

9 DCSW2006/3430/O - SITE FOR NEW SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND NEW ACCESS TO EXTEND SCHOOL FACILITIES, HEREFORD WALDORF SCHOOL, MUCH DEWCHURCH, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR2 8DL.

For: DfES Academies per Feilden Clegg Bradley Architects LLP, Bath Brewery, Toll Bridge Road, Bath, BA1 7DE.

Date Received: 27th October, 2006

Ward: Valletts

Grid Ref: 48215, 31008

Expiry Date: 26th January, 2007

Local Member: Councillor P.G. Turpin

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 Much Dewchurch is located some 7 miles south of Hereford and lies astride the Class II road that connects Wormelow and Allensmore. The site is on the southern side of the village and relates to the existing Waldorf School. However the application relates to a substantial area of land which encompasses the school, pastureland to its south, the existing school outdoor play areas to the south of St David's Church and an area of pastureland to the east of the village. In total the area is some 4.5 hectares.
- 1.2 This is an outline application and includes details of the proposed access. The matters of layout, appearance, scale and landscaping are reserved for subsequent approval. The proposal is to provide a new school. This will involve the erection of a new school building on the land to the south of the existing school and to incorporate this and the existing permanent buildings to provide a Steiner Academy. The land to the east of the village is proposed to be used to form a car park for the school, incorporating a new access to the Class II road, and with a pedestrian link formed to the school through the land to the south of the Church. The application is supported by a number of reports which will be referred to later in this report.
- 1.3 The site is within the current Area of Great Landscape Value. St David's Church, a number of the monuments in the graveyard and The Old Vicarage are Listed Buildings.

2. Policies

2.1 Planning Policy Statements

PPS1	-	Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS7	-	Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPG13	-	Transport
PPG15	-	Planning and the Historic Environment

2.2 Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands

Policy RR1	-	Rural Renaissance
Policy RR2	-	The Rural Regeneration Zone
Policy RR4	-	Rural Services
Policy QE5	-	Protection and Enhancement of the historic Environment
Policy T2	-	Reducing the Need to Travel

2.3 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft)

Policy S1	-	Sustainable Development
Policy S2	-	Development Requirements
Policy S7	-	Natural and Historic Heritage
Policy S11	-	Community Facilities and Services
Policy DR1	-	Design
Policy DR2	-	Land Use and Activity
Policy DR3	-	Movement
Policy DR4	-	Environment
Policy DR6	-	Water Resources
Policy T11	-	Parking Provision
Policy T14	-	School Travel
Policy LA2	-	Landscape Character
Policy LA3	-	Setting of Settlements
Policy LA6	-	Landscaping Schemes
Policy NC1	-	Biodiversity and Development
Policy HBA4	-	Setting of Listed Buildings
Policy CF2	-	Foul Drainage
Policy CF5	-	New community facilities

2.4 South Herefordshire District Local Plan

Policy GD1	-	General Development Criteria
Policy C1	-	Development within Open Countryside
Policy C2	-	Settlement Boundaries
Policy C3	-	Criteria for Exceptional Development Outside Settlement Boundaries
Policy C8	-	Development within Area of Great Landscape Value
Policy C29	-	Setting of a Listed Building
Policy C30	-	Open Land Within Settlements
Policy C40	-	Provision of Essential Services
Policy C43	-	Foul Sewerage
Policy CF1	-	Retention and Provision of New Community Facilities
Policy CF5	-	Provision of Community Buildings
Policy T3	-	Highway Safety Requirements

2.5 Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

Policy CTC2	-	Area of Great Landscape Value
Policy CTC7	-	Development and Features of Historic Importance
Policy CTC9	-	Development Requirements

3. Planning History

3.1	SH871704PF	Change of use of barn into a 2-storey classroom block and construction of playground parking and turning area	-	Approved 10/02/88
	SH940094PF	Erection of new complex to provide theatre and hall space, art/craft facilities and alterations to link block	-	Refused 20/04/94
	SH940095PF	Erection of a timber framed kindergarten building	-	Refused 20/04/94. Appeal dismissed 15/12/94
	SH950448PF	Kindergarten block, workshops and hall complex, altered and extended toilet block and hard play area	-	Refused 20/09/95. Appeal dismissed 04/10/96
	SW2000/2970/F	Change of use to educational premises with extension and alteration and erection of garage workshop (Church Farm)	-	Approved 18/04/01
	DCSW2003/3461/F	New assembly hall, new classroom block and ancillary buildings	-	Approved 09/01/04
	DCSW2005/3136/F	Change of use from agricultural use, to overspill car parking in part of field on temporary basis	-	Not determined

There have also been a number of permissions for temporary buildings and other minor work.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 Environment Agency - This is a case where the Agency offers standing advice with regard to surface water run-off and drainage.
- 4.2 West Midlands Regional Assembly - have no objection
- 4.3 Advantage West Midlands - have no objection

4.4 Welsh Water comment:

“Sewerage

The proposed development would overload the existing public sewerage system. No improvements are planned within Dwr Cymru Welsh Water's Capital Investment Programme. We consider any development prior to improvements being undertaken to be premature, and therefore object to the development. It may be possible for the Developer to fund the accelerated provision of replacement infrastructure or to requisition a new sewer under Sections 98-101 of the Water Industry Act 1991.

Reason: To prevent hydraulic overloading of the public sewerage system, to protect the health and safety of existing residents and ensure no detriment to the environment.

In order for this objection to be overcome, it will be necessary to undertake a feasibility study on the receiving Waste Water Treatment Works to determine whether adequate capacity exists to accommodate the additional foul flows from the proposed development. On completion of the study we will be in a position to revise our comments.

Sewage Treatment

The proposed development would overload the Waste Water Treatment Works. No improvements are planned within DCWW Capital Investment Programme. We consider any development prior to improvements being made to be premature and therefore object to the development.”

The applicants have commissioned the necessary feasibility study. Welsh Water advise that on its satisfactory completion their objection would be removed and replaced by a planning condition which would reflect its results.

- 4.5 English Heritage - do not wish to comment in detail but suggest conditions are imposed to require prior approval of architectural details, materials, finishes and landscaping.
- 4.6 Ramblers' Association - Comment that the public footpath must be protected and the bridge must be suitable in width for its use
- 4.7 Open Spaces Society - Comment with regard to the ensuring that the bridge over the public footpath is suitable for all users

Internal Council Advice

4.8 Director of Children's Services comments:

“The proposal to create an academy funded by Central Government at Much Dewchurch reflects a national policy to create diverse provision in the public sector and give more choice to parents. The way in which the admissions over-subscription criteria are worded for the academy does ensure that residents of Herefordshire will benefit from the additional provision. These admission policies are written to potentially benefit pupils wherever they live in the County. In this respect, the school would operate in a similar fashion to St. Mary's RC High School, Lugwardine and Bishop of Hereford Bluecoat High School in their role for the Roman Catholic and

adherents to The Trinity respectively. The Steiner Academy would join the wider community of maintained provision in Herefordshire.

The Education and Inspection Act places a responsibility on local authorities to maximise diversity and parental choice. On this issue, the local authority recognises the greater choice the Steiner School will bring to parents in the County.

The need for the academy at Much Dewchurch should be judged in this context. It should not be judged in terms of pupil numbers in Much Dewchurch itself. Those under the age of 5 living in the parish in each year group vary between 5 and 11. The provided schools for this parish are Much Birch Primary School and Kingstone High School and they both have sufficient capacity to meet the needs of those children living within their catchment area who do not seek a Steiner education.”

4.9 Environmental Health Officer - no comments

4.10 Traffic Manager -

(a) Traffic/Highways - recommends refusal for the following reason:

“The proposed junction layout indicated on the deposited plan accompanying this application is at variance with Department of Transport standards. Stopping sight distance (forward visibility) for southbound vehicles on the B4348 approaching the proposed access appears to be sub-standard. This may result in queuing traffic on the main road waiting to turn right being ‘shunted’ by vehicles travelling uphill (from blind bend) at school ‘peak’ hours. In order to provide the required ‘Desirable Minimum’ stopping sight distance of 90 metres (based on existing vehicles speeds identified) will require the possible realignment and reprofiling of carriageway and highway verge/footway to the north of the proposed access, and relocation of the adjacent residents parking lay-by. It should be noted Department of Transport document TD 9/93 para 1.26 (contained in the ‘Design Manual for Roads and Bridges’) states that relaxations below Desirable Minimum in stopping site distance will not be permitted on the immediate approaches to junctions, because the majority of accidents occur in the vicinity of junctions. It also defines the immediate approaches to a junction as being those lengths of carriageway on the mainline (in this case on the B4348) between a point 1.5 times the Desirable Minimum Stopping Sight Distance from the centre line minor road and the centre line itself (in this case 135 metres).”

(b) Public Rights of Way:

“The only area of concern is the narrow section of land joining the proposed new car park and main site. At this point the proposal is for the installation of a new bridge to replace the existing one on the legal line of footpath MD 12. There are no details of the proposed design or specifications at this stage. There is currently an old stone clapper bridge on site which is too low and liable to flooding and is in need of some repair. It is also totally unsuited for disabled access. The applicants should be aware that there is likely to be some local sensitivity when considering the replacement of this bridge and this should be taken into account when considering designs. The proposed bridge design also needs to be approved by ourselves as it will be a dual public/private bridge. It is likely that we would require either commuted 106 sums for ten years to maintain the bridge or require the School to undertake future maintenance of it at their own expense with a contribution from ourselves.

The legal line of the footpath is slightly different from the arrangement on site which although will not affect the bridge, will need to be taken into account when the new private footpath is constructed.”

(c) Land Drainage Engineer

“The Flood Risk Assessment as presented is acceptable, however, as the application progresses it would be advisable to involve the drainage section with regard to the storm water drainage, and in particular, the layout of the storage/attenuation pond for Area 1.”

4.11 Conservation Manager: -

(a) Archaeologist

“Although having no, in principle, objection to the development, I am concerned by the appreciable ground disturbance – in a sensitive location – that will occur. The application site lies in close association with the historic core of the village, which may have pre-conquest origins.

Accordingly I consider that the development as proposed is likely to damage significant archaeological deposits and features. This damage needs to be mitigated by a firm archaeological condition (PPG.16 Section 30), ensuring that the site is archaeologically recorded prior to/during development.

With regard to the proposal above, I would advise that the standard archaeological ‘site investigation’ condition be attached to any forthcoming planning permission.”

(b) Building Conservation Officer

“Although at outline stage, this is a thoroughly considered application which addresses the main siting issues in a systematic manner and presents a coherent framework for the detailed design decisions which will be made. This scheme has the potential to be a significant addition to Herefordshire’s C.21 architectural canon and is likely to attract national attention.”

(c) Landscape Officer

“I understand that this scheme has been extensively discussed with officers prior to the application being made and I would support the development in principle. There are a number of issues that I would like to raise at this stage, which I hope will inform your decision and help the applicant in formulating a detailed proposal for full permission.

Firstly, the site is located within the Principal Settled Farmlands landscape type as identified in the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment. As the name of the landscape type implies, this is a settled landscape where hamlets and villages are common as are dispersed farmsteads and dwellings. Many villages in this landscape originated as nucleated settlements but have expanded through linear extensions along principal roads. Much Dewchurch is typical of a village in this landscape. As such, the historic origins of the village have been suppressed by layers of development resulting in an eclectic mix of buildings and styles; new buildings could reasonably be accommodated in this landscape particularly where enhancements to the character of the village can be made and strong settlement boundaries reinforced or made.

The siting of the proposed car park is possibly the weakest element of the scheme, but one that will not easily be resolved as no other area is available for car parking. Integrating the car park into the landscape will therefore require considerable attention. In short, making full use of the existing 'lumps and bumps' and vegetation to the east of the area should be considered. This would require the car parking to be located to the west side of the field, ideally wrapping around the existing contours of the hill. Although this would present parked cars to open countryside, there are few receptors to the west and the impact could be more easily mitigated by boundary tree and hedge planting. Additionally, bunding to the roadside could be avoided and the general landform could remain materially unaltered. Roadside signage to the car parking area will also need to be kept to a minimum.

The Design and Access Statement accompanying the application identifies the importance of "interlinking of new and existing landscapes". This would apparently reflect the importance of the field linking the car park with the school site. This also highlights the importance of the change in topography from the hilltop settlement to the north and the flat, wet meadows and associated streams to the south. Details of how this linking field is to be landscaped will be essential to ensure the successful connection of the two principle elements of the scheme.

Similar to the above, the detailed landscaping of the 'MUGA' and 'lookout point' to the extreme southwest of the site will also be required. It should be noted that the 'MUGA' and the car park are the two built/hard elements that extend beyond the natural topographical boundary of the village. Boundary treatment and the relationship with the open countryside will be critical at these points.

Do we know how the existing public right of way to the west of the car park, where it passes through the application site, is to be treated and how site security maintained?

Naturally, general landscaping details, schedules and specification of planting will be required for the whole site and a suitable, standard condition requiring the submission of details attached to any consent granted, but the above are the critical areas that will need greatest attention and the car parking area gives me particular concern. Samples of materials for hard landscaping will be required in addition to samples for the built elements of the scheme and again a suitable condition should be attached."

(d) Ecologist

"I have received the accompanying ecological reports (there are two reports contained within the attached document) by Wildways. I have also spoken with Hilary Smith (the consultant ecologist) with reference to appropriate levels of survey, and am satisfied that this has been covered within the report. I note that the possibility of the presence of great crested newts has not been ruled out, and that a further survey at an appropriate time of year will be required. The results of this should accompany a full planning application, so that the necessity for a newt proof fence can be ascertained.

I would like to see more detailed proposals and drawings for mitigating for the loss of hedgerows along the road adjacent to the new car park. This should include location, length and species to be planted (these should be native) as well as protective measures to ensure their survival.

This outline application does not appear to include the proposed works to the existing buildings, and the effect that this might have upon bats that is outlined in the ecological report. However, I am satisfied that the bat mitigation proposals in the report are

appropriate. My recommendation is to approve this application with the inclusion of the following non-standard conditions based on the proposals outlined in the Mitigation and Compensation sections of both reports:

"The recommendations for bats, birds, great crested newts and habitat enhancement outlined in the Mitigation and Compensation sections of the ecologist's reports should be followed.

Timing of the development together with post-development site safeguards and monitoring mentioned in the report should be adhered to."

Reasons:

All species of bat and their roosts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 and policies within the Local Plan and UDP NC1, NC5, NC6 and NC7.

Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 and policies within the Local Plan and UDP NC1, NC5, NC6 and NC7

To comply with Herefordshire Council's Policy NC1, NC5, NC6, NC7, NC8 and NC9 and HBA9.8 in relation to Nature Conservation and Biodiversity."

4.12 Forward Planning Manager comments:

"The site is located at Much Dewchurch, a named Main Village in the Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft) (Policy H.4). Part of the site is within the settlement boundary, with the remainder of the application site adjacent to the village boundary. The principle of the application is acceptable in principle, with Policy CF.5 New Community Facilities, expressly stating that proposals which would result in the provision of new or improved community facilities or the enhanced use of existing facilities will be permitted where they 'are located within or around the settlement or the area they serve'. Material consideration needs to be made in regards to the following:

Further requirements of Policy CF.5 include that the development is:

- appropriate in scale to the needs of the local community and reflect the character of the location
- would not significantly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents
- incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian access together with appropriate provision of car and cycle parking and operational space

The supporting text also states that the provision of accessible new facilities and services are supported as long as they do not impact upon the area in which they are proposed.

The main issues are centred on highways, access and safety, and the impact of the proposal on the Scheduled Ancient Monument and the setting of the village overall. The relevant comments of those departments can inform a detailed opinion on those matters, nevertheless Unitary Development Plan policies do cover these issues.

Policy ARCH.3 states that proposals and works which adversely affect the integrity, character or setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument are not permitted.

Policy LA.3 seeks to protect the setting of settlements, and it is essential that the criteria of this policy are satisfied, even if all other relevant policies make the proposal acceptable. Important visual approaches into settlements, views of key buildings, open areas into developments, green corridors and surrounding valued open countryside will be particularly protected and where appropriate, enhanced. The creation of green wedges, open spaces and tree lines will be promoted where they compliment and enhance the landscape character and townscape.

Summary - In policy terms, the proposal is acceptable in principle, with the main issues as outlined above, and subject to the comments of the relevant departments.”

5. Representations

5.1 The application is supported by a number of documents: -

Planning Statement - This states that the Waldorf School opened in the 1980 and is currently undergoing the process of becoming an academy, part of the state provision of education, funded by the DfES and the Steiner Fellowship. The intention is to open in 2008 with space for 330 pupils (ages 3 - 16), an increase of some 22% on existing. The scheme involves new building and improvement to the existing buildings plus outdoor sporting facilities. The Statement considers the proposal against policy and concludes that it is in accordance.

Design and Access Statement - This states that the new buildings will be some 3050 sq. m. and will provide classroom for the upper and lower school, specialist teaching rooms, hall, gym and eurythmy space. Additionally the existing kindergarten facility will be extended. The remainder of the south field would be used for sport with hard play areas along its western edge. It is intended that the development will be sustainable achieving 40% renewable energy at the outset. The Statement includes a series of indicative drawings of the design and layout. The intention is to create two landscaped courtyards linking the existing with the new buildings. The new buildings will be cut into the slope, are to be barn like structures, to echo those existing, and would be mono pitched clad in larch and glazing and with sedum roofs. A new access and car park are proposed which will be safer, reduce traffic in the village and reduce parking at the school. The Statement includes a series of drawings indicating the concept and intended design and layout, the landscaping and the car parking and access.

Transportation Statement and Framework Travel Plan - It points out that the school has a wide catchment area and the proposal is to increase its size. There is public transport access and a high car occupancy level (2.6 children). The access onto the Class II road is substandard, the activity impacts on the amenity of adjacent residents and is not suitable for increased use. The new access and car park will provide space for 63 cars and room for coaches and it will not impact on the safe operation of the Class II road. A Travel Plan is to be implemented by the school.

Education Statement - This explains the educational background, as follows: -

The National Academies Programme

Academies are a new type of school. They bring a distinctive approach to school leadership drawing on the skills of sponsors and other supporters. They give schools new opportunities to develop educational strategies to raise standards and contribute

to diversity. Academies are publicly funded independent schools. Their independent status allows them the flexibility to be innovative and creative in their curriculum, staffing and governance. Academies, therefore, work in different ways to traditional Local Authority (LA) schools.

Academies are all ability schools established by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups working in highly innovative partnerships with central Government and local education partners. Sponsors and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) provide the capital costs for the Academy. Running costs are met in full by the DfES.

Each Academy provides an excellent environment for teaching and learning that is comparable with the best available in the maintained sector. The Steiner Academy will offer a broad and balanced curriculum to pupils of all abilities with a specialism in the Natural Environment. As the Academy becomes successfully established it will share its expertise and facilities with other schools and the wider community.

As well as providing the best opportunities for their pupils, Academies have a key part to play in communities. A new Academy will be a significant focus for learning for its pupils, their families and other local people. The Academy will be innovative in design and built to high environmental and sustainable standards. It is to be a national centre for Steiner Education. It will be a high profile establishment and is supported by the DfES wholeheartedly.

The DfES provide the capital costs for the Academy from the Academies Division funding with a contribution from the Sponsor. Running costs are met in full by the DfES.

Pupil Places & Diversity

The new Academy will offer places for 260 pupils aged 6 - 16 years, plus 70 Early Years places. As the current school is independent and fee paying, the new state funded Academy will offer more diversity to local children in Herefordshire at no cost.

The Hereford Steiner Academy has been included in the Academies Programme because of the special approach to education that it offers. The Academy will offer real diversity and choice to parents and the admissions policy is based on the following criteria (in order of importance):

- Looked after children;
- Children with statements of SEN that name the Hereford Steiner Academy in the statement;
- Children who have a sibling already in the school. To qualify under this category a child must have a brother or sister at the school both at the time of application and when the younger sibling is due to start. Siblings include not only natural brothers and sisters but also step-brothers/sisters, or brothers/sisters who have been legally adopted, so long as they are living at the same address as the family unit. However, cousins or other relatives at the same address will not be given priority;
- Proximity to the school, as measured by the shortest practical and safe walking route to the school.

Local College Support

Colleges local to the current Hereford Waldorf School have expressed great and continued support for the school and the students who attend the school. A good relationship has been developed and pupils are accepted without the typical set of qualifications that other mainstream schools insist upon. Steiner pupils achieve excellent academic standards at the Colleges and also when they go on to University.

In addition it reports on the pre-application consultation that took place with the local community.

Ecological and protected species survey - This concludes that the majority of the land appears to have little ecological value with the best habitat areas being the field boundaries and brook. The existing school buildings would also appear to have a small use by protected species. Recommendations are made with regard to further survey work and mitigation during development and construction.

Flood Risk Assessment - This concludes that there is little or no risk from fluvial flooding, building levels will be set above the flood level in a worst case scenario, in order to control surface water run off a surface water strategy will be incorporated including the provision of an attenuation pond to store water.

- 5.2 Much Dewchurch Parish Council "strongly object to the proposed Steiner Academy being established in the village. The development would be far too big in such a small village, taking up an area of land equal to a third of what the village properties stand on at present.

The proposed buildings are also extremely large in comparison to any other buildings in the surrounding area, therefore not within keeping. The Academy would have significant affect on residents and properties, especially those in The Pippins complex and adjacent to the present access. Residents living opposite the proposed car park entrance would experience the traffic movements and inconvenience; there are two vehicle entrances virtually opposite the car park entrance. The access road to the Church View Estate is only 40m south of the proposed new car park entrance. The applicants anticipate an extra 100 pupils attending the Academy resulting in over 60 additional vehicles.

The traffic census on the B4348 highway through Much Dewchurch was carried out at the end of January 2006, which is when traffic at at a low level. There are virtually no agricultural vehicles and machinery on the move, Allensmore Nurseries are also quiet, far fewer lorries are hauling grain to Sun Valley Feed Mill and there are no holiday coaches, caravans, motor homes, etc.

Drivers from south of Hereford use the road to get to the M50, avoiding the congestion of the city, to get to Worcester, Shrewsbury and beyond. An increase in traffic movement on this stretch of the B4348 will exacerbate traffic problems experienced for many years between the A465 and A466 junctions. It has been suggested that an independent traffic survey be taken at a more appropriate time of year.

The Parish Council question the term 'local' with reference to UDP Policy CF.5, 'Provision of Facilities for Local Needs'. The application states that present pupils travel an average 10 miles to the Waldorf School, with only 38 pupils travelling less than five miles, with some travelling much further than 10 miles, whereby the Council do not regard the Academy as a local need.

The bus shelter on the southern side of the proposed access was funded by village residents and built on a plot of land, which was donated by Mrs. Peel. The Parish Council owns, maintains and pays insurance premiums for it, but they have not been approached regarding it being moved. Residents want it to stay as a memorial to Mrs. Peel and her late husband who supported and helped the village in their time.

The proposed buildings would be quite close to the St. David's Church, which is a listed building and overlooks land regarded as being of natural beauty and outstanding views.

In 1977, Planners refused permission for Waldorf School to build a large unit to contain a hall and classrooms, the Parish Council objected to that development and contested the Waldorf School appeal, which was dismissed by a Government Inspector. That decision must surely have some influence on this application, which is for a much larger development and will have a bigger effect on the village as a whole and road users.

Past enquiries into the possibility of building residential properties on land adjacent to the proposed site received a reply stating that no development would be allowed in this area west of the B4348 road.

It is considered inappropriate and out of order for the Government to grant millions of pounds to fund this project, which would only accommodate an additional 100 pupils when many rural schools have closed through a lack of funds and pupils. This appears to be a scheme to build a new school on the existing.

If this Academy received Government funding, much of the schooling would have to comply with State rulings, whereby some parents would not be in favour of changes and move their children elsewhere, this combined with the known fact that children numbers are decreasing could result in an expensive Academy being under subscribed."

5.3 Councillor P Turpin comments:

"I feel I have to write to protect against this huge development in our small village. It used to be a small school with the most on role years ago totalling 60. They now want to increase their capacity to 330 plus. I wonder how many schools have a separate car park for the dropping off of their children and the parking of their cars? Although the applicant has presumably purchased the land for the car park and it eventually links up with their own land; I cannot and will not accept that when it is raining and snowing the children will be made to walk up to the car and walk back to the school.

Have they got Academy status yet? That's the key to all of this. The amount of traffic in the village am and pm is horrendous. How vulnerable are the small schools going to be, i.e. Kings Caple, Much Birch, Garway and St. Weonards? It's advertised in the local press as (a) not in accordance with the provisions of the development plan, (b) it's affecting the setting of the listed building (the church) and (c) it affects a public right of way.

Only a few local children use the school, the amount of traffic using the village for the school is vast. I would urge you local members to turn this application down, the village does not need or require this, it was a peaceful little village before they arrived and took our village over."

5.4 19 letters of objection have been received with the reasons for these as follows: -

- Additional traffic causing hazards on road
- Difficulty of access to Church View
- Disturbance to the countryside
- New car park will be a potential threat and risk to road safety
- Already causes traffic problems - can only be made worse
- Jeopardise peace and quiet of village
- School already too large for surroundings
- Car park will have significant impact on visual amenity of residents and setting of historical and listed buildings
- Concern over safety of access to car park
- Parents will continue to use current school access particularly in poor weather
- Lighting will be intrusive
- Concern as to use of larch cladding and sedum roof on buildings which will not blend into village
- Extension of village into open countryside which is in AGLV
- If permitted full affordable use of the facilities by the village should be assured/working hours should be restricted
- Contrary to planning policy
- Danger to public safety
- Increase in noise and disturbance
- Loss of views
- Overall will not benefit the village but will overwhelm it
- Concern as to access for construction vehicles
- Damage to a drainage system
- Does not serve the local community
- Will cause difficulties for bus users
- Money could be better used on other schools in County
- Concern as to standards of education
- Car park run off will increase flooding
- Will harm other schools in area
- Out of scale with village

5.5 A petition against the proposal containing 66 signatures. The reasons are dangerous access, out of keeping with village, harm to other schools in the area and strain on the roads and environment

5.6 93 letters of support has been received with the reasons for this that the development will: -

- Provide a new and exciting era for the village
- Reduce traffic in the village
- Enhance education facilities
- Architecture in harmony with its environment
- Exciting and innovative project
- New facilities will benefit community

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Southern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officer's Appraisal

- 6.1 The Waldorf School has been in existence at this site for many years. It is currently accommodated in the original village school building, a converted barn a former farmhouse and some temporary buildings. Planning permission exists for the construction of a new assembly hall, classroom block and ancillary buildings.
- 6.2 This proposal essentially is to redevelop the school to provide a Steiner Academy, which will be funded by the government. This however is an outline application with only illustrative details of the proposed development. Only details of the access are submitted at this time. The school would provide 330 places. The existing buildings will continue to be used. New buildings are proposed to the south of those existing in the form of two storey structures to provide classrooms and hall. These will use the ground contours to mitigate their impact. In addition an extension will be added to the farmhouse. The indicative details are that the new buildings will echo the existing barn structures and will be mono-pitched structures with the materials to be timber cladding with glazing and sedum roofs. The buildings will extend into the existing field with its remainder to be used for outdoor activities.
- 6.3 The access and parking for the present school does cause significant local difficulties. To endeavour to resolve this a new car park is proposed on land to the east of the village with a pedestrian link formed from this to the school through the land to the south of the churchyard. To manage the future use of this and the existing access and parking a Travel Plan will be developed.
- 6.4 In both the Local Plan and the Unitary Development Plan Much Dewchurch is identified as a main village, which is a settlement of a certain size with existing local facilities, employment opportunities and public transport. In terms of the "settlement boundary" the existing school buildings are largely within the boundary but the external activity areas are not. In terms of this proposal there would be substantial development outside the settlement boundary. Land outside this boundary is considered to be countryside where there are restrictions on new development. Exceptions can be made where the development is adjacent to the settlement boundary and is for "community use" (Local Plan Policies C2 and CF1), or "appropriate in scale to the needs of the local community (UDP Policy CF5). I consider that the policies in the UDP can be given considerable weight in the determination of the proposal
- 6.5 Policy CF5 that deals with new community facilities and this does include the provision of educational accommodation. It states: -

Proposals which would result in the provision of new or improved community facilities or the enhanced use of existing facilities will be permitted where they:

1. are appropriate in scale to the needs of the local community and reflect the character of the location;
2. are located within or around the settlement or the area they serve;
3. would not significantly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents; and
4. incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian access together with appropriate provision of car and cycle parking and operational space.

- 6.6 The first issue is the principle of the development. The proposal is to provide a new school that will serve a much wider area than Much Dewchurch, as does the current Waldorf School. The overall thrust of planning policy is to promote sustainable development with new development ideally directed to those locations that it is to serve. There is no reason why the academy should necessarily be located on the site of the Waldorf School and it could be argued that it be located in Hereford or one of the market towns where there is better access to transport and services. However other schools, such as St Mary's High School Lugwardine, are located in rural villages and serve the wider County. There is no policy requirement for the applicants to consider alternative locations neither was there a request during the UDP process for the allocation of a site. The proposal seeks to improve and enhance an existing community facility. In terms of the overall provision of education in Herefordshire the Director of Education does not object. On balance I consider that so long as the development does not result in unacceptable impacts in the locality there is no overriding reason why this location is unacceptable.
- 6.7 With regard to the scale of the development currently there are no planning controls on the pupil capacity of the school. At present it is understood that there are some 250 pupils. Therefore this proposal with some 330 pupils will represent a significant increase. The academy is not necessarily intended to meet the needs of the local community but will serve the wider area. In terms of the built form the illustrative details indicate that the buildings will seek to reflect the traditional styles on the area rather than a single large building.
- 6.8 A major issue with the operation of the school would be access and parking. The existing access to the school is by way of a difficult access with the Class II road and along a narrow drive. Parking facilities are also limited. The present operation of the school does result in difficulties. Clearly the proposed development would exacerbate these problems. The applicants are proposing a car and coach park on land to the east of the village for both pupils and staff. From this there would be a pedestrian link to the school by way of the land to the south of the Church. In addition a Travel Plan will be developed aimed at ensuring that this new arrangement is used. It is not possible to close the existing access or guarantee that it would not be used. The intention is that parking at the school will only be for the disabled and visitors. The car park will require a new access opposite the Church View estate, and the detail of this is included. There has been ongoing discussion on the highway safety requirements for this particularly with regard to forward visibility along the Class II road due to the changes in its alignment. At present these concerns have not been resolved and the Traffic Manager recommends refusal.
- 6.9 The site is within the Area of Great landscape Value, although this designation will cease with the adoption of the UDP. However the proposal in extending the built form of the village into the countryside will have an impact on the landscape. The village is overlooked by higher ground particularly to the south. However having regard to the illustrative details I consider that the development at and adjacent to the school site can be assimilated into the landscape. A detailed landscaping scheme can be negotiated at the detailed stage. As to the car park this will extend the village more significantly into the countryside. The land is uneven and there is a significant slope to its west side. However the parking of vehicles will be transitory and with careful landscaping I consider that there would not be unacceptable harm to the landscape.
- 6.10 With regard to drainage the additional development will increase the potential for surface water run off. The applicant's have submitted a flood risk assessment and this

is considered to be acceptable in principle. There is a potential flooding issue from the brook particularly with regard to the footpath link from the car park to the school (this is also partly a PROW). However the design of the new bridge and the level and form of the footpath can be dealt with at the detailed stage.

- 6.11 The present the operation of the school does impact on the amenities of local residents, primarily from the operation of its access and parking but also from its general activity. The relocation of the car parking will improve this although it will be offset by an increase in activity at the school. There are dwellings almost adjacent to the school site in The Pippins. However I do not consider that any increase in noise and disturbance above existing levels will be at an unacceptable level.
- 6.12 The school is adjacent to St David's Church, a Grade I Listed Building. Previous proposals for substantial new buildings for the school have been refused and dismissed on appeal due to their harm to the setting of this building. The setting includes the surrounding countryside and there are fine views of the surrounding countryside from its porch and churchyard. It is noted that following the refusals permission was granted for new buildings in 2004. The proposed design principles have carefully considered this relationship and although the new buildings will impose partially on the panoramic views from the Church I do not consider, in the light of the advice from English Heritage and the Conservation Manager, that the setting of the Church will be harmed.
- 6.13 Welsh Water has objected on the basis that the development would overload the public sewerage system. Further investigatory work is being undertaken to ascertain the extent and cost of the necessary improvement work but at present this has not been concluded.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

- 1. Having regard to Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft) Policies DR3 and CF5 the Local Planning Authority are not satisfied that the proposed development would not result in danger on the Class II road and is therefore considered to be unacceptable. The proposed junction layout indicated on the deposited plan accompanying this application is at variance with Department of Transport standards. Stopping sight distance (forward visibility) for southbound vehicles on the B4348 approaching the proposed access appears to be sub-standard. This may result in queuing traffic on the main road waiting to turn right being 'shunted' by vehicles traveling uphill (from blind bend) at school 'peak' hours. In order to provide the required 'Desirable Minimum' stopping sight distance of 90 metres (based on existing vehicles speeds identified) will require the possible realignment and reprofiling of carriageway and highway verge/ footway to the north of the proposed access, and relocation of the adjacent residents parking lay-by. It should be noted DfT document TD 9/93 Para 1.26 (contained in the 'Design Manual for Roads and Bridges') states that relaxations below Desirable Minimum in stopping site distance will not be permitted on the immediate approaches to junctions, because the majority of accidents occur in the vicinity of junctions. It also defines the immediate approaches to a junction as being those lengths of carriageway on the mainline (in this case on the B4348) between a point 1.5 times the Desirable Minimum Stopping Sight Distance from the centre line minor road and the centre line itself. (In this case 135 metres).**

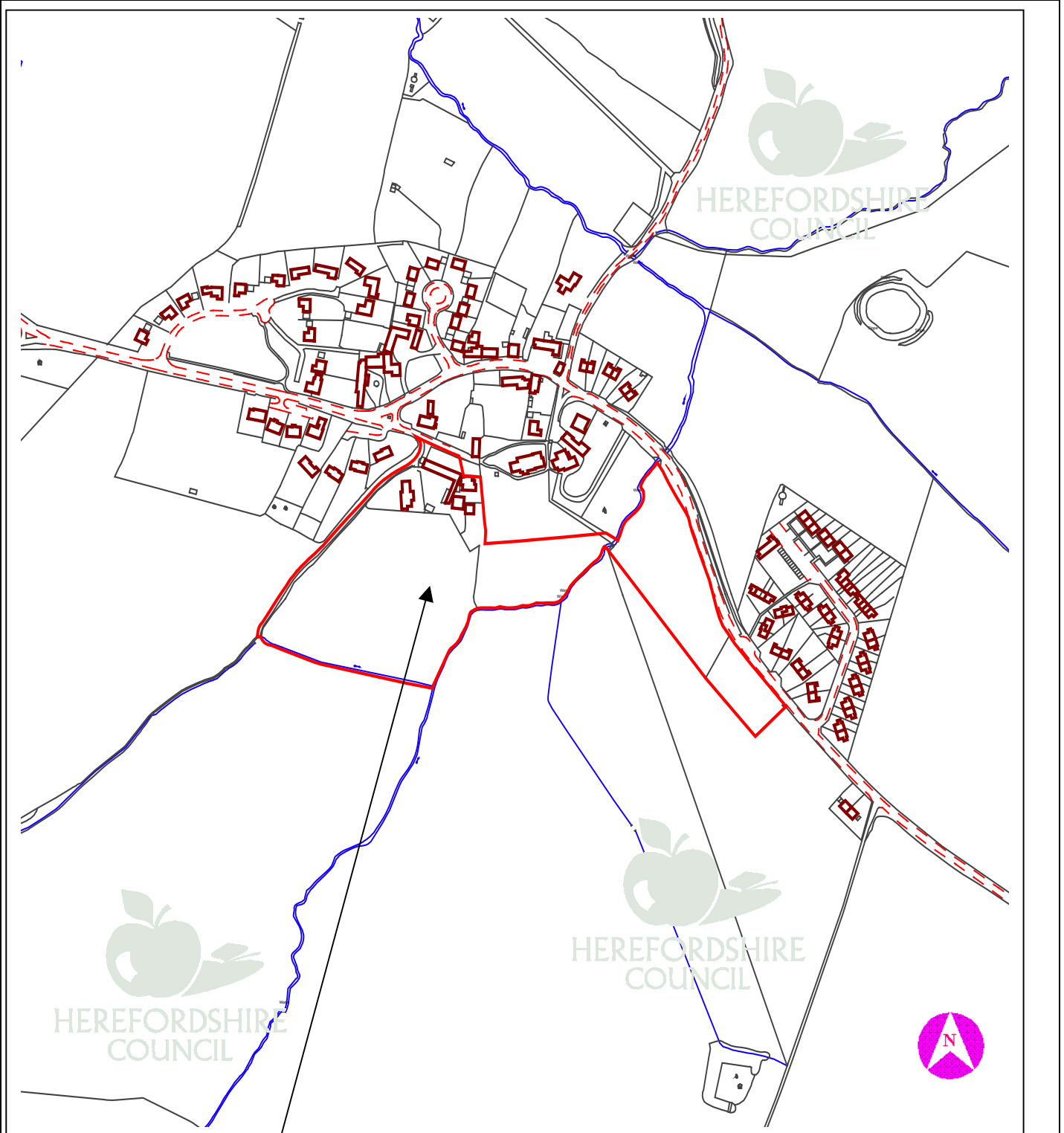
2. **Having regard to Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Revised Deposit Draft) Policies S2 and DR4, the Local Planning Authority are not satisfied that the proposed development would not overload the public sewerage system and waste water treatment works.**

Decision:

Notes:

Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCSW2006/3430/O

SCALE : 1 : 5000

SITE ADDRESS : Hereford Waldorf School, Much Dewchurch, Herefordshire, HR2 8DL

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