

For: PLANNING & REGULATION COMMITTEE – 2 DECEMBER 2013

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

Development Proposed:

Application to consolidate the existing school facilities for the current pupils: The permanent retention of the existing modular buildings, erection of an additional building to allow the existing old school room to be used as an assembly hall, construction of a multi use games area, reorganisation of existing hard play area to allow for staff parking on the site, and the erection of a polytunnel.

Division Affected: Thame and Chinnor

Contact Officer: Kevin Broughton **Tel:** 01865 815272

Location: Aston Rowant C Of E Primary School, School Lane, Aston Rowant, Watlington, Oxfordshire, OX49 5SU

Applicant: Oxfordshire County Council

Application No: R3.0110/13 **District ref no:** P13/S2639/CC

Application Received: 1st August 2013

Consultation period: 15th August - 16th September and 21st October - 11th November

District Council Area: South Oxfordshire

CONTENTS

- Part 1 - Facts and background
- Part 2 - Other viewpoints
- Part 3 - Relevant planning documents
- Part 4 - Analysis and Conclusions.

Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions.

Part 1 - Facts and background

Site and Setting (see plan 1)

1. Aston Rowant is a village that lies about 2km (about a mile and a quarter) south east of Chinnor.
2. The School is on the north eastern edge of the village within the Aston Rowant Conservation Area. It is bounded by houses to the west. To the south is a School lane which gives access to the school site and is also a footpath that leads through to Kingston Blount. South of School Lane there is a row of trees and then beyond that the residential road, Plowden Park.
3. To the north and east of the school lie open fields.
4. The School is very unusual in that it is almost split in two by the Old School House which is now in private ownership. Most of the classrooms are to the east of the old school house in modular buildings currently with temporary planning permission. The original school building to the west houses the Headteacher's office, one classroom and the rest of the administration.

Details of the Development

5. The application will accommodate a marginal increase in pupils (from 98 to 105, it will also address the ongoing issues that the school faces.
6. A new classroom would be provided alongside the existing temporary classrooms. It would be cedar clad and would have a pitched roof to a maximum height of 3.7 metres The walls would be clad in red cedar and the roof would be a single ply grey membrane with a photo-voltaic display on the veranda roof The new school building would provide a purpose built foundation level classroom for pupils aged 4 and 5. The classroom would be constructed partly of recycled materials, would have high performance insulation and would incorporate photovoltaic cells in the roof.
7. The provision of a new building would enable the single classroom in the school building to be relocated with the other classrooms on the eastern part of the school site. The old school classroom, which has a high ceiling, could then be used as a school hall and for indoor PE lessons. Currently the school assemblies are held in a classroom that has to be reorganised before and after the assembly causing disruption to the school day. Further loss of learning time is caused by the need to bus the children off site for PE lessons.
8. The school currently has no sports hall, and a games court that is too small for most sports. To overcome this shortfall in hard play area the

school are proposing a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) , to be built of permeable black macadam and providing 814 m² of games area. The proposal is for a MUGA in a north to south orientation to the north of the existing temporary buildings and approximately 15 metres to the north of The Old School House. This is an amended location following an objection from Sport England with regard to the loss of existing school playing field. All consultees were reconsulted on the altered position of the MUGA.

9. The application also includes the use of underused hardstanding at the western area of the site to be used for car parking and the erection of a polytunnel on the eastern part of the site.
10. The unusual layout of the school has led to the majority of classrooms in modular buildings. The school would not be able to operate without those buildings and so the proposal includes permanent retention of the existing modular buildings.

Part 2 - Other Viewpoints

Representations

11. There have been four objections to the application from local residents, including the residents of The Old School House on the following issues:
 - Disruption and congestion caused by contractors' vehicles.
 - Access to the school along School lane would conflict with pedestrian access to the school.
 - Teacher parking is not justified on such a narrow lane.
 - Increased parking in Plowden Park.
 - Use of the playing field is restricted outside school hours, this should be extended to the MUGA as well.
 - The polytunnel will be an eyesore.
 - The MUGA would be unsightly. This could be reduced by having a green surface.
 - The MUGA and the pathway will increase the risk of flooding despite the surface being permeable. Rain currently pools in the school field.
 - The MUGA should be placed in the north east corner of the field.

Consultations

12. South Oxfordshire District Council - no objection subject to tree protection during construction.
13. Sport England - no objection.
14. Environment Agency - no comment.
15. Highway Authority - no objection subject to a construction management plan and a revised school travel plan.

16. County Tree Officer - no objection.
17. Archaeology - no objection.
18. Protected Species Officer Response - no objection
19. Rights of Way - No objection subject to no material being deposited on the public footpath, and any damage to the footpath being made good.

Part 3 - Relevant planning policies

Relevant planning policies (see Policy Annex to the committee papers)

20. South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS): Policies
CS1 (Sustainable development),
CSM2 (Travel Plans),
CSR3 (Community Facilities),
CSQ2 (Sustainable design and construction),
CSQ3 (Design)
21. South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP): Policies
G2 (Protection from adverse development)
C4 (Landscape)
CON7 (Conservation Area)
EP2 (Noise)
D1 (Design)
D2 (Adequate parking)
D7 (Adequate disabled access)
CF2 (Community Facilities)
T1 (Safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists)
22. The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012. Paragraph 72 states that LPAs should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to ensure a sufficient choice of school places is available; they should give great weight to the need to expand or alter schools and work with school promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues prior to submission of applications. This is a material consideration in taking planning decisions. The CLG letter to the Chief Planning Officers dated 15 August 2011 is also relevant.

Part 4 - Analysis and Conclusions

Comments of the Deputy Director (Strategy and Infrastructure Planning)

23. There are three main issues related to this application: presumption in favour of the development; effect on the landscape; visual amenity and the conservation area; and transport issues.

Presumption in favour of the development

24. Policy CS1 of the SOCS states that applications will be approved if they accord with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
25. Policy CF2 of the SOLP states that proposals for additional community facilities or services within settlements will be permitted provided there are no overriding amenity, environmental or traffic objections. Further Policy CSR3 of the SOCS says that proposals which would result in provision of services in rural areas will be encouraged.
26. Policy CSQ3 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development that among other things responds positively and respects the character of the site and its surroundings. The proposed extension would be in the same style as the existing school which itself sits well within the topography of the constrained site.
27. The CLG letter to the Chief Planning Officers dated 15th August 2011 set out the Government's commitment to support the development of state funded schools and their delivery through the planning system. The policy statement states:

"It is the Government's view that the creation and development of state funded schools is strongly in the national interest and that planning decision-makers can and should support that objective, in a manner consistent with their statutory obligations." State funded schools include Academies and free schools as well as local authority maintained schools.

It further states that the following principles should apply with immediate effect:

- There should be a presumption in favour of the development of state-funded schools;
- Local Authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling the development of state funded schools in their planning decisions;
- Local Authorities should make full use of their planning powers to support state-funded schools applications;

- Local Authorities should only impose conditions that clearly and demonstrably meet the tests as set out in Circular 11/95;
- Local Authorities should ensure that the process for submitting and determining state-funded schools' applications is as streamlined as possible;
- A refusal of any application for a state-funded school or the imposition of conditions, will have to be clearly justified by the Local Planning Authority.

This has been endorsed as part of the National Planning Policy Framework.

28. The development would provide an improvement to the community facility and is of a good design for the site. It should therefore be granted permission unless there are overriding objections.

Effect on the landscape, visual amenity and the conservation area

29. Policy CON7 of the Local Plan seeks to protect the district's heritage assets including conservation areas.
30. Policy D1 of the SOLP says that there should be good design and the protection of local distinctiveness. The proposed school building would be set alongside the existing timber clad buildings which have been established on the site. The cedar cladding and pitched roofs are not unsympathetic to the area and have a relatively rural appearance. In my opinion they would not significantly detract from the value of the conservation area.
31. The proposed MUGA would extend the hardstanding into the playing field and so would have an effect on the visual amenity of the area. This has been raised as an issue by a local resident and has suggested that this could be alleviated by having the tarmac as a green colour. Policy G2 seeks to protect settlements from adverse impacts and policy C4 says that development that would damage the landscape setting of settlements will not be permitted. The proposal is limited to just the playing surface and does not have fencing or lighting associated with the scheme. The views of the surface would be at a low angle and so the visual effect on the landscape would be minimal. In my opinion black would be a reasonable colour in the location and I do not believe it would be necessary to condition the colour of the playing surface.
32. The proposed polytunnel would be functional and arguably not be an attractive addition to the school and would not of itself be in keeping with policy CON7 of the SOLP. However, as part of the application the polytunnel is a minor part. If not included in the application the development would be a small structure that would appear to come within local authority permitted development rights. In my view the proposal would not amount to a reason to override the presumption in favour of the development. However, I would recommend that the details

of this are required to be submitted for approval by condition, should planning permission be granted.

Traffic Issues

33. Policy CSM2 of the SOCS states that Travel Plans will be required for small developments, including education facilities, that generate a significant amount of travel. A local concern over the increased traffic on Plowden Park has been raised. The proposed development would accommodate the modest increase of 7 children but it would also negate the need to bus children off site for PE classes.
34. Policy D2 of the SOLP says that planning permission will not be granted for developments that fail to incorporate safe and secure parking for cars and vehicles. The proposal includes the use of an underused hard surfaced area that is unsuitable for formal games, to be used for car parking.
35. The access to the proposed car parking would be along the same lane that some children would use for walking to the school site, and an objection has been raised as to the justification for that parking. Parking already takes place on Plowden Park with many people making use of a gap in the hedge between Plowden Park and School Lane. A local resident has pointed out that this is over private land, although it appears the landowner is not preventing that access at this time. Policy T1 of the SOLP requires safe and convenient routes for pedestrians and cyclists. The numbers of car parking spaces would be low (6 spaces) and the teachers are likely to come to the school before the children and leave after them.
36. Policy D7 of the SOLP says that the safety and access requirements of those with impaired mobility, hearing or sight should be taken into account in the designing of new parking spaces. The proposed parking space is informal and there is little scope for the layout, but a condition could be attached requiring an updated travel plan including the priority to be given to disabled parking on the site. The travel plan could also include times at which access to the car park is restricted.
37. The Highway Authority has no objection subject to the attachment of conditions requiring an updated Travel Plan and a Construction Management Plan. The Construction management plan would address the concern raised about the disruption that would be caused by the construction traffic. With those two attached the development would not, in my opinion lead to significant traffic concerns and would even reduce the amount of bus traffic coming to the school.

Other Issues

38. A concern has been raised about the noise from the MUGA and the proximity to the residents. Policy EP2 of the SOLP says that proposals

which would have an adverse effect on local residents in terms of noise will not be permitted. The nearest local residence is the Old School House which sits almost surrounded by the school site. The proposed MUGA would be farther from that property than the existing hard play area. Condition 9 of the planning permission for the School Playing Field says that the playing field shall only be used as a school playing field, and only during normal school times. This condition should also be added to the MUGA.

39. A concern has been raised by a local resident about drainage. No objection has been received from the Environment Agency. Policy CSQ2 of the SOLP says that SUDS should be included. The MUGA is proposed to have a porous surface and the proposal includes a swale on the edge of the playing field. To add further clarity, a condition could be added requiring drainage details to be submitted and approved prior to the development taking place.

Conclusions

40. The proposed development would allow this Community Facility security in the provision of its service by granting it permanent consent, with sufficient facilities. The proposed development would not cause any significant harm to the landscape, conservation area or local amenity subject to appropriate conditions being attached to any planning permission granted. It should therefore be granted permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in policy CS1 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy paragraph 72 of the NPPF and the CLG letter to the Chief Planning Officers dated 15th August 2011.

Recommendation

41. **It is RECOMMENDED that application R3.0110/13 be approved subject to conditions to be determined by the Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Strategy & Infrastructure Planning) but to include the following:**
- 1. Development to be commenced within 3 years of the date of permission.**
 - 2. Development to be built in accordance with the plans and details of the development.**
 - 3. Within one year of the date of this permission a School Travel plan to include within it provision for disabled parking and management of the use of the School Lane access.**
 - 4. Prior to the development taking place a drainage scheme to be submitted and approved.**
 - 5. Prior to commencement of the development a Construction Traffic Management Plan to be submitted and approved.**
 - 6. That the MUGA shall only be used as a school play area, and only during normal school times.**

7. Prior to the commencement of the development. details of the polytunnel to be submitted for approval

Reasons for Approval:

The proposed development would allow this Community Facility security in the provision of its service by granting it permanent consent, with sufficient facilities. The proposed development would not cause any significant harm to the landscape, conservation area or local amenity. It should therefore be granted permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in policy CS1 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy.

Compliance with National Planning Policy Framework:

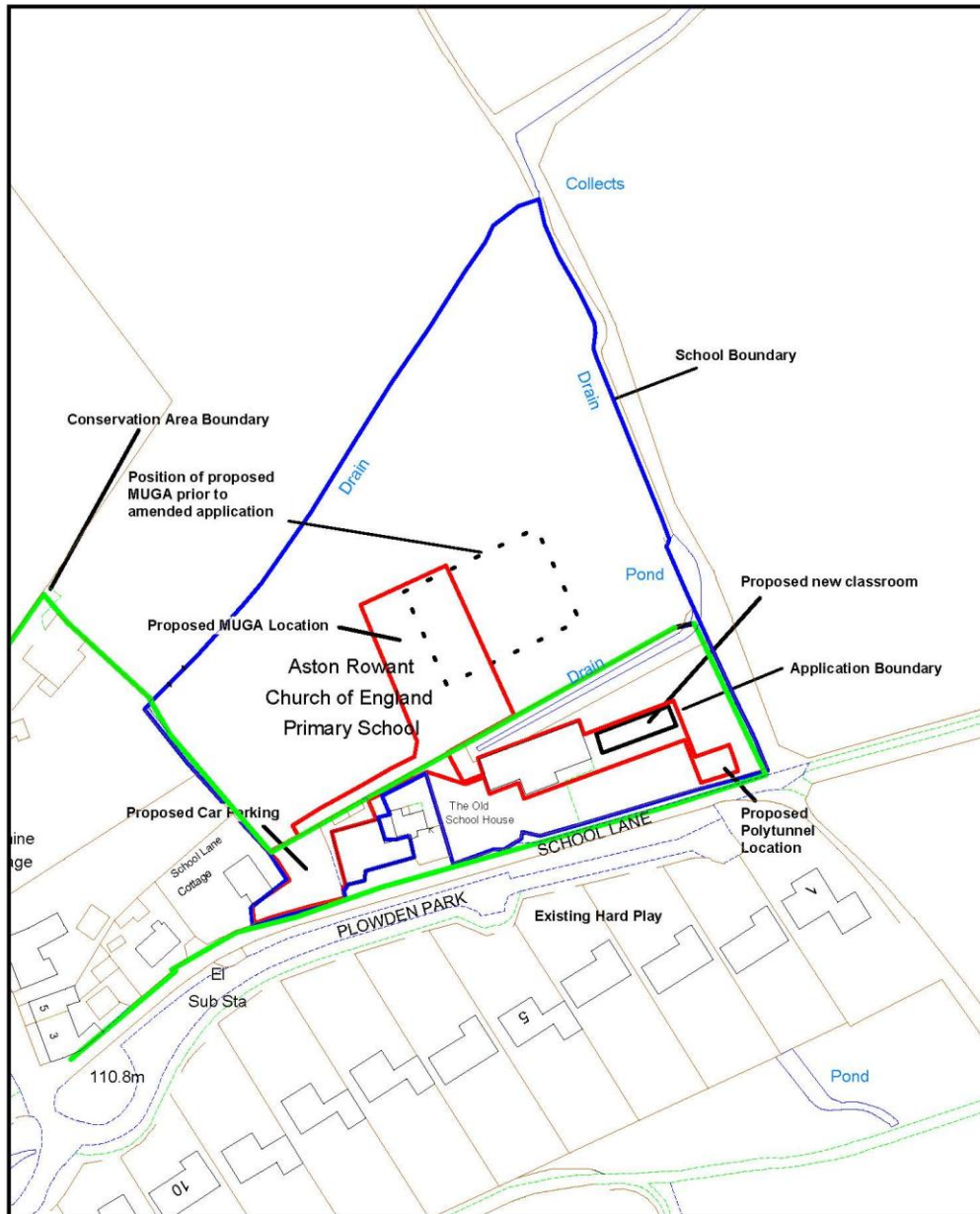
In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the NPPF Oxfordshire County Council take a positive and proactive approach to decision making focused on solutions and fostering the delivery of sustainable development. We work with applicants in a positive and proactive manner by;

- offering a pre-application advice service, as in this case updating applicants and agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and where possible suggesting solutions, as was the case with this application.

MARTIN TUGWELL
Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Strategy & Infrastructure Planning)

November 2013

Aston Rowant CP School - Application no. R3.110/13



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Scale:1:1250
Plot Date:15/11/2013
By: kb
Dept:

This plan is for indicative purposes only
- do not scale