SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)

APPENDIX 12:

SITE FEASIBILITY STUDIES

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12.1 Feasibility Building Design & Scoping (Executive Summary):

12.1.1 Introduction

Wiltshire Council has outlined an overall strategy to consolidate three existing special schools in the north of the county, and develop a new circa 350 place SEND Centre of Excellence, by 2023. The school will cater for students with a range of needs, with 70% of pupils with PMLD/SLD. A feasibility study has been undertaken to consider and assesses the viability of the existing Rowdeford School and the adjacent land for the provision of a new circa 350 place special school.

The proposed site is situated on land adjacent to the Rowdeford School, on the A342 St Edith's Marsh, half a mile north of the village of Rowde, in Wiltshire. The site is set on arable agricultural land, with open countryside views to the north, woodland to the east & west, and the existing Rowdeford School to the south.

In late 2018, a team comprising Architects, Town & Country Planners, Ecologists, Transport Consultants, Archaeology & Heritage Consultants, Ecologists and Cost Advisors were appointed to work with the School Project Team to assess the feasibility of developing a 350 place school on the Rowdeford site and the conclusion which is supported by the Council's Planning, Heritage and Highways Officers is that there are no significant obstacles that would otherwise prevent planning permission being obtained to build a new Special School at Rowdeford. That isn't to say that obtaining planning permission won't be a formality. There will still be some challenges to overcome, however the planning risks have all been rated as being medium to low. There are no high risks.

12.1.2 Building and Form

Project Brief

The brief for the project on which the feasibility study was based was:

- To provide a 350-place school for primary, secondary and post 16 aged pupils with special educational needs.
- To provide a school with provision for pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), global delay and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) with associated medical needs and syndromes.
- To ensure that the school provides separate zones for pupils aged 4 11, 11 16 and post 16.
- Facilities for Hydrotherapy and other Therapies is required.
- To consider a landscaping scheme that is sympathetic to the site.
- Vehicular access to the site is to be carefully considered taking into account the pupil needs.
- The existing temporary accommodation at Rowdeford is to be replaced with permanent buildings.

The overarching philosophy is a clear vision that the new school will be a SEND Centre of Excellence and this will be achieved in the following way:

Designing for SEND

The design approach guidelines provided within Building Bulletin 102, which promote inclusive design for SEND schools, have been adopted when considering the requirements for the special school and the feasibility of the site. The design principles considered are outlined below.

- A simple clear layout that is easily understood by all users
- Accessible circulation routes that are wide enough for people using mobility equipment
- Ergonomic details that allow everyone to use them (e.g. door handle size, positioning, colour, etc)
- Means of escape that considers the needs of the user
- Minimised travel distances where possible

Space

- Adequate provision to enable safe vehicular movement
- Adequate clearances around furniture and equipment to allow users
- Provision for additional learning and support spaces
- Storage provision for mobility equipment and specialised teaching equipment

Sensory Awareness

- Appropriate levels of glare-free controllable lighting
- Good quality acoustics, considering the needs of those with sensory impairments and/or communication and interaction needs
- Appropriate levels of stimuli to create a safe and calming environment that avoids sensory overload and anxiety
- Engaging sensory elements that carefully consider the use colour, light, sound, texture and aroma therapy.

Enhancing Learning Environment

- Attractive school environments to promote a sense of belonging and self-worth
- Considered environments that allow children and teachers to be able to communicate clearly
- Accessible workstations with adequate space for learning aids and support staff
- Varied furniture, fittings and equipment that support a wide range of learning and teaching styles

Flexibility and Adaptability

- Rationalising spaces so that their functions can change
- Access to different sized spaces to suit different needs
- Ability to adjust the learning environment locally to support a variety of learning needs (e.g. adjustable lighting)
- Flexible furniture that allows spaces to be rearranged to support different activities or changing needs
- Positioning structural and service elements to support adaptability

Health and Well-being

- Offer suitable thermal comfort, particularly to those who are unable to communicate their needs

- Suitable ventilation to avoid discomfort without introducing draughts
- Measures to minimise disturbance from sudden or background noise
- Accessible and conveniently placed personal care facilities that are sensitively integrated
- Specialist medical and therapy facilities
- Suitable hygiene and infection control measures that offer ease of cleaning and maintenance

Safety and Security

- Good sight lines for passive supervision, particularly where inappropriate behaviour can occur or where activities involve risk
- Zoning to reflect different functions or users
- Minimising the risk of harm, without restricting the development of life skills
- Measures to prevent unauthorised access and exit, without appearing institutional.
- Protect vulnerable children and young people who may be unaware of particular dangers

Sustainability

- Social: having a fully inclusive and cohesive school community, with a positive relationship with the wider community and other services accessing the site
- Economic: achieving value for money based on the whole-life cost of the building
- Environmental: minimising any negative environmental impact and making good use of the site's micro-climate and
 - biodiversity, with efficient use of energy and resources, ensuring the users' needs are not compromised

Building Layout

- Reception/admin and spaces used by visiting staff/parents close to the main entrance
- Large spaces that are likely to be used by the community to be in easy reach but separated from teaching spaces
- Shared medical and therapy rooms that are easy to access for all age groups
- Small group rooms and stores that are close to teaching spaces
- WC areas in small clusters that are evenly distributed to limit travel distances
- Outdoor spaces that are easily reached
- Courtyards/outdoor positioned to provide calm, quiet and protected spaces, with adequate sunlight

School within a School Approach

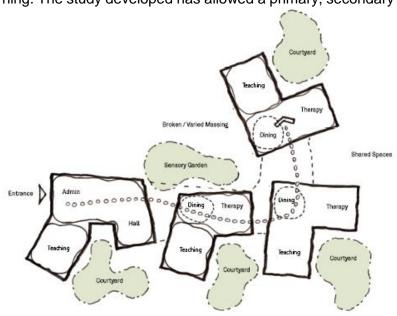
To minimise the scale and impact created by the consolidation of the three special schools, the feasibility study has considered and developed a "School within a School Strategy" which proposes a community of small and intimate teaching clusters offering a range of specialist

teaching spaces, therapeutic support and quiet dining. Each teaching cluster will be laid out to offer generous circulation whilst maximising natural daylighting and ventilation to create an airy feel.

The design will enable children and young people to establish an inner school identity that is secure and familiar and it enables the school the flexibility to manage the range of students needs by their stage of development as opposed to their age, allowing students to achieve their full potential and to make the most of their intellectual ability, focus and skills. The adoption of this strategy is intended to alleviate the concerns of a "super school" whilst offering an exemplar educational environment.

Footprint Architects have tested the site constraints and council's aspirations for an SEND Centre of Excellence, based on the requirements of Building Bulletin 104. The strategy proposes a community of small and intimate learning clusters offering a range of specialist teaching spaces, therapeutic support and quiet dining, as well as direct access to external breakout space and outdoor learning. The study developed has allowed a primary, secondary

and post-16 provision with individual play areas and some shared accommodation, including therapy, administration and cafe/shop, along with adequate parking and a safe pupil drop off. This study has demonstrated that the site has the capacity to accommodate a circa 350 place special school.



"School within a School"

External Breakout Space

A strong connection to the outside will be a key design principle for this project. Current thoughts are that the new building will be single storey allowing each teaching space to have its own external breakout space accessed directly from the classroom. This fully accessible space will allow students the opportunity for outdoor learning and play in a protected setting, with good lines of sight into the classrooms and adequate sunlight.

Initial design themes/concepts to further inform the brief and the design going forward are shown below:









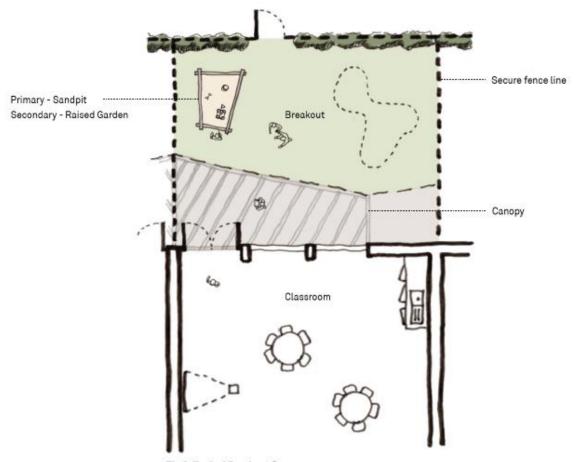
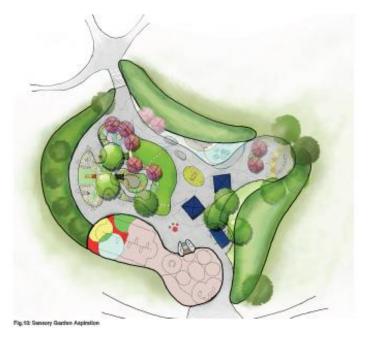


Fig.9: Typical Breakout Space

Sensory Courtyard

The new school will provide multiple opportunities for outdoor learning and play. This could include the provision of a sensory garden or courtyard that will be equally welcoming for the local community to enjoy offering a fully accessible environment with calm, quiet and protected

spaces as well as shaded covered areas for outdoor learning throughout the year. The garden will offer the opportunity for engagement with the wider community through the growing of plants and other outdoor events.







Attractive Circulation

Circulation space within the new school will require as much consideration as the teaching and support spaces. These spaces will have a light an airy feel and will be large enough for pupils using mobility equipment. The circulation will be attractive creating a sense of belonging with engaging sensory elements that carefully consider the use of colour, natural daylight, sound and texture. Zoned adaptable break out spaces will be provided for areas such as soft play, library resources or intimate dining.

Concepts/themes for further consideration are shown below:





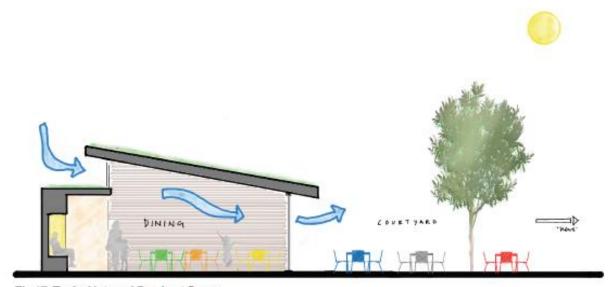


Fig.17: Typical Internal Breakout Space

Site Analysis

A site analysis study has indicated opportunities and constraints with the Rowdeford site, and these are discussed in detail in the feasibility report.



Design Appraisal

An initial design appraisal has been developed in response to the brief and the opportunities and constraints identified in the site analysis study. The layout and massing of the proposed school is based on a single storey offering a sensitive design approach that reflects the scale and form of the surrounding context. This also enables maximum accessibility and the opportunity for direct access to external breakout/play spaces from each classroom. The varied and fragmented massing has been developed around a series of courtyards that reflect the community character of the existing school, ensuring that it is not over dominant or adversely impacts upon the setting of the listed building and mature trees. This in turn provides the "School within a School" Community feel to the site with a series of smaller, welcoming buildings that are appropriate for students with SEND.



In summary, from an Architecture/Build point of view, the feasibility report shows that the Rowdeford site including the adjacent council owned land can accommodate a 350-place school.

12.1.3 Environmental and Planning Constraints

Johns Associates have led the development of the site appraisal regarding environmental and planning constraints, including ecology, archaeology, heritage, transport/access, hydrology, community, noise and landscape. Johns Associates have identified the following constraints and categorised the following risks to development, none of which are categorised as high risk.

Medium Risks:

- Planning: the site is outside of the Rowde settlement boundary and is prominent in local views north and from the AONB. However, development would be considered an extension to the existing Rowdeford School.
- Land Quality: potential loss of good quality agricultural land.
- Heritage: Potential impact upon the Grade II listed Rowdeford House, listed lodge and associated features.
- Community: Community opposition and political sensitivity. However, Rowdeford School currently has strong and proactive relationship with the local community.
- Archaeology: Potential for buried archaeology.
- Hydrology: Position of Flood Zone 2 & 3 within site boundary.
- Ecology: Potential impact upon European Protected Species, Local Wildlife Sites, hedgerows and mature trees.
- Traffic: Capacity of site entrance and potential operational impacts on traffic flow.

Low Risks:

- Air Quality: Potential impact of construction dust upon neighbouring residents/school.
- Noise: Construction and operational impact upon neighbouring residents and the existing Rowdeford School.

Note that further consultation, surveys and assessments will be required at the next stage to further appraise the constraints and identify any mitigation measures required.

12.1.4 Master Programme

The special school feasibility report contains a draft master programme for the project which will be reviewed and updated as the project proceeds. Key dates from the current master programme are summarised in the table below:

RIBA Work Stage	From	То
RIBA Stage O – Strategic Definition (the current stage)	05.12.18	26.07.19
RIBA Stage 1 – Preparation & Brief	29.07.19	11.12.19
RIBA Stage 2 - Concept Design	14.12.19	28.02.20
RIBA Stage 3 – Developed Design	02.03.20	17.07.20
RIBA Stage 4 - Technical Design (including pricing &	20.07.20	23.04.21
award of contract)		
RIBA Stage 5 – Construction Phase	26.04.21	21.04.23
RIBA Stage 6 – Handover & Close Out	24.04.23	22.05.23
RIBA Stage 7 - In Use (Getting the school ready for	22.05.23	03.07.23
operational use)		

12.1.5 Financial

A feasibility cost appraisal based on the initial design response has been carried out identifying a forecast project cost of £25,902,263.00 inclusive of construction costs, fees, equipment and furniture and contingencies.

Description	Predicted Cost			
	Best case	Worst case	Anticipated	
Construction Works Costs:				
New build works	£16,421,400	£16,421,400	£16,421,400	
Refurbishment of existing school accommodation	£1,995,000	£1,995,000	£1,995,000	
External works	£1,285,900	£1,285,900	£1,285,900	
Demolitions & asbestos	£135,000	£135,000	£135,000	
Construction Works Sub-total	£19,837,300	£19,837,300	£19,837,300	
Non-Works:				
Fees	£1,930,863	£1,930,863	£1,930,863	
Fixtures, Fittings, Equipment (including ICT equipment)	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	
Non-Works sub-total	£2,930,863	£2,930,863	£2,930,863	
Risks (contingency pot)				
Statutory External Factors		£2,388,000	£1,742,000	
Non-Statutory External Factors		£385,600	£235,600	
Project Definition		£1,300,000	£660,000	
Design & Technology		£1,068,750	£678,750	
Contractual		£2,523,750	£1,997,500	
Site Conditions		£614,250	£309,250	
Financial & Commercial		£22,500	£22,500	
Contingency sub-total		£8,302,850	£5,645,600	
Risk that can be backed off to contractor			- £2,511,500	
Total Forecast Project Cost	£22,768,163	£31,071,013	£25,902,263	

Cost Notes:

- The new build cost allowance has been benchmarked against new build costs for special schools with a floor area of circa 6,736 sqm and includes for a hydrotherapy pool. As such the £16.4m cost is realistic.
- The refurbishment costs allowance is based on an area of 2,400 sqm and assumes a "medium" level of refurbishment i.e. not a total strip out and start again. Within the refurbishment costs is an allowance for a lift in the existing Rowdeford House to make the building fully accessible and so meet the outline project brief that 70% of pupils at the school are expected to be non-ambulant.
- The external works allowance includes for the creation of new hard and soft play areas, as well as a substantial increase in parking provision to suit a 350-place school. The allowance also includes for drainage works and perimeter fencing.
- It is assumed that a lot of equipment from the schools that are to close will be able to be re-used in the new school, but that invariably new equipment including ICT equipment such as "smart boards", pc's etc will be required, hence an allowance based on c£2.8k per pupil has been factored into the cost plan for this.

- There are a number of temporary buildings serving the current Rowdeford school and the assumption is that there will be removed as part of the works. There is also an assumption that asbestos might be present in the existing school buildings that will need to be removed.
- The project is only at the outline feasibility stage and as such the brief is still to be developed and the design has not been established. Consequently, the reader is presented with three scenarios. The best-case scenario of c£22M assumes no risks will be encountered and as such is unlikely. The worst-case scenario of c£31M assumes accommodates significant risks that we currently feel can be appropriately mitigated for. Hence the likely cost at this feasibility stage is estimated at c£25M.
- As the project proceeds through the various RIBA work stages (Briefing Stage, Concept Design Stage, Detailed Design Stage), the contingency sum will be reviewed with the intent being that at the construction stage of the project. A rigorous change control procedure will be implemented to ensure that we maximise value for money and reduce costs where possible.
- At the end of each stage of the project, the project cost plan will be reviewed to ensure that the overall the project remains within budget before proceeding to the next stage of the project.

Following the conclusion of this piece of work the estates team were also asked to suggest costing for build for 400 pupils. An initial assessment would suggest that this could be afforded at £32m, but further detail will need to be taken forward to clarify this.

12.2 Planning Considerations – Rowdeford site

To address the heritage risks, a Heritage Appraisal study has been undertaken and consultations have taken place with the council's conservation officer to ensure effective early engagement. A full copy of the study is included with the Feasibility Report including the view of the council's conservation officer which is supportive of the development of a special school on the Rowdeford Site. Whilst clearly there are constraints associated with the listed nature of the site, there are also opportunities from a heritage perspective not least the continued upkeep of Rowdeford House and the surrounding landscape. The conservation officer indicates that there are positive parallels with the development of Tedworth House near Tidworth for Help for Heroes and the future proposals for the Rowdeford site. Further work will be required to inform a planning decision from a heritage point of view, but whereas the heritage risk was originally high, it now poses a medium risk which is manageable.

To address the concerns of the Highways Officer, a very detailed Transport Assessment has been carried out including road/traffic surveys and data has been obtained from Rowdeford School as to how current staff and pupil get to school and where they travel from. The Councils' Transport Team has also provided similar data for the other schools that are planned to close to enable a detailed assessment to be made on the impact on the local roads of a 350-place school at Rowdeford. The conclusion is that a right turn lane is not required, a view which has been confirmed by the Highways Officer following his review of the Transport Assessment, a meeting with him to run through the assessment and a meeting on site with him to witness traffic at Rowdeford at the start of the school day. A copy of the Transport Assessment including the supportive views of the Highways Officer can be found in the Feasibility Report. The Highways Officer does require improvement works to be carried out to the entrance to the school site to improve visibility for health and safety reasons and has suggested that the footpath outside the school be improved by way of vegetation clearance works as well as general widening and replacement kerbing works from the school entrance upto the existing 30mph sign on the outskirts of the village so as to provide better pedestrian footpath links to Rowde. The extent of the highway works has not been fully defined yet and as such a financial

allowance has been made in the project risk resister. Despite this and as with Heritage, whereas the transport risk was originally high, it now poses a medium risk to the project which is manageable albeit it could have a cost pressure on the budget depending on the extent of the final works which will only become apparent during the planning pre-application process.

The Transport Assessment considered road safety and whilst the speed limit in around 2010 was reduced along the section of road outside the proposed school from 60mph to 50mph which is deemed to be acceptable, it is thought that the 30mph speed limit through the village should be extended to beyond the school entrance in the interests of road safety. Wiltshire Council Highways has advised that in parallel with the planning application process for the new school, an application for a TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) to reduce the speed limit from 50mph to 30mph could be made, however they have advised that there is no absolute guarantee that the TRO would be approved. This matter will be considered further by the School Project Team as the project proceeds.

Another potential significant risk at the start of the process was linked to Ecology and whilst the site is not covered by any statutory designations, there are two local Wildlife Sites adjacent to the site boundaries. The proposed site is also within 2km of the Roundway Down and Covert Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI). In order to mitigate the ecology risks, and following a consultation with the County Ecologist, an Extended Phase One habitat survey of the site has been carried out. Again, the full results can be found in the Feasibility Report. There is the potential for there being a number of protected wildlife species on the site including Bats, Amphibians (including Great Crested Newts), Badgers, Dormouse, Birds (Barn Owls have been recorded on the site) and Reptiles – these are all manageable from a development point of view, though it is recommended that further survey work is planned to be carried out almost immediately to avoid the risk of delays to the project. What is meant by this is that depending on the species of wildlife, surveys can only be carried out in certain times of the year and if these periods are missed, there is a risk that the project might have to be put on hold until the next survey season comes around. That said, the risks associated with Ecology have been assessed as being medium and are manageable.

The Feasibility Report has also considered other environmental factors that could impact on the ability to secure planning to develop the Rowdeford site and the conclusion is that these risks are all low or medium and again are all manageable. These other environmental factors are:

Air Quality; Community; Archaeology; Land Quality; Landscape; Noise & Hydrology

The feasibility report includes a risk table which is extracted below for information. This would be incorporated into a project wide risk register on approval to proceed to the next stage of the project (RIBA Stage One – Preparation and Brief).

Project Feasibility Planning Risk Factors

Discipline	Sources of Potential Departure from Policy	Mitigation as outlined	Project Feasibility Risk Category
Planning Policy	The proposal site lies outside the settlement boundary of Rowde. The development would be considered an extension to the existing Rowdeford School, this is material in	guidance stated within this	MEDIUM

Discipline	Sources of Potential Departure from Policy	Mitigation as outlined	Project Feasibility Risk Category
	any planning consideration and could justify departure from policy. The site has a number of planning constraints, heritage, highways, landscape, ecology and flooding. In consultation with Wiltshire Council and by virtue of reports instructed for this feasibility, the policies can be addressed providing that appropriate mitigation is designed into any proposal with achievable timescales for delivery.		
Air Quality	Construction dust and particulate impact on adjacent school and nearby properties	Construction Dust Management Plan	LOW
Community	Community opposition to principle of new special school on this site. Political sensitivity.	Early stage consultation Community engagement	MEDIUM
Ecology		Further survey work to be carry out within optimal timescales informing necessary mitigation for the following species: Bats — Potential roosts /foraging and commuting. Records on main school site Amphibians (including Great Crested Newts) — Ponds off site within 500 metres Badgers - Two Setts found along the western boundary (one main and one outlier) Dormice — Potential on site and record of species within 2km radius of the site	

Discipline	Sources of Potential Departure from Policy	Mitigation as outlined	Project Feasibility Risk Category
		Birds – Barn Owls recorded on site (WSBRC) Reptiles – some potential Mitigation to be imbedded within any development proposal. Protection of hedgerows and mature trees through sensitive design and fencing during construction	
Heritage	Impact on setting of Grade II Listed Rowdeford House Impact on setting of Grade II Listed Lodge and Gate piers Opportunities for re- use of existing listed building. Direct impacts.	Full settings assessment including a study area walk over to inform the detailed development of the proposals, in order to ensure that the development does not affect the settings and harm the significance of the heritage assets. Enabling re-use of a heritage asset and securing its future Consultation with Heritage England (HE) Design and siting sensitive to setting of heritage assets	
Archaeology	Potential for buried archaeology	Desk Based Assessment (DBA) Further fieldwork evaluation in the form of a geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation.	
Land Quality	Potential loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (BMV)	Soil testing on site to confirm whether site is to be categorised (BMV)	MEDIUM
Landscape	Impact on countryside to the north. Views from the AONB into the development site.	Assessment Site design Advance/integrated scheme planting	
Noise	Construction impacts on existing school and adjacent residents Operational noise from school development	Construction Environmental Management Plan Consultation with adjacent residents	LOW

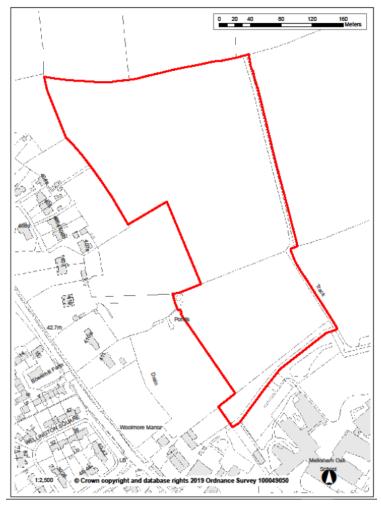
Discipline	Sources of Potential Departure from Policy	Mitigation as outlined	Project Feasibility Risk Category
Traffic/Access	' '	Continued consultation with Local Highway Authority Potential legal agreement for off-site highway mitigation Full Transport Assessment and travel plan The proposal would be seen as an extension to an existing facility.	
Hydrology	Part of the site in Flood Zone	Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)	MEDIUM

12.3 Review of Melksham sites

There are just two potential sites in Melksham identified as council owned and of sufficient size to accommodate a new special school (based on the Department of Education's 'Area guidelines for SEND and alternative provision including Special Schools, alternative provision, specially resourced provision and units' (Buildings Bulletin 104 December 2015)

The first site is Land at Woolmore Farm, Bowerhill SN12 6QZ

Location Plan – Site Extent Subject to Survey (Not to Scale)



The site area (7.90ha) is larger than required to position a new Special School. However, the site has the following constraints which make it not suitable for the development of a new special school:

- 1. Planning Permission 17/01699/FUL was granted on 28 April 2017 for a change in the use of this site from agricultural land to public open space.
- Planning Application W/07/09007/WCC for the 'Construction of a replacement George Ward School for 1350 including sligua associated playing fields, site access and parking areas and off-site highways works' was subject to Section the attached Agreement. Paragraph 3.1 of

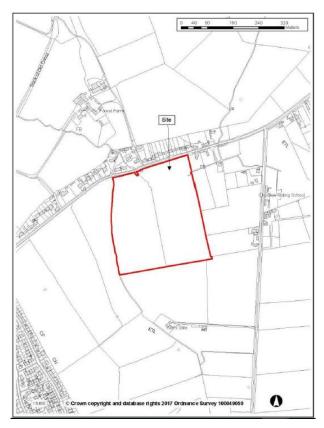
Schedule 2 states: 'The County Council shall ensure that the Fields are kept in agricultural use until such time as the County Council and the District Council agree in writing that they consider

the Fields are no longer capable of viable economic use and upon such agreement the County Council shall forthwith dedicate the Fields as Public Open Space in perpetuity'.

- 3. The current access to this site is via Woolmore Farm (which has been sold by Wiltshire Council) is for maintenance of the public open space only.
- 4. The planning consent for the adjacent residential development was subject to a 'Compensatory Offsite Ecology Contribution' which related in part to this site.
- 5. If access is sought from the adjacent residential development land, once the new residential distributor road has been built, it would be subject to negotiation with the owners of that land. Similarly, negotiated agreements regarding drainage and utilities may also be required.
- 6. A Conservation Appraisal would be required to assess the impact on the adjoining Woolmore Manor, which is a listed building.

Consideration was also given to land at Forest Farm (Woodrow Road SN12 7RE); this was discounted by the Planning Officer as being suitable for provision of a new school (without prejudice to consideration of a formal planning application) due to the results of a preapplication enquiry.

Location Plan – Site Extent Subject to Survey (Not to Scale)



Pre-Planning Application Advice summary:

- The site is outside the settlement boundary defined in the Wiltshire Core Strategy and there is effectively a presumption against development; in contrast, the National Planning Policy Framework attaches 'great weight' to the need to create new schools.
- Most the site is within Environment Agency Flood Zones 2 and 3. A sequential test will be required; this will not permit development should other sites be available with a lower flood risk.
- The Highways Engineer considers the site to be unsuitable to accommodate a school for 350 pupils.
- The Conservation Officer objects due to proximity to listed buildings and nondesignated heritage assets.
- A proportionate archaeological assessment will probably be required.
- An ecological survey will be required.

26 February 2019

Rupert Williams, Strategic Asset & Facilities Management

Housing & Commercial Development, Wiltshire Council, Trowbridge BA14 8JN