

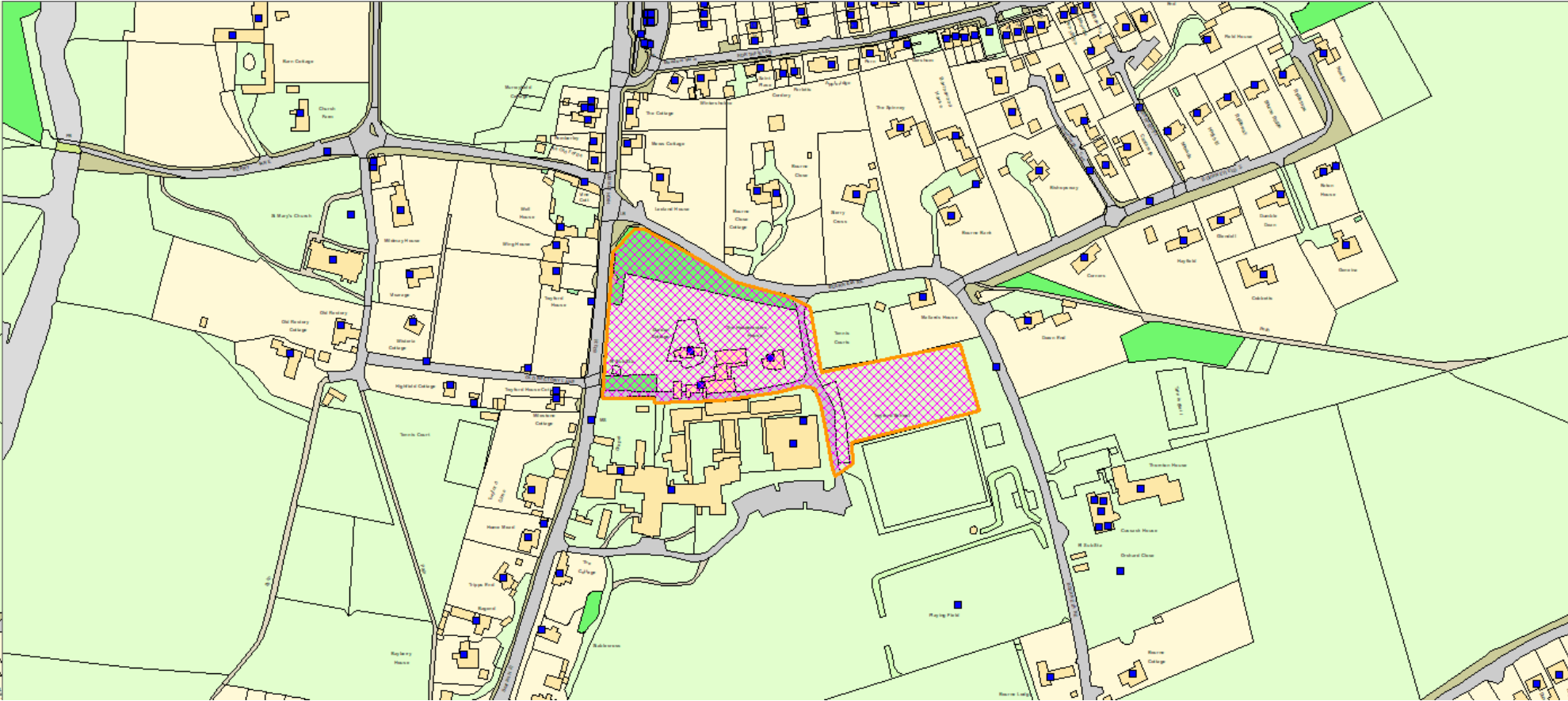
Agenda Item 6
Report PC23/24-24

Report to	Planning Committee
Date	14 March 2024
By	Director of Planning (Interim)
Local Authority	Winchester City Council
Application Number	SDNP/23/01466/FUL
Applicant	Twyford School
Application	Extend and resurface existing car parking areas for staff and visitors. Install new lighting to extended car parking areas.
Address	Twyford School, High Street, Twyford, Hampshire SO21 1NW

Recommendation:

- 1) That planning permission be granted subject to the conditions at paragraph 8.2 of this report.**
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Site Location Map



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Executive Summary

Key Matters

- Twyford School is an independent day and boarding school to the east of the centre of the village of Twyford. The School lies partially in the Twyford Conservation Area but is largely contained in terms of public visibility from the National Park environs.
- The School operates a one way system for pupil drop off and pick up. Vehicles enter via the High Street Access and exit via the Bourne Lane access point. There are currently 81 'formal' (marked out) staff and parent car parking spaces within the school, however in terms of area capacity there is space for approximately 150.
- This application seeks to formalise consent for 153 car parking spaces on site and will do this by re-surfacing the current areas in a mixture of tarmac and loose gravel. It will also involve the loss of some grassed areas and a number of trees. The application also proposes a significant increase in the level of lighting currently on site.
- Following a request from Hampshire County Council (highways) and the case officer, the applicant has submitted a Travel Plan.
- The scheme is before members due to the level of objection raised in relation to the proposals.

1. Site Description

- 1.1 Twyford School caters for pupils aged 2 – 13 and sits within grounds that extend to 30 acres.
- 1.2 As noted within the submitted Travel Plan the school employs 124 staff and currently has 434 pupils ranging from ages 2 to 13, of which approximately 48% of pupils come from families that have two or more children attending the school. Thirty-nine pupils are of nursery age and do not attend full-time. The School predominantly operates as a day school, with the majority of pupils travelling to and from school each day. However the school offers flexible boarding options (i.e. weekly Monday – Saturday or 1, 2, 3 nights a week). The site extends toward Bourne Lane and is bordered by residential properties to the north and agricultural land to the south.
- 1.3 The school is accessed from the High Street. A one way system is in place within the school grounds for drop off and pick up. Vehicles enter via the High Street access and exit onto Bourne Lane at the northern end of the site. The Bourne Lane vehicular access is also used for entry by larger vehicles including delivery lorries.
- 1.4 There are two existing car parking areas to the east and north of the school and within the boundary of the application site. The car park to the north is a staff car park, the car park to the east is a parents/visitors car park. The staff car park is on land adjoining High Street and Bourne Lane. The parents/visitors car park is further within the school site set back from Bourne Lane and comprises a 'u' shaped loose gravel surface surrounded by grasscrete. There are also other areas of parking, outside the redline plan but within the school grounds. These accommodate the school minibuses and an additional 40 staff/visitor parking spaces.
- 1.5 The total area dedicated by the planning application proposal to parking is only slightly more than the current area. However, as stated within the design and access statement, half of the existing parking area is in a poor condition with only 81 of the 153 car parking spaces clearly identifiable. The planning application forms submitted within the application record the existing number of spaces as 81 and the proposed number of spaces 153, a 72 space increase.

2. Relevant Planning History

- 2.1 There have been numerous approvals at the school over time but none, with the exception of that one cited below, are particularly relevant to this case.

- 2.2 SDNP/17/02070/PRE - Reconfiguration of access, set down/pick up and parking for staff and visitors, including improvements to junction of Bourne Lane and High Street. Reconfiguration of service area to provide lay-by for service and delivery vehicles on High Street : Advice provided 17th January 2018. The executive summary within this pre application advice states “The proposal to consolidate the car parking and access to the school in the area to the north of the school and adjacent to Bourne Lane is acceptable in principle. There are a number of constraints on this site; archaeology, trees, landscape and historic environment considerations, but it is considered that with careful planning and appropriate mitigation these concerns can be overcome”.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 The application proposes to extend and resurface existing car parking areas for staff and visitors and to install new lighting to the extended car parking areas. 2 new electric charging stations will be installed in the eastern staff car park and the road providing access to this part of the site will be slightly widened to 4.5m to aid vehicular movements.

Parking and access

- 3.2 The proposals to the car parking areas do not impact access or egress from this site. There are no objections from Hampshire County Council with regards to traffic ingress or egress and no objection in terms of highways safety. HCC recommended within their first consultation response that the school look to provide a Travel Plan. This has now been provided.

Ecology, biodiversity and landscaping

- 3.3 A preliminary ecological appraisal has been submitted, this concludes that no mitigation is required because there will be no loss of important habitats or species as a result of the proposals. It recommends measures are included to protect trees and hedgerows from construction vehicles and this is secured by condition. It also recommends the creation of wildlife refuges areas (log piles) in the wood strip to the north of the pond and bird, bat and owl boxes within the tree line and hedge.
- 3.4 The application proposes the removal of a number of trees within the conservation area for arboricultural and safety reasons. These are T6 (Horse Chestnut), T13(Ash), T18 (Sycamore), T43 (Birch), T45 & 46 (Pine), T50 & 52 (Cherry), G55 (4 Pine), T63 & 65 (Pine) and T69 (Ash).

4. Consultations

- 4.1 **Dark Night Skies:** No objection.
- 4.2 **16th January 2024 Drainage:** No objection subject to conditions.
- 4.3 **Ecology:** No objection subject to condition.
- 4.4 **HCC Highways:** No objection subject to s106 agreement to secure revisions to Travel Plan including monitoring payment and no concerns regarding access or egress.
- 4.5 **WCC Heritage** - Concern regarding impact on setting of Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area.
- 4.6 **Winchester Landscape:** Comments:

Concern raised with regards to the potential view of parked cars from various points along Bourne Lane and Mallards House. Concern also raised with regards to potential light pollution in relation to Dark Night Skies. Recommended that a landscaping condition is attached to secure the hedge planting and tree planting that is referenced in the submission and that opportunities to maximise vegetation should be taken. Recommended that minimal lighting is used and that this is Dark Night Sky compliant.

Officer Response – This part of the school is well screened from views within the National park. Revisions have been submitted during the course of the application and there is now no objection in relation to trees, ecology or dark night skies. The original school building is grade II listed and its

garden is on the Hampshire inventory of Historic Parks and Gardens, but not on the statutory list held by Historic England.

4.7 **WCC archaeology:** No objections Subject to conditions.

4.8 **WCC Trees:** No objection, subject to conditions.

4.9 **Twyford Parish Council: Comments;** Objection for the reasons below:

July 2023: The school has steadily increased in pupil numbers and employees. In 2018 there were approximately 400 pupils and 100 employees (teachers and auxiliary). The PC was informed by the leadership of the school that this would be the level at which they wished to operate and further growth was not required. Under a new leadership regime current numbers have risen to 436 pupils and 120 employees. There are between 600 and 700 car movements in a day excluding the service deliveries and visitors. Consequently at peak times congestion occurs at the narrow school entrance on B3335 and on Bourne Lane upon departure. The numbers making use of the mini bus service are not disclosed in the application although information received indicates that about 70 pupils per day are transported. No car sharing is detailed .

The school does not have a travel plan and the PC recommends a comprehensive Plan is formulated and promoted actively to the school fraternity to pursue. Increased bussing and parental lift sharing arrangements ought to be at the heart of the Plan. Once in operation it should be measured so that when further planning applications are submitted, any achieved mitigation can be assessed. The Travel Plan should be a produced and activated as a condition prior to approval being granted to this application. A consequence of the increasing size and activity of the school is the increasing proportion of developed area and the consequent diminution of green space and removal of trees. In this application there is to be further removal of trees without adequate compensatory planting

TPC support its construction provided the following conditions are imposed/satisfied;

1. All car park lighting must be dark skies compliant, produce minimum light spill, have motion sensitive settings and be time restricted to no later than 8.30pm,
2. The removal of trees be limited to only that which is absolutely necessary in the Staff Car Park area and replanting to be undertaken,
3. The new hedgerows to be planted should contain mature plants and be supported by other planting of evergreen shrubs nearby to reduce any light penetration to the north and west,
4. An archaeological report is undertaken before commencement of work and findings are investigated and recorded,
5. A Travel Plan is produced and activated prior to approval being granted to incorporate regular monitoring .

Other issues: There are some other issues to be noted regarding the undertaking of unauthorised development by the school. In the last two years, three unapproved developments have taken place; the installation of non-compliant lights on the astro pitch and the construction of a road crossing on Bourne Lane by Orchard Close (both approved following retrospective applications), the installation of four 3 metre tall lights in the staff car park earlier this year.

February 2024: Comment: Twyford Parish Council wishes to clarify its comments submitted earlier, in July 2023, regarding the lighting proposed on the north car park of Twyford School, namely that; the lighting should be placed at low level, be dark skies compliant, appropriate for its needs and movement sensitive. There is no need to over illuminate the area as security lighting is already operating on the walls of the buildings to south of the car park and street lighting from Bourne lane, to the north, provides illumination in the winter months when the trees have lost their leaves. Little to no lighting is required in the summer months as the car park is generally empty by 7 pm at the latest.

4.10 Ward Councillor Tony Higginson for Colden Common & Twyford - Objection

- Objection to the extension of the car park. Not persuaded in the absence of a clear travel policy at the school that everything is being done with the best interests of the environment and the community in mind. The absence of a clear school travel plan leads to a critical lack of any objective evidence by which decisions can be made to justify increasing existing infrastructure to support cars as a transport mode.
- If such a local institution does not wish to lead on doing the best it can to reduce car traffic and be seen to appropriately challenging its own current plans for active travel and mode shift, then it cannot then be surprised that it will face objections from the local community. Once the school has a travel plan it would then be possible to understand what the rationale would be for extending the car park to involve conservation land, destroying the legacy of mature trees for its pupils and the next generation.

5. Representations

5.1 2 letters of support raising the following matters:

- School uses minibuses and car sharing
- Agree that school should pay more attention to tree preservation and lighting.

5.2 9 Letters of objection raising the following matters:

- Dark night skies – must be no light pollution and should be DNS compliant
- Lighting should be on a sensor and the application does not mention this
- School should be exploring ways to reduce reliance on private cars
- Traffic management plan should be put in place to reduce cars, school appears to have no travel plan.
- School should publish travel and local environment plan
- School should liaise with residents regarding travel plan
- Queuing on Bourne Lane
- A bigger car park for the school does not improve the health and wellbeing of people in Twyford
- School has more than 400 pupils and 100 staff
- They should plant more trees
- No details of landscaping, tree planting or hedging
- School is not neighbourly

6. Planning Policy

6.1 Most relevant policies of the adopted South Downs Local Plan (2019) (a longer list of other relevant policies can be found in Appendix I)

- SS2: Ecosystems Services
- SD5: Design
- SD8: Dark Night Skies
- SD11: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- SD15: Conservation areas
- SD19 : Transport and Accessibility
- SD22: Parking Provision

6.2 Relevant supplementary planning documents (SPD) and other guidance

- Parking for Residential and Non-Residential Development SPD (2021)
- Ecosystems Services TAN

6.3 Most relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021

- Section 12: Achieving well designed places.
- Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

6.4 Most relevant policies of the South Downs Management Plan (2020-2025)

- Policy 1 – Landscape
- Policy 3 – Dark Night Skies

7. Planning Assessment

Principle of development

7.1 Policy SD19 supports development proposals where they promote the use of sustainable modes of transport.

7.2 Policy SD22 (2); Parking Provision supports development proposals if they provide an appropriate level of private vehicle parking to serve that development and in accordance with the relevant adopted standards for the locality. Electric vehicle points should be provided where possible and parking should be of a location, scale and design that reflects its context as well as incorporating appropriate sustainable drainage systems. Paragraph 6.39 confirms that new parking areas will be expected to contribute to a range of ecosystem services while protecting the landscape.

7.3 The application mainly seeks to formalise parking on the school grounds where there is already grasscrete and/or gravel screed. There is one area labelled 'informal parking' on the existing drawings, which is currently just mown grass. This is a flat area accessed by a sloping track which is roughly tarmacked. This grass area is only used when the ground is dry enough. By formalising and 'improving' the current areas where staff and parents park the school will 'gain' 72 formal spaces. These parking proposals are not associated with additional development but are seeking to manage an existing on-site situation.

7.4 The parking SPD advises a site specific assessment based on travel plan and needs for non-residential institutions such as schools.

7.5 The extended and proposed parking areas are formed of a mixture of tarmac and gravel, each individual space being gravel to improve drainage and the areas to access them formed from tarmac. The development is located within the school grounds and already largely hidden from public view. Additional tree planting and hedge planting is proposed along the boundary with Borne Lane and the High Street and a range of ecosystems services measures are proposed, including bat boxes and bird boxes. The parking areas are of a scale and design that reflects their functional nature and landscaping improvements are included where possible. Additionally the proposals include for 2 new EV charging points and incorporate appropriate sustainable drainage systems (details to be subject to condition). Therefore, the development is considered to accord with policies SD19 and SD22

Design and landscape

7.6 Policies SD4 and SD5 only permit development where it will preserve and enhance landscape character and where sensitive and high quality design makes a positive contribution to the overall character and appearance of the area.

7.7 The impacts on the character and appearance of the conservation area are also addressed below.

7.8 The proposals would partially extend and formalise 3 separate areas of existing car parking within the school site. All areas are currently accessed by tarmac and are located away from

the historic buildings at the front (southern boundary) of the site. The existing and proposed northern staff car park fall partially within the boundary of the Twyford Conservation Area. Concern has been raised by the WCC heritage officer that the additional hard standing required to form the larger staff car park in this location will suburbanise this part of the site and impact the setting of the listed buildings on site. Concern is also raised that Gardeners cottage will be surrounded by tarmac.

- 7.9 The listed buildings are to the south of the car park and separated visually from it by numerous large 2 storey and existing modern buildings. There will be no appreciable impact upon these listed buildings as a result of the proposals. The cottage too is modern and, whilst the addition of further hardstanding to its rear will result in it effectively being surrounded by tarmac, it still retains its garden, the mature hedging around it and substantial trees within this plot. Given the secluded nature of the school and the already existing presence of a large amount of hard standing in the car parking areas the re-surfacing works are considered to preserve the setting of the listed building and conservation area.
- 7.10 Overall, the proposals are considered to be low key within the school setting and are unlikely to be overtly apparent from the conservation area once the proposed new planting has been established. They are embedded within the overall school site and (in the main) formalise existing areas of hardstanding rather than creating new ones. This is considered to be the most appropriate and sensitive approach for this particular site and the approach is landscape led in this regard. The proposals would accord with policies SD4 and SD5.

Ecology and biodiversity net gain

- 7.11 During the course of the application further details were sought from the applicant regarding ecology and they have now included a commitment to enhancements such as bat boxes, bird boxes and woodpiles in addition to hedge planting and tree planting.
- 7.12 There is no objection from ecology or landscaping to the removal of those trees cited within the submitted arboriculture report (all of which are category C or below) providing that additional native trees and planting is secured. It is recommended this is done via condition.
- 7.13 The application was submitted in April 2023 and is therefore exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. However, the application will deliver ecosystems service enhancements in the form of additional native hedge and tree planting. A condition is attached requiring a landscaping and planting scheme in order to secure these enhancements. Given the amount of space available within the site and the fact that indicative tree locations are already shown on the submitted drawings, a condition requiring a landscaping scheme is appropriate in this instance.
- 7.14 Following the submission of further information during the course of the application the county ecologist does not object to the scheme and recommends mitigation and enhancement measures (e.g. nesting boxes, wildlife refuge areas and planting) regarding protected species are secured by condition.
- 7.15 Policy SD2 is accorded with.

Highways and parking

- 7.16 The proposals will not result in the increase in traffic to and from the school and the Highways Authority has not objected on highway safety grounds. The level of parking proposed can be accommodated on site and is deemed to be acceptable for the number of pupils and staff numbers. During the course of the application a Travel Plan has been submitted and this sets out the following measures to encourage a reduction in car use:
- Reduce number of pupils being dropped off/picked up by single occupancy vehicles
 - To increase proportion of pupils using minibus
 - To reduce number of staff travelling by single occupancy vehicles
 - To increase use of low emission vehicles

- 7.17 The Highways Authority overall support the submitted draft travel plan but consider that further more detailed amendments are needed, in conjunction with securing monitoring fees to ensure it is implemented for the longer term.
- 7.18 In relation to monitoring fees the following should be noted; Paragraph 8.1.11 of the current Travel Plan commits the school to appointing a Travel Plan Co-Ordinator and supplying the contact details of this person to HCC. Paragraph 9.3.2 of the current Travel Plan sets out how the school will monitor the impact of the Travel Plan and commits to sharing these results with HCC on request. Given that the proposed development does not increase pupil or staff numbers or propose additional facilities that could subsequently increase pupil or staff trips, it is considered that the travel plan could be amended to take into account HCC's comments and agreed and secured via a condition, rather than a legal agreement and that the monitoring fees are unnecessary in this particular instance.
- 7.19 The travel plan commits the school to monitoring the targets set down within it and to sharing this information outside of the school. Therefore, once this document is secured by condition, the Authority will have the ability to monitor the progress of the school in terms of the targets set.
- 7.20 HCC have also suggested a condition relating to hard surfaces and drainage. These details are secured via condition 7 as drafted.

Neighbouring amenities

- 7.21 Concern has been raised about traffic queuing on the roads surrounding the school during pick up and drop off time. This application does not seek to increase the pupil or staff numbers or to provide further, potentially traffic generating, facilities at the school. WCC highways have confirmed no objection to the application on highways safety grounds and it is considered that, given that there is no predicted change to the number people coming to and from the site as a result of the proposals, traffic issues on the local road network are beyond the scope of this application.
- 7.22 The school has confirmed that it has staggered drop off and pick up times for varying age groups within the school and it has submitted a travel plan which records the current mode of transport for staff and pupils as a marker in time, and also seeks to reduce reliance on the private car by its staff and pupils.

Surface water drainage

- 7.23 The current car parking areas are covered in a mix of concrete, tarmac, grasscrete and gravel screed and grass. The application proposes tarmacked access to each car park with each individual space made up of gravel to aid permeability. The district drainage engineer has no objection to the proposals but recommends a pre commencement drainage condition, including infiltration testing, to ensure the gravel bays can perform as expected.

Dark Night Skies

- 7.24 Policy SD8 requires that proposals demonstrate that all opportunities to reduce light pollution have been taken.
- 7.25 During the course of the application the applicant has submitted additional information and revisions and the proposed lighting scheme has been reassessed. The Dark Night Skies consultant is now satisfied that the proposals are appropriate. The lighting proposals are now DNS compliant and the level of illumination proposed is considered appropriate.
- 7.26 The school have also committed to removing all the existing 3 metre, non DNS compliant lighting columns and replacing these with DNS compliant ones and all new lighting will be sensor controlled. Additionally a condition is added preventing the erection of additional external lighting without prior consent. The proposals are considered to comply with SD8.

Conclusion

- 7.27 The proposals would provide an additional 72 formal car parking spaces on this part of the school site, but would only increase the (formalised) surface area given over to parking by 380sqm – noting that this area is mown grass accessed via a tarmacked track from the

northern staff car park and already used informally for parking.

- 7.28 The school have submitted a Travel Plan which seeks to encourage less reliance on private vehicles. It has also reduced lighting levels as requested and provided additional information regarding ecology during the course of the application.
- 7.29 Overall, the scale and design of the proposals are acceptable having taken into account consultee responses, representations, and the landscape character and appearance of the immediate and surrounding area. The proposals would also preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area for the reasons outlined. There are no impacts upon surrounding amenities as a direct result of these proposals which would justify a refusal of Planning Permission.
- 7.30 The proposals substantially comply with the Local Plan and the NPPF, National Park Purposes and duty, and relevant legislation. There are no material considerations of sufficient weight which would justify refusing permission.
- 7.31 The application is, therefore, recommended for approval subject to planning conditions.

8. Reason for Recommendation

8.1 It is recommended that Planning permission be **granted** subject to the conditions set out below:

8.2 Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the plans listed below under the heading "Plans Referred to in Consideration of this Application".

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Landscaping, ecology and trees

3. No development shall commence take place until a further detailed Scheme of Soft and Hard Landscape Works has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include (but not be limited to):
 - a. Written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment);
 - b. Planting methods, tree pits & guying methods;
 - c. Schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate;
 - d. Retained areas of trees and hedgerows;
 - e. Details and positioning of bat boxes, bird boxes and wildlife refuge piles;
 - f. Details of proposed trees and hedgerows including species and positions;
 - g. A landscape schedule for a minimum period of 5 years including details of the arrangements for its implementation;
 - h. A timetable for implementation of the soft and hard landscaping works.

The scheme of Soft and Hard Landscaping Works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved timetable. Any plant which dies, becomes diseased or is removed within the first ten years of planting, shall be replaced with another of similar type and size, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To achieve an appropriate landscaping scheme to integrate the development into the landscape and provide a setting for the new development.

4. The development shall proceed in full accordance with the measures detailed in Sections 4.2 'Recommendations – further surveys' and 4.3 'Recommendations – opportunities for enhancement' of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal by Vesper Conservation & Ecology Ltd. (September 2023)

Reason: To ensure the protection of notable/protected species.

Dark night skies

5. The development permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the external lighting scheme by Light Tech dated 11.09.2023.

Reason: To conserve dark night skies.

6. No external lighting shall be installed on the buildings.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in detail in the interests of night time amenity, tranquillity and protect and conserve the International Dark night Skies.

Drainage

7. No development shall commence until a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme, including a Management Plan detailing its future management and maintenance, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This scheme should show hard surfaces as porous materials, and where these are not porous provision shall be made to direct run-off water from the hard surfaces to a permeable or porous surface within the site. The scheme shall thereafter be undertaken in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory provision of surface water drainage and avoid discharge of water onto the public highway.

Trees

8. Protective measures, including fencing and ground protection, in accordance with the Arboricultural Impact Appraisal and Method Statement reference 1148 written by Catherine Fforde of SJ Stephens Associates and submitted to the Local Planning Authority shall be installed prior to any demolition, construction or groundwork commencing on the site. Works shall be carried out in accordance with the methods stated within this approved statement, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the amenity and the landscape character of the area and to ensure protection and long term viability of retained trees and to minimise impact of construction activity.

Highways

9. An updated Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the development being brought into first use. Thereafter the measures set down within the approved Travel Plan shall be put into place and monitored as set down within the approved document.

Reason: To reduce reliance on the private car and promote sustainable transport in accordance with SD19.

MIKE HUGHES
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South Downs National Park Authority

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SDNPA Consultees Legal Services, Development Manager

Background Documents: [All planning application plans, supporting documents, and consultation and third party responses](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework \(2021\)](#)

[South Downs Local Plan \(2014-33\)](#)

[South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan](#)

[SDNPA Supplementary Planning Documents and Technical Advice Notes](#)