

**SHERSTON: CONSTRUCTION OF A SINGLE STOREY PRIMARY SCHOOL  
WITH VEHICULAR AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS, SERVICES AND  
PLAYING FIELDS WITH THE ASSOCIATED PROVISION OF AN  
ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURAL ACCESS ON LAND AT  
JUNCTION OF KNOCKDOWN ROAD AND SOPWORTH ROAD,  
SHERSTON, FOR WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
(Application No. N.03.1365 CP)**

**Purpose of Report**

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

**The Site**

2. The application site is located at the western edge of the village of Sherston and is part of a field bounded on the south by Sopworth Road and to the east by Knockdown Road.
3. The school site is located in the lower south east corner of the field on relatively flat ground. This southern end of the field is a naturally low area, with the field rising gently to a crest at its northern end. A mature hedge runs along the southern boundary of the site and separates the field from the adjacent lane that is Sopworth Road. Knockdown Road forms the eastern boundary, with an area of allotment gardens and modern housing opposite. New housing is currently under construction on an area adjacent to the north-eastern boundary of the site.
4. A site plan is attached at **Appendix 1**.

**Planning History**

5. There is no planning history in respect of this site.

**Proposals**

6. Permission is sought for the construction of a new six class Primary school, including a hall, kitchen and associated teaching and support areas. This would replace the existing school that is currently located in the High Street.
7. The new school would provide greatly expanded and improved facilities over the current school, together with appropriately sized hard surface play areas next to the building and the required large soft play, grassed, sports area. The scheme also provides car parking and planned vehicular access for safe arrivals and departures.

8. The design of the proposed school building is drawn from the concept of a long farm barn or shed, with its open sides filled-in as a series of screens or panels to enclose the classrooms. This design concept provides a building that incorporates roof pitches and traditional style external construction materials appropriate to the buildings of the area.
9. An agricultural access is also proposed to the west of the school site from Sopworth Road, to replace an existing access that would be lost to the school development. The position of this access has been revised since the submission of the application to address concerns raised by the Local Highway Authority and residents neighbouring the application site.
10. The Director of the Department for Children, Education and Libraries has submitted the following statement in support of this application: -

"The need to make improvements to the buildings used for primary education in Sherston has been long recognised. In the Autumn of 1997 the Local Education Authority embarked on a collaborative venture with the school governors to finance a major extension to the existing school building through the sale of the replacement school site within the village. This would have provided, amongst other things, for all the teaching accommodation to be in permanent build and under one roof, replacing four temporary buildings.

In the event, the sale of the replacement school site raised more money than anticipated, giving the option of a complete replacement building. County Councillors considered the investment case for the brand new school building, as opposed to the original use of existing buildings with the new extension. They decided that the proposed new building was the better investment, giving the school accommodation and external spaces which meet all DfES space standards with the benefit of low long-term maintenance.

The proposed building provides six classrooms, sufficient for the long-term needs of the village (in which little housing growth is expected). Other facilities such as the hall will be potentially available for the community as well as for the schoolchildren. Outside there is good provision for informal social spaces, hard play and grass pitch areas."

### **Planning Policy**

11. Policy C8 of the Wiltshire Structure Plan 2011 (adopted January 2001) is considered relevant to this application.
12. Policies RC7, RLF1 and RB2 of the Adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2001 are also considered relevant to this application.
13. All of the policies considered relevant to this proposal are set out in **Appendix 2**.

## **Consultations**

14. **North Wiltshire District Council** - no objections.
15. **Sherston Parish Council** - recommends approval of the proposals and looks forward to completion of the school.
16. **Environment Agency** - no objections in principle, but recommends that if permission is granted conditions be imposed relating to the prevention of pollution to the water environment.
17. **Countryside Agency** - no observations.
18. **English Nature** - confirms that there are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest in close proximity to the development site and notes that the County Countryside Section has recorded that the site has no potential to support protected species.
19. **Local Highway Authority** - concerned that the lack of footways and the road configuration surrounding the site make it unsustainable unless off-site works are undertaken to mitigate these road safety and sustainability issues. Considers the proposed on-site access arrangement to be generally satisfactory. Concerns regarding poor visibility associated with the original position of the proposed agricultural access have been addressed by the relocation of this access.
20. **County Countryside Team** - considers that the proposal would not have a significant adverse impact on the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, subject to the provision of a hedgerow along the western boundary and a similar feature along the northern boundary. Concerned that the existing hedgerows on the site boundaries should be retained as part of the development and the retained elements linked with any new planting.
21. **Rights of Way** - no comments as revised position for agricultural access would not affect Footpath 22 which is located to the west of the application site.
22. **County Archaeologist** - advises that the application site is adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument located to the south side of Sopworth Road, but outside the area of Medieval settlement and so unlikely to have any impact on the Scheduled Monument. Therefore, there is no requirement for archaeological investigations in relation to this proposal.

## **Publicity**

23. The application has been publicised in the local press and by site notices. A neighbour notification exercise was also carried out. One letter of representation was received from residents neighbouring the proposal site in respect of the original position proposed for the agricultural access. The concerns raised included:-
  - the location of the agricultural access would require the removal of a very old stile, which is an attractive feature of the lane

- the proposed entrance would infringe rights over the land between the property and the road
  - the access would diminish rights to use and maintain land considered to form an integral part of a private entrance
24. However, the respondents have confirmed that they have no objections to the revised position for the agricultural access, the position of which does address their earlier concerns as outlined above.
25. Copies of the representation received will be available in the **Members' Room**.

### **Planning Considerations**

26. This planning application proposes the construction of a new six class Primary school to accommodate the long-term needs of the village. The main issues to be considered with regard to this application are: -
- Planning Policy departure
  - Landscape impact
  - Form and materials
  - Highway implications

#### **Planning Policy departure**

27. The proposed site for the new primary school falls outside of the framework boundary for the village of Sherston as defined in the Adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan (illustrated in **Appendix 3**). The purpose of the framework boundary is to indicate those areas where the relevant plan policies apply. The application site is wholly located within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
28. Policy C8 of the Adopted Wiltshire Structure Plan and Policy RC7 of the Adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan give priority to the protection and conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and restricts development within the AONB to only that which meets specified criteria. Furthermore, Policy RLF1 of the Adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan provides for the provision of local community, education and recreational facilities on land within or adjoining the framework boundaries of towns and villages, but subject to a number of provisos.
29. Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires that all applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.
30. Consequently, it is necessary to consider whether the development proposed by this application meets with the criterion set down in the respective policies and so establish whether the proposal represents a departure from the Development Plan. If the proposal is found to not accord with the provisions of the Development Plan, and if the Committee was minded to grant planning permission, then it would be necessary to refer the application to the First Secretary of State.

### Landscape impact

31. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 requires the 'relevant authorities' to 'have regard' to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. Planning Policy Guidance Note 7: The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development (PPG7) advises that *'in general policies and development control decisions affecting AONBs should favour conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape. In all cases the environmental effects of the new proposal will be a major consideration, though it will also be appropriate to have regard to the economic and social well-being of the areas'*. These aims are encompassed in Policy C8 of the Adopted Wiltshire Structure Plan.
32. Policy RC7 of the Adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan restricts development in the Cotswolds AONB to that which is, amongst other uses, appropriate to the economic and social well-being of the area. It is considered that the provision of a new primary school for the village of Sherston, and its potential availability for community use, accords with this criterion. The development of such appropriate uses is however subject to them not causing demonstrable harm to the natural beauty of the landscape; its siting as to minimise its impact on the natural beauty of the area and; the use of appropriate building materials and landscaping.
33. In order to be satisfied that the proposal would not have a significant adverse effect on the natural beauty of the AONB it has been necessary for the County Landscape Officer to undertake a landscape and visual impact assessment of the proposed development. The County Landscape Officer has concluded that, given the nature of the topography of the site, the local landscape character and the nature of the adjacent and nearby residential development, the proposed new school would not have a significant adverse landscape impact on the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB. However, this is subject to the provision of appropriate boundary and landscaping features along the northern and western boundaries of the site. Such matters can all be secured through the imposition of suitable conditions on any planning permission granted.
34. In view of the visually contained nature of the site, the County Landscape Officer does not consider that the proposed development would lead to a significant adverse visual impact when considered cumulatively with existing residential development and development currently under construction.
35. With regard to PPG 7 advice, it is considered that the need for the development and the effects of not having it on the local community and economy are well established; that the development site is the only available and cost effective site for such a development in the area; the need for the development cannot be met in any other way and; the proposal would not have a significant adverse impact on the landscape.
36. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development accords with the majority of the criterion set down by Policy RC7 of the Local Plan in that the new school would not cause demonstrable harm to the natural beauty of the landscape and is so sited to minimise its impact on the natural beauty of the area. This leaves the criterion regarding the use of appropriate building materials and landscaping to be considered.

### Form and Materials

37. The application site lies within the Cotswolds AONB and is adjacent to the Sherston Conservation Area and so the appropriateness of the design of the building and the materials to be used is an important consideration. The Development Plan seeks to ensure that the design, materials and siting of a new development is appropriate to its location.
38. The proposed school building is of multiple pitch roof design, using different heights to minimise the appearance of scale. The central section has the appearance of a barn conversion with other lower single storey elements attached. The whole of the building has been designed to be as compact as possible, minimising land-take.
39. The materials proposed for the external finishes of the school building are contemporary slates for the traditionally styled pitch roof and masonry block with a weathered 'Cotswold' finish for the walls. The classrooms would have a small lean-to rain shelter and sunscreen on the southern side formed with stained timber framing and a glazed-style plastic roof. The main entrance would have a glazed canopy with a pitched roof to complement the slate-pitched roofs either side.
40. The architectural qualities of Sherston and the immediate surrounding areas of the site provide a strong character that the new school would need to complement. The external building materials should therefore reflect the traditional qualities of natural stone walls and pitched stone slated roofs. In this context, it is considered that the design of the building and the materials that would be used in its construction are appropriate and acceptable to the location of the application site. Nevertheless, a condition can be attached to any permission granted requiring actual samples of the proposed materials to be approved prior to the commencement of development.
41. The application does not include detailed proposals for landscaping, but does set out the principle for a modest landscaping scheme to supplement and reinforce the natural existing features such as hedgerows using native species. A few key areas of structural planting including trees to follow this theme and to tie the building into its surroundings are also envisaged. No objections have been raised to these landscaping principles, though as set out in paragraph 33 above, the County Landscape Officer does advise that the provision of appropriate boundary and landscaping features would be necessary along the northern and western boundaries of the site. A detailed landscaping scheme outlining species and provenance could be required by a condition attached to any permission granted.
42. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development accords with the criterion set down by Policy RC7 of the Local Plan in that the development of the new school would utilise appropriate building materials and landscaping. In addition, it is considered that the proposed development accords with Policy RB2 of the Local Plan in that the proposed school building exhibits a good standard of design.

43. As referred to in paragraph 28 above, Policy RLF1 of the Adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan provides for the development of local community, educational and recreational facilities on land adjoining the framework boundaries of towns and villages. However, as with Policy RC7, Policy RLF1 sets down criterion whereby such facilities may only be permitted. These criteria are:- there is no harm to the amenities of the open countryside; causes no demonstrable harm on the environment; the proposal being in scale and harmony with its surroundings and; the access and parking arrangement being acceptable.
44. It is considered that the above assessment in respect of Policy RC7 is applicable to establishing whether the proposed development meets with the criterion of Policy RLF1. Consequently, it is considered that all but the last criterion of Policy RLF1 has been met, and the development is acceptable in this context. It remains therefore to consider whether proposed access and parking arrangements are acceptable.

#### Highway implications

45. Access to the site by pedestrians has been arranged primarily via a single crossing over Knockdown Road that leads to a pathway to the main school entrance and the hard play areas outside the classrooms. The main pathway links with a crescent shaped vehicular access road that provides a one way route into and out of the site entering from a southern junction on Knockdown Road and leaving via a second junction to the north opposite Manor Close. Parking is arranged to the west of this internal site road giving direct pedestrian access to the school pathways.
46. The Local Highway Authority considers the lack of footways and the surrounding road configuration tend to make the site untenable, unless off-site works are undertaken to mitigate the road safety and sustainability issues that exist. The Local Highway Authority is concerned that current routes to the proposed school site are not conducive to a safe pedestrian environment and would therefore dissuade parents from allowing their children to walk to school.
47. Discussions between the applicant and the Local Highway Authority have produced a draft plan that shows proposed off-site footway and road signage/furniture improvements which the Local Highway Authority considers acceptable subject to some minor amendments. The Local Highway Authority recommends that the improvement of pedestrian links to the school should be a requirement of any planning permission granted. The Local Highway Authority also considers the proposed internal access layout of the school site to be generally acceptable, subject to some minor amendments in respect of planting next to the proposed vehicular entrance. Full details of the pedestrian and vehicular access layout would be required to be approved before any works commenced to construct the new school, but the proposed access and parking arrangements are considered acceptable in principle. Such details can be made subject to a condition attached to any permission granted.
48. The School Travel Plan, submitted as part of the planning application, is considered to be generally acceptable with its aims to encourage more children to walk to school and to reduce car borne journeys.
49. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development accords with Policy RLF1 of the Adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan in that the proposed access and parking arrangements are acceptable.

## **Conclusion**

50. This planning application proposes the construction of a new six class Primary school to accommodate the long-term needs of the village of Sherston. The new school would replace the existing school that is currently located in the High Street that has long been in need of improvement and/or replacement.
51. The proposed development accords with Policy C8 of the Adopted Wiltshire Structure Plan 2011 and Policy RC7 of the Adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2001 in that a new school is a development appropriate to the economic and social well-being of the area. The new school would not cause demonstrable harm to the natural beauty of the landscape, is sited to minimise its impact on the natural beauty of the area and would make use of appropriate building materials and landscaping.
52. The proposed development accords with Policy RLF1 of the Adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2001 in that a new school is a permissible development of land adjoining the framework boundary of the village. The new school would cause no harm to the amenities of the open countryside or on the environment. The proposed school is in scale and harmony with its surroundings and the access and parking arrangements are acceptable.
53. In view of the above, it is considered that the proposal does accord with the provisions of the Development Plan.

## **Recommendation**

54. That planning 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 external walls and roofs have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with approved details.
  3. No development shall take place until details of the treatment of the site boundaries have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Such scheme shall provide for appropriate positions, design, materials and type of boundary features along the northern and western boundaries of the site. The scheme shall be implemented and completed in accordance with the approved details before the building hereby permitted is occupied.
  4. No development shall take place until a scheme of hard and soft landscaping works has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Such scheme shall include details of all hard surfacing treatments and all means of enclosure. Soft landscaping shall include full details of the new planting, including the number, height, type, species and spacing. The approved scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.



5. All new soft landscape works and planting approved under Condition 4 shall be implemented within the first available planting season following completion of the building. Any trees, shrubs or hedges which die, become diseased or damaged, or are removed within five years of initial planting shall be replaced with others of a similar species, size and number in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species
6. No development shall take place until a detailed scheme for the safeguarding of all existing trees has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Such a scheme shall comply with requirements of BS 5837:1991. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
7. No development shall take place until a detailed scheme for the means of vehicular access and means of access for pedestrians/cyclists to the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Such scheme shall provide for improvements to the footways and highway on Knockdown Road, Court Street and Green Lane and the continuation of a footway along the western side of Knockdown Road to the existing footway to the north.
8. The school shall not be occupied until the scheme to be approved under Condition 7 above has been constructed in accordance with the approved plans.
9. No development shall take place until full details of the number and design of the secure cycle racks have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and the facilities shall be provided before the occupation of the development hereby permitted.
10. No development shall take place until full details of agricultural access from Sopworth Road have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details before the occupation of the development hereby permitted.
11. Any facilities for the storage of oils, fuels or chemicals shall be sited on impervious bases and surrounded by impervious bund walls, details of which shall be submitted to the County Planning Authority for approval. The volume of the bunded compound should be at least equivalent to the capacity of the tank plus 10%. If there is multiple tankage, the compound should be at least equivalent to the capacity of the largest tank, or the combined capacity of interconnected tanks, plus 10%; or 25% of the total volume which could be stored at any one time, whichever is the greater. All filling points, vents, gauges and sight glasses must be located within the bund. The drainage system of the bund shall be sealed with no discharge to any watercourse, land or underground strata. Associated pipework should be located above ground, where possible, and protected from accidental damage. All filling points and tank overflow pipe outlets should be detailed to discharge downwards into the bund.

12. 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.
13. There shall be no discharge of foul or contaminated drainage or trade effluent from the site into either groundwater or any surface waters, whether direct or via soakaways.

**GEORGE BATTEN**

Director of Environmental Services

Report Author

**JASON DAY**

Principal Planning Officer (Development Control)

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

Consultation replies and correspondence

**Environmental impact of the Recommendation contained in this Report:**

As set out in the report

**RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES**

**ADOPTED WILTSHIRE STRUCTURE PLAN 2011**

AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

C8 IN AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY, PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED HAVING PARTICULAR REGARD TO THE NATIONAL DESIGNATION OF THEIR LANDSCAPE QUALITY, AND THE NEED TO PROTECT, CONSERVE AND WHERE POSSIBLE ENHANCE BY POSITIVE MEASURES, THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE LANDSCAPE.

IN CONSIDERING PROPOSALS, REGARD SHOULD ALSO BE GIVEN TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF THE AREA.

PROVISION FOR MAJOR INDUSTRIAL OR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD NOT BE MADE UNLESS PROVED TO BE IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST AND INCAPABLE OF BEING ACCOMMODATED OUTSIDE THESE AREAS.

**ADOPTED NORTH WILTSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2001**

AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY  
POLICY RC7

IN AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY, PRIORITY WILL BE GIVEN TO THE CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE LANDSCAPE. DEVELOPMENT WILL BE RESTRICTED TO:

- (a) THE CHANGE OF USE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS; AND/OR
- (b) THAT WHICH IS APPROPRIATE TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF THE AREA; AND/OR
- (c) THAT WHICH IS DESIRABLE FOR THE UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT OF ITS AMENITIES;

AND PROVIDED THE PROPOSAL:

- (i) DOES NOT CAUSE DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE LANDSCAPE, INCLUDING ITS OPEN RURAL CHARACTER, AND ANY RIVERSIDE OR WATER FEATURES, WILDLIFE SITES, TREES OR WOODLAND;
- (ii) IS SO SITED AS TO MINIMISE ITS IMPACT ON THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE AREA AND, WHERE POSSIBLE, IS LOCATED CLOSE TO AND IN ASSOCIATION WITH EXISTING BUILDINGS; AND

(iii) USES APPROPRIATE BUILDING MATERIALS AND LANDSCAPING.

OTHER PROPOSALS, INCLUDING MAJOR INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT, WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THEY ARE IN THE PROVEN NATIONAL INTEREST, AND CANNOT BE ACCOMMODATED OUTSIDE THE AONB.

#### LOCAL FACILITIES IN TOWNS AND VILLAGES POLICY RLF1

WITHIN OR ADJOINING THE FRAMEWORK BOUNDARIES OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, THE PROVISION OF LOCAL COMMUNITY, EDUCATION AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES WILL BE PERMITTED, SUBJECT TO:

1. THERE BEING NO HARM TO THE AMENITIES OF THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE;
2. NO DEMONSTRABLE HARM ON THE ENVIRONMENT;
3. THE PROPOSAL BEING IN SCALE AND HARMONY WITH ADJACENT DEVELOPMENT AND THE CHARACTER, APPEARANCE AND ENVIRONMENT OF THE AREA; AND
4. THE PROPOSALS FOR ACCESS AND PARKING, TOGETHER WITH THE EFFECT ON ANY HIGHWAYS, BEING ACCEPTABLE.

#### DESIGN POLICY RB2

NEW DEVELOPMENT AND ADVERTISEMENTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN OR ENHANCE THE APPEARANCE AND CHARACTER OF SETTLEMENTS. NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD EXHIBIT A GOOD STANDARD OF DESIGN, AND BE IN SCALE AND HARMONY WITH ITS SURROUNDINGS.