

**For: PLANNING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE – 27 NOVEMBER 2017**

**By: DIRECTOR FOR PLANNING AND PLACE**

**Development Proposed:**

**Demolition of an existing one and a half classroom prefabricated modular building and the installation of a two classroom prefabricated modular building for a temporary period of 5 years. The works to include drainage and creation of fire appliance hard-standing access where the existing prefabricated modular building is located.**

**Division Affected:** Chalgrove and Watlington

**Contact Officer:** Kevin Broughton **Tel:** 07979 704458

**Location:** Great Milton (C Of E) Primary School, High Street, Great Milton, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX44 7NT

**Applicant:** Oxfordshire County Council

**Application No:** R3.0064/17 **District ref No:** P17/S3180/CC

**District Council Area:** South Oxfordshire

**Date Received:** 21 August 2017

**Consultation Period:** 7 September 2017 – 28 September 2017

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**Recommendation:** Approval

• **Part 1 – Facts and Background**

**Location (see site plan Annex 1)**

1. Great Milton Primary School is located centrally in the linear village of Great Milton 2km (1.4miles) south east of Wheatley. The whole village, including the school site is within the Oxford Green Belt. The school site is adjacent to, but outside the Great Milton Conservation Area.
2. The site is bounded by allotments to the north, a substantial tree belt with open fields beyond to the east, public playground to the south, and housing to the west. The nearest house is 90m away on the far side of the existing school building.
3. The school is predominantly of single storey construction, brick built with a dual pitched roof.
4. The site for the proposed temporary classroom unit is at the rear of the school on informal green play space.

**Details of the Development**

5. The proposed prefabricated modular building would provide 2 classrooms and associated toilets, cloak area and store rooms for a temporary period of five years.
6. The proposal would include the demolition of an existing prefabricated modular building, containing a single classroom and a withdrawal room, adjacent to the northern boundary of the school. The unit had a temporary planning permission up to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017. A condition survey identified that the existing modular unit has reached the end of its economic life.
7. The area currently occupied by the temporary classroom unit would be used to create an access for fire appliance vehicles.
8. Great Milton Primary School has a Published Admission Number of 25. There is continued demand for places at the school and in order to ensure a sufficiency of places the applicant would like the school to be able to operate with an admission number of 30. This cannot be provided with the current accommodation. The proposal would address this by replacing the existing unit with a two classroom unit, allowing the admission numbers to rise to 30.
9. Consideration was given to locating the new building on the footprint of the existing building, but there are existing well established trees next to the existing building. Other options were appraised, involving consultation with the parish council and local county councillor, and the proposed location was decided on by the applicant.

10. The proposed new building would be 16.9m (long) x 8.3m (wide) x 3.6m (high) providing 140.27 m<sup>2</sup> of gross new floor space in an overall application site area of 330 m<sup>2</sup>. It would be of flat roof construction, with a grey felt roof. The building would be cream in colour with white windows and doors.
11. The following features have been included to increase energy efficiency and reduce costs: openable windows to promote natural passive cross ventilation; a wall mounted gas fired fully modulating condensing boiler to feed Low Surface Temperature (LST) radiators and provide the hot water required in the classroom; and automatic lighting controls and incorporated with new LED lamp technology.
12. Ground investigation conclude that the sub-soils in this vicinity are of a silty fine sand down to a depth of 3m, and the sub-strata is suitable for discharge of surface water via a 2.8m<sup>3</sup> proprietary crate soakaway system.
13. The applicant put the following case for Very Special Circumstances in the Green Belt: there are no alternative development opportunities outside the Green Belt area as this is a village school that lies within a Green Belt area; and although there is a new build, there would also be the removal of a similar, though slightly smaller, modular building.
14. Access into and around the building has been considered in the application: the building would be single storey with access ramps; contrasting materials will be used to help those with visual impairment; and there would be level surfaces and double leaf doors to aid the movement of wheelchair users.

## **Part 2 – Other Viewpoints**

### **Representations**

15. There have been no third party representations.

### **Consultations**

16. SODC Planning – no objection
17. SODC Environmental Health Officer – no objection.
18. Great Milton Parish Council – supports the application.
19. Natural England – no comments.
20. OCC (Highway Authority) – no objection subject to a revised travel plan being produced.
21. OCC (Archaeology) – no archaeological constraints.

22. OCC (Protected Species Officer) – no comments.
23. OCC (Minerals Policy) – no comments.
24. OCC (Arboriculture) – no objection.

### **Part 3 – Relevant Planning Documents**

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

25. Planning applications should be decided in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
26. The relevant Development Plan policies are:

South Oxfordshire Core Strategy – December 2012 (SOCS)

CS1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development

CSM1: Transport

CSM2: Transport Assessments and Travel Plans

CSEN1: Landscape

CSEN2: Green Belt

CSQ3: Design

CSG1: Green infrastructure

CSB1: Conservation and improvement of biodiversity

South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP)

G2: Protection and enhancement of the environment

C4: Development in the countryside and on the edge of settlements

C6: Biodiversity conservation

GB4: Visual amenity

EP6: Surface water protection

D7: Access for all

CF2: Provision of community facilities and services

Other Material Considerations are:

Draft South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033 (SOLP2031)

The final version of the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan has been consulted on but has not yet been submitted for independent examination. It can therefore only be given limited weight at this stage.

TRANS2: Promoting Sustainable Transport and accessibility

TRANS4: Transport assessments, Transport Statements and Travel Plans

ENV1: Landscape and countryside

DES8: Promoting sustainable design

CF2: Provision of community Facilities and Services

The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012. 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 Director for Planning and Place**

27. The CLG letter to the Chief Planning Officers dated 15<sup>th</sup> 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 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. Policy CS1 of the SOCS sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development which states that planning applications that accord with the policies of the development plan will be approved unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. Policy CF2 of the SOLP, and policy CF2 of the SOLP 2033 state that proposals that would result in the provision of additional community facilities within settlements will be permitted.

29. The application should therefore be approved unless there are policy or material considerations that dictate otherwise. The main issue is the development within the Green Belt which makes the proposal a departure from the development plan and therefore it has come before the Committee even though there have been no objections to it.

Green Belt

30. Policy CSEN2 of the SOCS states that the special character and landscape setting of Oxford will be protected by the Oxford Green Belt, and that planning permission will not be granted for development within the Oxford Green Belt that is contrary to national policy guidance in the NPPF and the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. The NPPF states that considerable weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, and that development should not be approved except in Very Special Circumstances. The development is not one of the listed exceptions to Green Belt policy and so is inappropriate development in the Green Belt and Very Special Circumstances must therefore exist for the application to be approved.
31. The proposed development is required in order to increase the intake for the school in line with identified need. The school is a village facility and therefore has to be located within the village which is all within the Green Belt. The proposed development includes the removal of another building within the Green Belt, although there would be an increase in the footprint of the development. Neither the new building nor the fire appliance access could be provided other than at the school site. As there is no alternative to siting the unit in the Green Belt, and there is an identified local need, there is in my opinion Very Special Circumstances for the development in the Green Belt.
32. Policy GB4 of the SOLP states that where new development is permitted, either within or where it would be conspicuous from the Green Belt, it should be designed and sited in such a way that its impact on the open nature, rural character and visual amenity of the Green Belt is minimised.
33. The proposed unit would sit within the existing school site and within the village. It would be seen in that context from the surrounding Green Belt, and would not impact on its open nature or the rural character.

Other Issues

34. Policy CSM1 of the SOCS seeks, among other things, to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport. Policy TRANS2 of the SOLP 2033 also seeks to promote sustainable transport. Policy CSM2 further states that development proposals should include a travel plan where appropriate, as does policy TRANS4 of the SOLP 2033.

35. The County as Highway authority have requested a revised travel plan be included in any planning permission granted. A condition could be attached requiring a revised travel plan be submitted within 6 months of the occupation of the new building which would give time for the effects of the extra pupils to be included in the updated plan.
36. Policy CSEN1 of the SOCS and policy ENV1 of the SOLP 2033 seek to protect the landscape character of the district. Policy G2 of the SOLP seeks to protect the district's countryside and settlements from adverse development. Policy C4 of the SOLP states that development on the edge of settlements which would damage attractive landscape will not be permitted.
37. The proposed development would be a standard temporary classroom unit, but as stated above it would be within the context of the school site and its village location. The trees to the east of the site would screen the development from the surrounding countryside.
38. Policy CSQ3 of the SOCS seeks good design for new developments. Policy DES8 of the SOLP 2033 seeks to promote sustainable design. The proposed building is a standard unit and not high quality in terms of design. It does however incorporate some environmental design concepts in terms of energy saving. In its location to the rear of the school, and given its temporary nature it is not contrary to the design policies.
39. Policies CSG1 and CSB1 of the SOCS, policy C6 of the SOLP, and policy EN3 of the SOLP 2033 state that a net gain in biodiversity will be sought and that a net loss through development proposals will be avoided. The proposal does not lead to a loss of biodiversity, but it also does not include any measures to increase biodiversity. The applicant has stated that they would provide bird boxes as directed by the OCC Protected Species Officer. With a condition requiring the details of at least two bird boxes, the development would provide an increase in biodiversity and would comply with those policies.
40. Policy EP6 of the SOLP states that developers should demonstrate that the development has a sustainable drainage system. The proposal includes a soakaway that is based on ground investigations on the site and is therefore compliant with policy EP6.
41. Policy D7 of the SOLP seeks for new public buildings to include accessibility for all included in their design. The proposal includes design features for wheelchair, and sight impaired users. It is therefore compliant with policy D7.

### **Conclusions**

42. The proposed development would provide an improvement to a local community facility. There are Very Special Circumstances for the

inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and there are no overriding policy or material considerations that would lead to a refusal of the application. The proposal should therefore be granted planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

**RECOMMENDATION**

- 43 It is RECOMMENDED that planning permission for application no. R3.0033/17 be approved subject to conditions to be determined by the Director of Planning and Place to include the following:**
- I. Detailed compliance.**
  - II. Temporary period of 5 years.**
  - III. School Travel Plan to be submitted and approved within 6 months of the date of occupation of the building. The approved scheme to be implemented.**
  - IV. Prior to the first occupation of the development a scheme for the location of at least two bird boxes shall be submitted and approved. The approved scheme to be implemented.**

SUSAN HALLIWELL  
Director of Planning and Place

November 2017



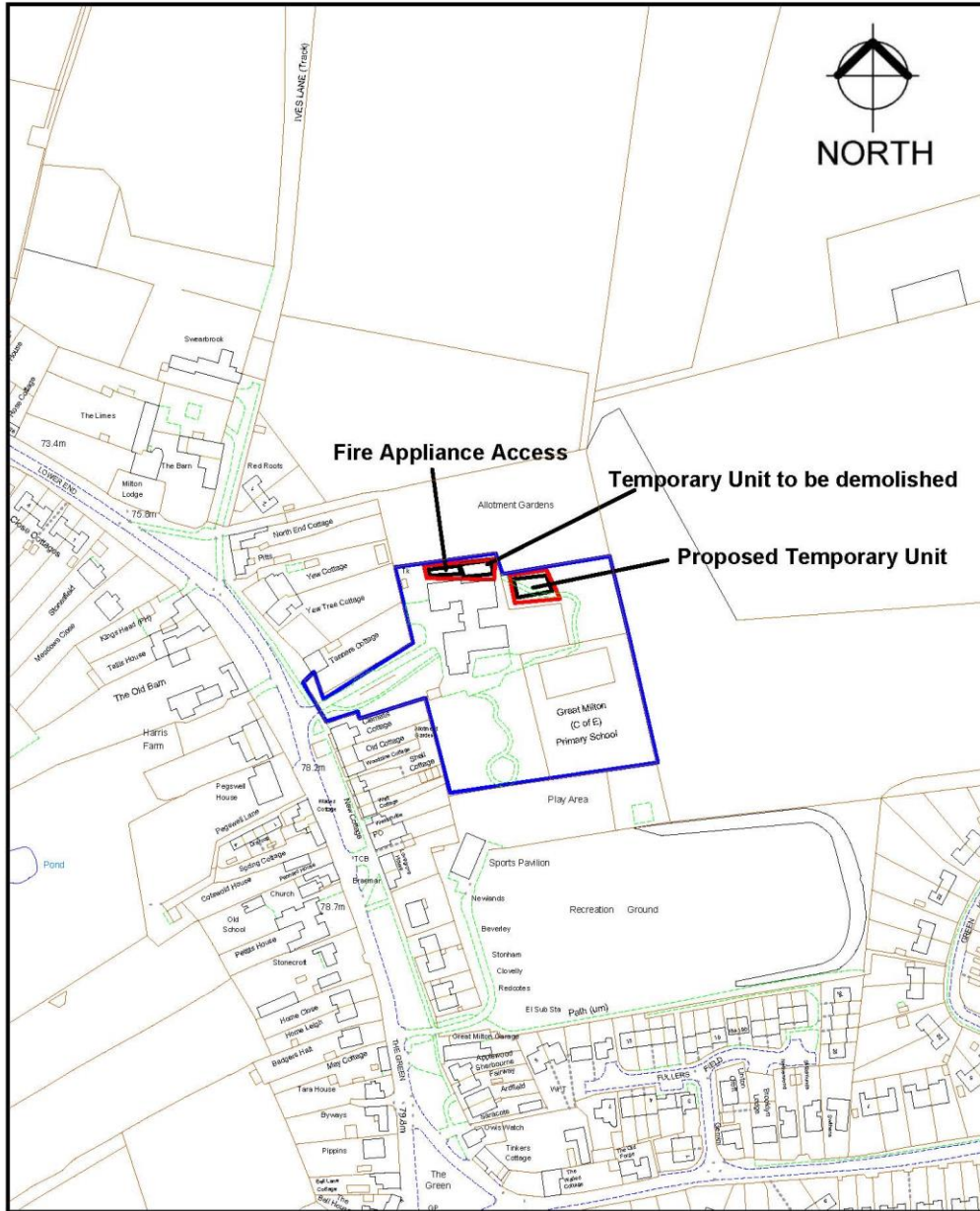
### European Protected Species

The habitat on and around the proposed development site indicate that European Protected Species are unlikely to be present. Therefore no further consideration of the Conservation of Species & Habitats Regulations is necessary.

### 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, which the applicant took advantage of in this case updating applicants and agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and where possible suggesting solutions. Additional information on the plans and in the supporting statement were sought from the applicant at an early stage which helped to assess the application in terms of Green Belt and other policies.

R3.0064/17 Great Milton School



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