

**For: PLANNING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE – 28 MAY 2012**

**By: DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY (GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE)**

**Development Proposed:**

**Retention and continued use of two modular building units (ref T1) as a children's centre base office and (ref T2) as a classroom, for a further period of five years.**

**Division Affected:** Chalgrove

**Contact Officer:** Naomi Woodcock **Tel:** Oxford 815708

**Location:** Great Milton CE Primary School, The Green, Great Milton, Oxford, OX44 7NT.

**Application No:** R3.0047/12

**District Council Area:** South Oxfordshire

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**Recommendation**

The report recommends that the planning application be approved subject to conditions (see paragraph 38).

## **Part 1 - Facts and background**

### **Location (see site plan)**

1. The village of Great Milton is located 2 miles (4 kilometres)<sup>1</sup> south of junction 8a of the M40.
2. Great Milton CE Primary School is situated at the northern end of the village just off The Green.
3. The school site lies within the Green Belt. Great Milton Conservation Area abuts the school's southern and western site boundaries.

### **Site and Setting (see site plan)**

4. The school site is bounded by allotment gardens to the north, a woodland area to the east, a playground to the south and residential dwellings to the west.
5. The temporary buildings are situated next to each other close to the northern site boundary and north of the main school building.
6. Vehicular and pedestrian access is from the western end of the school site from the street known as The Green.
7. The nearest dwellings to the temporary buildings lie 75 metres to the west on Lower End.
8. Views of the temporary buildings are screened from the nearest residential dwellings by a 2.5 metre high timber fence which runs along the western site boundary and by trees located on either side of the school's western site boundary. Views from the north (from the allotments) are partially screened by three large trees and a 2 metre high hedge.
9. The buildings are of a standard pre-fabricated functional design with a mineral felt flat roof, textured painted plywood walls and upvc windows.

### **Background and Details of the Development**

10. In August 2010<sup>2</sup> the County Council approved a planning proposal for Apermanent children's centre building and replacement of the temporary classroom buildings with permanent accommodation.
11. Funding for the permanent buildings has not been forthcoming. As a result the school's accommodation has been re-arranged to accommodate the children's centre in one of the existing temporary buildings. Planning permission is now sought to retain the temporary buildings on site for a further period of 5 years.

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<sup>1</sup> All distances are approximate.

<sup>2</sup> Application No: R3.0188/09

12. The applicant explains that the temporary children's centre is required to ensure that families with children under 5 (within the Great Milton Children's Centre catchment<sup>3</sup>) can continue to receive integrated information and services<sup>4</sup>. Current legislation<sup>5</sup> places a duty on local authorities to establish and run children's centres.
13. The temporary classroom for the school is needed because there is insufficient space within the main school buildings to accommodate the school's current and forecasted pupil population.
14. The applicant states that they are in sound condition and suitable for use for another 5 years.
15. No alterations are proposed to the buildings. No changes are anticipated to staff or pupil numbers as a result of this proposal.

## **Part 2 – Other viewpoints**

### **Representations**

16. One letter of support and one letter of objection have been received. Copies of the letters are available in the Members' Resource Centre. The key points made are:

In support of the application:

- the buildings provide necessary accommodation for school children.

Points made against the application:

- the existing parking for the school is insufficient;
- the proposal should be for replacement classrooms only; and
- the buildings are old and ideally should be replaced.

### **Consultations**

17. South Oxfordshire District Council – No objection.

Great Milton Parish Council – No objection.

Oxford Green Belt Network – No objection.

English Heritage – No comment.

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<sup>3</sup> Catchment: Great Milton, Garsington, Wheatley, Forest Hill and Holton.

<sup>4</sup> Services and information include: child and family health services, links on access to work and stay and play sessions.

<sup>5</sup> The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children's and Learning Act 2009

Transport Development Control – No objection. Travel options for parents and children travelling to and from the school site are very limited. Suggest that the children's centre develops a travel plan and that the school travel plan is updated to alleviate any problems that travel to school might be causing the local community.

### **Part 3 – Relevant planning documents**

#### **Relevant planning documents and legislation (see Policy Annex to the committee papers)**

18. Planning applications should be decided in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
19. The relevant development plan documents are:
  - The South East Plan (SEP) 2026, relevant policies: - CO4, S3.
  - The South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) 2011, relevant policies: - CF1, CON7, GB4, T1, T2.
20. The SEP forms part of the development plan. However, the government has made it clear that it intends to abolish regional strategies. The Localism Act enables the Secretary of State to revoke the whole or any part of a regional strategy by order. Whilst no such order had been made at the date this report was drafted, the published intention to revoke is a material consideration to which substantial weight should be given.
21. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 is a material consideration to the consideration of this proposal.

### **Part 4 - Assessment and conclusions**

#### **Comments of the Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth & Infrastructure)**

22. The matters that need to be considered in deciding if planning permission should be granted are Green Belt, need for the accommodation and impacts on residents and surroundings
  - (i) **Need and Green Belt:**
23. The proposal is to continue the use of two temporary class rooms for a further 5 years. Although temporary, the development is not consistent with Green Belt objectives as expressed in Policy GB2 of the SOLP2011 because it is built development which obstructs the openness of the Green Belt. The Committee must be satisfied that there are very special circumstances to justify overriding normal Green Belt policy.

24. Current legislation places a duty on local authorities to establish and run children's centres. The intention had been to provide a new purpose built children's centre on the school site (Item PN5 to the 27 July 2010 Planning and Regulation Committee refers) but funding for this was withdrawn. Instead the children's centre was established in the temporary building. An extension of time would enable it to continue to provide a satellite for integrated services and information for families in Great Milton, Garsington, Wheatley, Forest Hill and Holton.
25. The second building is required to enable the school to continue to accommodate the children on the school roll.
26. Meeting community needs locally is supported by policy SE3 of the SEP2026 and policy CF1 of the SOLP2011.
27. The Oxford Green Belt Network and South Oxfordshire District Council do not object to the renewal of the temporary buildings.
28. The buildings remain in reasonable condition. They are well screened from the wider landscape so their impact on the openness, rural character and the visual amenity of the Green Belt is limited. Because these buildings are (and any consent would be) temporary, any adverse impact would remain for the short term only.

**(ii) Impact on local residents and the surroundings:**

29. Policy G6 of the SOLP seeks to ensure that development is of a high quality and inclusive design and of a scale or type which is appropriate to the site and its surroundings. Policy CON7 of the SOLP2011 seeks to ensure that developments located outside of a conservation area do not have a harmful effect on that conservation area.
30. One local resident opposes the proposal on the grounds that the temporary buildings are old and should be replaced. He also recognises that they provide necessary accommodation for (including his own) school children. Another local resident comments that the proposal should be for replacement classrooms only.
31. The nearest residents live 75 metres from the proposed site for the temporary buildings. There is a good screen of trees between the houses and the temporary buildings. They are in a sound state of repair and have a reasonable external appearance. Whilst the buildings are not ideal in terms of their design quality, there is no prospect of replacement permanent accommodation at this time. The actual impact on residents is limited. Similarly the impact on the open countryside and the allotments to the north is limited because of the existing screening around the school site.
32. The buildings are tucked away to the rear (north) of the existing school and do not relate to the conservation area which lies to the west and south. They do not have an adverse impact on the Great Milton Conservation Area.

33. One local resident objects to the proposal because of parking and traffic.
34. Policy T1 of the SOLP 2011 seeks to ensure that the new development is served by an adequate road network which can accommodate traffic without creating traffic hazards. Policy T2 of the SOLP2011 requires planning proposals to put measures in place to reduce the need for vehicle parking where appropriate.
35. The concern about traffic and parking is often expressed about schools and related uses. In this instance traffic and parking would continue as they are now. Transport Development Control has indicated that the children's centre should produce a travel plan of its own. The school have an existing travel plan and Transport Development Control suggest that it would help to alleviate that problem if the travel plan is updated. I recommend a travel plan informative to encourage the school and children's centre to better manage traffic and parking around the site and promote sustainable travel to and from the school site.

### **Conclusion**

36. Retention of the temporary buildings would enable the children's centre to continue to provide integrated services and information for families within the catchment and enable the primary school to continue to accommodate the current and forecasted pupil population.
37. Although located in the Green Belt, I believe that the need to continue to provide services amounts to very special circumstances which justifies overriding Green Belt policy on this occasion.

### **Recommendation**

38. **It is RECOMMENDED that Application No. R3.0144/11 be approved subject to conditions to be determined by the Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth & Infrastructure) to include the following matters:**
  1. **The development must be carried out strictly in accordance with the plans and drawings submitted with the application.**
  2. **Temporary buildings to be removed by 31 May 2017.**

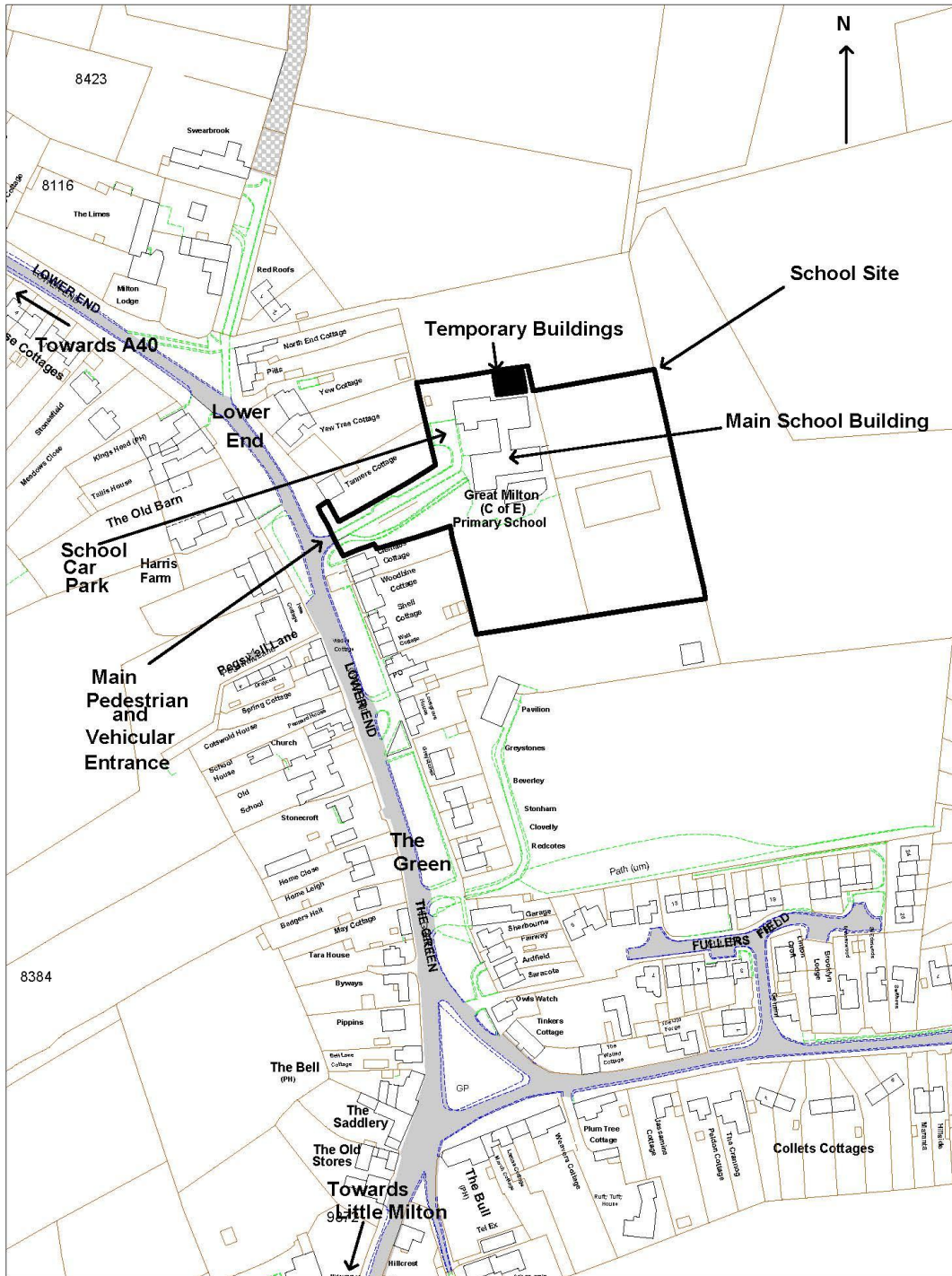
### **Travel Plan Informative:**

**Encourage provision of a new travel plan for the children's centre and update existing school travel plan.**

MARTIN TUGWELL

Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth & Infrastructure)

May 2012



This plan shows only an indication of the proposed development and should not be scaled from.