

12 DCSW2007/1091/O - SITE FOR NEW SCHOOL BUILDINGS TO EXTEND EXISTING SCHOOL FACILITIES AND NEW ACCESS, 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: 17th April, 2007 **Ward: Valletts**

Grid Ref: 48215, 31008

Expiry Date: 17th July, 2007

Local Member: Councillor M.J. Fishley

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 documents which will be referred to later in this report.
- 1.3 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

PPS.1	-	Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS.7	-	Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPG.13	-	Transport
PPG.15	-	Planning and the Historic Environment

2.2 Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands

Policy RR.1	-	Rural Renaissance
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Policy RR.2	-	The Rural Regeneration Zone
Policy RR.4	-	Rural Services
Policy QE.5	-	Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
Policy T.2	-	Reducing the Need to Travel

2.3 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007

Policy S.1	-	Sustainable Development
Policy S.2	-	Development Requirements
Policy S.7	-	Natural and Historic Heritage
Policy S.11	-	Community Facilities and Services
Policy DR.1	-	Design
Policy DR.2	-	Land Use and Activity
Policy DR.3	-	Movement
Policy DR.4	-	Environment
Policy DR.6	-	Water Resources
Policy T.11	-	Parking Provision
Policy T.14	-	School Travel
Policy LA.2	-	Landscape Character
Policy LA.3	-	Setting of Settlements
Policy LA.6	-	Landscaping Schemes
Policy NC.1	-	Biodiversity and Development
Policy HBA.4	-	Setting of Listed Buildings
Policy CF.2	-	Foul Drainage
Policy CF.5	-	New Community Facilities

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	-	Deemed Withdrawn 23/03/07
DCSW2006/3430/O	Site for new school buildings and new access to extend school facilities	-	Refused 24/01/07 Appeal lodged

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 - no response (no objection to previous application)
- 4.3 Advantage West Midlands - no response (no objection to previous application)
- 4.4 Welsh Water - As private drainage facilities are intended they have no comments.
- 4.5 English Heritage - Do not wish to comment in detail but suggest that the architectural and landscape details, materials and finishes should be conditioned. They recommend the application is determined in accordance with policy and specialist conservation advice.
- 4.6 Ramblers' Association - Point out that a public right of way will be affected and that its future should be protected. In addition they question with regard to the standard of the replacement footbridge and its suitability for all users.
- 4.7 Open Spaces Society - no response.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.8 Director of Children's Services – The comments already made regarding this application have not changed. The school provides diversity within Herefordshire and provides for the whole of the County rather than locally.

The previous comments were as follows :- "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 - comments that hours of construction should be conditioned and that the sewage treatment plant will require consent from the Environment Agency.

4.10 Traffic Manager -

(a) Traffic/Highways – No objection, subject to conditions, but comments that the Travel Plan falls well short of what is required to ensure that the required substantial modal shift is achieved at the school in order to mitigate the proposed development.

(b) Land Drainage Engineer - no comments

4.11 Public Rights of Way Manager - Points out that there will be an affect on a public right of way. Concern is raised with regard to the design of the replacement footbridge which will need to be approved and its future maintenance assured. Efforts should also be made to replace the nearby stiles with gates. The right of way should remain at its historic width and a temporary closure order will be required.

4.12 Conservation Manager: -

(a) Building Conservation Officer - Although the design remains indicative, the architects have taken steps to simplify (from the previous scheme) the more prominent south and east elevation, the roofscape and to eliminate ythe chimney, which read as a vertical element in competition with the tower on the Church. These measures reduce the visual impact of the scheme without diluting its underlying rationale, and I remain of the opinion that the contemporary approach offers the most flexible, sensitive solution to the constraints of the site. Support.

(b) Landscape Officer – no response received (no fundamental objection to previous application).

(c) Ecologist comments:

"I had no objection to the previous application and was satisfied with the findings and recommendations of the ecological reports by Wildways (August 2006). The possibility of the presence of great crested newts has not been ruled out, and 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.

Pipistrelle bats were recorded as roosting in the existing buildings; brown long-eared and lesser horseshoe bats are also present on the site. I am satisfied that the bat mitigation proposals in the report are appropriate, and would like to see the inclusion of bat lofts as recommended in the ecological report.

Update protected species surveys will be required to accompany a full planning application for the site.

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

4.13 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: -

Covering letter - This is attached as an Appendix

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 national planning policy and the UDP. It concludes that the development will fulfill an important role in state education provision in the County, be appropriate to the local environment, would enhance local road and pedestrian conditions and cause no harm to the environment, and that it is in accordance with planning policy.

Design and Access Statement - This states that a rural location is essential because the schools' specialism is the natural environment, environmental aspirations are to become zero carbon and the Waldorf School has existed on the site for 24 years. The present school has a capacity for 294 pupils but at present has 270. The Academy would increase this to 330, an increase of 12%. The proposals are to add to existing facilities to provide specialist teaching spaces required to support a school on this site for the number of pupils. It states that the new buildings will be some 2980 sq. m. and will provide a classroom wing, specialist teaching rooms, hall, gym and eurythmy space. Additionally the existing kindergarten facility will be extended and the existing buildings will be refurbished. The remainder of the south field would be used for sport with hard play areas along its western edge. The buildings will be made available for community use out of school hours. It is intended to aspire to a zero-carbon development aiming to achieve 40% renewable energy at the outset. The Statement includes a series of indicative drawings of the design and layout. The intention is to maintain the views from the Church with the buildings being set around landscaped courtyards. The concept of the buildings is as simple barn like structures echoing the existing buildings but dug into the slope of the site. The buildings would be clad in larch with the roofs mono pitched and covered in sedum. 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 Travel Plan - This examines the road network and its current useage together with the current travel patterns of the existing school. It points out that there is a bus and mini bus service to the school. It recognises that the current access and parking arrangements are below normal accepted standards. The proposed scheme includes a new car park of sufficient size and with an acceptable access which has acceptable highway visibility. The access has been subject to an independent audit which identified no safety concerns. The car park will have 63 spaces to provide for staff and parents. There will be opportunities to reduce this through the travel plan. Service vehicles will continue to use the existing access where the car parking will be reduced to a limited number.

The results of the traffic count (March 2007) are that at present there are 177 traffic movements in the morning peak hour and 119 in the evening peak hour. If this pattern is unchanged the increase will be 39 movements in the morning peak hour and 26 in the evening, a 22% increase.

In order to seek to mitigate the traffic impact a School Travel Plan is proposed. A survey shows that presently 81% of pupils travel by car, 13% by bus and 6% walk or cycle. The Travel Plan suggests that to reduce the proportion of car journeys measures

could include additional minibus services, review of bus timetables, a car share scheme and initiatives to promote cycling and walking.

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 building work will be funded by the Sponsor, the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and by Central Government (DfES). To reiterate, funds will not come out of the county's budget; they are separate Academy funds, new money being brought into the County which cannot be re-directed into other local schools if the Academy is not built.

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. In line with the provisions of the Education & Inspections Act 2006, this type of curriculum will secure diversity of provision and increase opportunities for parental choice in and around Herefordshire. The Local Authority also agrees that the Academy will offer real diversity and choice to parents. 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 comment:

“These amended plans do not satisfy nor address the concerns and objections previously put forward by Much Dewchurch Parish Council.

The footprint of the proposed development is equal to approximately one third of the land which the present village properties occupy, therefore must be regarded as being too large to be accommodated in such a small village.

Planning Policy indicate that these types of large developments should be directed towards suitable and appropriate sites which are not within small villages.

This site is in an area of Great Landscape Value and adjacent St. David's Church and the Old Vicarage which are listed buildings. The development would have a significant effect on village residents, properties and lives of the many senior citizens, with more noise and inconvenience from vehicles entering, manoeuvring and leaving the proposed car park and the vehicle lights during the dark mornings and evening would shine on to the properties situated opposite the access. The application states the

activities would only take place during school time, but later state that the proposed facilities would be available for use during evenings, weekends and holidays.

Much of the proposed development would be on land outside of the settlement boundary. It is claimed the Academy is a Local Need when the catchment area goes beyond the Herefordshire Boundary, very few children reside within 5 miles of the school and Much Dewchurch therefore the claim of being a local need is very debatable and the offer of facilities being available to the local community are only to get development beyond the Settlement Boundary.

The Residents insist that the Memorial Bus Shelter must stay in its present position whereby the car park access could not be sited within legal Highway requirements. The B4348 is not very wide with bends, brows and junctions which make it a dangerous and difficult stretch of road for the volume, size and speeds of vehicles that travel through the village, an additional access on the brow of the hill would exacerbate existing problems.

The replies from parents answering the school questionnaire regarding travel and vehicle movements etc support the concerns raised by the Parish Council.

The included Travel Plan contains suggestions and ideas, but there are no definite workable solutions to address the serious traffic and safety issues, the words 'could be', 'if' and 'maybe' are frequently used.

The B4348 is too narrow to contain any additional footpaths nor cycle way without a major road widening programme and the acquisition of land to do it. Children travel from many scattered places within the large catchment area making it near impossible to reduce vehicle movements economically.

The Parish Council understand that the Park Hall at Wormelow is not available for the suggested park and ride. Additional buses using the proposed bus lane would create danger problems for other vehicles and children, furthermore, buses are not allowed to reverse with passengers on board except in exceptional circumstances with assisted guidance.

There are far too many impatient and reckless drivers who have no road manners, and no consideration for other road users nor circumstances, they do overtake on the length of road including the hill in spite of there being a 30mph speed limit. There have been accidents on the road fortunately without injuries or fatalities, sometimes through evasive action - by competent drivers, which is the reason why the proposed access would be a recipe for disaster. The Parish Council question who and how some of the proposals in the Traffic Plan are going to be policed and carried out.

The Parish Council's objections and reasons fall within Planning Policies and Guidance, mostly under PCF.5, ARCH.3, C.2 and CF.1 and Highway requirements, and the Council fully support the objections and comments which have been put forward by the Residents and Parishioners."

5.3 A petition in support of the proposal containing 276 signatures.

5.4 Ninety eight letters expressing support for the proposal

5.5 Forty two letters of objection have been received with the grounds being: -

- Increased traffic danger especially at peak times
- The new access will not be safe
- The parking will not be used particularly in inclement weather
- Loss of hedgerow
- There will be harm to the landscape
- Scale will overwhelm and be out of keeping with the village
- Buildings and car park will dominate the view
- The village envelope will be broken
- Harm and intrusive to the Church and churchyard
- Light and noise pollution
- No need for it to be in Much Dewchurch
- No benefits to village
- Makes no contribution to village life
- Jeopardise peace, beauty and quiet of village
- Bus service poor so cars are used
- Money could be better applied in schools where academic standards are higher
- Village may not be able to use facilities
- Not appropriate location for school of the size proposed
- Intrusive to church and neighbours
- Pressure on housing market
- No real difference to refused application
- No regard to local community
- Damage to other local schools
- Contrary to policy
- Pollution to brook
- Does not serve local community

5.6 A petition against the proposal for reasons as outlined above with 173 signatures.

5.7 One letter makes a number of comments with regard to the scale of the building being disproportionate to the increase in pupils, how will the new car park operate in inclement weather, the loss of the path at Church View, an additional local hall will be disruptive, concern about the possible loss of a bus stop, the writers septic tank is on the site, the flood risk assessment is not clear and concern about effluent discharge to the brook

5.8 Letters from three local schools expressing concern about the impact on existing schools in the area

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Southern Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh 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 and has grown incrementally. Currently it is accommodated in the original school building, a converted barn, a former farmhouse and some temporary buildings. There is a playground/parking area to the south and a more formal parking area to its north side. Vehicle access is along a drive from the Class II road that also serves a number of other houses and the Church. There is a play/sports area on the land to the south of the churchyard.

- 6.2 There have been a number of applications in recent years for further development at the school. In 2004, following earlier refusals and dismissed appeals, permission was granted for significant extensions on the southern side of the site. These provide for a new assembly hall, two-storey classroom block and a single storey building all linked to the existing buildings. The scheme would add in the order of 900 sq m of additional floor space.
- 6.3 This proposal is almost identical to an earlier application that was refused on 24th January 2007 (Application DCSW2006/3430/O). An appeal has been lodged against this decision. The reasons for refusal were: -
1. The site for the proposed Steiner Academy would involve a redevelopment of the existing Waldorf School but would also include land outside the settlement boundary for Much Dewchurch as identified in Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007. Having regard to Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007 Policy CF5 the Local Planning Authority considers the proposal to be unacceptable, in that:
 - a) The form, extent and scale of the development, together with associated activity and movement would not be appropriate to the scale of Much Dewchurch or reflect its character.
 - b) The nature of the proposed Academy is such that it is not necessary for it to be located in Much Dewchurch.
 - c) The proposed development does not provide satisfactory measures so as to ensure that the increased vehicle and pedestrian activity would be safe and convenient and not exacerbate the current operational difficulties arising from the existing school
- 6.4 The proposal is to redevelop the school to provide a Steiner Academy, which will be funded by the government taking it out of the independent sector. This is an outline application that seeks to establish the principles of the development. At this stage only the details of the access are submitted. However also included is an illustrative scheme for the whole proposal. The redevelopment would increase the pupil capacity of the school from 294 to 330. The existing buildings would be retained and continue in school use. To the south a roughly rectangular building is proposed which would be two- storey and contain hall and classrooms. Adjacent to this and south of Church Farm would be a two-storey "L" shaped building containing classrooms and office space. Both these buildings would be cut into the ground such that their first floor level would, adjacent to the existing buildings, equate with the existing ground level. In addition a single story building is proposed to the west of Church Farm. The total additional floor space would be some 2980 sq m. The indicative design shows that the scheme seeks to reflect the established character and built form with the buildings to have a generally narrow span and with mono pitched hipped roofs and with the external materials to be timber cladding and glazing under sedum roofs. Externally it is proposed to use the majority of the current field to the south for outdoor activities including a multi use games area. The aspiration is for a sustainable development with water recycling, natural drainage and a bio-mass heating system.
- 6.5 The access and car park proposal involves the development of the land to the east of the village. A new access would be created together a bus stop. A car park with parking for staff and parents would be created within a landscaped area. A footpath link would be

formed to the school along the land to the south of the Church. In addition a School Travel Plan has been included. The existing parking at the school would be reduced to provide limited spaces for visitors, staff with a mobility handicap and service vehicles.

- 6.6 Much Dewchurch is identified in the Unitary Development Plan as a main village which is a settlement with potential for further development and which has a good level of public transport and with a significant level of community facilities. There is a settlement boundary. The current school buildings are within this boundary but the proposal would involve substantial development outside this boundary.
- 6.7 Land outside the settlement boundary is in terms of policy considered to be countryside where there are restrictions on new development. In terms of a main village an exception can be made to this restriction where the development is for community facilities and this includes educational accommodation. Policy CF5 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.

- 6.8 The first issue is the principle of the development. One of the guiding principles of the UDP is to promote sustainable development with new development directed to those locations that it is intended to serve. Thus Policy CF5 provides that permission can be granted for the enhancement of facilities intended to serve the local community. In this case however the present school serves a wide catchment and would not be a "local school" in the normal interpretation of Policy CF5. In terms of the present pupil catchment in theory the school could be sited at a variety of locations in the County although the most central location is Hereford where there would be the best access to transport and services. Any location would presumably involve the significant movement of pupils and staff, although one of the important elements of the proposal is to give a more diverse choice of school to local families. There are a number of schools in the County that serve a much wider area than the community in which they are located, an example of which is St. Mary's RC High School at Lugwardine. There is no specific UDP policy with regard to the location of such a school neither was there a request through the UDP process for a site to be so allocated. There is an existing school at the site and there is permission for a substantial extension of it, although this is well below, in terms of the floor space, that which is currently proposed. The proposal will further develop the facilities at this school and the Director of Children's Services does not object. Whilst it can be argued that there is no overriding necessity for the school to be located in the village it does involve the development and expansion of a long established school. In terms of principle I consider that it might not be appropriate to consider the proposal solely against Policy CF5 and therefore there is no overriding reason that in principle this is an unsuitable location.
- 6.9 I consider that the proposal should be assessed on the basis of its impact on the locality. There will be an increase in pupil numbers although there is no planning control on current numbers and such a restriction would not normally be applied through planning legislation. The capacity of the school will increase from 294 to 330 pupils and this will generate additional activity that will have an impact on the locality.

- 6.10 Although an outline application the principles of the detailed siting and design of the buildings have been included and have been the subject of prior negotiation. In terms of their architecture the design has sought to reduce their apparent bulk and has sought to apply a more modern approach to the traditional vernacular style. The proposal has been considered by English Heritage and the Conservation Architect who raise no objections. I consider that the design principles so long as they are suitably developed would result in a scheme that although contemporary would be appropriate to this village location. In addition the proposed environmental aspirations are also appropriate and in accordance with UDP policy.
- 6.11 The site is adjacent to St David's Church, a Grade I Listed Building, and the churchyard cross is also listed and an ancient monument. The impact of the development on the setting of the Church is a major issue. Previous applications have been refused with appeals dismissed for the reason of harm to this setting. The setting of the Church includes not only its immediate surroundings but also the open countryside beyond, from which there are also important views towards the village. The design principles for any development in terms of this setting formed the basis for the permission in 2004. This scheme is for a contemporary design and although there will be some imposition on the panoramic views from the Church I do not consider that this will harm the setting of the Listed Building.
- 6.12 In terms of its landscape impact the site is within the principal settled farmlands type as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment. In such an area to maintain the quality of the landscape it is important that new development is associated with existing settlements and that the elements of the landscape are enhanced. This proposal will extend the built form of the village into the countryside and will have an impact on the landscape particularly on the views towards the village from the higher ground to the south. However I consider that its impact, subject to the final detailed design of both the buildings and the landscaping, will enable it to be seen as an extension to the present built form and that it will be readily assimilated into the landscape. In addition the major part of the current field will be used as open ground/sport facilities. The issue is slightly different for the car park that is on much higher ground to the east of the village. This will involve a significant incursion into the landscape and the land itself is uneven with a significant slope to its west side. However the stated intention is to create a car park in a woodland setting using native species. I consider that with a careful design and acknowledging that the actual car parking is transitory there will not be an unacceptable impact on the landscape.
- 6.13 A significant issue is the operation of the access and car parking arrangements. It is clear that the operation of the school at present has a significant impact on the village. The access to the school from the Class II road is difficult and the parking facilities are limited. In the morning peak hour (08.00-09.00) there are estimated to be 177 vehicle movements (106 vehicle in and 71 vehicles out). The estimate is that the expansion would add 39 vehicle movements during this period (23 in and 16 out). This would add a further burden to the immediate vicinity of the school. In order to address these problems the applicants are proposing a new car park to the east of the village from which a pedestrian link would be formed to the school. This involves a new access to the Class II road adjacent to the existing bus shelter. A bus stop would also be provided. In terms of safety I consider the access to be acceptable. The access has been subject to an independent safety audit that concluded that the proposal was acceptable. The Traffic Manager has no objection. The proposal involves the repositioning of the bus shelter, however the Parish Council opposes this. This would

result in some practical difficulties with the bus stop on the opposite side of the new access. The amount of car parking proposed is considered appropriate at this time.

- 6.14 However in order to reduce the problems at the present site it is necessary to introduce measures to ensure that the new car park is used. The existing access to the school and some car parking must be retained and it is not possible to apply conditions that require the new car park to be used. In order to deal with this the applicants are developing a Travel Plan. In the previous application this was merely in outline form but has now been developed further. A detailed survey has been undertaken and from the results an action plan developed. I consider that further work is required to develop these ideas such as the investigation of options and assessing the viability so there is a focus and commitment to deliver the necessary changes in the current pattern of activity. However these matters can be dealt with through a condition given the current commitment from the applicants.
- 6.15 With regard to drainage there are two aspects surface water and foul. The development will increase the potential for surface water run off and a flood risk assessment has been provided. It is concluded that there will be no adverse impacts. It is known that the Worm Brook does flood in the vicinity of the footbridge. Clearly this will need to be addressed in the detailed design of the replacement bridge and the footpath link so as to ensure a continuity of access. Part of this route will be along a Public Right of Way. With regard to foul drainage ideally there would be a connection to the mains system, but this requires improvement. The applicants consider that having regard to the costs involved this would not be reasonable and are proposing a treatment plant on the site. This is not unusual and, subject to the future grant of discharge consent by the Environment Agency, is an acceptable arrangement.
- 6.16 At present the operation of the school does have an impact on the amenities of local residents, primarily from the access and car parking but also from its general activity. The relocation of the car park should significantly improve this. The nearest dwellings such as at The Pippins may as a result of the increased activity and pupil numbers notice an increase in noise levels but I do not consider that these would be so significant such that they would be unacceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1. A02 (Time limit for submission of reserved matters (outline permission))**

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2. A03 (Time limit for commencement (outline permission))**

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 3. A04 (Approval of reserved matters)**

Reason: To enable the local planning authority to exercise proper control over these aspects of the development.

- 4. A05 (Plans and particulars of reserved matters)**

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

5. F18 (Scheme of foul drainage disposal)

Reason: In order to ensure that satisfactory drainage arrangements are provided.

6. F20 (Scheme of surface water drainage)

Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding by ensuring the provision of a satisfactory means of surface water disposal.

7. H03 (Visibility splays) (2.4m by 90m)

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

8. H05 (Access gates) (12m)

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

9. H06 (Vehicular access construction)

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

10. H13 (Access, turning area and parking)

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure the free flow of traffic using the adjoining highway.

11. Development shall not begin until details of the works required to provide forward visibility on the B4348 comprising the reduction in level of the roadside verge and adjacent footway (the extent of which is identified on the concept plan CO14) and a suitable location and provision for pedestrians to cross the B4348 to give access to the bus stop have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall not be occupied until the scheme has been constructed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the safe and free flow of traffic on the highway.

12. H18 (On site roads - submission of details)

Reason: To ensure an adequate and acceptable means of access is available before the dwelling or building is occupied.

13. H21 (Wheel washing)

Reason: To ensure that the wheels of vehicles are cleaned before leaving the site in the interests of highway safety.

14. H29 (Secure cycle parking provision)

Reason: To ensure that there is adequate provision for secure cycle accommodation within the application site, encouraging alternative modes of transport in accordance with both local and national planning policy.

15. Prior to the commencement of the development a Travel Plan, which contains measures to promote alternative sustainable means of transport for staff and visitors with respect to the development hereby permitted, shall be submitted to and be approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Travel Plan will need to include clear policies and actions to ensure a significant reduction in vehicles accessing the site via the Pippins to help increase safety for vulnerable road users at this location. This should form a central element of the Travel Plan's approach to promoting sustainable modes as a means of accessing the site. The Travel Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details. A detailed written record shall be kept of the measures undertaken to promote sustainable transport initiatives and shall be made available for inspection by the local planning authority upon reasonable request.

Where a Travel Plan currently exists the condition will require a full review of the Plan and a revised submission to the Council.

Reason: In order to ensure that the development is carried out in combination with a scheme aimed at promoting the use of a range of sustainable transport initiatives.

16. D01 (Site investigation - archaeology)

Reason: To ensure the archaeological interest of the site is recorded.

17. Prior to the commencement of development, the detailed design of the new footbridge and footpath link to the car park shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The new school shall not be brought into use before the approved scheme has been implemented.

Reason: In order to ensure that the design is suitable to meet the requirements of all users and to comply with Policy DR.3 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007.

18. 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.

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

19. F32 (Details of floodlighting/external lighting)

Reason: To safeguard local amenities.

Informative(s):

1. N19 - Avoidance of doubt

2. N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of Planning Permission

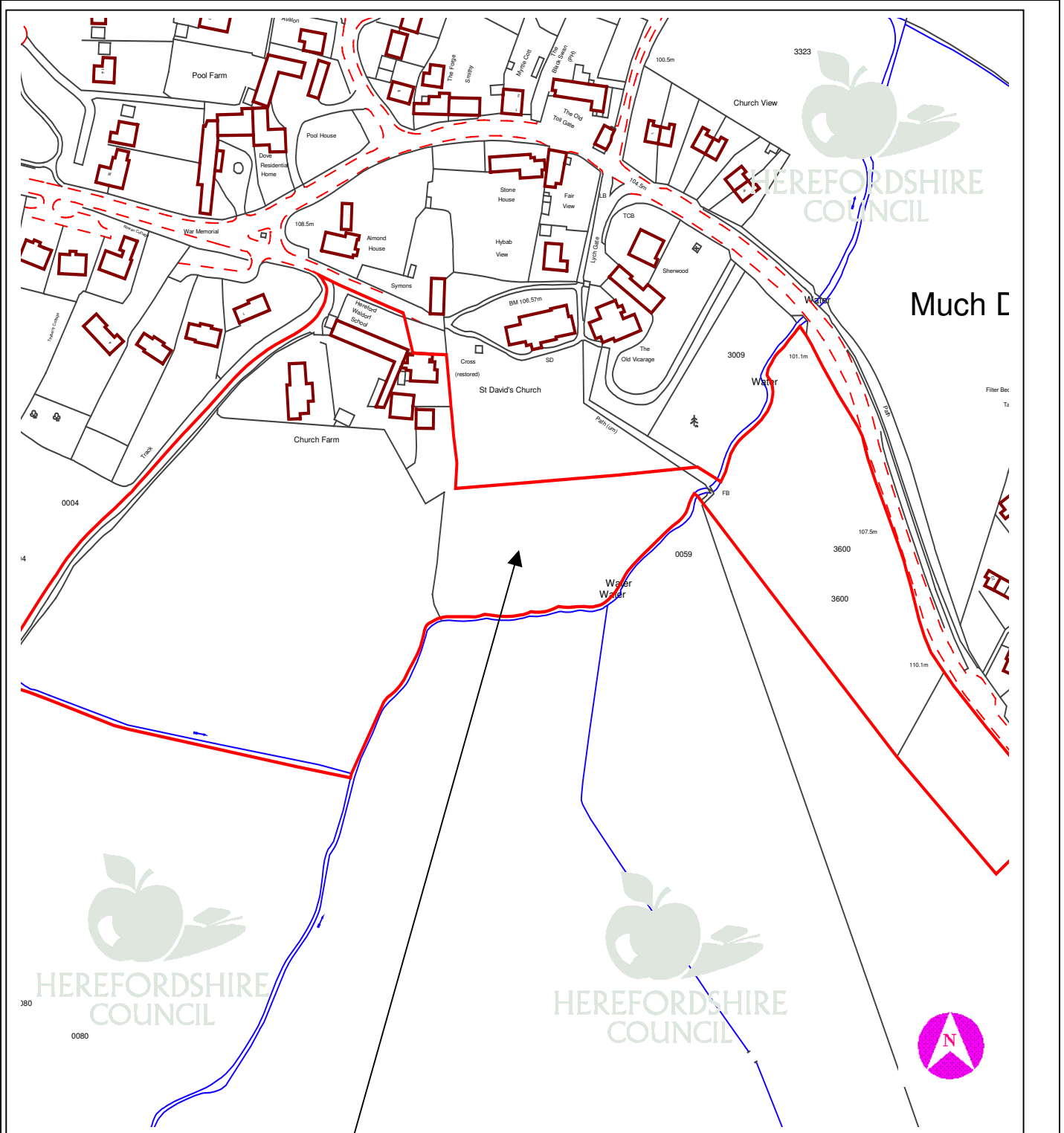
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCSW2007/1091/O

SCALE : 1 : 2500

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

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