

**REPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE** Report No.

Date of Meeting	25 <sup>th</sup> February 2009
Application Number	08/02130/FUL
Site Address	Wiltshire College, Chippenham Campus, Cocklebury Road
Proposal	Demolition of existing buildings and erection of a new collage building of circa 12,000sq m gross intenal floor area with landscaping and associated works
Applicant	Wiltshire College
Town/Parish Council	Chippenham
Grid Ref	392306 173717
Type of applications	Full application

**Reason for the application being considered by Committee**

- This application has been submitted to the Committee for decision under the scheme of delegation in force after the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2002 because 5 letters of objection have been received

**Summary of Report**

This report is prepared to enable the Development Control Committee to consider of the proposed redevelopment of the Wiltshire College Chippenham Campus with new college building. With reference to prevailing adopted Local Plan policy and relevant national planning advice, consideration should be given to the following issues:

- Implications of adopted Local Plan Policies and national planning guidance
- Principle of development
- Layout, scale, design and landscaping
- Demolition of existing buildings
- Sports provision and development at Lackham Campus
- Parking provision and access
- Impact upon residential amenity

**Officer Recommendations**

Planning Permission be **GRANTED** subject to conditions

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## The proposal and site description

This application represents a significant proposal for the redevelopment of the Wiltshire College Chippenham Campus site so as to provide improved post-16 educational facilities. It will involve the demolition of all existing buildings on the site and the construction of a single new building purpose built to modern educational standards. The existing buildings provide for 11,800sq m of floorspace and 269 on-site car parking spaces. The proposal is for some 12,000sq m of floorspace and 270 on-site car spaces for staff and students.

Staff and students numbers are not expected to directly increase as a result of development, although it is expected that the gradual growth in staff and student numbers anticipated over coming years, irrespective of development taking place, will be better accommodated. The development is part of Wiltshire College's wider review of all their campus in Wiltshire.

The Chippenham Campus itself is approximately 5.3Ha in area and is located some 1.0km north of the town centre and despite its elevation above the centre it retains good pedestrian links to the wider town, and in particular to the train station to the north-west. Contextually, the campus is defined by residential development to the south-west, the rail line and commercial development to the north and Monkton Park / the civic centre to the south and west. Vehicular access is, and is to remain as existing, being via Station/Cocklebury Road which links directly to the A4.

Amongst other supporting documents, the application has been accompanied by a Statement of Community Involvement, Transportation Assessment, landscape assessment, ecological appraisal, archaeological evaluation, noise survey report, outline construction management plan and Flood Risk Assessment.

Planning History		
	Several previous applications received and approved in respect of ancillary educational development.	
	Two previous applications for residential development refused and withdrawn in 2005 and 2004 respectively – 05/02558 and 04/03015 refer.	

## Consultations

### Wiltshire County Council

*Extracts.* Proposed development is an appropriate land use and is suitably located in terms of Chippenham being an identified Strategic Service Centre. The County Council is of the opinion that the site is accessible by a range of sustainable transport options and is linked to a detailed transport plan. The development should contribute to the overall strategy that encourages development that will lead to stronger economy and better employment markets at a Strategic Service Centre in Wiltshire.

### Wiltshire County Council Highways

No objections to the principle of development. Discussions between WCC and the applicant's highway consultants regarding the scope of the off site highway works and infrastructure contributions is ongoing. It is hoped that a resolution to this issue will be reached and reported to the meeting of the DC Committee.

### Environmental Health Officer

No issues with sound attenuation measures recommended within submitted noise survey report. Also

welcome Construction Management Plan.

#### District Ecologist

No objections subject to conditions to ensure development is carried out in accordance with the mitigations measures and recommendations contained in Ecological Appraisal.

#### WCC Archaeologist

Trenching work required by County Archaeologist has been completed. Comments upon the submitted investigative report from County Archaeologist are awaited.

#### Environment Agency

On the basis of the submitted Flood Risk Assessment, raise no objections to proposed development, subject to the imposition of conditions.

#### Wiltshire Police

No objections.

#### Sport England

In order to comply with Playing Field Policy, it requested that the following is secured as part of any planning approval: (i) details of layout and specification of the relocated grass football pitch on the site be provided and carried out in accordance with such details; (ii) replacement playing field and outdoor sports facilities be provided at the Lackham Campus to compensate for loss of part of playing field at Chippenham Campus; (iii) replacement sports hall at Lackham Campus to compensate for loss of existing sports hall at Chippenham Campus; (iv) all new facilities at both Chippenham and Lackham Campus shall be made available for wider community use.

#### Chippenham Town Council

In principle the Town Council welcomes the new collage development, based on the information received.

### **Representations**

Eight (8) letters of objection received from separate households :

Summary of relevant points raised:

- Height of proposed building and potential for overlooking into properties and gardens of neighbouring properties
- Position of new building – should be closer to Cocklebury Road – and not simply so as to allow existing buildings to remain during construction phase
- Change to outlook of local residents as new building is nearer than existing
- Proximity of student car parking area to properties
- Existence of outdoor teaching space – will be inappropriately used and become cause of noise, disturbance and anti-social behaviour outside of college hours
- Removal of historic buildings
- Noise and disturbance from air conditioning units – should be screened
- Wish for football pitch to remain at full size so as to ensure the long term retention of the rear part of the site as playing fields and not developed
- Inadequate provision for bin storage

## **Planning Considerations**

### Principle of development

The Chippenham Campus is and remains a site for used for educational purposes. This proposal would not alter the nature of the use of the site, nor immediately or automatically lead to intensification in its operation.

Policy CF1 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011 establishes the principle of education facilities as acceptable within the identified towns and villages. However, the more generalised development control criteria contained within Policy C3 provides for a more useful and rigorous assessment of the acceptability of development.

### Layout, scale, design and landscaping

The proposed layout has been arrived at through extensive negotiation with the Local Planning Authority and a public consultation exercise carried out by the developers prior to the submission of the application, as advised by national planning guidance. The final layout has also been informed by constraints on the site, most notably, the retention of the full size outdoor sports pitch and the ability of the college to remain open during the construction phase of development.

The singular, roughly crescent shaped, building proposed is to be placed to the rear of the existing suite of buildings. Architecturally it would function as a large pavilion type building set in its own grounds, with parking/public space to the front adjacent to Cocklebury Road/Saddlers Mead and the retained football pitch to the rear. As a design approach, the layout is considered to have legitimacy, especially given the grand scale and bold architecture of the building and its high degree of visibility from road frontages and passing rail line.

The proposed building takes a contemporary visual form with a large atrium entrance central to an inner 3 and 4 storey crescent shaped core (with a maximum overall height of approx. 18.5m), which then tapers down to 2 and 3 storey presentations closest to Cocklebury Road and Saddlers Mead. Two "finger blocks" are to project from the rear of the building at 2 and 3 storey heights respectively. Internally the building is driven by the architectural form, with the highly visual activities such as the Tunings Restaurant (which will continue to be open to the public), reception area and meeting points located centrally overlooking the newly created public space, and the construction workshops located toward to the northern end of the site closest to existing commercial activity. External materials reflect the buildings uncluttered and contemporary form through use of large areas of coloured render, glazing and contrasting panels of terracotta tiles (all of which could be controlled through planning conditions).

Concern has been expressed over the presentation of the building to Cocklebury Road at the point closest to the "island tree" opposite Avon Vale House. At some 11.0m to the pavement wall, the building would present a 10.0m (approx.) two-storey rendered elevation. Whilst not considered to represent an inappropriate or "oppressive" massing of built form at this point, it has been requested that the elevation be provided with a greater degree of architectural relief so as to improve its visual appearance and aspect.

New landscaping across the site is primarily defined by the creation of the new public space immediately in front of the building and the largely retained grassed amenity space and formal sports pitch to the rear of the building. Hard and soft landscaping across the site does account for the strategic positioning and routing of pedestrian and vehicular access, together with the required Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) water storage pond. Where required to be dismantled across the Cocklebury Road frontage, stone from the wall will be retained and re-used in new external works. Imported fill to the site will be kept to a minimum.

Through consultation with neighbours it is thought that the proposal has reached an acceptable compromise between the competing demands for new planting. In this respect the existing tree planting to the rear boundary of the site with properties at Saddlers Mead and Esmead will remain as existing. The gradual mounding of land, kerbing and additional tree and hedge planting to the student parking area is considered to effectively mitigate disturbance to neighbours (particular at Esmead) and stop unauthorised vehicular access to the rear part of the site.

### Demolition of existing buildings

Notwithstanding the legitimacy of the urban form of a large building set back from the road frontage within its own grounds, it can be argued that the building is situated primarily so as to allow retention of existing buildings and therefore continuation of educational activities throughout the construction phase. Alternatives, including a phased approach to development, have been considered by the College and rejected due to their cost and significant lengthening of construction time (and therefore local disruption).

The majority of existing buildings across the campus are functional and of mid-late C20th vintage. Their demolition is not considered to be objectionable. There is, however, a single red-brick Victorian school building situated on the corner of Cocklebury Road / Esmead junction. In recognition of its greater intrinsic merit than the other buildings on the site, the Conservation Area designation makes a deliberate incursion into the campus site.

Whilst PPG15 : Planning and the Historic Environment (particularly paras. 4.25 – 4.27) advises that there should be general presumption in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area, neither does it rule the possibility out. Rather it requires that an assessment be made as to the role the building plays in the architectural or historic interest of the area as well as nature of the proposed development to replace it. In this particular instance it is clear that the school building is on the periphery of the Conservation Area adjacent to large areas of car parking, and would be replaced by a new building (and grounds) of some architectural merit in its own right.

### Sports provision and development at Lackham Campus

Sport England have expressed concern about the net loss of sports facilities as a result of development of the site. In seeking to address their concerns, a link has been made between development at the Chippenham campus with that also intended for the Lackham campus. It is, and always was, the overall aim of the Wiltshire College's Property Strategy to relocate sporting activities / courses to the Lackham campus from Chippenham. As such, a net loss of sporting facilities between the two sites should be avoided to the satisfaction of Sport England. As previously indicated, a full size outdoor football pitch at the Chippenham campus is to be retained.

Discussions between Sport England and Wiltshire College remain ongoing, although at this stage it is considered entirely possible to ensure through a legal agreement under s106 of The Act that a net loss of sports facilities between the two sites would be avoided.

Sport England has indicated that would wish that all sports facilities across the two sites be made available for community use. Again, this is thought to be both reasonable and achievable and in particular respect of the retained football pitch at Chippenham campus (which is already made available to some external sports clubs – albeit on an infrequent basis) could be controlled via a management plan so as to avoid noise and disturbance to neighbours.

### Parking provision and access

The intensity of use, student and staff numbers as well as parking spaces available on site will be largely unaltered as a result of development. Growth in student and staff numbers is expected to increase over coming years, but this is irrespective of development taking place.

A Transport Assessment and Green Travel Plan has been prepared, submitted and considered by Wiltshire County Council as the highway authority. In general terms it is understood that agreement between Wiltshire College and WCC has been reached over the scope, detail and outcome of this assessment work, although final agreement remains to be reached in respect of the expected improvements to highway infrastructure. Such improvements are likely to include : upgrading of pedestrian crossing across Cocklebury Road, provision of cycleway signage, improvements to bus stop on Sadlers Mead, contribution towards the implementation of any required Traffic Regulation Orders.

### Impact upon residential amenity

Several concerns have been raised in respect of the potential impact upon residential amenity from development.

The positioning of the new building, its height and potential for overlooking must be considered in the context of its distance from surrounding residential properties. Although marginally closer than existing buildings on the site, the two-storey "fingers" element of the building remains some 110m distant from the boundaries of properties at Esmead and some 150m+ to the four-storey element of the main core of the building. Such distances are considered to successfully mitigate any possible overlooking.

At 60m and 25m, properties at Sadlers Mead are positioned at a closer point to the new building, but at two-storeys at these points is not thought to impinge upon residential amenity. In fact the proposal will result in the removal of existing college buildings which are much closer.

The extent and position of car parking areas (particularly that accessed from Cocklebury Road from the north) has been reached through discussion with local residents. At 65.0m+ from the nearest property it is considered to represent a good compromise position. Boundary treatments to car parking areas, described above, is thought to successfully mitigate against unacceptable disturbance.

Concerns were raised about the possible inappropriate use of the outdoor teaching area to the rear of the main building. In this respect the perimeter of the campus will be made secure so as to act as a deterrent to unlawful entry after opening hours of the college, and is not thought to any more prone to such anti-social behaviour than existing. Wiltshire Constabulary have not objected to the proposal.

Details have been provided in respect of positioning of all items of plant on the proposed building. It has also been agreed, and details provided, that the major items of plant such as Air Handling Units and Chiller plant will be acoustically treated with attenuation screening/casing/absorbent infill. Again, in this regard there is no suggestion that the proposed development will cause any greater degree of disturbance than the existing situation.

The bin store, service yard and construction compounds have been located to the north of the site, adjacent to existing commercial operations, and at the furthest point from residential properties.

### **Recommendation:**

#### **Subject to the receipt of the following:**

- Satisfactory comments of WCC Highways in respect of off site highway works and contributions
- Satisfactory final comments from Sport England in respect of the provision of replaced and compensatory sports facilities at the Lackham and Chippenham Campus', which shall include managed provision to make such facilities available for community use

The applicant be invited to enter an Agreement in respect of compensatory sports facilities at Lackham and Chippenham Campus', following completion of which the Development Control Manager be authorised to GRANT planning permission 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 Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved plans subject to such minor amendments to the development as may be approved in writing under this condition by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that the development is implemented in accordance with this decision in the interests of public amenity, but also to allow for the approval of minor variations which do not materially affect the permission.

3. Prior to the commencement of development details in respect of the approved landscaping scheme shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local planning Authority. Such details shall include specific planting schedules and make reference to species and size of specimen. Planting shall be carried out in accordance with those details approved unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and for the avoidance of doubt.

4. The approved landscaping scheme shall be implemented within one year of either the first occupation or use of the development, whether in whole or in part, or its substantial completion, whichever is the sooner, and shall be maintained thereafter for a period of not less than five years. This maintenance shall include the replacement of any tree or shrub which is removed, destroyed or dies by a tree or shrub of the same size and species as that which it replaces, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity.

5. No development shall commence and no equipment, machinery or materials shall be brought onto the site for the purposes of the development, until details of fencing to be erected for the protection of retained trees/hedges/shrubs have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Fencing for the protection of retained trees/hedges/shrubs shall be erected in accordance with the approved details before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought onto the site for the purposes of the development and 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 written consent of the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of protecting the existing trees/hedges/shrubs on the site.

6. Prior to the commencement of development a schedule of all external materials to be used across the site, including those used for buildings and hardsurfacings, shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried in accordance with those details approved unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to secure a harmonious architectural treatment across the site.

8. External lighting shall be restricted to that specified within the details approved (plan reference: L-1340-(P)-12 B together with associated appendix 1) only. There shall be no further external lighting whatsoever across the site unless otherwise agreed in the form of a separate planning permission in that behalf.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity in the landscape and to avoid any impact upon residential amenity.

9. The development permitted by this planning permission shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment (FRA): Hyder Consulting Report No: 0004-WX22875CC-WXR-01 dated 4 August 2008 and the following mitigation measures detailed within the FRA:

1. Limiting the surface water run-off rate and volume generated by the 1 in 100 critical storm including 30% uplift in peak rainfall intensity for climate change so that it will not exceed the run-off from the existing/undeveloped site and not increase the risk of flooding off-site.
2. Provision of compensatory flood storage on the site up to a 1 in 100 year standard including 30% uplift in peak rainfall intensity for climate change.

Reason: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site and to prevent flooding elsewhere by ensuring that compensatory storage of flood water is provided.

10. Prior to being discharged into any watercourse, surface water sewer or soakaway system, all surface water drainage from impermeable parking areas and hardstandings for vehicles shall be passed through an oil interceptor designed and constructed to have a capacity and details compatible with the site being drained. Roof water shall not pass through the interceptor.

Reason: To prevent pollution of the water environment.

(Further conditions, including those from County Highways and Archaeologist, will be reported via the "additional information" pages prior to Committee.)

### **Reason for Decision**

The proposed development is considered to be an appropriate and welcome improvement to existing educational facilities in this location and has no adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the area, highway safety in the locality or have any adverse impact on neighbouring residential properties. The proposal complies with the provisions of Policies C1, C3, CF1, HE2, T1, T2, T3 and T4 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011.

<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>NONE</b>
<b>Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:</b>	<b>1.19; 1.20; 2.01; 2.02; 2.07; 2.32; 4.02; 4.04; 4.06</b>