

REPORT TO EAST AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Report No.1

Date of Meeting	22 August 2013
Application Number	13/01003/FUL
Site Address	Land to North of Tidworth between A338 (Pennings Road) and A3026 (Ludgershall Road), Tidworth, Wiltshire
Proposal	Two storey, 420 place primary school, with 30 place nursery, along with playing fields, external games courts, playgrounds and car parking
Applicant	Wiltshire Council
Town/Parish Council	TIDWORTH
Grid Ref	423413 149662
Type of application	Full Planning
Case Officer	Andrew Guest

1. Reason for the application being considered by the Planning Committee

The applicant is Wiltshire Council. The Council's Scheme of Delegation to Planning states that "... applications submitted by Wiltshire Council will not be dealt with under delegated powers where an objection has been received raising material planning considerations". In this case two objections raising material planning considerations have been received.

2. Purpose of report

To consider the recommendation of the Area Development Manager to approve the application subject to conditions.

3. Report summary

The main issues in this case are, firstly, the principle of the proposal; and then assuming the principle is accepted the impact of the specific proposal on the following matters:

- Visual amenity;
- Residential amenity;
- Ecology;
- Flooding;
- Highway safety.

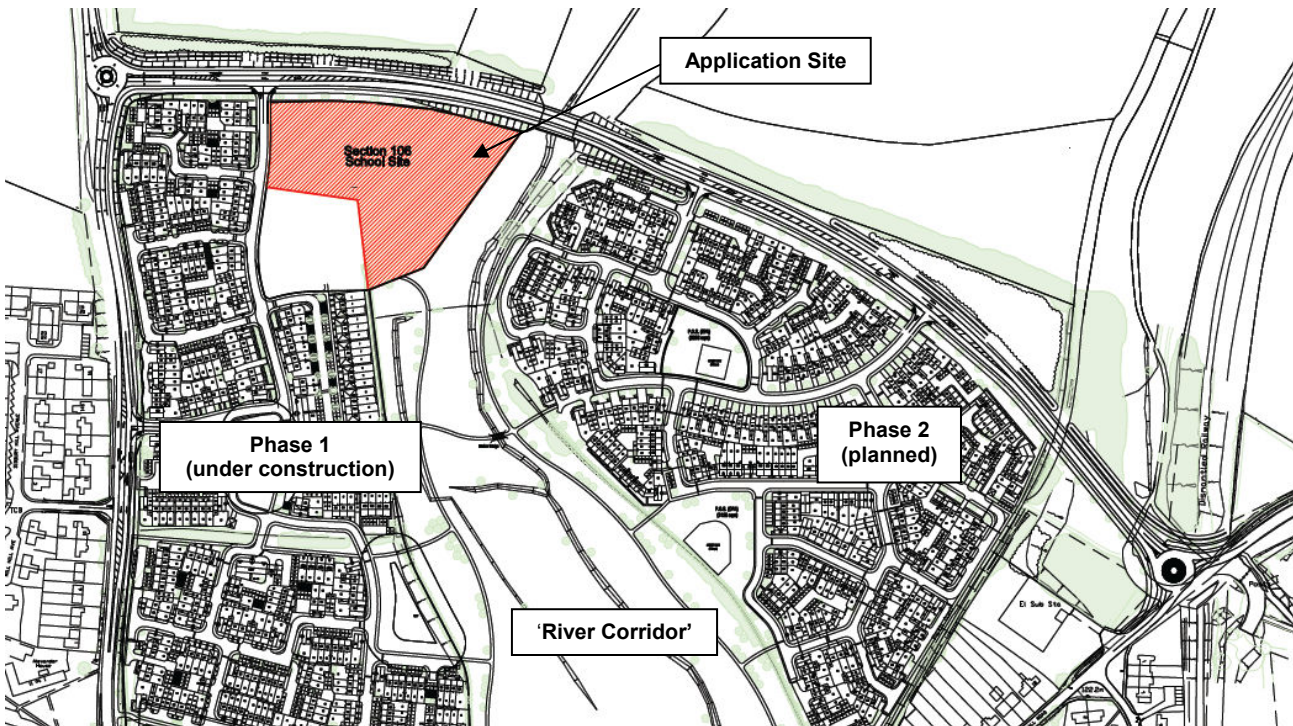
4. Site Description

The 1.2 ha application site lies to the immediate north of Tidworth. It forms part of a larger site (31.2 ha) which is a housing allocation in the Kennet Local Plan and which benefits from planning permission for 600 houses, a new primary school, and related open space and infrastructure. Building works for the houses and infrastructure (in Phase 1) have commenced although at the time of writing no houses are complete.

The application site is positioned towards the northern side of the larger housing site, and will be adjacent to (on its north and west sides) two principal roads within the new development. Beyond these roads there will be housing (to the west) and open countryside (to the north). To the east and

south east side of the site there will be an area of open land for informal recreation (referred to as the 'river corridor'). To the south is a relatively small area of land excluded from Phase 1.

Ground levels fall gently from west to east. Approximately half the site on its eastern side lies within a flood zone of the River Bourne.



Site Location Plan – showing adjacent new development which is presently under construction (Phase 1) or planned (Phase 2)

5. Relevant Planning History

E/09/1078/OUT – Outline planning application for 600 civilian houses, primary school, link road and landscaped public open spaces – approved 22/11/12

[This permission is subject to a S106 agreement which requires (amongst other things) the transfer to Wiltshire Council of a serviced 1.2 ha primary school site and a financial contribution to meet the cost of the primary school].

E/2012/1447/REM – Phase 1 of residential development for 289 dwellings (reserved matters application for approval of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) – approved 28/03/13

13/01044/VAR – Vary condition 11 of E/2012/1447/REM to incorporate the erection of rear conservatories to 66 dwellings in the northern part of Phase 1 – approved 17/07/13

6. Proposal

It is proposed to construct a 420 place primary school and a 30 place nursery on the site together with related playing areas/fields, access and parking facilities and landscaping.

The primary school comprises a two storey building positioned towards the west side of the site. Immediately adjacent to the primary school (to its south) would be the nursery in a single storey building. The primary school has a more or less square 'footprint' with the classrooms and functional spaces set around a central hall. The design of both buildings is contemporary – the primary school notably having mono-pitch roofs on each of its four sides screening from view a central flat-roofed section over the hall.

To the rear (east) of the buildings play areas, games courts and playing fields would be laid out, and to the front (west) an access road from the new estate road serving 27 parking spaces and a service yard. Also at the front would be an enclosure containing a biomass boiler, fuel store, sprinkler tank and a school recycling centre.

In view of the fall of the land some cut and fill would be necessary to accommodate each of the parts of the development.

Within and at the edges of the site it is proposed to carry out landscaping for amenity purposes and to create wildlife habitats.



Site Layout

7. Planning policy

Kennet Local Plan: Policies PD1, HC19, HC37

Wiltshire Core Strategy Pre-Submission Document:

8. Consultations

Tidworth Town Council: TTC endorses and supports everything in the proposal, except the car parking. The Design and Access Statement shows the way the applicant has arrived at the number of car parking spaces they intend to provide.

The Wiltshire Local Transport Plan, 2011-2026, Car parking Strategy (March 2011) provides the following maximum parking standards:

- Staff parking ratios 2/3 FTE staff (40 FTE staff therefore 26 parking spaces)
- Visitors parking spaces 1/7 FTE staff (40 FTE staff therefore 5 parking spaces)
- Parents parking spaces 1/20 pupils (420 approx. Therefore 21 parking spaces)
- Accessible spaces 2 required, but included in the above numbers

Maximum total allowable parking spaces is therefore 53. However parent parking spaces are not to be incorporated within the proposals, partly to discourage travel by car to the school, and partly because the restricted site area would require the loss of valuable external pupil play area to incorporate additional parking spaces. The 22 maximum number of parking spaces for parents, calculated from the formula, have therefore not been incorporated in the scheme, resulting in a maximum staff and visitor parking allowance of 31 spaces. 27 spaces have been incorporated into the scheme.

TTC accept they have a problem with space for Car Parking but just dismissing the requirement for parent and visitor car parking is not the answer! The formula above gives a scant 21 spaces for parents, which is probably insufficient to cope with parents attending parents' evenings, school plays (eg the Christmas nativity) and sports days and there would be parents' cars abandoned on kerbs all round the neighbouring estate roads. Then just to dismiss this requirement is breathtakingly arrogant and totally ignores the needs of the residents in the adjacent houses, let alone the needs of the pupils and their parents.

Even the arithmetic used to calculate the numbers of parking spaces is adrift.

- 2/3 of 40 is 26.7, so should be rounded up to 27 (not 26)
- 1/7 of 40 is 5.7 so should be rounded up to 6 (not 5)
- 1/20 of 420 is 21 (but quoted later as 22....)
- Adding up their figures gives 52 (not 53...) but should be 54...!!

So, what should they do? The applicant must make provision for an overflow parking area, for say 30-50 cars, on the flood plain if necessary. This space would not be denied to the area set aside for sports facilities as it would only occasionally be used for car parking and could normally be used as a netball or basketball court.

As for the school itself, it is a shame that WC has had to build on the smaller plot as a deal for the additional land from Persimmon to accommodate a 40 place school fell through. So the school has to be built upwards, rather than outwards.

The design itself looks unspectacular but TTC has been spoilt by the £32M Wellington Academy and this was never going to compete architecturally with that. So it will be a functional school that will look OK and meet the needs of pupils and staff. TTC agrees that parking should be reduced for parents as we should encourage walking and cycling etc. However, there should be spaces for visitors (many of whom will be from outside of Tidworth) and 27 spaces for staff and others is not enough.

Security looks good and TTC is content there will be a sprinkler system. As for the playing fields being in the flood plain, TTC has always known this would be the case. However. page 9 of the Design and Access Statement does say that they want to do some levelling work and discussions with the Environment Agency are underway in this regard. That said, any changes to the levels will mean less room for the flood plain, which in turn means less capacity to store water, which means water coming down the Bourne earlier than it would at present, so may lead to flooding further down or water travelling faster if the plain is narrowed. So there may not be progress on this in the long term.

TTC is also happy that the school will be used for the community and the addition of a new nursery is very much welcomed.

Given the constraints of the site because of the failed negotiations with Persimmons, TTC believe this is a good application and should be supported, subject to more parking for staff/visitors confirmation on the kitchen.

Wiltshire Council Highways: No objection.

The main issue from a highway viewpoint is the parking provision on site. However, given the constraints of the site there is no way that parking can be increased without a consequential loss of facilities. It is accepted that there will be an element of on street parking but this will also have the effect of reducing the speed of traffic entering the development.

Whilst it would be preferred to see more on-site parking provision, it must be borne in mind that published parking standards for schools are maximum.

Wiltshire Council Public Protection: Requested more technical details on the proposed biomass installation in relation to noise, fumes and disturbance. These details have been supplied and the response of Environmental Protection will be reported at the meeting.

Wiltshire Council Ecologist: no objection.

A phase I habitat survey was initially carried out in relation to the adjacent housing development and this was updated in February 2013 covering only the area of the school application site. No ecological constraints were identified by the survey, other than the potential for low numbers of reptiles to use parts of the site.

The site itself is quite constrained, however it is recognised that a considerable level of ecological enhancement will have been achieved through the landscape strategy for the site and that there is really no space to fit any further enhancements for biodiversity into. The landscaping has been designed to incorporate the provision of suitable basking areas for reptiles on some south facing banks, together with a good level of ground cover planting that will afford good connectivity for reptiles and small mammals, throughout the site.

All ecological issues have been suitably addressed at this site.

Environment Agency: **views awaited.**

Sport England: no objection, subject to conditions.

9. Publicity

The application has been publicised by way of site notice and neighbour letter.

The publicity has generated one objection from Persimmon Homes South Coast (the company presently developing the larger site) for the following reasons:

- The nursery is situated close to the southern boundary. If it were repositioned further north then what would otherwise be an incomplete proposed landscape buffer to this boundary could be

avoided. The provision of landscaping at this point would mitigate what would be an imposing flank wall against a future housing area.

- There is no mention as to whether or not floodlighting is planned for the games courts or playing fields. If such lighting is likely then this may have adverse implications for future nearby occupants and the wider appearance of the landscape.
- Concerns are raised at the lack of clarity associated with the proposed appearance of the sprinkler tank, chimney and other plant (the biomass enclosure). It would be churlish to say that this group of structures appears to have been something of an afterthought but there is no clear indication of external finishes, only limited reference to the height of the chimney and information about emissions including noise from this plant cannot be found within the application papers. Whilst it is accepted that these structures are situated below adjacent street level and so partially hidden from view in the round without further amplification there is cause to express legitimate concerns on behalf of future occupants of approved houses opposite as to the potential adverse implications for their residential amenity. Could not this plant be situated at a greater distance from the proposed houses?

10. Planning considerations

There are a number of issues to consider with this application – firstly, the principle of a new school in this location; and then, assuming the principle is accepted, the impact of the specific scheme on visual amenity, residential amenity, highway safety, surface water management/flooding and ecology.

10.1 Principle of the development

The allocation of the larger site for residential development and a primary school and the subsequent outline planning permission have established the principle of a school in this general location. This is in accordance with Policy HC19 of the Kennet Local Plan.

Due to a predicted increase in demand for school places in Tidworth since the outline application, the proposed primary school is now larger than that originally planned – 420 places instead of 210 places. The application demonstrates that a larger school can still be accommodated on the original site without detriment to the quality of its design or to the amenities of the wider area, in accordance with Policy PD1. This is considered further below.

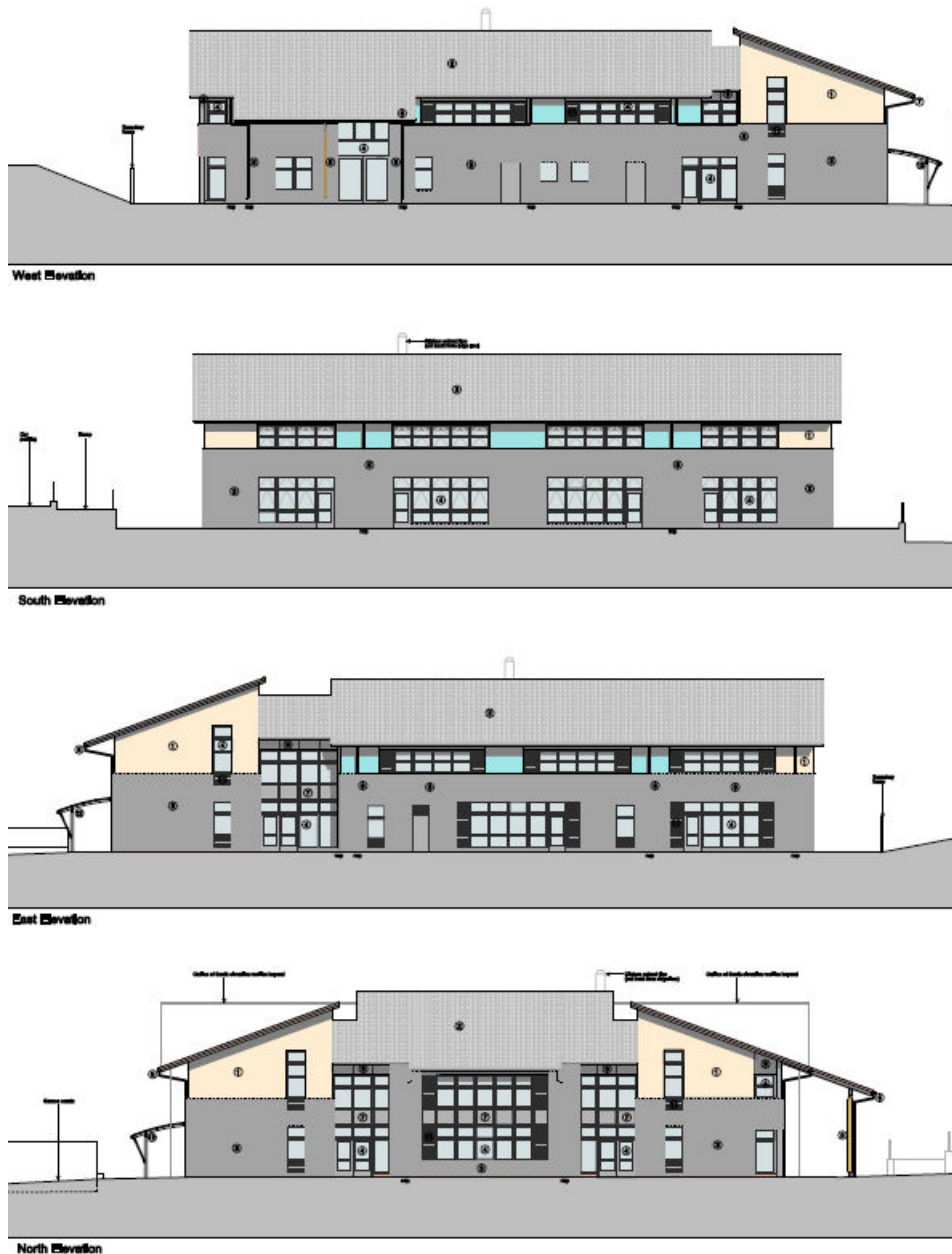
The principle use of the site will be a school. In addition it is intended to allow use for community purposes (some of the internal space and the outside games areas/playing fields), and the main building and outside spaces have been designed to accommodate this. Dual use is supported by Sport England, and to this end it recommends a condition to require this together with a management plan for its operation. However, as the applicant does not yet know what the 'new' community surrounding the school will require, and because the applicant is the Council which takes its community responsibilities seriously in any event, such a condition is considered unreasonable and unnecessary.

10.2 Visual amenity

The application site is situated within a larger housing site which is currently under construction. Within the context of this new residential development the new school will be complimentary as a matter of principle.

Despite their relatively large size, the new school buildings will not dominate the surrounding residential development. Maximum height remains just two stories which will be comparable to the nearest new houses. Adequate margins are retained between the new school buildings, play areas/fields and car

park to avoid a cramped appearance and to allow landscaping to soften and break-up the development. It is acknowledged that the nursery building would come closer to the south edge of the site, but as it is of modest proportions it is not considered that it would have a detrimental impact on whatever development may be planned for the adjoining land. Equally, the biomass enclosure is considered to be a relatively modest element of the whole development which would be adequately distanced and screened from the public highway and nearby houses to ensure no harmful impacts on amenity.

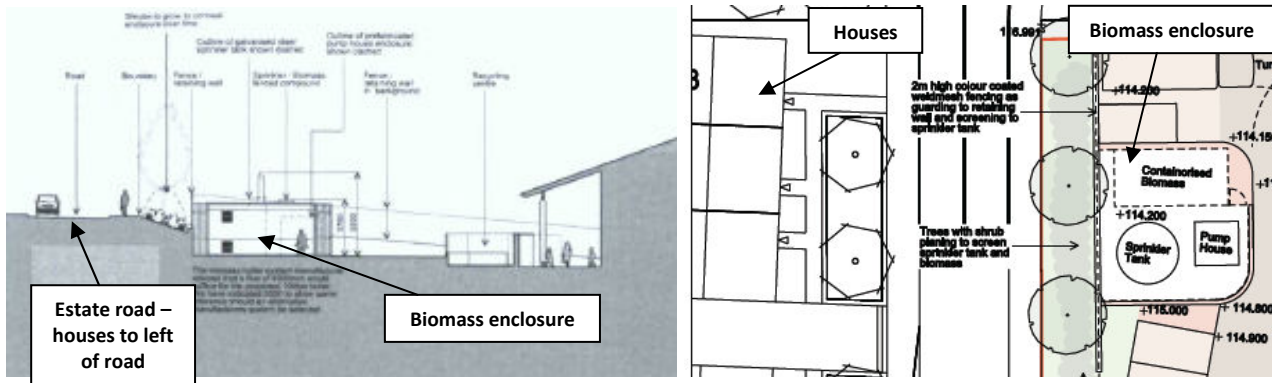


Elevations - school

Although some 'cut and fill' would be necessary to accommodate the buildings and the levelled open areas (playing fields, games courts, etc.) on the site, the extent of this is limited, and within the context of the surrounding development (which includes a much more elevated new road to the immediate north of the site) would not detract from the beauty of the landscape.

10.3 Residential amenity

The houses which will neighbour the new school are still under construction. However, it is evident from the context drawings that these houses are sufficiently distanced from the site to ensure no loss of amenity through overlooking or general disturbance. Detailed comments from Environmental Protection on the biomass enclosure will be reported to the committee.



Section drawing and site plan extract showing relative positions/levels of biomass/plant enclosure and closest new houses

School traffic can be a cause for conflict between parents' dropping-off/collecting children and residents of nearby houses. In the interests of sustainability the application is supported by a Green Travel Plan which encourages travel to the school by means other than motorcars. Despite this, it is inevitable that some of the children will be dropped-off/collected by car. The limited and short term inconvenience this may cause to nearby residents at the beginning and end of the school day would not amount to a sufficient reason to reject the application on residential amenity grounds.

There is no floodlighting proposed on the games courts or playing fields. A condition is recommended requiring details of such lighting to be approved, should it be proposed in the future. External lighting in the car park and beside paths would be appropriately discrete and directed.

10.4 Highway safety

The proposal offers a safe access to the site from the adjacent main estate road. Specific parking provision is made for 27 cars, and this is considered acceptable by the Highways Officer having regard to the maximum parking standards which apply.

The Town Council expresses concern that a far greater number of parking spaces should be provided to cater for parents dropping-off/collecting children. However, an objection based on this is unsustainable for the reasons set out above – specifically, any short term need for this parking can be accommodated through adequate and safe on-street parking, and the school will discourage dropping-off/collection by car in any event through its Green Travel Plan. Additionally, the applicant advises that experience has shown that on-site drop-off/collection arrangements invariably lead to congestion and delay within the school itself.

The applicant has acknowledged the Town Council's specific concerns about parent parking for events (such as school plays and parents' evenings), and has amended the drawings to indicate overflow car parking on the games courts at these times.

10.5 Surface water management and flooding

To the east side of the site is the River Bourne. Part of the application site on this lower side lies within the floodplain of the river. For this reason development on this part of the site is limited to games areas and playing fields. Some cut and fill is proposed to accommodate these, although not to such an extent as to be prejudicial to the floodplain.

The Ground Investigation Report which accompanies the application concludes that soakaways for the management of surface water would not be effective on the site. In view of this the application proposes large attenuation tanks instead to be sited underneath the games courts. These tanks would collect the surface water from the development and allow its slow discharge into the Bourne via a short length of swale. The applicant's agent explains:

"The drainage strategy in the Flood Risk Assessment reviewed and commented on by the Environment Agency includes a short length of surface water swale outside the site boundary, crossing the linear park where this connects into the existing river.

The swale is a V-shaped ditch 3m wide with sloping sides of around 1 in 3, the surface of which would be a continuation of the adjacent grass land. Like the River Bourne into which it discharges, this swale would generally be dry, but would provide a route for surface water to drain away when ground water levels are high. The swale is necessary as, during periods of exceptional high ground water, it is not possible for surface water to drain to soakaways.

The discharge into the swale is from very large attenuation tanks (surface water storage tanks) under the games courts that ensure water is discharged into the swale at a slow steady rate to meet the Environment Agency's requirements".

This solution to surface water management is satisfactory to the Environment Agency.

10.6 Ecology

The Council's ecologist is satisfied that there are no ecological interests adversely affected by the proposals, and she supports the habitat enhancements which are offered through the landscape strategy accompanying the application.

To safeguard ecological interests some works will have to be carried out prior to commencement of actual development, these comprising removal of a hedgerow (to safeguard potential reptiles and nesting birds) and the erection of reptile fencing. In this instance these operations are not considered to amount to commencement of development.

10.7 Conclusion

This planning application is for a primary school and nursery, in accordance with the allocated use of the land and its outline planning permission. The design of the school is considered appropriate for its context, and will not cause harm to interests of acknowledged importance including both visual and residential amenity. Parking provision satisfies maximum standards, and any short term overflow can be accommodated on-street in any event. Measures are incorporated to manage surface water and potential flooding.

For these reasons the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to 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 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.

- 3 No part of the development hereby permitted shall be first brought into use until the access, turning area and parking spaces have been completed in accordance with the details shown on the approved plans. The areas shall be maintained for those purposes at all times thereafter.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety.

- 4 Any gates across the vehicular access to the site shall be set back 4.5 metres from the edge of the carriageway, such gates to open inwards only, in perpetuity.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety.

- 5 The Green Travel Plan Framework for Primary School accompanying the application shall be implemented following first occupation of the school. The results of its 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.

- 6 The new playing field and pitches shall be constructed and laid out in accordance with standards and methodologies set out in the guidance note "Natural Turf for Sport" (Sport England, May 2011), before they are first brought into use.

REASON: To ensure the quality of pitches is satisfactory and they are available for use.

INFORMATIVE: The Natural Turf for Sport document can be obtained from the Sport England website: www.sportengland.org .

- 7 No external flood lighting of the games courts or playing fields/pitches shall be installed until plans showing the type of light appliance, the height and position of fitting, illumination levels and light spillage in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institute of Lighting Engineers in their publication

"Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light" (ILE, 2005)", have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved lighting shall be installed and shall be maintained in accordance with the approved details and no additional external lighting shall be installed.

REASON: In the interests of the amenities of the area and to minimise unnecessary light spillage above and outside the development site.

- 8 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Tidworth Primary School Design and Access Statement (and appendices) dated 28/05/13

Drawing no. 275928 Site P 02 P05 (location plan in context) dated 31/05/13

Drawing no. 275928 Site P 202 T3 (site plan) dated 12/07/13

Drawing no. 275928 P 0 202 P02 (ground floor plan) dated 31/05/13

Drawing no. 275928 P 1 202 P02 (first floor plan) dated 31/05/13

Drawing no. 275928 P R 200 T06 (roof plan) dated 15/07/13

Drawing no. 275928 E 200 P03 (elevations- school) dated 31/05/13

Drawing no. 275928 S 200 T03 (general sections) dated 16/07/13

Drawing no. 275928 E 203 P01 (elevations - nursery) dated 31/05/13

Drawing no. 275928 Site P 203 (proposed fence types) dated 28/06/13

Drawing no. 275928 E 201 T02 (elevations in context) dated 28/06/13

Drawing no. 275928 E 202 T02 (elevations in context) dated 28/06/13

Drawing no. 275928 Site P 210 T02 (site plan - landscape areas) dated 28/06/13

Drawing no. P148-1693 (external lighting) dated 28/05/13

Drawing no. C-01 P3 (drainage strategy) dated 21/05/13

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 9 The development hereby permitted shall not be first brought into use, until the cycle parking facilities shown on the approved plans have been provided in full and made available for use. The cycle parking facilities shall be retained for use in accordance with the approved details at all times thereafter.

REASON: To ensure that satisfactory facilities for the parking of cycles are provided and to encourage travel by means other than the private car.

Appendices:

None

Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:

Development Plan