

REPORT TO THE EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Report No.1

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| Date of Meeting | 1 st July 2010 |
| Application Number | E/10/0452/FUL |
| Site Address | Kennet Valley CE Aided Primary School, Lockeridge, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 4EL |
| Proposal | Removal of existing prefabricated outbuilding. Erection of new single storey extension (with related alterations) incorporating classrooms and ancillary accommodation. |
| Applicant | The School Governors |
| Town/Parish Council | FYFIELD & WEST OVERTON |
| Grid Ref | 414719 167795 |
| Type of application | Full Planning |
| Case Officer | Andrew Guest |

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The application is before the Committee at the request of the Division Member, Cllr Jemima Milton.

Purpose of Report

To consider the recommendation that the application be approved.

Report Summary

The main issues in this case are as follows:

- The principle of amalgamating two schools on one site, including loss of outdoor recreation space;
- The impact of more intensive use of a single school site on amenity and highway safety;
- The impact on Lockeridge Conservation Area;
- The impact on residential amenity.

Site Description

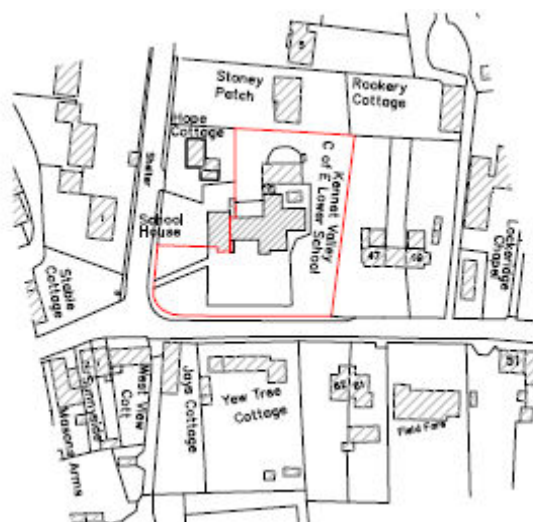
Kennet Valley CE Aided Primary School is 'split' between two sites at Lockeridge (the lower school) and East Kennet (the upper school). Each school site supports two classes (reception and years 1-2 at Lockeridge; and years 3-6 at East Kennet). Additionally there is a nursery at the Lockeridge site within a portable classroom.

The application relates to the Lockeridge site. The Lockeridge school building is located on a prominent corner site at the centre of the village. The main school building is a traditional structure originally built in 1875. Part of the building comprises School House, a residential unit now in separate ownership. The school building is set back from the public highways behind its surfaced playground and play areas. To its rear and north sides are the self-contained nursery, further small play areas and/or landscaped margins. Vehicular access to the site is at the front, with

parking shared with the playground. Separate pedestrian access is also available at the south side.

The site is surrounded by residential development – School House and Hope Cottage to the south, Stoney Patch to the west, nos. 47-49 to the north, and Jays Cottage, Yew Tree Cottage and nos. 61-62 to the east.

The school building is not listed, but it is recognised as a building of character within the Lockeridge Conservation Area Statement. Jays Cottage, nos. 47-49 and nos. 61-62 are listed buildings. All of Lockeridge and the surrounding countryside is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Location Plan

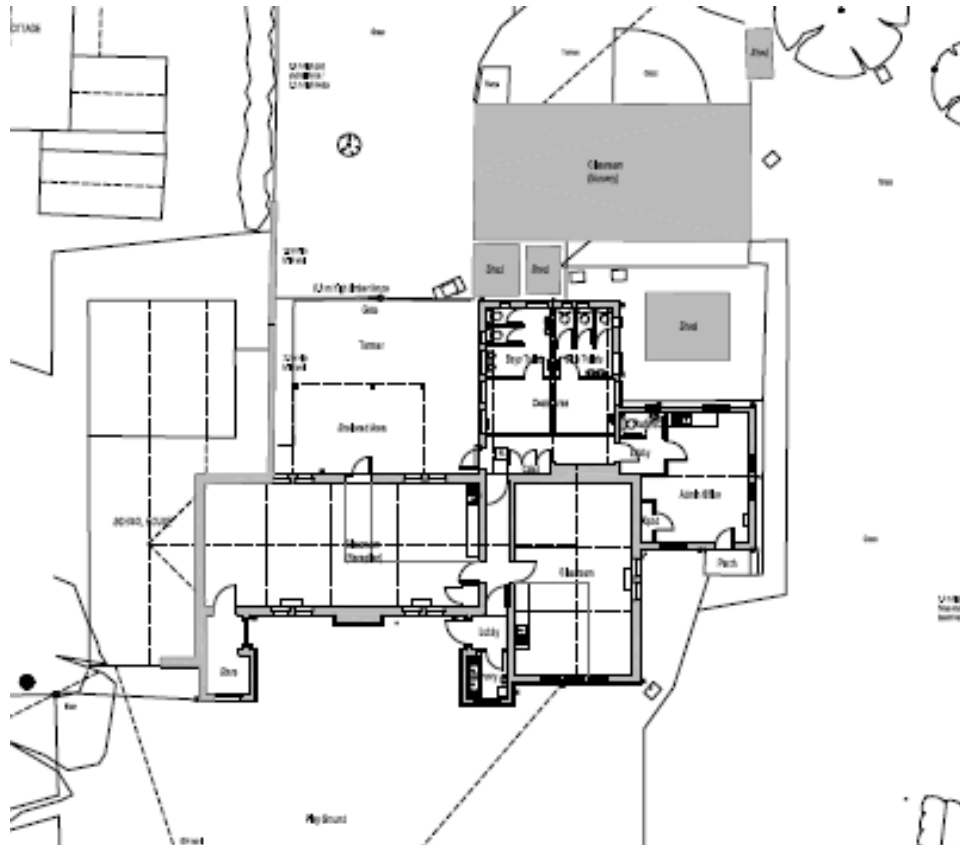
Proposal

The proposal is to extend the Lockeridge School. This is fundamental to the school's overarching ambition to move from two split sites to one single site. It follows that if this planning application is successful then the other school site at East Kennet will ultimately close.

The proposed extension would be to the rear and north side of the original school building. It would be single storey containing three classrooms (including the nursery), offices and reception area. The original school building would be re-configured to contain one classroom, the school hall and upgraded wash rooms, (at present the school hall is used as a classroom). The existing portable classroom for the nursery would be removed. As a consequence of the proposal the total number of classrooms at the site would, therefore, increase from presently two (plus the nursery) to four (including the nursery).

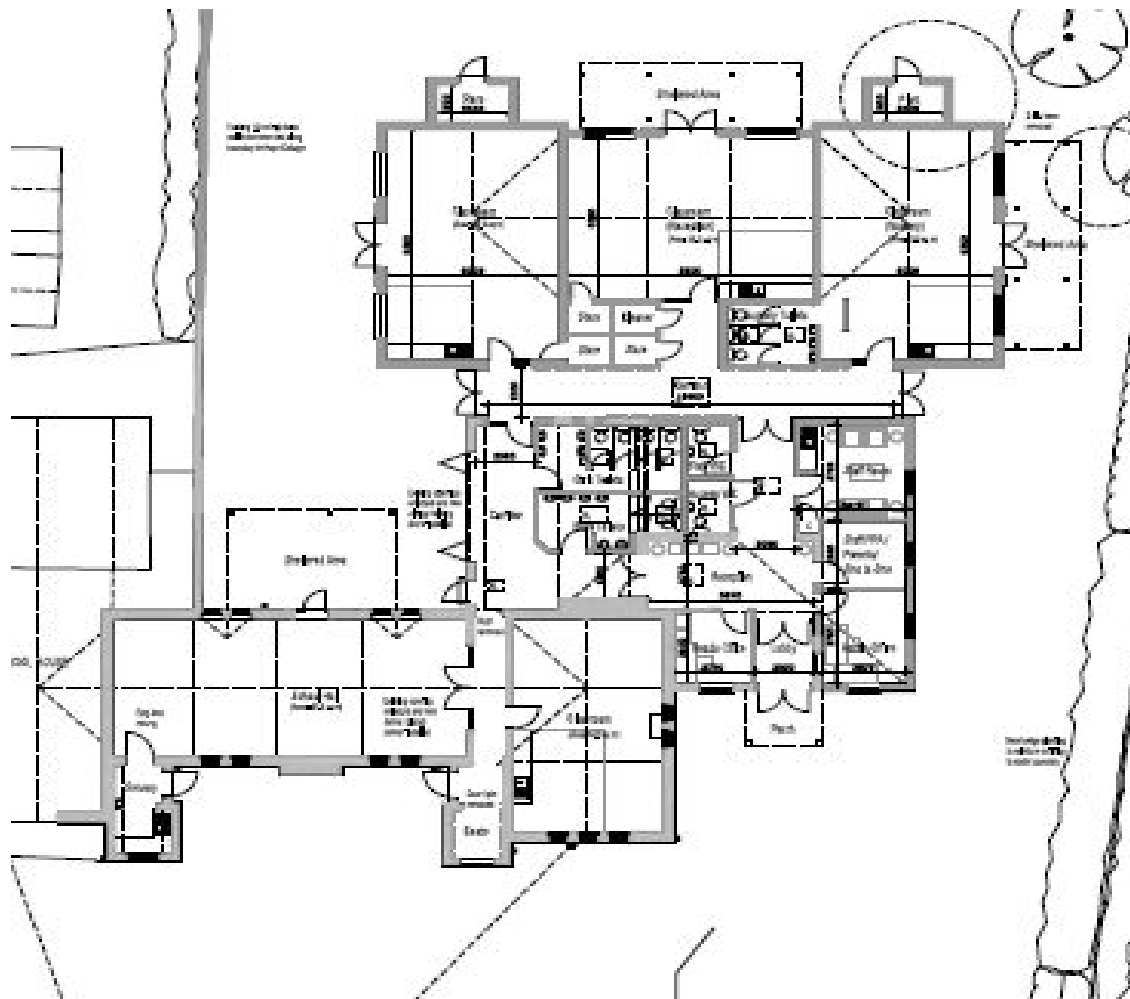
The design of the extension is conventional with pitched roofs not exceeding 5.2m in height. Projection to the rear would be 12m (excluding the stores), this leaving an approximately 8m wide margin with the rear boundary. Projection to the north side would be maximum 6.3m (excluding the 'sheltered area') leaving a minimum 6.4m margin to the side boundary.

The application is supported by a Travel Statement which sets out the school's proposals to manage travel arrangements for staff and pupils' comings and goings to and from the school.



Existing Layout Plan

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Proposed Layout Plan – Extension to the side and rear

The applicant's agent makes the following comments:

“Following careful analysis of the school, its current activities and its future, it was decided to move from the split site to a single site based at the existing school premises at Lockeridge. Initial investigations demonstrated that there was sufficient space on the Lockeridge site to accommodate the necessary development, whereas the East Kennet site is too restricted to accommodate sufficient additional space. The plan that has evolved is therefore to build an extension to the rear of the Lockeridge school to provide two additional classrooms, a nursery and ancillary accommodation.

The advantages of a single site are significant from several viewpoints. For the children, there is the opportunity for the older ones to help the younger, and the younger children can see the positive role models of behaviour and learning within the larger school. For the teachers, teamwork is improved, there is less isolation, and more support. For the parents, this means better opportunities for contact and for those with more than one child the advantage of not having to travel to two sites. Extra curricular activities will be more effective and easier to arrange. Administration of the school will be more efficient, and the carbon footprint of the school can be reduced by a more efficient building and less transport between sites.

The scheme has therefore evolved taking into account:

- providing up-to-date accommodation and a total of three classes. (Three classrooms could reasonably accommodate up to 90 children is based on the aspiration of not more than 30 to any one class. Infant classes are not allowed by law to have more than 30 children. There is a theoretical maximum of 105 accommodated in three classrooms but such a situation is highly unlikely to arise. The current forecasts indicate that a school role of around 70 children is the likely norm. Until September 2007 Lockeridge school housed two teachers with two classes);
- creating attractive and effective internal and external spaces for learning and play;
- providing a school hall;
- designing with the neighbours in mind;
- respecting the character of the village and the conservation area;
- dealing with access and traffic management;
- providing accommodation for the Bluebell Nursery (for up to 20 children);
- having a playing field (not part of the application but under discussion)".

Planning Policy

Kennet Local Plan 2011 – PD1, ED29 and NR7
 Wiltshire Structure Plan 2016 – DP1, DP2 and C8
 PPS7 and PPS15

Consultations

Fyfield and West Oveton Parish Council: no objections but make the following comments –

It is clear that expanding the school in the way contemplated by this application will bring with it significant parking and traffic flow challenges, and this is a real concern for parts of the local community. The Parish Council considers it essential that there be produced, at as early a stage as possible, an imaginative, realistic and robust travel plan which addresses these issues and that the local community should be actively involved, alongside the school, both in formulating the plan and then in monitoring it and, if needed, adjusting it.

In terms of preserving or enhancing the character of the village, the new extension needs to do more to echo (without imitating) the Ponting elements of the original building, particularly the doors and windows and particularly on the East elevation, which is in practice the most visible. Greater use of decorative brickwork might also be used as an allusion to the Ponting features of the rest of the school and of other houses in the village.

It is noted that the application plan showing the East elevation did not clearly show the outline of the east elevation of the nursery, such that at a glance the visual impact was not entirely apparent from the plan, something which could perhaps be remedied should revised plans be produced.

We assume that the lime trees at the front, which are a well loved and prominent feature of the street-scene will remain after the development and will be fully protected during it. The Scots pines adjacent to the school site should be equally protected.

Given the increased footprint of the building and the fact that it would be nearer to the boundaries of the site, the landscaping conditions should include provisions to help safeguard the privacy of neighbours.

Steps should be taken to ensure that light spillage from any external or security lighting, and from roof lights, is minimised.

Wiltshire Council Highways Officer The school site is reasonably well signed for a small school in this sensitive village location. It will be important for parents to continue to be encouraged to park at the nearby public house and to be neighbourly when parking on roads by not blocking driveways of nearby residents. These points are best addressed through a robust revised Travel Plan for the merged site.

No objection subject to a fully revised Travel Plan for the merged site, on the lines set out in the planning application supporting information, being submitted and approved prior to first use of the new extension, with the points in the Travel Plan being implemented in the timescales agreed.

For information the existing access for vehicles while narrow is at the best position in terms of visibility. I consider it suitable to continue for low-key staff and emergency use. But in the absence of improvements to the access, I would not support its regular use by parents - for example dropping off and picking up children for the nursery. An informative should be applied on this basis.

Wiltshire Council Conversation Officer: The original schoolroom is set well back within its plot, the building being inline with the building lines of neighbouring properties, which creates a visual and physical buffer between the building and the road to two sides of the site. Past sub-division of the plot (the original school house is now in private ownership) and school-related development, has resulted in the plot being tight, essentially to the rear of the building, as thankfully no development has taken place to the front of the school.

The new extensions significantly increase the size of this village school but at the same time they replace the existing pre-fabricated building to the rear that currently provides the nursery facilities for the school, which is obviously a welcomed move and vast improvement for the site.

The key to the success of the development will be the design of the proposed extensions and it is vital that they complement the original building and its surroundings, so as to not detract from the wider historic environment, namely the character and appearance of the conservation area: this however does not necessarily require the replication of existing styles in order to achieve this. The proposals show modern extensions, with pitched roofs and simplified detailing that should not detract from the fine quality and Gothic detailing of the main building. The main entrance will be off-set, yet more clearly identified than at present, by extending the existing modern side extension to provide a centralised doorway, with steep pitched porch, referencing the Victorian host building.

It is a shame that the new buildings cannot be kept inline with the extended entrance, as the view of this, essentially from the front of the building and therefore the main view within the conservation area, as it seems to compromise the aesthetic balance of the buildings as a group. However, I understand the reasons for doing so, as this maximises the green space to the rear of the building and limits any potential impact on neighbouring properties. Off-setting the extensions also helps preserve the rear elevations of the original building and therefore there are no objections to this aspect of the proposal.

Considering the finely detailed Victorian Gothic school, significantly extending it in the same styling would, in my opinion, detract from the high quality of the building and I therefore view the simplified extensions appropriate in this instance, as they respect the host building, neither replicating nor competing with it. Preserving the character and appearance of the conservation area, by preserving its setting and respecting the important buildings within it (whether listed or not) is the Council's main duty from a Conservation perspective.

In addition to the above, a positive move of the proposals, from the point of view of the usage of the original building, is that classroom currently located in the original hall will be relocating, so the space can be returned to its original use.

It goes without saying that the quality and appropriateness of materials will be important to ensure architectural unity and replicate the quality of the original buildings. Therefore all materials should be conditioned, along with details of new windows, doors etc.

There are no objections to the proposals, as they are seen to have a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area, by preserving the setting of the historic environment and not detracting from the importance of this building of local significance.

I suggest that all materials are conditioned, along with details of windows and doors, and all new rainwater goods should match the existing.

County Archaeologist: final views awaited.

Publicity

The application has been publicised by site notice, press advert and neighbour notification.

The application has generated objections from 11 local residents summarised as follows:

- the potential number of children and staff that might eventually attend the school is far too high (that is 105 + 20 in the nursery, + staff) with a resulting harmful impact on the amenities of nearby neighbours from playground noise (on site play areas are reducing in area), traffic and parking. There should be a conditional limit on the number of pupils (no more than 75). Applicant's forecasts of pupil numbers are unrealistic having regard to additional housing developments in Marlborough, high roles of other nearby schools inc. Manton, and this school's potential to gain good OFSTED status;
- the school will be too big for the small village centre site with housing on all sides. The East Kennet site is far more suited to expansion having more space, easier access, etc.;

- there is no school playing field (existing arrangements on an informal basis only). There should be a conditional requirement for a playing field to be sourced. Use of on-site play space would be staggered in view of the higher no. of children which will lead to greater noise nuisance to neighbours;
- there is inadequate parking for both staff and parents (existing arrangements with the nearby public house are on an informal basis only, and no formal agreement for 'shared driveway' parking). Proposal is contrary to Structure Plan policy DP2 which requires adequate infrastructure to be provided, and this is not satisfied. Assumptions about nos. of vehicles are unrealistic – in any event, the assumption is that the nos. will more than double, and Lockeridge's infrastructure is inadequate to cope with this. Informal 'park and stride' scheme has not worked due to distance of pub from school;
- vehicular access to nearby properties made difficult and hazardous by parked vehicles. Parked vehicles do not 'calm' traffic passing through the village;
- any additional traffic signs would detract from appearance of village;
- there should be a conditional requirement for a 20mph zone to be created through the village;
- design of extension is unsympathetic to original building – brick course should be carried through, brick arches over windows, high quality materials essential;
- Improved landscaping will be required on boundaries of site;
- car park on site too close to lpg tank;
- no constructive consultation between school and neighbours;
- proposal would harm the setting of nearby listed buildings;
- extension to side would 'move' activity within site closer to boundaries with resulting adverse impact on neighbouring properties;
- proposal contradicts Village Design Statement.

The application has generated one letter of support summarised as follows:

- School is an integral part of life in the Kennet Valley, and a focal point for the local community. Combining the schools will add to these values and allow the educational potential to be realised.

Planning Considerations

The principle of a single site school

Policy ED29 of the Kennet Local Plan requires existing buildings used or last used for community purposes to be retained in this use wherever possible unless there is no long term need or an alternative facility of comparable community value is provided. In this case the proposal is to bring together the split facilities of two schools on to a single site with no intended reduction in the level of education provision. As education provision would remain the same (or, indeed, may be enhanced through 'sharing' presently divided services and making better use of resources) it is considered there would be, as a minimum, comparable community value from the proposal. This is in accordance with Policy ED29 as a matter of principle.

The impact of more intensive use of the Lockeridge school site

Notwithstanding the 'in principle' support for the proposal set out above, considerable objection has been raised to the single site initiative based on the detailed concern that a greater number of children on one site would inevitably lead to an increase in

activity, and this in turn may lead to an increase in disturbance and inconvenience to nearby residents from traffic and noise.

In terms of the actual rise in pupil numbers, based on the current roll there are 22 children plus 18 nursery children at the Lockeridge school site (total, 40). This current roll is well below the actual capacity of the school. At East Kennet there are presently 45 children.

The actual present maximum capacity of Lockeridge School (comprising two classrooms and the nursery) is approximately 61 school children and 20 nursery children (giving a total of 81 children)¹. This capacity could be reached without any need to extend or alter the existing school. The proposal is to increase the number of classrooms to three (an increase of one classroom only), this giving 'worst case scenario' capacities of 84 and 20 (totalling 104 children). In percentage terms this increase amounts to 28%.

In reality the Wiltshire Council forecasts indicate school rolls below these figures, the short term peak being 75 children (plus up to 20 in the nursery) in 2015. This is a maximum of 95 children, and represents a 17% increase over present maximum capacities.

These figures clearly indicate an increase in pupil numbers. However, having regard (as a material consideration) to the actual capacity of the existing classroom accommodation at Lockeridge school, it is not considered that the forecast increase in pupil numbers set out above (or, for that matter, the 'worst case scenario' situation also set out above) represents such a significant increase to justify an objection to the application based on inappropriate intensification grounds. This conclusion is reached not only with regard to the data set out above, but also with regard to the other measures proposed by the applicant which are considered on more detail below.

Concern has been expressed that the Lockeridge school site has no playing field and that arrangements to use other land are informal only. This is a management matter for the school and is not a reason to refuse planning permission. The school will maintain its playground and most of its existing open areas of play. It will also gain a school hall as a consequence of the proposals (something neither the Lockeridge nor East Kennet site presently has).

Traffic generation and parking

The application is accompanied by a Travel Statement which sets out existing and anticipated movements to the Lockeridge site. The statement also sets out existing initiatives used by the school to 'manage' methods of arrival and departure by children and staff to the school. The statement is attached in full as an appendix to this report.

In terms of staffing, as a consequence of the proposal there would be seven full time members based at the Lockeridge site, with various other flexible part time workers (teaching assistants, cleaners, etc.) coming and going throughout the day. At present two members of staff park in the school grounds, and the proposal is to increase the number of on-site available parking spaces for this purpose to seven. Other part time staff would park outside of the site, as at present (on the street or by informal arrangement in the local pub car park or shared driveways with neighbours).

¹ Based on national standards for classroom sizes.

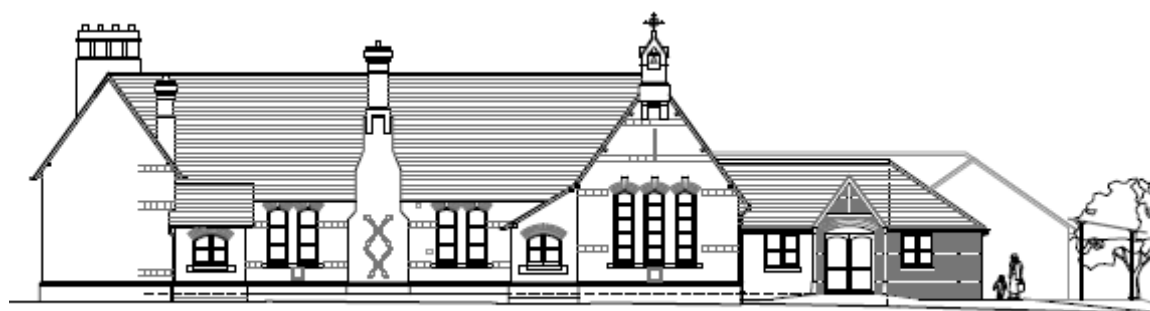
It is considered that the increase in on-site parking as proposed would adequately address the additional pressures for staff parking resulting from the amalgamation of the two schools. Parking outside of the site at present clearly causes concern to some third parties. However, the current planning application can only reasonably be expected to address the additional demands for parking now raised by the proposed extension to the school, and not to address historic problems associated with the operation of the existing school. It is considered that five additional spaces address the additional demands.

Regarding traffic associated with the dropping-off and collection of children, the Travel Statement anticipates that the number of children walking to the school will increase by 5 to 9, the number of children in cars will increase from 11 to 20, and a school bus and taxi will 'deliver' the remainder (there is presently just a taxi). This shows a rise in the number of vehicles of 10. In addition there is separate traffic generated by the nursery.

The disruption caused by the traffic dropping-off and collecting children from the school has clearly caused concern to nearby residents in the past - for example, sometimes leading to the road in front of the school being blocked or making it difficult for residents to enter or leave their properties. That said, the actual number of vehicles visiting the site remains relatively low, and this consideration taken together with the short duration of the 'disruption' (primarily at school opening and closing times) and the school's own informal initiatives to keep traffic away from the school gate, makes an objection based on additional traffic generation unsustainable.

The school's initiatives include an informal arrangement with the local pub for parents to temporarily park in the pub car park before walking with their children to and from the school gate (referred to as 'park and stride'). A further initiative is to stagger the start time of the school and nursery. These (and other) initiatives are commendable but are not necessary to make the development as a whole acceptable in planning terms. A condition is, therefore, recommended requiring an updated Travel Plan for the school to be submitted and implemented only, but not requiring formalisation of the informal initiatives (such a condition being 'unreasonable' in terms of the tests for conditions in any event).

Concern has been expressed that additional children at the school will cause noise disturbance to neighbours (particularly as a consequence of longer and/or staggered outside play times). It is not considered that the sound of children playing in a school play ground within a village centre location would cause such disturbance to warrant an objection for this reason.



Proposed east (front) elevation – extension on right hand side of drawing



Proposed north (side) elevation, showing depth of extension



Proposed west (rear) elevation - extension on left hand side of drawing

Impact of the extension on conservation area and amenity in general

The proposed extension would be sited mainly at the rear of the existing school building and so largely screened from public viewpoints. That said, the side element would be visible from the road across the open soft play area.

The entire extension has been designed in a traditional manner and to be subservient to the original school building. This approach is supported as it ensures the original school building remains the dominant part. The side element of the extension is attached to an existing side addition which already lacks some of the fine detail of the original building. This is why, at least in part, not all of the detailing of the original building has been carried through (such as the plinth and brick courses). The more simplistic detailing in the extension also ensures that it does not compete with the original school building, and this approach is supported by the conservation officer. Removal of the existing portable classroom at the rear of the site (but visible from the highway) would be an enhancement to the setting of the school and conservation area.

The extension would be sited sufficiently far from the boundaries of the site to ensure no overbearing relationship with neighbouring properties. All existing hedgerows would be retained and/or improved to further safeguard privacy.

Overall it is considered that the proposed extension would preserve the conservation area and have a satisfactory relationship with neighbouring properties.

Conclusion

The Kennet Valley CE Aided School is presently split between two sites at Lockeridge and East Kennet. The proposal is to amalgamate the schools on to a single site and so reap the educational and economic benefits of this.

To achieve the end result it is proposed to extend the Lockeridge School, and the scheme presented for this is acceptable in design terms, preserving the setting of the existing school building and the conservation area. Although there would be some intensification in the use of the school and some additional traffic generation, this would remain relatively low key and of short duration, and managed to a certain extent by the school's own local initiatives.

For these reasons there are no sustainable planning reasons for objecting to the development and the application is recommended for approval accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve with Conditions

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

REASON:

To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 No development shall commence on site until details and samples of the materials to be used for the external walls and roofs have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:

In the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.

- 3 No development shall commence on site until a scheme of hard and soft landscaping has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the details of which shall include:

- (a) indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land;
- (b) details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development;
- (c) all species, planting sizes and planting densities, spread of all trees and hedgerows within or overhanging the site, in relation to the proposed buildings, roads, and other works;
- (d) finished levels and contours;
- (e) means of enclosure;
- (f) car park layouts;
- (g) other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas;
- (h) hard surfacing materials;
- (i) minor artefacts and structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse and other storage units, signs, lighting etc);

REASON:

To ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development and the protection of existing important landscape features.

- 4 All soft landscaping comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the first occupation of the

building(s) or the completion of the development whichever is the sooner; All shrubs, trees and hedge planting shall be maintained free from weeds and shall be protected from damage by vermin and stock. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years, die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. All hard landscaping shall also be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:

To ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development and the protection of existing important landscape features.

5 (a) No retained tree shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be topped or lopped other than in accordance with the approved plans and particulars, without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority. Any topping or lopping approved shall be carried out in accordance with British Standard 3998 (Tree Work).

(b) If any retained tree is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree shall be planted at the same place and that tree shall be of such size and species and shall be planted at such time, as may be specified in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

(c) No equipment, machinery or materials shall be brought on to the site for the purpose of the development, until a scheme showing the exact position of protective fencing to enclose all retained trees beyond the outer edge of the overhang of their branches in accordance with British Standard 5837 (2005): Trees in Relation to Construction, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and; the protective fencing has been erected in accordance with the approved details. This fencing shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed in any area fenced in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made, without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

In this condition "retained tree" means an existing tree which is to be retained in accordance with the approved plans and particulars; and paragraphs (a) and (b) above shall have effect until the expiration of five years from the first occupation or the completion of the development, whichever is the later.

REASON:

To enable the Local Planning Authority to ensure the retention of trees on the site in the interests of visual amenity.

6 No works shall commence on site until details of all new external window and door joinery and/or metal framed glazing have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include depth of reveal, details of heads, sills and lintels, elevations at a scale of not less than 1:10 and horizontal/vertical frame sections (including sections through glazing bars) at not less than 1:2. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:

In the interests of preserving the character and appearance of the listed building and its

setting.

- 7 No development shall commence on site until a Green Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Travel Plan shall include details of implementation and monitoring and shall be implemented in accordance with these agreed details. The results of the implementation and monitoring shall be made available to the Local Planning Authority on request, together with any changes to the plan arising from those results.

REASON:

In the interests of road safety and reducing vehicular traffic to the development.

- 8 This decision relates to documents/plans submitted with the application, listed below. No variation from the approved documents should be made without the prior approval of this Council. Amendments may require the submission of a further application. Failure to comply with this advice may lead to enforcement action which may require alterations and/or demolition of any unauthorised buildings or structures and may also lead to prosecution.

Drawing nos. 1457-10, -11, -12, -13B & -14B received by the lpa 8 April 2010.

Appendices:

None

Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:

The application file and relevant government guidance.