

REPORT FOR EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	28 th January 2015
Application Number	15/11169/FUL
Site Address	Land to the South of Ramsbury Primary School Back Lane Ramsbury Wiltshire SN8 2QH
Proposal	Erection of new pre-school building, with outdoor play areas, and associated landscaping.
Applicant	Ramsbury Pre-School
Town/Parish Council	RAMSBURY
Electoral Division	ALDBOURNE AND RAMSBURY – Cllr Sheppard
Grid Ref	427494 171736
Type of application	Full Planning
Case Officer	Ruaridh O'Donoghue

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

This application is brought to committee at the request of Divisional Member, Cllr Sheppard.

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to assess the merits of the proposal against the policies of the development plan and other material considerations and to consider the recommendation that the application be granted planning permission.

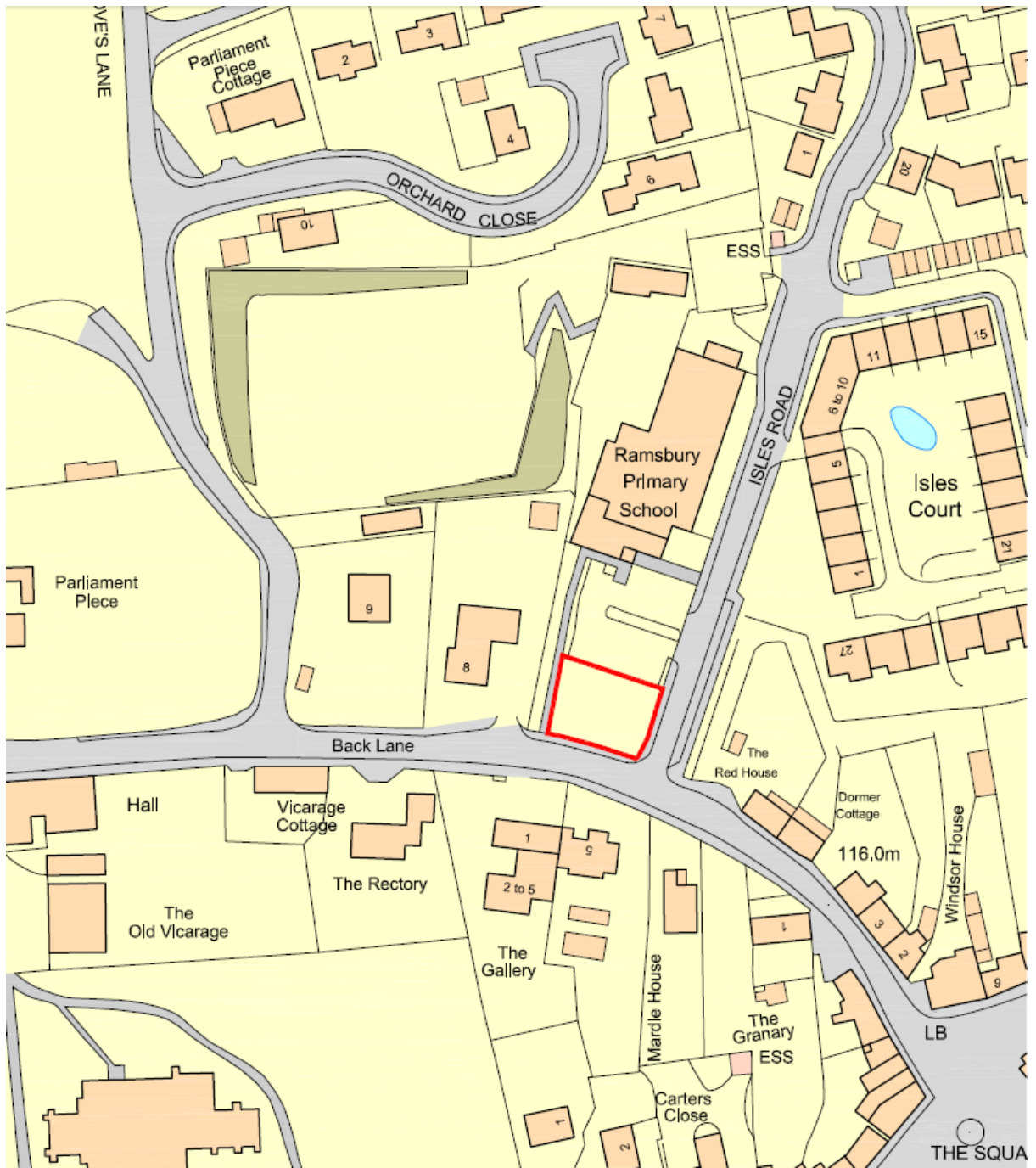
2. Report Summary

The key issues for consideration are the principle of development (whether it is sited in a location supported by national and local planning policy); the design of the building and its impact on the character and appearance of the area, notably, the Ramsbury Conservation Area; the impact upon parking and highway safety and that of neighbour amenity.

3. Site Description

The site is located within the grounds of Ramsbury Primary school located on the corner of Back Lane and Isles Road. The site is located within the Ramsbury Conservation Area. The settlement of Ramsbury is washed over by the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The area proposed for the new building is located forward of the existing school building on an area of grass with mature trees and a well-established hedge set behind a low wall fronting Back Lane.

Below is a map of the location of the site with some photographs.





THE SITE



ISLES ROAD



**EXISTING VEHICULAR ACCESS AND
PARKING AREA**



**VIEW FROM SOUTH EAST TOWARDS
SITE**

4. Planning History

K/84/0919/DP	Two mobile classrooms without toilets
K/86/1237	Erection of new primary school
K/86/1238	Erection of replacement school
E/2012/0289/TCA	The felling of an unspecified tree within the school grounds.
14/10272/PREAPP	Single storey building with associated external space, part covered, to provide a stand-alone pre-school facility.

5. The Proposal

The application proposes the erection of a new pre-school building with outdoor play areas and associated landscaping.

The building will measure approximately 20.5 metres in length, 13 metres in width and 6 metres in height and will be constructed out of timber boarding, facing brickwork and natural slate tiles for the roof.

Access will be via a pedestrian gate accessed off Isles Road.

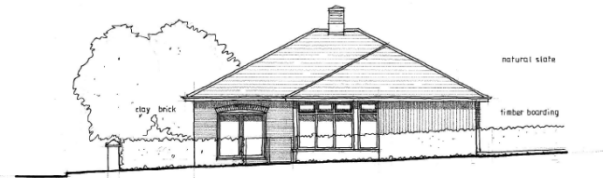
The proposed development will not be served by any designated off road parking spaces however, there is an existing car park serving the primary school which could potentially be utilised. 2 dedicated bicycle stands will serve the development.

The outdoor play space detailed on the ground floor plan will be surrounded by a 1800mm close boarded fence to be stepped down to 1050mm at the south eastern corner of the site.

Below are the elevation drawings and ground floor plan of the development proposal.



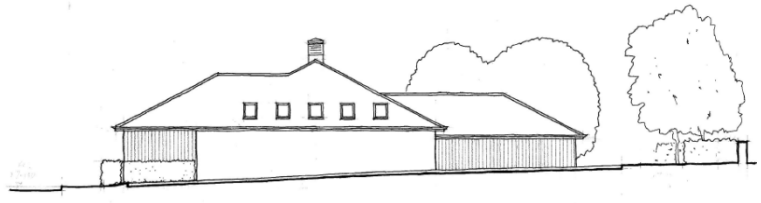
south elevation



east elevation



west elevation



north elevation

Above the various tiers of planning policy and guidance is the over-arching statutory requirement under The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to give **special regard** to the desirability of preserving the character and appearance of the conservation area (s.72).

7. Summary of consultation responses

Wiltshire Council Highways

No objections – Maximum parking standards are in place for new education facilities in schools and therefore, there is no requirement to provide off road parking spaces. This was agreed at pre-application stage subject to a robust travel plan being submitted. A robust travel plan has been submitted.

Wiltshire Council Arboricultural Officer

No objections subject to work being carried out in full accordance with arboricultural report.

Ramsbury Parish Council

This application is controversial mainly because of intractable parking problems. Some residents of Isles Road have expressed concern that the problems will be exacerbated by the addition of a pre-school on the site.

Notwithstanding these concerns, the Parish Council feels that this area, which was designated for a nursery school when the school was built in 1986, has benefits which outweigh these concerns. The site itself is small but in this position the pre-school can benefit from sharing outdoor facilities with the primary school and the children, most of whom will subsequently attend the primary school, will have a seamless transition.

We have recently negotiated a 20mph zone which includes Back Lane and Isles Road and the presence of a building will alert drivers in Back Lane to the proximity of a school-this is not immediately obvious at present -which was a concern expressed in the Parish Council Traffic Plan.

Traffic and parking are an almost universal problem around schools in term time when pupils arrive and leave but many of the children attending pre-school will be siblings of school children so there will be some duplication of transport. If this application is granted the pre-school and the school must address this and engage in parent education and strategies such as a walking bus and encouraging walking to school.

8. Publicity

The application has been advertised by way of a site notice and consultations with the neighbours.

Approximately 28 letters of support have been received. A summary of the points are raised below.

- New building is of good design
- Green space is currently not used for anything / underutilised
- Will increase capacity of Pre-school
- Will allow shared resources between pre and primary school

- It will reduce traffic flows around the village as one destination for kid drop off etc.
- Current facility is too small and does not meet OFSTED requirements.
- It will prevent out commuting to access pre-school facilities

Approximately 6 letters of objection have been received. A summary of the points are raised below.

- Increase in an already traffic congested road
- Comings and goings at different times with the different lengths of day of pre and primary schools
- Parking and traffic issues have been ignored in this application
- Proposal would lead to a decrease in road safety / pedestrian safety
- Building has been 'squashed in' to the front of the school building

9. Planning Considerations

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that the decisions be made in accordance with the development plan. Development that accords with the development plan should be approved without delay (unless material considerations indicate otherwise) – NPPF paragraph 14.

9.1 Principle of Development

The site is located within the Limits of Development of Ramsbury where under Core Policy 2 of the WCS there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. As such, the principle of this development can be considered acceptable subject to conformity with other relevant policies in the development plan.

9.2 Design

The building is of contemporary design whilst reflective of the local vernacular (with brick and slate used and a limited amount of timber). It is a modestly sized building of single storey design thus making sure it will not dominate the streetscene, yet is of a size that allows it to function internally as a pre-school. Furthermore, its modest scale allows an appropriately sized outdoor recreation space to be achieved on the site and ensures that an appropriate level of the existing planting can be retained. The building is also designed so that it addresses both Isles Road and Back Lane – a positive feature that ensures blank elevations do not front the streets and public realm of the Ramsbury Conservation Area. Subject to a condition to control material samples prior to the commencement of development, the design of the scheme is considered to be in general accordance with Core Policy 57 of the WCS.

9.3 Impact upon the AONB

The application site is located within the AONB. However, it is well contained within the built up area of the village and as such, will not have a material impact upon the landscape character and scenic quality of the AONB.

9.4 Impact upon the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

S.72 of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to give special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The part of Back Lane where the application site is located forms a transition zone between the more urban character of the High Street and Oxford Street and the more rural character that is seen further to the west along Back Lane. The area where the pre-school is proposed is currently an open grassed space with several key trees and hedging that contribute to the verdant character of Back Lane and to the setting of the historic buildings that are in close proximity to the site. Buildings in general along Back Lane tend to be set back from the road behind brick walls or hedging save for some key municipal buildings such as the Church Hall which is located hard up to the road. An assessment needs to be undertaken to ensure that this character with the Ramsbury Conservation Area is either preserved or enhanced by the proposed development. In accordance with paragraphs 132-134 of the NPPF any identified harm to this character will need to be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.

The proposed building inevitably results in the loss of this green space to the front of the primary school and will as a result change the character of the area to a degree. However, the design seeks to retain as much of the landscaping to the front of the site as possible (although does result in the loss of 2 trees). This retention helps to preserve some of the verdant character that this site so contributed to. A condition would be required to ensure this landscaping is retained as part of a submitted landscaping scheme to ensure it is not lost during the course of development or in the immediate future. Whilst the development sits in close proximity to the road, it is a non-residential building which, as noted above, would be in conformity with other non-residential buildings in close proximity to the site e.g. the Church Hall.

Whilst clay tiles are common in Ramsbury, the use of slate is not unusual and is often characteristic of school buildings where in historic times, slate would have been more commonly used given the age of construction and the introduction of slate as a building material. The development is reflective of this point and helps in the assessment of its impact upon the character of the area. The building has some benefit in that it helps to screen the car park to the front of the school which, arguably detracts from the appearance of the Conservation Area.

The building will inevitably change the appearance of this part of the Conservation Area through building on the current open space, although an educational building within the confines of an existing primary school is in character with the area.. The points identified above regarding how the scheme has been designed have helped lessen the impact of the development and reduce the impacts to a modest level. On balance, any harm to the visual appearance of the area is, at worst, less than substantial harm to the Ramsbury Conservation Area.

That said, the scheme would present considerable public benefit which in accordance with paragraph 134 of the NPPF must be weighed against this harm. The existing pre-school in Ramsbury is located within the Methodist Church and is having to relocate to meet current OFSTED requirements. Whilst other options have been explored for the

relocation they have not been considered viable and or practical propositions and so this site has been settled upon as the preferential/best location. Officers are inclined to agree with this assessment of alternative sites. If the pre-school was not permitted on this site then there is a good chance the facility would be lost within the village which would be to the detriment of the public who utilise this facility. Its location here, therefore, has public benefit in that it retains the pre-school for the village in a more convenient location where it can take advantage of the existing facilities on offer at the primary school. The benefits identified above are considered to outweigh any limited harm caused. Although not a public benefit of the scheme, in reaching the recommendation to approve the application, some consideration (albeit of limited weight) has been given to the considerable local support for the proposal.

9.5 Parking and Traffic

Education facilities have maximum parking standards and therefore, there is no requirement to provide any off road parking spaces. As such, and in accordance with Core Policy 64 of the WCS and Appendix C of the Local Transport Plan 2011-2016 there is no policy backing to insist upon the provision of any parking spaces. Furthermore, subject to a robust travel plan, the Council's Highways Officer accepts the provision of no off street parking spaces. A travel plan has been submitted that the Council's Highways Officer considers acceptable. This will need to be conditioned to form part of the approved documents to ensure implementation and adherence of it when the development is built and occupied. Therefore, despite the objections raised in relation to parking, a reason for refusal based upon lack of parking could not be justified and/or supported by any local planning policy.

It may well be the case that the pre-school increases to a limited extent the volume of traffic within the vicinity of the application site during school drop-off and collection times. However, it is not considered to be at a level that would give rise to severe harm (the test required by paragraph 32 of the NPPF) to the highways network in the area such that a reason for refusal could be substantiated.

9.6 Neighbour Amenity

The scheme is located a satisfactory distance from any neighbouring properties such that it will not cause any harm by reason of loss of light or privacy. It is noted that the new building will provide an outdoor area where currently there is no formalised play/outdoor amenity space. Although this space is within close proximity to residential properties it will not have any detrimental impacts by reason of noise or disturbance, namely because the site forms part of the existing primary school and in theory could be used at any point for outdoor activities associated with the school. Furthermore, no issues have been raised by third party consults pertaining to these points.

9.7 Impact to Trees

Subject to development being carried out in accordance with the Arboricultural report submitted with the application, there will be no adverse impact to trees (this can be conditioned accordingly). Consideration has been given to the loss of the two trees by the Arboricultural Officer and no objections have been raised.

10. CIL contributions

The development is not CIL liable.

11. Conclusion (The Planning Balance)

The scheme is considered to be of acceptable design having no impacts upon the reasonable living conditions of the adjoining residential properties. The public benefits of the scheme are considered to outweigh any less than substantial harm to the Ramsbury Conservation Area. No harmful impacts have been identified to the AONB and severe harm has not been identified through lack of parking or associated traffic impacts. The proposal is therefore in general accordance with the criteria of the policies of the WCS and central government guidance contained within the NPPF.

Planning law requires applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (NPPF para 11). The proposal does accord with the development plan (the WCS) and no other material considerations have been identified. As such, the application is recommended for approval subject to any of the conditions detailed in this report.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve with conditions

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

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

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

Application Form received 9th November 2015

Location Plan - 150111-01 received 9th November 2015

Fence and Gate Detail - 150111-03 received 9th November 2015

Arboricultural Impact Assessment by SJ Stephens Associates received 9th November 2015

Design Scheme - 150111-02 Rev A received 7th January 2016

Ramsbury Pre-School Travel Plan received 7th January 2016

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

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

REASON: The application contained insufficient information to enable this matter to be considered prior to granting planning permission and the matter is required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order that the development is undertaken in an acceptable manner, in the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area

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

- a) location and current canopy spread of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land;
- b) full details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the
 - a. course of development;
- c) a detailed planting specification showing all plant species, supply and planting sizes
- d) and planting densities;
- e) finished levels and contours;
- f) means of enclosure;
- g) car park layouts;
- h) other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas;
- i) all hard and soft surfacing materials;
- j) minor artefacts and structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse and other
- k) storage units, signs, lighting etc);

REASON: The application contained insufficient information to enable this matter to be considered prior to granting planning permission and the matter is required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order that the development is undertaken in an acceptable manner, to ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development and the protection of existing important landscape features.

5. 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.