

Division(s): Sonning Common

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## **PLANNING & REGULATION COMMITTEE – 24 OCTOBER 2011**

**RELOCATION OF PEPPARD CE PRIMARY SCHOOL TO LAND ADJACENT TO THE B481. THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED INCLUDES: CONSTRUCTION OF 903SQM SINGLE STOREY SCHOOL BUILDING; NEW AND IMPROVED VEHICLE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS ONTO THE B481; 14 ON-SITE CAR PARKING SPACES (INCLUDING 2 DISABLED SPACES) AND CYCLE PARKING; ON-SITE DROP OFF AREA; HARD AND SOFT PLAY AREAS AND GRASS PLAYING PITCH; LANDSCAPING, NEW FENCING AND RETENTION/ IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING BOUNDARY TREATMENTS**

**Report by Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth & Infrastructure)**

**Location:** Land north of the former Dog Public House, Rotherfield Peppard, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire.

**Applicant:** Oxfordshire County Council

**Application No:** R3.0065/11

**District Council Area:** South Oxfordshire

### **Introduction**

1. This application seeks planning permission to relocate Peppard CE Primary School 300 metres to the north of the existing school on Church Lane to a parcel of land adjacent to the B481 Nettlebed to Reading Road.

### **Location (see site plans)**

2. The application site is within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and located on the northern edge of Rotherfield Peppard. The village conservation area lies immediately to the south of the site.

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

3. The application site is a triangular shaped area of open agricultural land which rises by approximately 3 metres from south to north. It is bounded by playing fields (used by Rotherfield United Football Club) to the north, Greys Green golf

course to the east and a restaurant and houses to the south. The B481 runs immediately west along the site.

4. There are a number of dwellings located beyond the B481 to the west, the nearest dwelling is approximately 45 metres from the site boundary. Other nearby dwellings are located immediately to the south of the application site and on Dog Lane. The former Dog Inn (now a restaurant) is the nearest property to the south of the site (approximately 25 metres in distance).
5. Along the eastern boundary of the site runs a public footpath, beyond this to the east is a dense wooded area which partly screens the site from those dwellings to the south of Dog Lane. A mature hedgerow runs along the length of the western boundary which partly screens the site from the B481. The northern boundary is generally open albeit there is an area of low level planting and a cherry tree in the northern corner.
6. The main entrance to the site is situated within its south west corner and is onto the B481/Dog Lane junction via a small access road/lay-by.

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

### **Reasons for proposal**

7. Peppard Primary school is currently located on a small site off Church Lane, approximately 300 metres south of the proposed site. It has been there since 1871 and comprises a mix of Victorian and more recent buildings and includes a temporary classroom. The total existing school site area is approximately 800sqm.
8. The school have explained that the existing accommodation is in poor condition and provides poor functional suitability in being structurally unsound and failing to meet modern school accommodation standards. Although on site options of redevelopment/refurbishment have been considered the school explain that due to the small size of the existing site and the constraints of developing within a conservation area it is not feasible to improve the existing school accommodation on site. The school therefore propose to relocate in order to enhance the scale and quality of education provision which can be offered. The County Council as the local educational authority has established that there is a need to maintain the school within the village.
9. A full educational statement has been submitted giving justification of the need to relocate the school, it includes the following reasons:
  - (i) The opportunity to re-launch the school with a new image and vision;
  - (ii) Lack of space in existing buildings to accommodate future curriculum changes;
  - (iii) High maintenance and heating costs of existing accommodation;
  - (iv) Lack of on-site parking and drop off areas at the existing site;

- (v) The existing temporary classroom building has exceeded its life expectancy and is no longer fit for purpose;
  - (vi) Existing outdoor play and learning space is limited as there is no playing field for physical education lessons and the existing playground is cramped;
  - (vii) There is currently no school hall for assemblies, plays or school lunches;
  - (viii) Existing disabled and staff facilities are inadequate;
  - (ix) Outside toilets are still in use;
  - (x) Difficulties during the construction phase of redeveloping the existing site, for example disruption to pupils and disturbance to local residents.
10. Building Bulletin 99<sup>1</sup> sets out space requirements for primary schools and based on the projected pupil numbers the school require a site of 6,800 sq m. The proposed site measures some 8,176 sq m. This is 1,400 sq m above the minimum statutory requirement. This is in part because a drop-off/pick up area is provided, and also simply because of the shape of the site.
11. The existing school currently has some 80 pupils but has the capacity to take 105. The school's catchment area principally consists of Rotherfield Peppard, Rotherfield Greys and Highmoor although some pupils are drawn from further a field. The development proposed is for a replacement school and not a facility designed to take an increase in pupil numbers above the present school capacity.

### **Proposed school buildings**

12. The proposal would provide approximately 900 sq m of buildings accommodating four classrooms, a hall, support areas for special educational needs (SEN), a library and ICT area, staff room, office and reception areas, storage and ancillary circulation areas.
13. The applicant explains that the development has been designed to respect the setting of the village within the AONB and the fact that this is a greenfield site. The proposed building would be located on the eastern boundary of the site and would be single storey extending to 5 metres in height. The building would be cut into the slope of the site to enable it to have a low profile and limit its impact on the surrounding area. The building has been designed to respond to the site characteristics and a key component of this is the use of a long curved wall running through the building and on to the western boundary of the site, this would flow up and down in height and would be visible above the main building roofline by some 1.5 metres. The wall is intended to soften the straight lines of the mono-pitched and flat roofed elements of the building. Gateways for vehicular and pedestrian access would be incorporated in the wall. A curved administration/reception building would signify the entrance to the school.

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<sup>1</sup> Building Bulletin 99: Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects (Department for Education and Skills)

14. The choice of materials for the building has been selected both to compliment its setting in the AONB and to be sustainable. The majority of the building elevations (including the curved wall section) would be clad in vertical larch timber with a green staining. The aim is to make the building part of the landscape. Other elevations would be covered using render and cladding panels of various colours. The roof coverings would include the use of raised seam or profiled coated grey steel. The south eastern elevation would have long glazed windows. The aim is to achieve a building with a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good'. This would, in part, be achieved by air source heat pumps and the use of sustainable materials that may be recycled, for example timber.

### **Parking and vehicle and pedestrian access**

15. The vehicle and pedestrian access would be provided at the southern tip of the site from the existing B481/Dog Lane junction through a "lay-by" area from the B481. This lay-by forms part of the public highway. The vehicle access into the site would lead to a turning circle with drop-off/pick up areas alongside. Low level bollard lighting would be used alongside the vehicle and pedestrian access. The drop-off/pick up area would principally be used for pre-school children. Otherwise parents would be expected to use parking on Church Lane (as at present) and walk to the new school site via improved footways (referred to as 'park and stride' in the planning application). The school propose to police the lay-by area during school start and finish times to ensure that it is not used for drop-off/pick and remains clear for access to the school and neighbouring properties.
16. Fourteen car parking spaces for staff and disabled users would be provided within the site adjacent to the western boundary. Although onsite parking for parents is not proposed, the hard play area could be used for over flow parking when events and open evenings are held at the school. Cycle parking would be provided adjacent to the staff car park. The pedestrian entrance would use traditional 5 bar fencing and gates, including a lych gate (a gateway covered with a roof) as a reference to traditional features of Peppard village.
17. The applicant has set out a package of highway safety measures. These include: measures to reinforce the existing speed limits and reduce speed on the adjacent B481 (for example using speed activated signs, buff coloured surfacing with 30mph roundels on the road surface and the creation of village entrance gates); the provision of school warning signs; resurfacing of the carriageway, footways and layby area to improve safety for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists; realignment of kerbs and the provision of bollards to protect pedestrians and improve driver awareness when accessing the site; the improvement of existing signage to neighbouring uses (for example the adjacent golf course) and improvements to drainage to reduce the risk of ponding on the carriageway surface.

### **Hard and soft landscaping**

18. To accommodate the new vehicle and pedestrian access it would be necessary to remove a section of the hedge along the western site boundary adjacent to

the B481. The remainder of this hedge would be retained. Four new cherry trees and one beech tree would be planted alongside this boundary to compensate for the section of hedgerow lost. A new hedgerow is proposed along the eastern boundary with a cherry tree and two beech trees also being planted along the northern boundary. Two copper beech trees would be planted in the middle of the vehicle turning circle. Hard surfaces for vehicles, parking and play areas would be constructed using tarmac which would be broken up with grassed areas and other artificial surfaces.

19. 1.8 metre and 2 metre high green weldmesh fencing would be erected along the eastern and northern boundaries of the site respectively. New timber gates would be used at the main entrance to ensure site security outside of school hours. Inside the site low level fencing would be provided to separate play space/areas and a 1.8 metre high weldmesh fence would be erected around the hard play area.

### **Outdoor learning and play**

20. Each classroom would have its own outdoor space for external play and learning. A dedicated foundation play area would be created adjacent to the building. A hard play area would be located adjacent to the western site boundary and a grassed sports pitch close to the north east boundary (north of the new buildings). An open area of playing field would be created between the two.

### **Documents submitted with the planning application**

21. The application includes the following supporting documents:
  - Design and Access Statement
  - Justification Statement
  - Statement of Community Involvement
  - Landscape Proposals
  - Transport Assessment and proposed Highways Mitigation Measures
  - Travel Plan
  - Flood Risk Assessment
  - Ecological Assessment
  - Drainage Assessment
  - Sustainability Statement
  - Archaeology Statement

### **Consultations**

22. The application was originally submitted to the Planning Authority in May 2011. As a result of responses to the first consultation further information from the applicant was submitted in relation to proposed highway safety measures. This amended information was available for further comment during September 2011.
23. A summary of the consultation responses and third party representations is set out in Annex 1. Copies of all responses are available in the Member's Resource Centre.

## Development Plan and other Policies

24. Planning applications should be decided in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant development plan documents are:

South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP). The relevant policies are as follows: CF2, C1, C2, G3, G4, G6, D1, T1, T2, T3, EP2, EP3, EP6, EP8.

The South East Plan 2026 (SEP). The relevant policies are as follows: S3, S6, C3.

The South East Plan (SEP) forms part of the Development Plan, however, the Government has made it clear that it intends to abolish regional strategies. Whilst this intention is a material consideration, legislation to achieve this is at an early stage of development in the parliamentary process, and therefore the weight attached to that intention is limited accordingly.

25. Planning Policy Statement 23 – Planning and Pollution Control (PPS23) and Planning Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development (August 2011) are also relevant.
26. All relevant policies are set out in the Policy Annex attached to this Agenda.

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

27. The key planning issues to be considered with this application are:

- (i) Need for a new school;
- (ii) Proposed location and design of the development;
- (iii) Traffic and highways matters;
- (iv) Other environmental matters;
- (v) Other matters.

- (i) Need for a new school

28. The school has identified a need to relocate as the existing school buildings have structural problems and the site is cramped. Policy CF2 of the SOLP supports additional community facilities provided that there are no overriding amenity, environmental or traffic objections or conflicts with other policies in the plan. Policies S3 and S6 of the SE Plan support the provision of additional educational and community facilities. Policy C3 of the SE Plan encourages proposals which support the social well-being of communities within AONBs provided that they do not conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing natural beauty. The Government's Policy Statement on Planning for Schools Development states that *'the planning system should operate in a positive manner when dealing with proposals for the creation of state-funded schools'* and that *'local authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling the development of state-funded schools in their*

*planning decisions*'. One of the policy statements principles is that *'there should be a presumption in favour of such development'*.

29. Concern has been raised as to whether the village needs a new school of this size. However, many local residents support the application and comment that the existing school site is cramped and unfit for its purpose. These residents have also expressed concern that parents are sending their children to schools outside of the village and therefore this development would positively support the local community.
30. In my view there is a well established need for the provision of a replacement school given that there is insufficient space on the existing school site to improve accommodation either through extensions or redevelopment. Providing a replacement school within the village would be more sustainable and would enable and encourage parents to send their children to the local primary school. Although concerns have been raised about the need for a school of the size proposed the development will in fact be for a like-for-like replacement school rather than for a larger capacity intended to draw children from a wider catchment. The nature of the site allows for a school layout that will exceed minimum space standards and that can be viewed as a positive benefit to the local community. I therefore consider that the application is strongly supported by policies in the SOLP and SE Plan that seek to improve facilities within existing settlements where there are clearly deficiencies. The development is also strongly supported by the Government's policy statement on the development of state-funded schools.
31. Whilst the need for the development is established, amenity, environmental and traffic implications must be assessed and these are dealt with below.

(ii) Proposed location and design of the development

32. The application site is on the edge of the existing village and is undeveloped; it is in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Policy C3 of the SE Plan requires proposals for development in AONB's to have regard to their setting and for the emphasis to be on small-scale developments that are sustainably located and designed. This policy also supports developments that support the well being of communities in AONB's provided that it does not conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing natural beauty. Policy C2 of the SOLP advises that development that would harm the beauty of the AONB will not be permitted. Policy G4 of the SOLP seeks to protect the countryside by restricting new development within the countryside, in open gaps between settlements and on the edge of settlements where the built up area would be extended. Policy C1 of the SOLP seeks to conserve and enhance local landscape. All new built development should incorporate good design and this is particularly relevant for this proposal given its location. Policies G6, C2 and D1 of the SOLP seek to ensure design is appropriate and sympathetic to the site and surrounding local area.
33. Objectors argue that the development will harm the character of the area. On the other hand the District and Parish Councils are supportive of the proposal. Whilst the Chilterns AONB authority does not object to the development in

principle they are concerned with the use of some of the proposed materials, namely coloured cladding panels. Other concerns have been expressed that the zinc roof would not be in keeping with the surrounding area and that the proposed building would be visible from the B481. The District Council are supportive of the development in its location given the educational need; they also consider that the design reflects the proposed location. Residents who support the application have commented that the design and materials would be sympathetic to the AONB and in keeping with the village.

*Location of the development*

34. Turning first to the issue of whether the development would be on the edge of the existing settlement extending its built-up area. Whilst the application site is situated between a golf course, the local football club and residential development the site cannot be considered to be within the built-up area of the existing village. It is a greenfield site that is on the edge of the existing area of *built* development. In my opinion the proposal would extend the built up area of the existing settlement into the countryside. Policy G4 of the SOLP seeks to restrict such types of development. However, it has been clearly established that there is a need for this proposal in order to support the local community from an educational perspective. The site is well located in relation to the existing village and as discussed in paragraph 35 below the visual impact of the new school buildings would not be significant. In my view the educational need for the school to relocate and within a location that is central to the existing village outweighs any conflict with policy G4 of the SOLP in terms of extending the village's built-up area.
35. The application site is within the Chilterns AONB and it is important that the proposal should not conflict with policies that seek to protect such areas. To be acceptable the development must be of a scale and type appropriate to the area. In my view, in the context of its location in the village this proposal does not represent a major development within the AONB and the building proposed is of a scale that is in-keeping with the existing settlement and this part of the AONB. The proposed building has been designed to have a generally low profile by keeping roof lines low and by cutting the building into the slope of the site. It would be set back from the B481 towards the eastern boundary adjacent to mature and dense woodland planting. I agree with the applicant's justification that visually the new development would not be prominent in the landscape or when viewed from the surrounding area given: its position on the site; the low profile of the building; the backdrop of woodland to east and the retained hedgerow planting along the western boundary of the site adjacent to the B481.

*Design of the development*

36. Policy CO2 of the SOLP requires development in the AONB to be sympathetic in terms of design and materials used. The buildings design and materials are proposed to reflect traditional elements of the Chilterns and the surrounding area whilst providing a modern appearance to an educational facility. In my opinion the overall design of the building is acceptable and features such as the curved wall add interest to its appearance whilst ensuring it maintains of low profile and limited in its scale.

37. The majority of the building would be clad in green timber panels which I consider to be an appropriate material for this location given the rural feel. It would also limit its appearance in the landscape. The elevations would incorporate some sections of coloured render and cladding to break up each elevation and to add interest. The Chilterns AONB Conservation Board argues that more traditional materials such as brick or flint would be more appropriate. Whilst these traditional materials would work I consider that the use of coloured cladding and render sections would be appropriate given that they are small in their size (the majority of the elevations would be timber clad and/or glazed) and would seek to break up the elevations by using a mix of materials. The majority of these sections would also be along the south east elevation. This elevation is screened from the woodland to the east and not visible from other view points around the site. A small section of coloured cladding would be used in the south west elevation but this should not be visible due to the mature hedgerow along the western site boundary. Overall these coloured sections would add interest to but not dominate the appearance of the building.
38. The proposed roof materials include the use of grey coloured steel to the pitched sections. In order to maintain the buildings low profile these pitches have been kept shallow and this ensures that the appearance of the roof materials would be limited. Whilst overall the choice of materials for the building is considered to be acceptable in principle I recommend a condition to require the final specification of each material to be submitted and agreed. In particular the roof finish to ensure that the grey steel has a dull finish as opposed to being 'shiny' or 'reflective' and the coloured sections of the elevations are sympathetic. This should ensure that all materials are appropriate and sympathetic to the AONB and the wider area and therefore there would be no conflict with policies G6, C2 and D1 of the SOLP.
39. Overall the visual impact of the development in the landscape would be limited due to the design and position of the school building, the use of materials sympathetic to the AONB and the use of the existing landscaping to set the building against and screen it from the surrounding area. Other features of the development such as parking areas and play spaces would also be well screened by existing planting. In my view therefore the development would not harm the special landscape character, setting and beauty of AONB and the proposal does not conflict with policy C3 of the SE Plan or C1 or C2 of the SOLP. The development incorporates high quality design and materials and is sympathetic to the AONB and the surrounding area; it is therefore consistent with policies G6, C2 and D1 of the SOLP.

(iii) Traffic and highways matters

40. The application effectively means moving the existing school from one part of the village to another. There are no proposals to increase the pupil capacity of the school. Nevertheless, the traffic and highway implications of this relocation need to be considered carefully to ensure that the development can be acceptable.

41. Policy T1 of the SOLP requires developments to provide a safe and convenient access to the highway network for all movements. Policy T2 also requires developments to incorporate provision for parking and turning/drop off areas whilst Policy T3 of the SOLP requires a transport assessment for proposals that have significant transport implications. Policy CF2 of the SOLP supports additional community facilities provided there are no overriding traffic objections whilst policy G3 favours development proposals which are well related to existing services and facilities and would not give rise to increases in traffic in rural areas.
42. A number of detailed objections have been raised in relation to highways safety, these points are summarised in Annex 1. Residents and parents who support the application have commented that the parking and vehicular arrangements have been well thought out and that parents who walk to the existing school site would continue to walk to the new site. Transport Officers originally had concerns that the change in location of the school had not been fully mitigated in terms of highways safety. For example how parking and drop off areas would be managed and what measures would be introduced to reduce speed on the B481.

*Increase in traffic within the village*

43. In my view the development would not have a significant negative impact in terms of increasing traffic within the village given that the development is for a replacement of the existing school only. The school would continue to serve the existing village and surrounding catchment parishes and provides a sustainable location for access to the community. This is in accordance with policy G3 of the SOLP.

*Parking and drop-off*

44. It is important that children that walk to the existing school can continue to do so to the new school and that the change in location does not raise highways safety issues for all concerned locally within the village, including neighbouring residents and businesses.
45. Although no formal parking would be provided for parents on the school site, a drop off and pick up area would be created on the school site for parents of pre-school age and school buses. This can ensure that there are limited impacts on the B481. Parents with non-preschool age children would be encouraged to park on Church Lane and walk to the school and I consider that this can be done so safely with the proposed improvements to the footways in place. Measures are also proposed which would reduce the speed of traffic on the B481 past the school site and where children would walk from Church Lane.

*Site access*

46. Some local residents have expressed concerns regarding the safety of the proposed access from the B481 into the site but again the design of the access in conjunction with the safety measures proposed should allow safe and convenient access for all users of the school and those neighbouring residents and businesses. The peak flow of movements to and from school would not

conflict with peak flow of movements visiting the neighbouring restaurant and golf course.

47. The applicant has carried out considerable work prior to the application being submitted and during consultation in order to overcome highway safety concerns. The application was accompanied by a full transport assessment. Transport Officers have carefully considered the merits of this application and taking account of the additional measures proposed have come to the view that the proposed highways safety measures would allow for the safe operation of the school. They have no objections subject to a number of conditions. Taking into account the matters raised as discussed above and subject to the inclusion of conditions to ensure that all the proposed highways safety measures are implemented prior to the first use of the development I consider that the proposals are consistent with policies T1, T2 or CF2 of the SOLP and the development is acceptable in traffic and highway safety terms.

(iv) Other environmental matters

*Impact on neighbouring land uses and residents*

48. The new school would be located on a greenfield site on the edge of the existing settlement and currently not in use for activities that generate noise and disturbance. Those residential properties nearest to the development site are to the west and south beyond the B481 and Dog Lane whilst there is a restaurant located immediately to the south of the site.
49. Policies EP2 and EP3 of the SOLP seek to protect existing occupiers from noise and light associated with new development whilst policy CF2 supports the provision of new community facilities provided that there are no overriding amenity objections. Some concern has been raised regarding the impact of the school on those nearest residential properties, including increases in light pollution. The District Council have no objection from an amenity point of view and do not consider the development would be oppressive for adjoining neighbours.
50. The site would only be used during normal school hours. The school have not asked to make the school buildings or external play areas available for wider community use during evenings or weekends. In my view the use proposed on the site does not raise significant issues in terms of noise particularly since activities on the site as a whole would be undertaken during school hours only. Those properties potentially most affected by the development (see paragraph 4) are also located beyond and adjacent to the B481 meaning that they are not immediately adjacent to those noisiest activities that would take place, for example out door play and sports. The actual school building is also well set back from these dwellings. Existing landscaping would be retained around the western perimeter of the site and would provide some privacy to those properties to the west.
51. No floodlighting is proposed for the external play and sports areas. Lighting is proposed around site access areas but this would be in the form of low level bollard style lighting to assist pedestrians.

52. In my view the development does not conflict with policies EP2, EP3 and CF2 of the SOLP as I do not consider there to be any overriding harm to residential amenity by way of noise or light pollution. Conditions can be imposed to restrict the use of external play and sports areas to school hours only and the final details of the proposed external lighting can be agreed.

### *Landscaping*

53. The development proposes the removal of a section (approximately 15m in length) of the mature hedgerow along the western boundary of the site to create the new access. The remainder of this hedge would be retained. The site is currently an open grassed field so no other planting would be lost to development. New tree, hedgerow and shrub planting are proposed in various locations across the site. Policies C1 and D1 of the SOLP seek to protect existing landscaping and ensure new developments include high quality new landscaping.
54. One respondent has expressed concern that cutting back part of the hedgerow along the western boundary would affect the rural appearance of the entrance to the village. In my view the removal of a small section of the existing boundary hedgerow would have only a limited impact on the overall rural appearance of the village.
55. The proposal seeks to make use of existing landscape features such as hedgerows and woodlands to ensure that the site as a whole fits into the surrounding landscape. The new landscaping proposed across the site would include a new hedgerow along the eastern boundary and new beech and cherry tree planting along the northern and western boundary. This new landscaping is beneficial and would help soften and enhance its overall appearance in the village context. Conditions can be imposed to require the final details of the proposed landscaping scheme to be submitted and agreed.
56. It will be important to ensure existing trees and hedgerows are protected during the construction works. Details can be required through condition.
57. Overall I do not consider that the proposed development raises significant issues in relation to landscaping (either proposed or existing) and as such there is no conflict with policies C1 and D1 of the SOLP.

### *Biodiversity*

58. The Council's Planning Ecologist has no objection to the application. She has assessed the application in terms of its impact on European Protected Species such as great crested newts and bats. She considers they are unlikely to be present. In such circumstances no further consideration of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations is necessary. The Ecologist considers that the landscape proposals have the potential for biodiversity enhancements and recommends a number of conditions to ensure protection and enhancement of biodiversity. These are set out in the recommendation.

*Drainage*

59. Policy EP6 of the SOLP requires development proposals to demonstrate that surface water management systems would effectively mitigate any adverse effects from surface water run off. The County Council's Drainage Engineer has no objection to the development in principle but has requested that the final drainage scheme for the development is submitted and agreed prior to the commencement of the development. It should incorporate the use of a Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS).

*Land contamination*

60. Policy EP8 of the SOLP prevents development on contaminated land unless the contamination is effectively treated by the developer. The Environmental Health Officer at the district council has requested that a land contamination condition should be imposed requiring the applicant to investigate for contamination before the development commences and if necessary, remediate the site before the development is occupied. This is necessary because school development is regarded in Planning Policy Statement 23 – Planning and Pollution Control (PPS23) as a particularly sensitive use to any land contamination. Although previous uses of the site suggest that contamination is unlikely an investigation of the site should be carried out before development starts.

*Street furniture*

61. Comments have been made expressing concern about the use of school/road signage and bollards as it would urbanise the village. The proposed highways safety measures (see paragraph 17) would affect the appearance of the street scene in the village. Nevertheless, the highway advice is that these measures are necessary to discourage speeding and help reduce the likelihood of accidents, particularly important around a school. I consider that the need for such street furniture outweighs any harm that it would have on the appearance of the village.

*(v) Other matters*

62. One resident has expressed dissatisfaction about the length of the consultation period and the level of publicity undertaken. The consultation period ran for the statutory period of 21 days and was supplemented with a second period to allow comment on the set of highway safety measures. Site notices were erected around the proposed site and an advert was placed in the local newspaper in the normal way. Notification letters were sent to adjacent landowners and residents who live close to the proposed site and the existing school site. Responses received during and after the 21 day consultation periods have been summarised at Annex 1. It is also noteworthy that the applicant carried out pre-application engagement with the local community, statutory consultees and other bodies.

63. A neighbouring landowner has put forward alternative land adjacent to the application site where they consider a new school could be built and/or where parking and drop areas for parents could be provided. These options have been forwarded to the applicant. The application before you is for the development of a new school on the land within the submitted planning application and therefore the merits of this site only need to be considered. There is no policy requirement for the applicant to assess alternative sites in order to establish whether other sites might also be suitable for the development proposed.

## Conclusion

64. The need for the replacement of the existing school has been clearly identified. Relocation of the school would allow it to secure its long term future and ensure that those pupils within its catchment attend their local school helping to maintain the viability of Rotherfield Peppard and by ensuring that the village school remains an integral part of the existing community.
65. The impact of the development on the edge of the existing village and within the AONB is limited due to the design of the development as a whole, including the height of the building, its materials and the use of existing and proposed landscaping. The scale of the development proposed is appropriate to this part of the AONB. The development would not lead to an increase in traffic on the local highway network. There are genuine concerns about highway safety. However, the applicant has carried out extensive work to ensure that these concerns can be fully mitigated.
66. The impact on a number of neighbouring dwellings and businesses has been fully considered. Whilst the nearest dwellings and properties are less than 45 metres from the proposed site I do not consider that there would be undue noise or other amenity impacts given the types of activities that would be carried out on site limited to normal school operating hours.
67. In my view the application does not raise any overriding issues that would conflict with the requirement of a *'presumption in favour'* of this type of development as set out in the Government's policy statement on schools development. The policy statement also requires all parties to work together at an early stage to plan for such developments and to shape strong planning applications. The applicant has carried out extensive work in order to ensure that this is the case. Overall I consider that the development is consistent with this policy statement and in my view there is no conflict with policy CF2 or other relevant development plan policies in the SOLP as I do not consider there to be any overriding amenity, environmental or traffic objections to the development.

## Recommendation

68. **It is RECOMMENDED that subject to a unilateral undertaking being first agreed to ensure that a contribution is made towards the provision of improved highway safety measures in the local area Application No. R3.0065/11 be approved subject to conditions to be determined by the**

**Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth and Infrastructure)  
to include the following matters:**

- 1. The development must be carried out strictly in accordance with the particulars contained in the application and the plans accompanying.**
- 2. Commencement of the development within 3 years.**
- 3. Submission and agreement of the external materials.**
- 4. Retained trees and hedges to be protected during construction works.**
- 5. Submission and agreement of a landscaping scheme - to include species mix, plant size, planting layout and spacing.**
- 6. Landscaping scheme to be implemented within first planting season following the completion of the development.**
- 7. Removal of hedgerow to be carried out outside of the bird breeding season.**
- 8. Submission and agreement of external lighting details and hours of use.**
- 9. Submission and agreement of land contamination assessment. Should contamination be found on site the submission and agreement of remedial strategy.**
- 10. Relocation of electricity transformer before the proposed development is brought into use.**
- 11. Submission and agreement of full details of proposed renewable energy technologies within the development.**
- 12. Submission and agreement of fencing details.**
- 13. External play areas and sports pitches to be used during school hours only.**
- 14. The school's existing Travel Plan to be updated to take account of the proposed new location.**
- 15. Submission and agreement of the detailed design of the scheme of highways safety mitigation measures, including the submission of a Road Safety Audit which shall be used to inform the final detailed design of such measures.**
- 16. Scheme of final highways safety mitigation measures to be implemented before use of the school.**

17. **Submission and agreement of the final details of parking, drop-off and turning areas. Such areas shall be implemented before use of the school.**
18. **Submission and agreement of cycle parking facilities.**
19. **Submission and agreement of construction traffic management plan.**
20. **Submission and agreement of a drainage scheme, including the use of SUDS.**
21. **Submission and agreement of final details of footways surfacing.**

**Informatives:**

**Archaeological informative – If archaeological finds do occur during development, the County Archaeologist shall be notified in order that he may visit the site and advise as necessary.**

**Contaminated land informative – If contamination is found to be present on site the applicant is requested to liaise with South Oxfordshire District Council's Environmental Health team prior to the submission of a remedial strategy.**

MartinTugwell  
Deputy Director (Growth & Infrastructure)

File Ref: R3.0065/11      8.3/7182/2

October 2011

## Consultation Responses and Third Party Representations

(Copies of all responses are available in the Member's Resource Centre)

An initial period of consultation and notification was carried out in May/June 2011. A further period of consultation was carried out in September 2011 on amendments to the applicaiton. A summary of all responses is set out below:

### 1. Consultations

May/June 2011 comments:

**a) South Oxfordshire District Council** – No objection. The site lies within the Chilterns AONB and would extend the limits of built development at Peppard. However, the development is to serve the educational needs of the local parishes which is considered to be a material planning consideration and the impact on the AONB would not be as great as other sites given that it is contained within existing hedges and woodland. The existing school has been demonstrated to be inadequate for modern education and other locations are likely to be less sustainable. Do not consider that the school would overlook or be oppressive to the adjoining properties. The design of the school has been formulated to reflect its location. The accommodation should be restricted to state education only, external lighting should be controlled and the pole mounted transformer at the front of the site should be removed to enhance the sites setting.

**b) South Oxfordshire District Council Environmental Health Officer** – No objection. Should any land contamination be found on the site it should be remediated before the development is occupied.

**c) Rotherfield Peppard Parish Council** – No objection. Comment that access via the B481 lay-by should be dependant on disciplined behaviour from parents when dropping off and collecting children. Suggest that: i) any required road safety measures should not detract from the rural appearance of this part of the B481, ii) measures should be put in place to protect the access to Dog Lane, the golf course and Ruchetta Restaurant, iii) adequate parking arrangements be put in place for existing users of the lay-by (e.g walkers and restaurant customers).

**d) Rotherfield Greys Parish Council** – No objection. The design of the proposed building is much liked. Have concerns about the parking provision during school peak periods but understand that this issue is being resolved.

**e) Highmoor Parish Council** – No objection.

**f) Chilterns AONB Conservation Board** - No objection to the principle of the development. The building has adopted a generally low profile and this is welcomed. Users of the site should be guided to the entrance by the layout of the paths within the site. Objects to the use of large, coloured mineral fibre wall cladding panels. Suggests that: i) these are replaced with materials that are in keeping with the local contexts (e.g. brick, traditionally constructed flint work or wood), ii) lime based render

is used rather than light coloured render as it would weather better and improve the environmental credentials of the building, iii) specific conditions are imposed to make the scheme as sustainable as possible.

**g) Nettlebed and District Commons Conservators** – The relocation of the school does not affect the village Common. The School Travel Plan is very thorough and its objectives and actions are welcomed.

**h) English Heritage** – The application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice.

**i) Environment Agency** – No objection.

**j) Sport England** – No objection. The proposed development would not impact on any existing sport facilities.

**k) Archaeology** – The proposal does not appear to directly affect any presently known archaeological sites. If archaeological finds do occur during the development the applicant should notify the County Archaeologist so that he can advise as necessary. This only need be an informative.

**l) County Planning Ecologist** – The ecological survey indicates that European Protected Species are unlikely to be present. No further consideration to the Conservation and Habitat Regulation is necessary. The landscaping scheme has potential for ecological enhancements. Suggests that a landscaping scheme is submitted for approval and that trees/hedgerow felling or coppicing should not be undertaken during the bird breeding season.

**m) Rights of Way** – The application does not affect any recorded public rights of way. However care should be taken for fencing and landscaping to avoid the footpath that runs down the eastern boundary of the site. There has been a history of poor surface water drainage of the lay-by section of the roadway from the B481 and this should be improved.

**n) Transport Development Control** – Submit a holding objection as the proposals do not adequately address the different context in which the proposed school would be situated compared to the existing village green location. The change to the location of the new school has not been mitigated for in terms of highway safety design measures, including dropping off facilities and the need to reduce speed of passing traffic on the adjacent B481.

September 2011 comments:

**a) South Oxfordshire District Council** - No comments to make on the amendments.

**b) Rotherfield Greys Parish Council** – Support proposed changes with one comment as to whether the proposed white gates on the highway will effectively reduce speed.

**c) Sonning Common Parish Council** - Concerned that the provision for off-road parking for parents dropping off and picking up their children are inadequate. Consequently there is a serious risk of on road parking on the B481 on either side of

the school by parents not wishing to park in locations well away from the school. The B481 is a major link road and is busy at all times and this will inevitably cause congestion and traffic hazards at either end of the school day.

**d) Chilterns AONB Conservation Board** – No comments to make on the amendments.

**e) Nettlebed and District Commons Conservators** – No objection to the proposed safety measures. Any surfacing of footways on the common should not be tarmac.

**f) English Heritage** – No comments to make on the amendments.

**g) County Forester** – Any agreed landscaping scheme must have a built in aftercare programme, preferably for three years.

**h) Transport Development Control** – No objection subject to conditions to cover the following matters:

- Travel Plan – shall be provided for the encouragement of the use of sustainable modes of transport to the development;
- Road Safety Audit, Highways Mitigation and Access Measures – a detailed design to deliver these highway safety measures shall be submitted for approval in line with the principles already established in the proposed highways measures drawing;
- Parking – final details of parking and turning areas shall be submitted and approved;
- Drainage – a Sustainable Drainage System (SUD's) for the site shall be submitted and approved;
- Cycle Parking Facilities – details of which shall be submitted and approved;
- Construction Traffic Management Plan – shall be submitted and approved.

## **2. Third Party Representations**

### May/June 2011 comments:

35 letters have been received from local residents and other third parties supporting the application. They make the following points:

- The existing school is cramped and not fit for purpose;
- The school has outgrown the existing site and needs updating;
- The development would help secure the long term future of the school;
- Existing school numbers are decreasing as the school lacks the complete range of educational facilities. The new school site would encourage parents to send children to the local primary school;
- The development would be beneficial to the whole community;
- The proposed parking arrangements and vehicular access have been well thought out;
- The site is well located in the village so parents would continue to walk to school;
- The design and materials of the new building would be sympathetic to the AONB and would be in keeping with the village;
- The visual aspects of the unused field would be greatly improved;

- Warning signs around the school would improve road safety and discourage drivers from speeding along the B481.

11 letters objecting to or expressing concern about the application have been received from local residents and other third parties. They make the following points:

- No provisions to mitigate the impact of traffic and road safety issues;
- Environmental and visual impact on the character and appearance of the village, Peppard Common and AONB;
- The use of the lay-by for access is not safe and will block access to Dog Lane;
- The application does not consider the unpredictable behaviour of small children when considering whether drop off areas area safe;
- The application must be considered in the same way as any other application;
- Proposals for access and staff and bus parking are inadequate;
- The drop off area is not practical and will be difficult to police;
- The development will make it unsafe for users of the adjacent bridleway;
- The park and stride proposal will not work in practice given how far children will have to walk;
- Congestion at drop-off times is already considerable and this will continue;
- Pedestrian routes to the site will be unsafe;
- The new access would have an impact on the adjacent golf course business, for example parents cars would block the route into the golf course;
- Parents may use the golf course car park;
- No specific details are provided of the new access into the site;
- The surface of the lay-by needs to be maintained during construction works;
- Previous planning applications for the golf course have been refused due to traffic and highways reasons. OCC now seem to consider the proposals are acceptable;
- It is unclear why a school of this size is needed;
- The development would lead to an increase in parking on grass verges on the Common;
- The proposed development does not seem to resolve the issues relating to playing field access;
- Speeding needs to be addressed and an opportunity to calm traffic by using a roundabout has been missed;
- Impact on local businesses;
- Residents should be informed of any travel improvements proposed as part of the school travel plan;
- The site is not suitable. The school should move to the south of Drays Lane and east of Church Lane;
- The coloured cladding, zinc roof and school signs would be harmful to the rural character of the village;
- It is unclear how the building would be low lying on the site;
- New landscaping should be mature and deciduous to provide an effective screen in autumn and winter;
- The lights would increase light pollution;
- Road signs, bollards and other street furniture would urbanise the village;
- Wildlife may be affected by the development;
- The culvert at the entrance to Dog Lane overflows when it rains, additional hard surfacing would exacerbate this issue;

- It is unclear whether Scottish and Southern Electricity are happy to reposition the electricity transformer and how this would be achieved;
- Concerns about the level and timing of the consultation on the application.

September 2011 comments:

44 letters have been received supporting the proposed highways measures from local residents or other third parties. They make the following points:

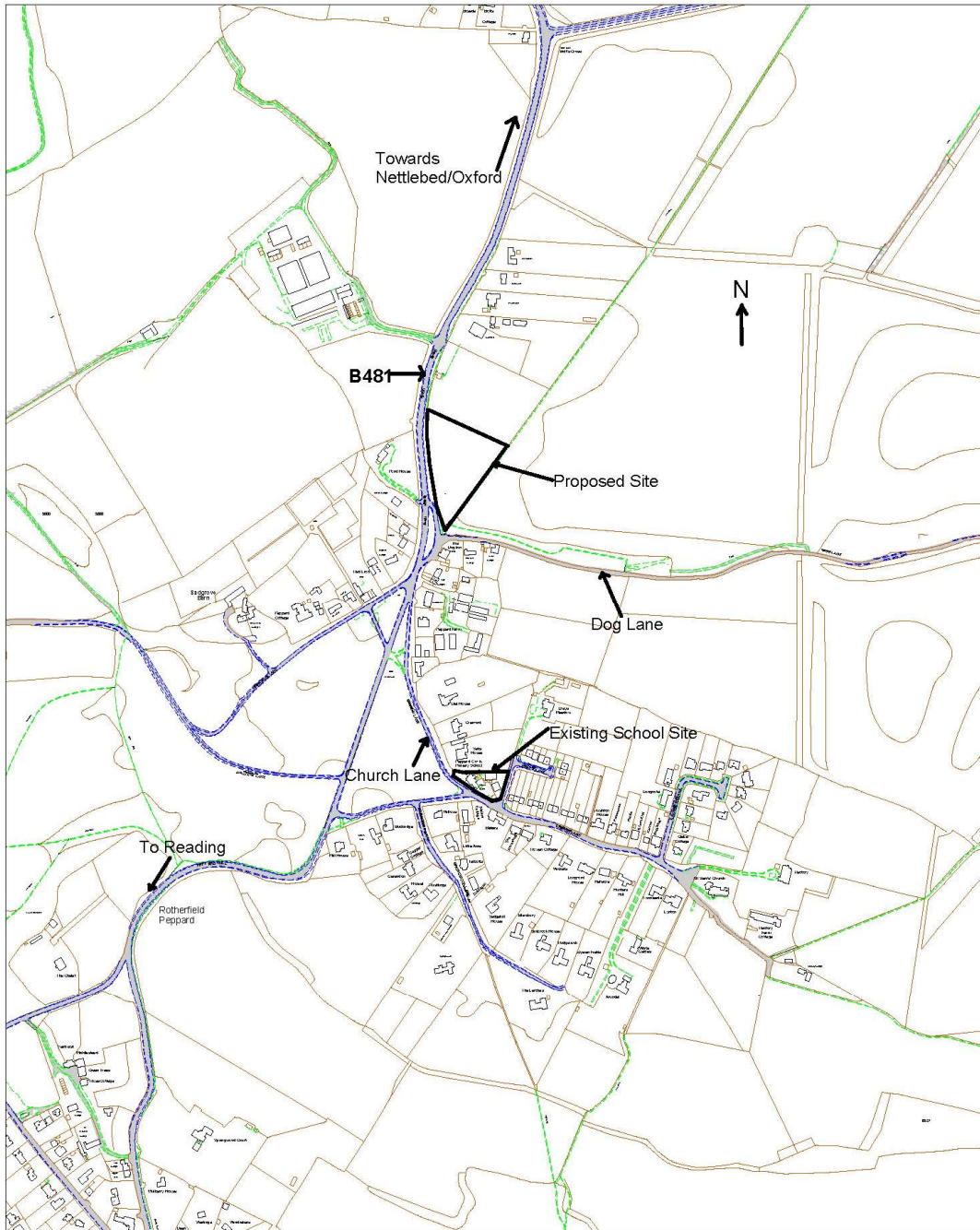
- The highways measures will seek to reduce and calm traffic speed on the B481 and benefit children attending the school and the community as a whole;
- They will improve vehicle access onto the B481 by reducing speed;
- The measures will not detract from the appearance of the village;

7 letters objecting or expressing concern to the proposed highways measures have been received from local residents or other third parties. They make the following points:

- The amendments are cosmetic in trying to squeeze the development into an inadequately sized and inappropriately located site;
- Parents will park where they like regardless of signs and bollards, this will cause traffic blockages in the 'lay-by' and on the B481;
- The lay-by is needed for its current use and previous Planning Inspectors have said space within it is insufficient and it should be kept clear;
- OCC highways have previously resisted any increase in traffic through the 'lay-by' to the adjacent golf club. This development will cause an increase of use of through the 'lay-by', therefore OCC highways must be consistent in their decision making;
- The development would negatively impact on the access for the adjacent golf course;
- Alternative land adjacent to the proposed development site could more appropriately accommodate the school and/or drop off and parking areas. This land would not overlook houses and would have more suitable vehicle access onto the B481;
- Walking to the school from the common along the busy B481 will be dangerous;
- The aesthetics of the village, the common and the AONB will be damaged and urbanised by the bollards, signs, gateways and kerbs;
- No evidence is provided as to how the amendments will improve safety, they are likely to increase risks;
- There is no acknowledgement of the unpredictable behaviour of small children when using the 'park and stride' and whether parents will adhere to using it correctly;
- Speed activated signs, posts and bollards, village gates and realignment of kerbs will not be effective in improving safety or reducing speeding;
- Realignment of the kerbline at the southern access will increase the amount of queuing for the entrance from traffic entering from the south;
- Replacing kerbs and resurfacing accesses will be ineffectual;
- Improvements to the junction of the B481 and Church Lane will not work;
- The proposal as a whole has inappropriate provision of parking, poor vehicle access and dropping off and picking up areas;
- The proposed 'Park and Stride' will not be effective.

Peppard CE Primary School: Plan A

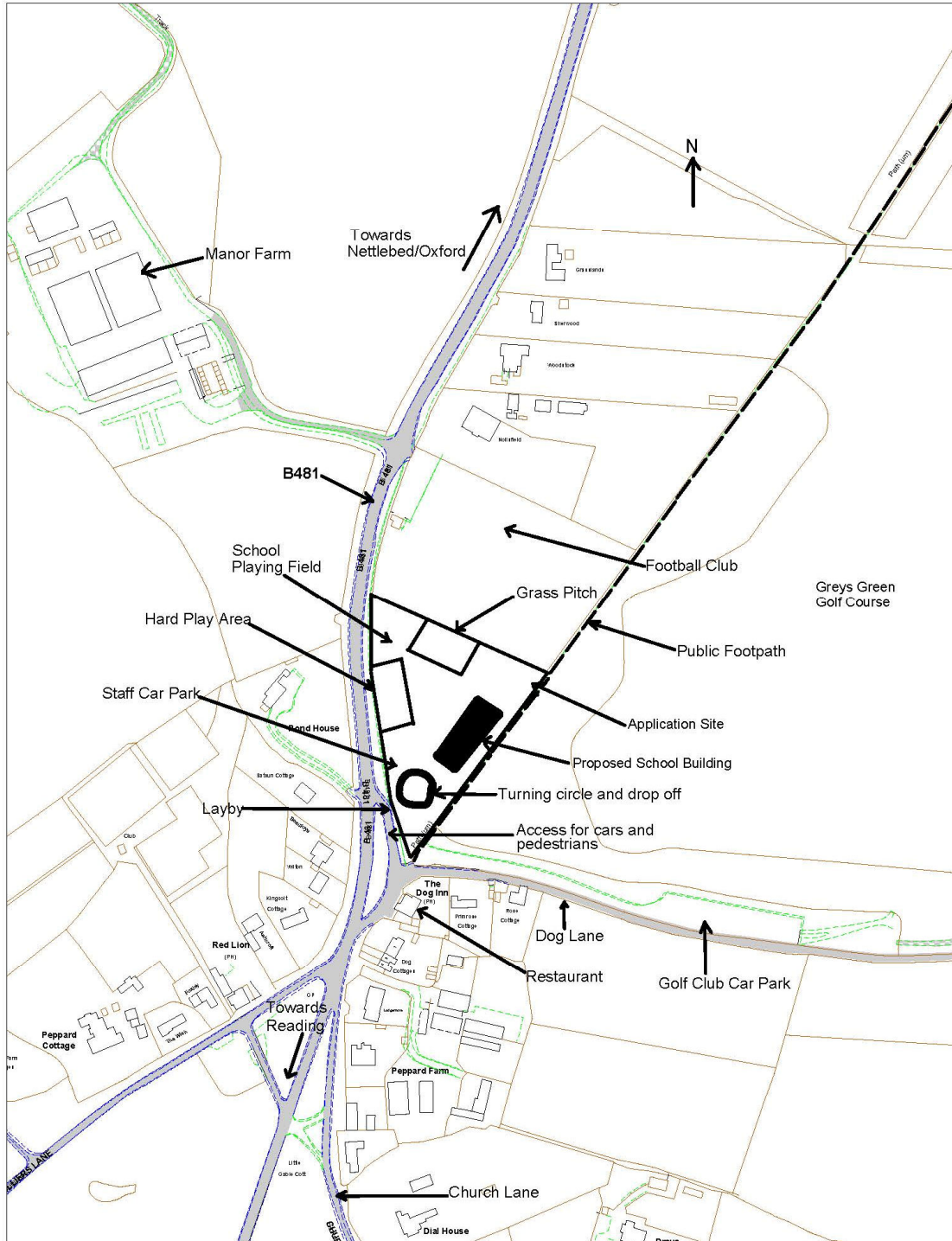
Application No. R3.0065/11



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

Peppard CE Primary School: Plan B

Application No. R3.0065/11



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