

MELKSHAM WITHOUT: PROPOSED EXTENSION AND REFURBISHMENT
AT BOWERHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL, HALIFAX ROAD,
MELKSHAM, FOR WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
(Application No. W.03.2077.CP)

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the above application and to recommend that conditional planning permission be granted.

The site

2. Bowerhill Primary School is situated on Halifax Road to the south of Melksham town. The application site itself is located to the south east of the existing school building, adjacent to a tarmac playground and the school playing field. The site is located close to the southern school boundary which is lined with a combination of fencing and some mature and semi-mature vegetation.
3. Location and site plans are attached at **Appendices 1 and 2**.

Planning History

4. In brief, the planning history of the site is as follows:-

<u>W.98.0815.CP</u>	Planning permission granted for a County proposal to site a single mobile classroom extension to an existing single mobile classroom on the Bowerhill School site - 1998.
<u>W.98.1714.CP</u>	Planning permission granted for a County proposal to construct a permanent classroom extension at Bowerhill Primary School - 1999.
<u>W.99.1418.CP</u>	Planning permission granted for the retention of a single mobile classroom with toilets together with the single mobile extension - 1999.

Proposals

5. Planning Permission is sought for a permanent extension to Bowerhill Primary School. The extension would incorporate four additional classrooms, an area for art work and toilet amenities. The extension would facilitate the removal of two double mobile classrooms. The extension would have a floor area of approximately 573 square metres and be linked to the southern elevation of the existing school building.

6. The building proposed is a single storey structure, located in close proximity to the southern boundary of the school site. The walls would be a combination of brick work and render in a colour suitable to complement the existing school building. The roof would have a shallow pitch and incorporate high level glazing to give light to the central corridor areas.

7. The applicant has submitted the following statement in support of this application:-

"Bowerhill Primary School serves an area of new housing development. Within the designated area the building work is still in progress. The school has been operating within temporary mobile accommodation for a number of years. The building of a permanent extension will lead to the removal of the mobile accommodation. They shall however remain temporarily in use until the new build is complete.

Within the planned design is the provision of an area for Art work and four additional classrooms. In addition an IT suite will be introduced on a mezzanine level within the existing school. The school hall which is no longer able to cope with the number of pupils on roll will also be enlarged. The extension would provide first class permanent accommodation at the school and would enable the curriculum to be enhanced particularly for Key Stage 2 pupils."

8. The Director of the former Department for Children, Education and Libraries has submitted the following statement in support of this application:-

"Accommodation currently available at Bowerhill Primary School includes eight permanent classrooms and four in temporary mobiles. There is also a further room which is designated as a classroom on their asset management plan but is used as a music/group room.

The extension would provide an additional 5 classrooms and an Art room. One of the existing classrooms would go since the hall would be extended into the space and a new staffroom created. The school would be left with twelve teaching rooms, an Art Room and the existing music/group room. The two double mobiles would be removed from the site.

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Numbers on Roll	351	346	366	355

Permanent planning permission is now requested for this project."

Planning Policies

9. Policies CF1 and C1 of the West Wiltshire District Plan (1996) are considered relevant to this application.
10. Policies CF1 and C1 remain fundamentally unaltered in the West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration (Revised Deposit 2000).
11. All relevant planning policies are set out in the attached **Appendix 3**.

Consultations

12. **West Wiltshire District Council** - no objections.
13. **Melksham Without Parish Council** - supports the application.
14. **Environment Agency** - no objections.
15. **English Nature** - no objections.
16. **County Countryside Section** - comments on the removal of trees and management of the ecology present on site.
17. **Highways** - no objections but comments that Bowerhill Primary School would benefit from the formulation of a School Travel Plan.
18. Copies of the consultation replies referred to above are available for inspection in the **Members' Room**.

Publicity

19. The application has been publicised by site notices. A neighbour notification exercise was also carried out. One letter of objection has been received from a resident neighbouring the school site. The concerns raised include the potential tree loss, the size and location of the proposal in addition to the suggested materials for the project.
20. Copies of the representation received will be available in the **Members' Room**.

Planning Considerations

21. This planning application seeks planning permission to provide a substantial permanent extension to the existing school building facilitating internal alterations and the removal of two double mobile classrooms from the site. The main issues to be considered with regard to this application are:-

- Siting, form and materials
- Ecological impact

Siting, form and materials

22. The building would be located to the south east of the existing main school building, between the tarmac play area and the southern school boundary. Policy CF1 of the Adopted West Wiltshire District Plan (March 1996) requires that development must have regard to scale, siting and design.

23. The walls would be a combination of brickwork and render in a colour suitable to complement the existing school building. The roof would have a shallow pitch and incorporate high level glazing to give light to the central corridor areas. Concerns regarding the proposed materials have been raised, specifically that the white render is not in line with the rest of the school. The applicant states that the architects were encouraged to provide relief from large areas of uninterrupted brickwork. In addition, many schools completed recently include rendered walls which can provide additional colour options and good thermal insulation. Officers believe that the design and materials would complement those of the existing school building. A condition requiring samples of all proposed materials to be approved prior to the commencement of development could be attached to any permission granted.
24. In respect of concerns raised by the local resident regarding the size and location of the proposed extension, the applicant has stated that the size of the building is dictated by the number of classrooms required for school expansion and the need to provide better quality permanent accommodation on the site. The height of the eaves of the proposed building would be no higher than the existing mobile classrooms due to ground levelling and the pitch would match that of the school building. The decision to locate the extension in this area follows an analysis of the school's working practices, other developments planned for the site (notably the village hall) and the logistics of moving the mobiles temporarily during construction. With regard to the proposed design and materials, officers consider that the proposal complies with Policy CF1.
25. The local resident also expressed concern regarding the doors at the rear of the classrooms, stating that they may be used at all times and thus impact upon the amenity of the adjacent residents. The classrooms each have an external door which is classified as a fire escape and not intended for general pedestrian circulation.

Ecological impact

26. Policy C1 of the Adopted West Wiltshire District Plan states that the rural landscape and wildlife should be protected through the control of development and positive planning. The classroom extension is located adjacent to a small pond (approximately 3 to 4 square metres). The County Ecologist advises that the pond is lined with little submergent/emergent vegetation and was considered to provide poor quality habitat for great crested newts. However, the presence of a small marginal population of great crested newts cannot be ruled out, particularly as there is some suitable terrestrial habitat to the south of the pond (an area of willow trees and rough grassland). Great crested newts are protected under the Habitats Regulations (1994) and it is illegal to capture or kill them, damage or destroy their breeding sites or resting places (including their terrestrial habitat), to take or destroy their eggs and to deliberately disturb them. Consequently, the County Ecologist recommends that a destructive search of the landtake area of hawthorn and birch shrubs is carried out by a suitably licensed ecologist. Any amphibians present must be moved to a suitable adjacent habitat. The detailed methodology for undertaking this work and specification for the fencing can be attached as a condition to any permission granted and must be agreed with the Countryside Section.

27. The proposed extension would result in the loss of two young cherry trees and one young whitebeam tree as well as encroaching on a group of semi-mature trees and shrubs including birch, hazel and hawthorn. The letter of objection expresses concern over the loss of the trees, stating that they partly screen their adjacent property. A condition requiring the submission of a landscaping scheme to mitigate for the tree loss and to visually reinforce the boundary can be attached to any permission granted.
28. The County Ecologist considered that the existing school building had potential to support bats. Consequently an internal survey of the roof space was undertaken by a licensed ecologist. No signs of bats and no indications of the presence of bat roosts were found. The building was assessed as having low potential for roosting bats and considered not to be a material consideration. Providing the outlined ecological safeguards are put in place, the impact on the ecology of the site would be minimal, thus complying with Policy C1.

Conclusion

29. The classroom extension would replace two temporary double mobile classrooms, thus providing improved facilities enhancing the aesthetic appearance of the school site. The proposed site is considered acceptable for the development when looking at the school site as a whole in aesthetic and functional terms. The proposed design would enable the new build to effectively blend in with the existing school buildings, in materials and form.
30. The impact on the amenity of the local residents would be minimised by a planting scheme on the school boundary.
31. Providing the outlined ecological safeguards are put in place, the impact on the ecology of the site would be minimal.
32. There is an educational need to provide additional permanent accommodation at Bowerhill Primary School.
33. In view of the above, it is considered that the proposal accords with the Development Plan with no other overriding planning considerations to warrant refusal.

Recommendation

34. That permission be granted subject to the following conditions:-
 1. The development hereby granted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.
 2. No development shall take place until samples of materials to be used in the construction of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Development shall be in accordance with approved details.
 3. No development shall take place until full details of the methods to be employed to exclude great crested newts from the development site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The great crested newt mitigation shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.
 4. Within three months of the date of this permission a scheme of landscaping shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented in accordance with

those approved details in the first available planting season following completion of the development.

5. Trees, shrubs and hedges planted in accordance with the approved scheme shall be maintained and any plants which within five years of planting 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.
6. All existing trees and shrubs shall be retained, unless shown on the approved drawings as being removed. All trees and shrubs on and immediately adjoining the site shall be protected from damage during the course of works on the site. This shall be in accordance with the relevant British Standards (BS 5837:1991). In the event that trees become damaged or otherwise defective during such period, the County Planning Authority shall be notified within seven days and a programme of remedial action shall be submitted for approval and thereafter implemented as approved.
7. Within three months of completion and occupation of the proposed extension, the mobile classrooms shall be removed and the site restored to its former condition.

GEORGE BATTEN

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

Consultation replies and correspondence