

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	21 July 2010		
Application Number	W/10/01560/REG3		
Site Address	George Ward School Shurnhold Melksham Wiltshire SN12 8DQ		
Proposal	Change of use to offices for a period of 3 years, and associated works		
Applicant	Wiltshire Council		
Town/Parish Council	Melksham (Town)		
Electoral Division	Melksham North	Unitary Member:	Rod Eaton
Grid Ref	389634 164842		
Type of application	Reg 3 Application		
Case Officer	Mr Michael Kilmister	01225 770344 Ext 5228 michael.kilmister@wiltshire.gov.uk	

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

This application is submitted by Wiltshire Council under Regulation 3 of The Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992. Under the Council's adopted Scheme of Delegation Specific to Planning, significant infrastructure applications by Wiltshire Council that exceeds 0.5Ha in site area must be dealt with by the Strategic Planning Committee.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the above application and to recommend that planning permission be granted subject to conditions being attached.

2. Main Issues

The main issues to consider are:

- * Principle of development
- * Impact on residential amenity
- * Impact of the character and appearance of the area
- * Impact on the highway network
- * Ecological impact

3. Site Description

The site is located on the western side of the town of Melksham between Melksham and Shaw. It is located to the south of Dunch Lane on an area currently occupied by a variety of different educational buildings, a caretaker's house, a multi-use games area (MUGA) and playing fields with tennis courts. The school buildings comprise of the following:

Block 1 – 1970's steel framed 2-storey building of circa 700 sq m footprint

Block 2 – 1970's steel framed 1 and 2 storey building of circa 1,330 sq m footprint

Block 3 – 1950's masonry and concrete framed 1 and 2 storey building with associated Sports Hall, Gym and 1980's extension all of circa 5,000 sq m footprint

Block 4 – 1970's steel framed single storey building of circa 1,600 sq m footprint

Block 5 – 2005 refurbished and extended single storey building of circa 668 sq m footprint.

The site area is 72,139 sq m (7.2 hectares)

The existing school currently has 144 designated parking spaces around the school. Vehicular access is gained from Bath Road

Site location plans and site layout comprise Appendix I and II

4. Relevant Planning History

07/02806/OUT - Outline application for up to 270 dwellings including playfields, car park and changing facilities – Allowed on appeal 26.8.08

5. Proposal

The proposal is for the change of use to offices for a period of three years.

The proposals include demolition of two school blocks, alteration of three blocks to provide office space, and the provision of additional car-parking spaces. A total of 6998 m² of B1(a) office space would be provided, to accommodate 600 full-time employees. The site currently has parking for 144 cars, and the proposals would involve provision of an additional 238 spaces, to give a total of 382 spaces. The area currently occupied by an astro pitch would be hoarded and used for storage of demolition material, whilst the area currently used as tennis courts would become a 'hard-standing' area. The proposals only apply to the southern area of the school site, and do not affect the existing playing fields.

There will be also the inclusion of low level and additional security lighting within the car park.

Within the site there will be for the provision for the duration of the use 2 additional bus stops with raised kerbs and one will provide a central shelter.

Also the following associated works would also be included

Blocks 1 and 2 would both be demolished as they internally have various asbestos containing materials within them.

The asbestos containing materials would be removed from site to a designated waste facility. The hardcore material would be re-used to provide a base for some car park areas and the surplus will be maintained on site in a hoarded area to be used by the housing developer later.

Block 2 will have a roof mounted solar panel which is proposed to provide solar hot water heating for the kitchen.

Block 3 will have Air Source Heat pumps located externally to provide additional heating to larger areas (open plan gymnasium, sports hall and assembly hall). There will also be the installation of three new windows on the ground floor east elevation and two new windows on the ground floor of the northern elevation

The external doors into blocks 2, 3 and 5 will require modest alterations to ensure accessibility.

Some grass areas will be removed to provide parking and/or safe traffic circulation.

6. Planning Policy

National Guidance

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PPS9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
PPG17 Transport
PPS22 Renewable Energy

Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016

DP5 Town Centres, District Centres and Employment Areas

West Wiltshire District Plan First Alteration (June 2004)

E4 Premises outside Employment Policy Areas
T10 Car Parking

C31A Design
C32 Landscaping
C33 Recycling
C34 Renewable Energy
C35 Light pollution

The West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation DPD (adopted January 2009)

LP1 Protection and enhancement of existing open space or sport and recreation provision.
LP2 Proposals that involve the loss of open space or sport and recreation provision

Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy (adopted 2009)

WCS6 Waste Reduction and Auditing

7. Consultations

Town Council – Whilst Melksham Town Council had no objection to this application they asked that materials for the developer are not stored on the MUGA/Astro Turf area, and asked that this area is retained for community use with maintenance and booking arrangements co-ordinated by Wiltshire Council for the next 3 years.

With regard to the impact on surrounding roads the Town Council asked:

The footpaths to the rear of the school are blocked off to stop staff parking in the nearby residential area and walking in.

Staff be encouraged not to use Dunch Lane as a cut through to gain access to the site.

The Town Council wish to be consulted on the Green Travel plan, along with Melksham Without Parish Council with regard to the impact of additional traffic on surrounding roads.

What transport will be provided to allow those staff without transport to gain access to the town centre during office hours?

If working hours could be staggered during peak times to relieve the impact on extra cars on nearby roads?

Highway - Recommend that no highway objection is raised, subject to planning conditions.

Spatial Planning – No policy objection

Strategic Landscape Officer – no objection

Environmental Protection – No objections, subject to planning conditions

Building Control – The demolition should be the subject of a demolition notice under section 80 of the Building Act.

Ecology - No objection, subject to planning conditions

Minerals and Waste Policy – Awaiting comments regarding waste and recycling matters.

Police Liaison Officer – No objection as the applicant has taken on board all issues of concern at the pre-app stage.

8. Publicity

The application was advertised by site notice/press notice /neighbour notification.

Expiry date: 18th June 2010 and 7th July for site notices

Four letters of concern have been received and points raised

Will not affect the right of access to the rear of my property
Travel element not properly thought through
Large number of employees will need to park their car at George Ward School
Traffic chaos
Parking chaos
Any traffic control going in and out of building

One letter of support has been received and points raised

very good use of existing infrastructure
excellent location for provision of all council services.

9. Planning Considerations

9.1 Principle of development

The existing George Ward school site is redundant as an educational facility as a new school has been built and is being occupied at Woolmore Farm, Bowerhill.

The site currently has planning permission for 270 dwellings (07/02806/OUT and 08/00024/REF). This permission is due to expire on 4 February 2011. The 2007 application for housing development was refused by planning committee, contrary to officer recommendation, and permission was granted on appeal. The planning policy response to the 2007 housing application stated that the application was acceptable in policy terms.

The site is located within the Town Policy Limits and is very well related to the established boundary of the town. There will be no encroachment of development beyond the existing school. The site is considered to be previously developed land occupied by the school buildings and associated structures. The principle of employment development on the site is therefore, acceptable and complies with Policy E4 of the District Plan and PPS 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth .

The current planning application does not affect the existing playing fields on the northern section of the school site (to the south of Dunch Lane) but does involve the loss of the astro pitch and tennis courts. The policy response to the previous permission noted that "loss of playing fields can be acceptable if one of the tests in policy can be satisfied", with "the replacement of playing fields lost" being one way of satisfying policy. The Leisure and Recreation DPD has since been adopted, thus changing the policy context.

It is considered that the principle of development on the site, and of the relocation of the astro pitch and tennis courts to the Woolmore farm site, has already been established through the granting of outline permission for 270 dwellings in 2008. There is therefore no policy objection to the loss of the astro pitch and tennis courts.

9.2 Design and Visual impact

The existing school premises date from the 1950s and 60s and are of utilitarian design and appearance. Development on the site is limited to the demolition of the two school blocks (blocks 1 and 4) to provide additional parking. Essentially the built form is that which is in existence at the present time with the addition of windows being inserted into block 3 for light. The visual impact of the occupiers of adjoining properties on Addison Road and parts of Roundponds would be greatly improved, with the removal of blocks 1 and 4.

9.3 Highway Safety

The Highways Officer has confirmed that no objection be raised subject to the imposition of conditions that seek to obtain further information, namely a travel plan and excess parking space arrangements.

9.4 Ecology and Landscaping

The proposal is unlikely to have any adverse impact on protected species but a condition will need to be attached for a construction method statement to be submitted in relation to the demolition of the buildings.

Any landscape effects on this temporary permission are short term to warrant any mitigation e.g tree planting.

9.5 Renewable energy

There is a clear national planning policy framework for supporting such development (as set out in PPS1 and PPS12). At the local level, policy RE1 of the Structure Plan and policy C34 of the District Plan are both supportive of renewable energy development "in appropriate locations". These policies will be applicable here assuming that Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) can be loosely included within the definition of a 'renewable energy' technology. Policy C34 emphasises the need to consider the impacts of the proposed renewable energy development, and visual impact and potential noise generation may be particular issues in this case.

With regards to visual impact, the proposals are that the ASHPs will adjoin an existing structure, and it is therefore considered that visual impact is likely to be small.

With regards to potential noise impacts, further detailing is required and a condition has been attached. There is no policy objection.

The applicants have also included solar panels on the site and a condition has been attached seeking further details.

9.6 Other matters

Environmental Protection have commented that a B1 use is suitable for any residential area and therefore have no objection subject to planning conditions requesting further details on lighting (light spillage and glare) on the site and details on the Air Source Heat Pumps to include noise data and siting.

The Police Liaison Officer has commented that the agents' acting on behalf of the applicants has taken on board all comments made at the pre-application stage.

Waste and Minerals policy comments will be reported at committee regarding recycling and waste on the site.

The development proposed complies with policy and is therefore recommended for permission subject to appropriate planning conditions.

Recommendation: Permission

For the following reason(s):

The proposed development conforms to the Development Plan and there are no objections to it on planning grounds.

- 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 approved shall not be occupied until a Green Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Travel Plan shall include details of implementation and monitoring and shall be implemented in accordance with these agreed details. The results of the implementation and monitoring shall be made available to the Local Planning Authority on request, together with any changes to the plan arising from those results.

REASON: In the interests of road safety and reducing vehicular traffic to the development.

Wiltshire & Swindon Structure Plan 2006 - POLICY: DP1

- 3 No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied until the internal access, turning areas and parking spaces have been completed in accordance with the details shown on the approved plans. The areas shall be maintained for those purposes at all times thereafter.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety.

West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration 2004 - POLICY: C31a

- 4 No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied until the overspill car parking space together with a vehicular access thereto has been provided in accordance with details submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said space shall not be used other than for the parking of vehicles or for the purpose of access.

REASON: To ensure that adequate provision is made for parking within the site in the interests of highway safety.

West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration 2004 – POLICY: T10

- 5 No development shall commence on site (including any works of demolition), until a Construction Method Statement which shall include details of how demolition will be undertaken and what provision will be made to protect bats should they be discovered in any parts of these two buildings has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with the approved construction method statement without the prior written permission of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To minimise the detrimental effects to the neighbouring amenities and the natural environment.

PPS9 and West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration 2004 – POLICY: C38

- 6 No external lighting shall be installed on site until plans showing the type of light appliance, the height and position of fitting, illumination levels and light spillage have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The lighting approved shall be installed and shall be maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of the amenities of the area and to minimise unnecessary light spillage above and outside the development site.

West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration 2004 - POLICY: C35 and C38

- 7 Prior to the occupation of the site full details of the Air Source Heat Pumps which shall include noise data shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved measures shall be implemented and brought into operation in accordance with the approved scheme and thereafter retained.

REASON: In the interests of the conservation of energy resources

West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration 2004 – POLICY: C34

- 8 Prior to the occupation of the site full details of the solar panels including location shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.

West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration 2004 – POLICY: C31a and C34

- 9 No part of the development shall be brought into use until details of the stopping up of the existing pedestrian access from Addison Road on to the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. That stopping up shall take place in accordance with the approved details within one month of the first occupation of the development. No later than one month after the first occupation of the development, the sole means of pedestrian access to the development shall be as shown on the plans hereby approved.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety.

West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration 2004 - POLICY: C31a

- 10 Prior to the occupation of the development hereby approved details of the bus stop/shelter shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.

West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration 2004 – POLICY: C31a

Appendices:	
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	

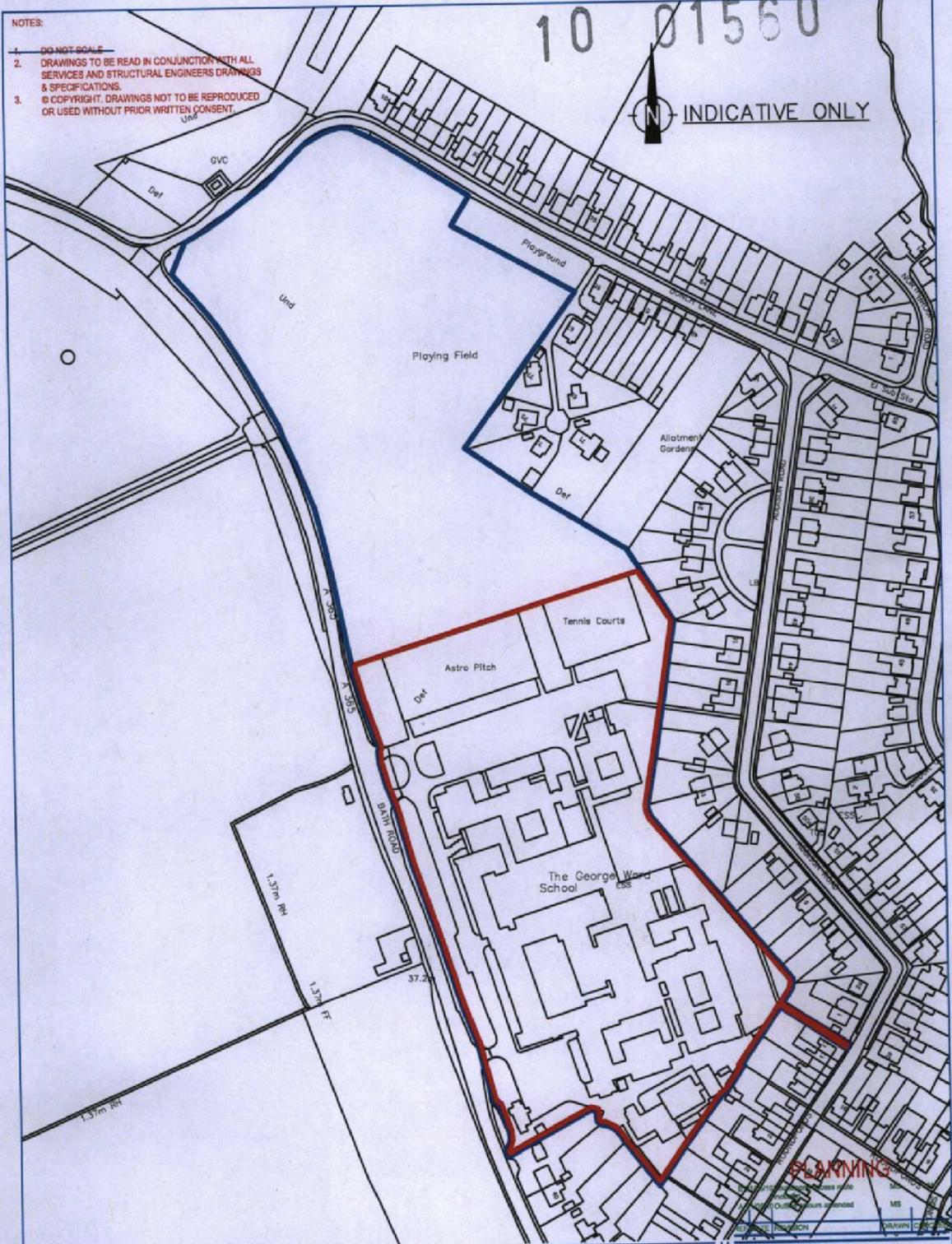
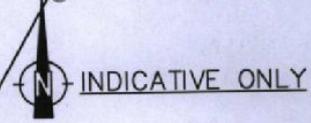
RELEVANT APPLICATION PLANS

Drawing : 100204-A-02 REV B
Drawing : 100204-A-022
Drawing : 100204-A-021 REV A
Drawing : 100204-E001 REV B
Drawing : 100204-A-100 REV B

NOTES:

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DRAWING Site Plan	PROJECT George Ward School, Melksham Proposed Decant	SCALE 1:2500	DATE May 2010	DRAWN BY MS	CHECKED BY JW
	CLIENT Wiltshire Council	DRG NO 100204-A-100			REV B
		FILE REFERENCE:			
		AREF FILE REFERENCE:			
		RIDGE			
		EDEN OFFICE PARK 85 MACRAE ROAD HAM GREEN BRISTOL, BS20 0DD Also at Oxford, Reading, London and Luton		TEL: 01275 813500 FAX: 01993 815003 www.ridge.co.uk	