this aspect.
23. Likewise, a Travel Plan has been submitted as part of the proposal. It sets out some solid initiatives and targets, with a clearly defined monitoring regime. Subject to the implementation of the Travel Plan being secured by condition (condition 8), the WBC Highways Officer has raised no objections to the proposal on this ground.

Flooding and Drainage:

24. Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan requires consideration of flood risk from historic flooding, and Policy CC10 of the MDD Local Plan requires sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow. The site and access thereto is located within Flood Zone 1, and the proposal represents no additional flood risk or vulnerability. A Drainage Plan and Drainage Design document have been presented with the application, which consist of detailed information about the soil-ground investigation, project overview and detail description of the proposed surface water drainage strategy – supported with overview detailed drawing and cross-section drawings of the proposal.
25. The main strategy is to store and dispose the surface water into a pond which is inside the development area with maximum control flow of 2 l/s. Calculations presenting the chosen method and supporting its capabilities are presented too. A substantial part of the proposed development would be built over already hardstanding surface, therefore the increase of water surface run-off would not be significant. The WBC Flood Risk and Drainage Engineer has evaluated the proposal and information submitted and has raised no objections to the proposed development on flooding and drainage grounds.

Landscape and Trees:

26. Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan states development should protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features. Policy TB21 of the MDD Local Plan states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues and 'proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape'.
27. The application site is located in the designated countryside, and within landscape character area K1 Stanlake Farmed Sand and Clay Lowland, which is defined as: *'A lowland landscape with many unique and distinctive features not found elsewhere in the borough, which provide a contrast to the wooded hills to the north and south. The area supports numerous small tributary streams and ponds set amongst the largely arable farmland. The area is characterised by its wooded character and a general absence of settlement resulting in a sense of relative remoteness.'*
28. The site is also set back a short distance from the B3018 Waltham Road, a Green Route designated under Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan, that is a rural road edged with trees and well-kept hedgerows. There are intermittent views of the athletics track between the trees and the top of the school buildings from the entrance. The school buildings are set back from the road, with the main building to the far south west of the site that has the appearance of being tucked away to the back of Hinton House.
29. There is a good tree population within the school grounds, and although none of these are protected, they contribute to the site setting and surrounding countryside character. Of particular note is the presence of a mature Oak tree towards the west side of the proposed siting of the new building, the most significant tree in terms of visual amenity and biodiversity.

30. The following documents relating to trees on site have been submitted in support of the application:
- Tree Survey (report) dated 2.2.21
 - Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) report dated 6.5.21
 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) Drawing Arbtech AIA01 dated March 2021
 - Tree Protection Plan (TPP) Drawing Arbtech TPP01 March 2021
31. The WBC Trees and Landscape Officer has evaluated the proposal and information submitted, who has indicated that the technical solutions proposed to mitigate the impact of development on the Oak tree, both foundation design and permeable systems for surfacing are mostly acceptable, subject to recommendations/specifications, which would need to be included within an updated AMS. The revised AMS will be secured by way of planning condition (condition 5). A landscape and tree management plan would be also required and will be secured through condition (6). On this basis, the Officer has raised no objections to the proposal on this ground.
32. Likewise, the Officer has indicated that it is important to retain and enhance the character and appearance of the site's setting and wider countryside area, with provision made for soft and hard landscaping that complements the siting of the new building. A condition requiring the submission of a landscape proposals plan would be sufficient to address this concern (condition 4).

Ecology:

33. Policy CP7 of the Core Strategy 2010 requires the conservation of sites for nature conservation in accordance with national, regional, county, and local biodiversity action plans. Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network. The site is located in habitat which matches that where bat roosts have previously been found in the borough.
34. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment Survey (Arbtech, January 2021) has been submitted in support of the application. The report concludes that the existing pond on site has some potential to be suitable for Great Crested Newts (GCN) which are known to be present in the local landscape (within 2Km), and as such, an eDNA water sampling test should be completed on the pond to confirm GCN presence or otherwise. A follow up Technical Report (SureScreen Scientifics, April 2021) was carried out and found no presence of GCN within the pond (negative eDNA). As such, no further consideration is necessary in this aspect.
35. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal further indicates that the proposed development will have no impact on other ecological receptors. However, precautionary methods of working are given in order to mitigate low risk of harm to birds, mammals and common amphibians during construction works. Likewise, the report provides recommendations for additional habitat boxes/bricks to secure on site gains for biodiversity, in line with paragraph 170 of the NPPF. Implementation of these will be secured via planning condition (9).
36. Subject to the above, no objections are raised to the proposal on ecological grounds.

Sustainable Design/Construction:

37. Policy CC04 of the MDD Local Plan and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD require sustainable design and conservation and R21 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that new development contribute to environmental sustainability and the mitigation of climate change.
38. A Sustainability Statement has been included within the supporting Design and Planning Statement and outlines how the development will endeavour to meet the requirements outlined in policies CC04 and CC05 of the MDD Local Plan. It is considered that acceptable measures would be taken to ensure the sustainability of the proposal, so that the scheme is acceptable in this respect.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

39. Wokingham Borough Council adopted CIL on 6 April 2015. The proposed development will result in an increase in new build floorspace of more than 100sqm and therefore is liable for CIL.

CONCLUSION

40. The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in principle and would succeed in providing a building of adequate size and dimensions to accommodate a much needed new educational unit, in terms of its setting and appropriate scale and design. The proposal would not result in any detrimental impact upon the street scene or significance of the adjoining heritage assets, nor would it harm the intrinsic character of the surrounding countryside. Subject to appropriate conditions, no harmful impact would occur with regard to neighbouring amenity, highways, drainage, biodiversity or trees and landscape. As such, the proposal is considered to accord with national and local planning policies and is therefore recommended for approval.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)
In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. The proposal is intended to support children learning and development, and this is acknowledged in consideration of the application. Aside from this, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts upon protected groups as a result of the development.