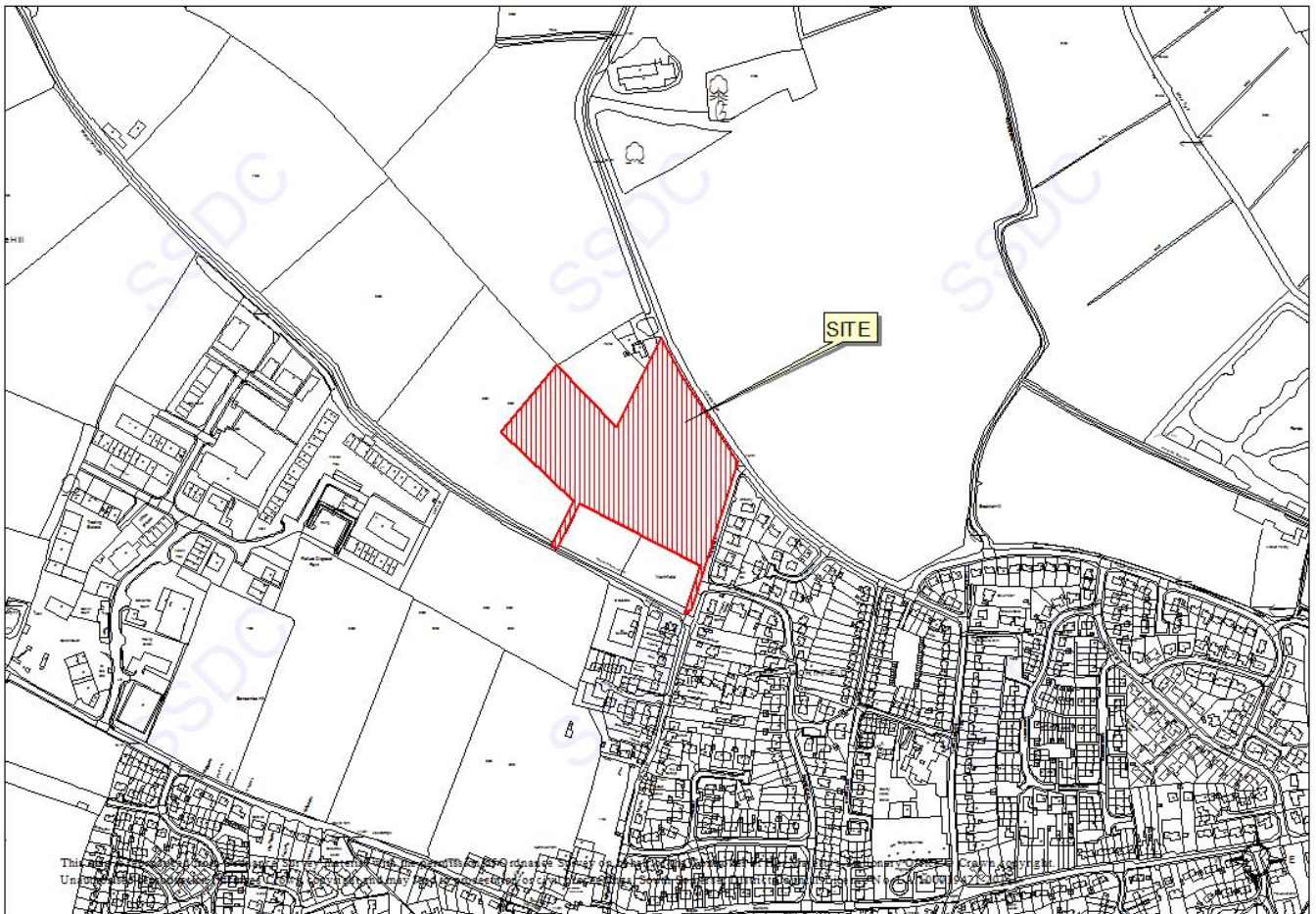


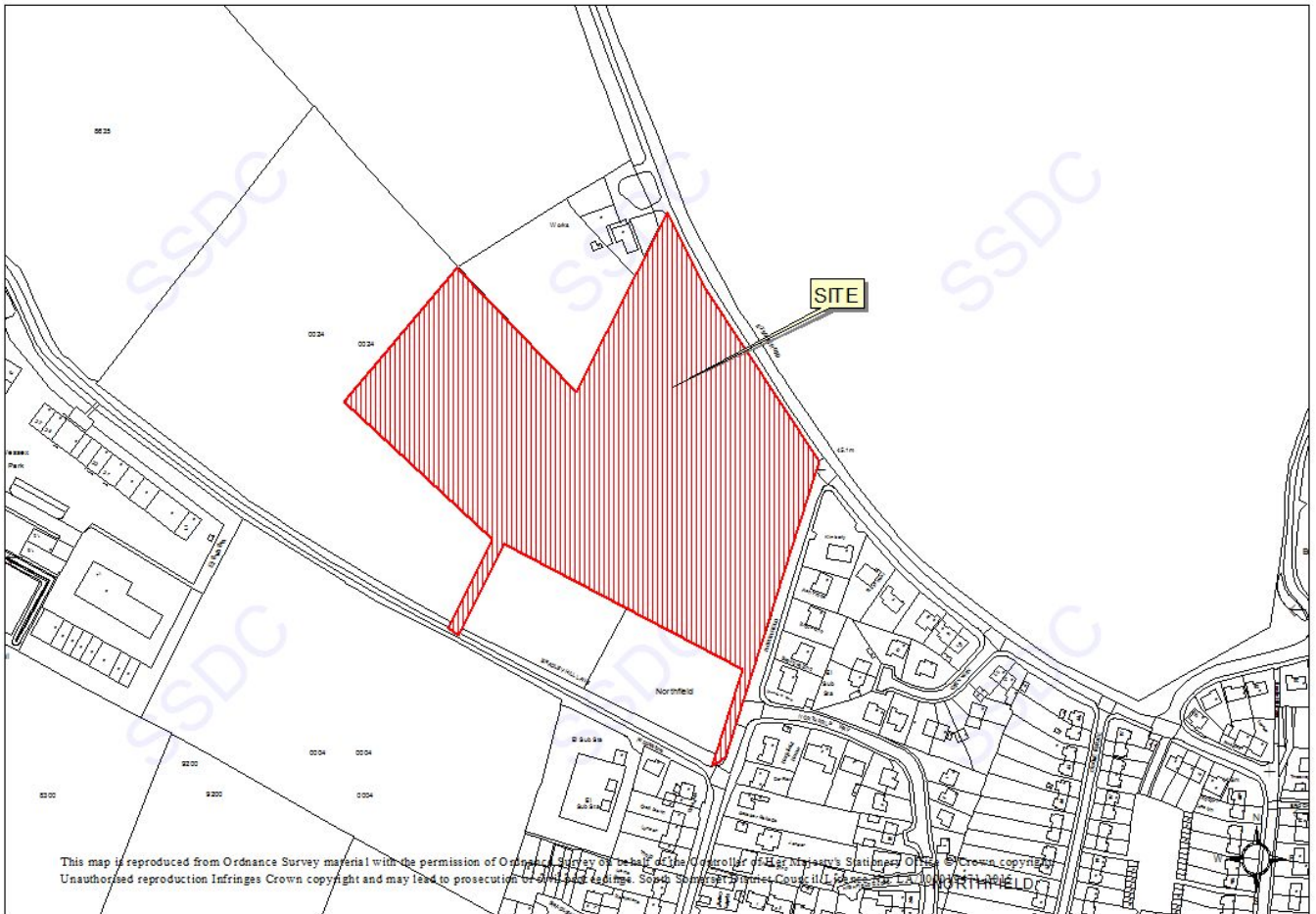
Officer Report On Planning Application: 19/00721/FUL

Proposal :	Erection of new primary school, to include construction of sports pitches, parking area with drop off/pick up area, new access points onto Northfield and Etsome Road, landscaping and associated infrastructure.
Site Address:	Land OS 1615, Etsome Road, Somerton.
Parish:	Somerton
WESSEX Ward (SSDC Members)	Cllr T Kerley and Cllr D Ruddle
Recommending Case Officer:	Alex Skidmore Tel: 01935 462430 Email: alex.skidmore@southsomerset.gov.uk
Target date :	26th June 2019
Applicant :	Mr P Griffin
Agent: (no agent if blank)	Ms Coral Ducroq, Promenade House, The Promenade, Clifton Down, Bristol BS8 3NE
Application Type :	Major Other f/space 1,000 sq.m or 1 ha+

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMITTEE

The application has been referred to Area North Committee under the delegated powers of the Development Manager in view of the nature of the proposed development and so that the issues raised can be further considered by Committee.





SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

This application is seeking full planning permission for the erection of a new primary school with a capacity of 420 pupils, with space to allow further expansion should it be needed in the future for a further 210 pupils. The new school is sought to replace the existing King Ina primary school and pre-school which currently operates over two separate sites within the town and which are highly constrained restricting their capacity to expand further in its existing locations.

The application site comprises 3.3 hectares of agricultural farmland, currently left for pasture, and is located on the northwest periphery of the built up area of Somerton and approximately 500 metres from the nearest school site which is located on Etsome Terrace to the east. The site sits opposite residential housing on Northfield Road and there is a single dwelling situated on adjacent land to the northwest of the site, to all other sides the site is surrounded by agricultural and. The site, which is relatively flat and level with nearby development, is bounded primarily by native hedgerows and is accessed via Bradley Hill Lane to the south. The site is within flood zone 1 and is not located within any areas of special designation.

The application is supported by:

- Planning Design & Access Statement (incorporating a Secure by Design Statement and Refuse Disposal Details);
- Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) / Foul Drainage Strategy;
- Archaeology Assessment;
- Ground Conditions Report;

- Utility Assessment / Plan;
- Ecological Survey (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal);
- Energy & Sustainability Strategy;
- Transport Statement;
- Travel Plan;
- Construction Environmental Management Plan;
- Statement of Community Involvement.
- Plans including topographical survey, location plan, existing and proposed site plans, proposed elevations, floors and roof plans, indicative proposed views, building sections, site sections, topographical survey and landscape masterplan.

HISTORY

No recent relevant history in respect of the application site.

This report makes reference to a proposed residential housing scheme on neighbouring land (Land OS 9200, Bancombe Road, Somerton) immediately to the south of the application site and is referred to as the 'Fairfax' scheme, this is proposed under the following outline application and is yet to be determined:

18/03483/OUT: Outline application for residential development of circa 130 new homes, together with associated open space and related infrastructure as well as the means of access (all other detailed matters – scale, layout, appearance and landscaping - are reserved for later consideration). Pending consideration.

Other major housing schemes approved in Somerton in recent years:

15/03585/OUT: Granted outline consent for up to 59 dwellings on land off Cartway Lane to the south of Bancombe Road. Reserved matters has yet to be submitted.

13/03272/OUT: (later amended under application 18/00363/S73A): Granted outline consent initially for 150 dwellings, this was later increased to 161 dwellings under the subsequent Section 73 application, on land south of Landport Road. Reserved matters was later approved under application 17/00568/REM (later amended under application 18/00645/REM to incorporate the increase in house numbers). This application is now under construction.

10/03704/FUL: (later amended under application 15/04331/S73): Granted consent for 133 dwellings on land at Northfields Farm. This scheme is now well advanced in terms of its construction.

POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), and Paragraphs 2, 11, and 12 of the NPPF indicate it is a matter of law that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purposes of determining current applications the local planning authority considers that the adopted development plan comprises the policies of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 (adopted March 2015).

Policies of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028)

SD1 - Sustainable Development

SS1 - Settlement Strategy

SS6 - Infrastructure Delivery
LMT3 – Somerton Direction of Growth
TA1 - Low Carbon Travel
TA4 - Travel Plans
TA5 - Transport Impact of New Development
TA6 - Parking Standards
EQ1 - Addressing Climate Change in South Somerset
EQ2 - General Development
EQ3 - Historic Environment
EQ4 - Biodiversity
EQ5 - Green Infrastructure
EQ7 - Pollution Control

National Planning Policy Framework

Part 2 – Achieving sustainable development
Part 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
Part 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
Part 10 – Supporting high quality communications
Part 11 – Making effective use of land
Part 12 – Achieving well-designed places
Part 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Part 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Part 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
Part 17 – Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Other

Somerset County Council Parking Strategy (September 2013)
Somerset County Council Highways Development Control - Standing Advice (June 2017)

CONSULTATIONS

Somerton Town Council: Recommend approval but offered the following recommendations and observations:

- More parking could be gained by placing the water attenuation underground;
- Request for the Travel Plan and Transport Plan documents to be reviewed. The walking route via Waverley and Highfield Way and the provision of crossing guards is unrealistic and unaffordable. Who will pay for this?
- Request for traffic calming in Northfield and 20 mile per hour speed limit on all access roads to the school;
- Concerns over highways issues and pupil safety;
- A new link road from Bancombe Road to Bradley Hill Lane should be put in place related to any new housing developments in Bancombe Road (Fairfax). This will permit safer passage for both pedestrians and vehicles to the school taking the pressure off Northfield.
- Concerned over the limited staff parking facilities (only one space for every 2 full-time staff member, most of whom live outside of Somerton);
- Request for more overflow parking facilities (over attenuation tanks);
- Widening of the junction of Etsome Road, Cary Way and Northfield.

County Highways: Offered the following observations:

“Concerns have been raised regarding the increased use of Northfields by pedestrians attending the school, as there is limited footway provision along certain lengths of the road. However, on-going liaison and discussions over an appropriate Travel Plan and pedestrian access through the adjoining development site submitted under application number 18/03483/OUT will create an improved method of access and help remove the need to use Northfields.”

Recommend a number of conditions to cover the following matters in the event of permission being granted:

- Prevent emission of dust or deposit of mud, slurry or other debris on the highway during the construction phase.
- The pick-up / set down arrangements and parking areas to be laid out and constructed prior to first use.
- Development to be served by a new access as per the submitted plans.
- Limit the access off Northfields for the purpose of “Entry Only”.
- Limit the northern access on to Etsome Road for the purpose of “Exit Only”.
- Scheme to prevent the discharge of surface water on to the highway.
- Provision of a 1.8m wide footway around the Northfield access, as per the approved plans, to be provided prior to first occupation.
- Provision of a cycleway and footway connection between the school buildings and the site’s southern boundary on to Bradley Hill Lane, as per the submitted plans.
- Provision of consolidated onsite parking and turning, as per the submitted plans, prior to first occupation.
- Development shall not be commenced until a detailed Travel Plan has been agreed in writing. The scheme shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed TP thereafter.
- Provision of visibility splays no greater than 300mm above adjoining road level 33 metres in either direction.

Somerset Waste Partnership: No comments received.

County Education: No comments received.

County Minerals and Waste: No comments received.

County Archaeology: Recommends further assessments prior to determination.

The desk based assessment provided concludes that there is archaeological interest within the application area. This interest is defined as being the potential for the presence of buried archaeological remains, in particular relating to Iron Age and Romano-British activity with cropmarks indicating a possible hut circle and field system. I also agree with the comment in the report that at this level of assessment it has not been possible to assess the date, exact nature and significance of these remains. Therefore recommends that the applicant provides further information on any archaeological remains on the site prior to the determination of the application.

Crime Liaison Officer: No objection but queried what access control measures have been considered for the various gated entrances.

Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA): No objection subject to a pre-commencement condition requiring a detailed surface water drainage scheme. They made the following additional comments:

“We note that the drainage strategy states that there is scope for an expansion to create a 3FE school

and additional pitches to the north, but this does not form part of the current proposals. We would expect any future separate application with to be accompanied with details of proposed drainage infrastructure and any required attenuation.

We have no objection and encourage the use of infiltration features where these are locally possible but would just seek clarity that the permeable surfacing for the PE court and the filter strips are appropriate given the stated ground conditions.

On a general point, the consultant undertaking the drainage strategy should undertake the SUDS techniques review prior to determining the preferred methods of water management. Some methods appear to have been discounted due to a seemingly pre-determined intention to discharge to attenuation basins. SuDS techniques can (and we would argue should) be used in conjunction with each other and are not limited to simply flood risk management. Sites such as schools, provide an excellent educational opportunity to utilise a range of SuDS, to support the school and wider community learn about flood control, biodiversity, pollution and sustainability, as well as providing amenity spaces for students to enjoy.

Please be aware that as it appears you propose works on and ordinary watercourse may require a land drainage consent from the LLFA (ourselves). For more information please visit: www.somerset.gov.uk/consent.”

Environmental Agency: No comments received.

Wessex Water: No comments received.

SSDC Environmental Health: No comments.

Natural England: No comments.

SSDC Ecologist: No objection subject to conditions to:

- Control lighting in the interests of protecting foraging bats;
- To limit when any hedgerows, trees and shrubs are removed on site so that this does not occur during the nesting season;
- To protect reptiles during constructions works;
- To require biodiversity enhancements.

The Ecologist did raise a concern in respect of the proposed Landscaping Masterplan and requested that the amenity grassland right up to the hedgerows (including the attenuation pond) are designated as wild flower meadow so that this is in line with SCC's Pollinator Action Plan. This matter can be addressed through a condition requiring an amended Landscaping Plan.

Somerset Wildlife Trust: Support the findings of the Ecology Appraisal but are disappointed about the lack of biodiversity enhancements and lack of tree planting and provision of a wildlife area.

SSDC Tree Officer: Noted that some basic measures to protect retained trees and hedges seemed appropriate but considered the Landscaping Masterplan to be rather disappointing which makes provision for the planting of just 6 unspecified trees. Therefore suggested conditions requiring a tree and hedge protection plan and a landscaping / tree planting scheme.

REPRESENTATIONS

Written representations have been received from five local households. None of the households have raised an in principle objection to the proposed new school but have noted the following concerns and objections in respect of the proposal:

- Highway safety - support the principle of the new school and the benefits this will bring however have reservations about the suitability of aspects of the transport strategy:
 - Welcome the initiatives to get more children walking to school however it has to be recognised that any change in habits takes time. For some families anything other than driving is not an option, such as those living outside the town and those driving to work after the school run, concerned that too much reliance has been placed on pupils walking to school and therefore the reliability of the Travel Plan which is based on a show of hands by pupils when asked if they would like to walk to school.
 - At times Etsome Terrace is filled with parked cars and large vehicles such as tractors, fuel lorries etc regularly get stuck whilst they wait for parents to move.
 - The drop off lane will assist with getting parents off the road but I still believe it will have an impact on road parking. The TP identified the capacity for kerbside parking within 200m of the site and identified 56 spaces within Northfield which appears to have been exaggerated. Northfield is without any pavement for much of its length, the hazardous nature of this is recognised in the TP and an alternative walking route identified for children. It is not ideal for parents to unload children and walk them along the road without a refuge even if they are accompanied.
 - Additional parking should be provided within the site and every effort made to demonstrate the site is self-sufficient in its parking provision because to do otherwise runs the risk of detriment highway safety and the amenity of nearby neighbours.
- The lack of safe pedestrian provision will do nothing to help encourage more to walk to school.
- Key is the safety of children, vehicle management must be given greater consideration.
- I disagree that Etsome Terrace is lightly trafficked and on street parking will make it difficult for school buses and other service vehicles to access the school safely and satisfactorily.
- The proposed pedestrian entrance shared with the kitchen services is unsatisfactory and staff and visitor parking inadequate. The water attenuation area should be made subterranean to allow additional parking to be made available.
- Northfield is a very dangerous road, it has a narrow bend with no pavement and cars parked there. I have had many narrow escapes when walking with cars speeding towards each other and unable to see around the bend. This is not suitable for use by children to get to school.
- Access to this corner of Somerton is difficult at best and with the amount of additional car journeys this proposal will generate will become dangerous. What price do we put on our children's safety?
- The reports on traffic flow are flawed. The proposal is for a 400+ pupil school of young children, if half walk (optimistic) it still leaves 200+ cars travelling to and parking in and around the site. Parents will park as near to the proposed school as possible.
- This application should be refused until a sensible proposal addressing all safety / access issues is presented and agreed or another site chosen.
- Concerns about the safety of the local highway network as a result of this proposal.
- The idea of directing pedestrians away from Northfield Road and along Waverly and Highfield Way instead as a route to get to the school is interesting but I question how compliant parents are likely to be in this regard. Encouraging cycling is a good idea with questionable as they will be competing with other vehicles.
- The school is unattractive.
- This will promote the uneconomic provision of playing areas. The school will have good playing

facilities which will be utilised only on weekdays during term time. Meanwhile the sports ground at Langport Road continues to be unused on weekdays during term-time.

CONSIDERATIONS

Principle

This application is seeking to erect a new primary school with a capacity of 420 pupils, with space to allow further expansion should it be needed in the future for a further 210 pupils. The new school is sought to replace the existing King Ina primary school and pre-school which currently operates over two separate sites, one at the southern end of Etsome Terrace and the other at Kirkham Street in the town centre, both of which are highly constrained in their size and ability to expand further in these locations.

Over recent years Somerton has experienced a relatively high level of housing growth which has contributed significantly to the increase in pupil yields for this catchment area putting pressure on the existing school infrastructure. Based on approved and proposed planning applications for housing within the settlement, the growth in housing in Somerton looks set to continue for the foreseeable future, which can only exacerbate matters further. It is therefore proposed to relocate the school to this new site where it is better able to meet current and future demand.

Local Plan (LP) Policy LMT3 stipulates that the direction of growth for Somerton should be to the west of the town, the location of the site, which is a greenfield site comprising agricultural land, on the northwest periphery of the town is therefore considered to comply with this requirement. Whilst it is located on the edge of existing built development, in terms of distance alone, it is relatively well related to the town centre and to existing housing development. The principle of building a new school in this location is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Highway Safety / Accessibility

The proposed school site is situated right at the northern end of Northfield Road and approximately 500m to the northwest of the existing school site located on Etsome Terrace. At present the application site is undeveloped agricultural land which generates only a low level of agricultural traffic and overall this end of Northfield Road can reasonably be described as being a very quiet, lightly trafficked part of the local road network. The proposed development, which is to have a capacity of over 400 pupils with space to expand further in the future, is likely to have a very noticeable impact both in terms of the nature and number of vehicular movements generated by the school and also those approaching the area by foot and bicycle. It is not unreasonable either to expect the level of on-street parking to increase as a result of the development.

Concerns have been raised by a number of local residents as well as the Town Council about the accessibility of the site, inadequate level of on-site parking provision, and the substandard nature of the approach roads. As part of the application submission the applicant has provided a detailed Traffic Assessment as well as a Travel Plan setting out anticipated levels of traffic generation, the proportion of pupils and staff who are likely to walk or cycle to the site and schemes to be utilised to encourage more to give up using the car for such trips.

These reports acknowledge the substandard nature of Northfield Road to the south of the site which is very narrow and unable to accommodate two-way traffic in places and lacking in a continuous footway. This route however provides the most direct route to the school site for anyone approaching (or leaving) from the south and west of the site, such as St Cleers, the Northfields Farm and Langport Road developments as well as the direction of growth. As the most direct route from that side of town it is reasonable to anticipate that it will prove to be the most desirable route for anyone walking or cycling in this direction as well as leading to an increase in vehicular traffic.

The scepticism of the Town Council and local residents in regard to the traffic generation, parking impacts and the long-term success of the travel plan measures are not considered to be entirely without foundation. In particular the measures to encourage pedestrians along Waverley and Highfield Way away from Northfield Road by traffic guards (a teacher or 'lolly-pop person') is questionable given that it is not possible to prevent anyone from legally using the public highway, which would be the case if they continued along Northfield Road to the school rather than the suggested alternative route. It is also suggested that walking trains (groups of school children) be used along the alternative route however this would take long-term organisation and the enthusiasm for such an approach is unclear and unproven in this location.

The Highway Authority has provided the following comments:

“Concerns have been raised regarding the increased use of Northfields by pedestrians attending the school, as there is limited footway provision along certain lengths of the road. However, on-going liaison and discussions over an appropriate Travel Plan and pedestrian access through the adjoining development site submitted under application number 18/03483/OUT will create an improved method of access and help remove the need to use Northfields.”

Whilst their comments do not appear to object to the proposal, they have based this view on having an appropriate Travel Plan to mitigate the impacts of the proposal as well as the provision of an alternative pedestrian access through an adjoining development site (the Fairfax scheme for 130 houses located just to the south of the school site – application ref. 18/03483/OUT) which incorporates a link from Bancombe Road through to Bradley Hill Lane which is immediately to the south of the school site. This is unfortunate given that the Fairfax scheme is still under consideration and if approved would still require the later consideration and approval of reserved matters. The Fairfax scheme is entirely separate to the school proposal and if approval is granted there is no guarantee of when or even if the housing scheme will ever be built out, at the very best it is likely to be a number of years before the proposal could realistically be implemented and the footpath link provided. Given the lack of guarantees attached to the Fairfax scheme, the provision of the associated footpath link cannot be relied on to make the proposed new school acceptable from an accessibility / highway safety point of view.

This application for a new school must be considered as a standalone application based on its own merits. The Highway Authority's comments of support are based on this pedestrian link being provided however as this link cannot be relied upon or secured through the school application it must be interpreted that without this link the HA is not supportive of the scheme and that as matters stand the proposal is not acceptable from a highway safety point of view.

Prior to the submission of this application, the proposal went through a pre-application process involving SSDC's Planning Department and the Highway Authority. During this stage of the process various recommendations were made but unfortunately the applicant has not taken the opportunity to incorporate all of these into the end submission. To highlight some of the concerns and recommendations that were made and which are considered to still be relevant and unresolved SSDC's Highway Consultant has offered the following comments:

“These views are no different to those that I have adopted from the outset of this scheme, having been involved with pre-application discussions with you and the applicant. I have restricted my comments to pedestrian/cycle accessibility and general connectivity of the proposal to the surrounding transport network, as well as commenting on on-site matters. I do not propose to comment on the vehicular traffic impact of the scheme on the local highway network - this would have been assessed and considered by the highway authority.

Off-Site matters

Northfield – The location and size of the new school has the potential to generate significant

levels of pedestrian traffic. This is borne out in the Transport Assessment (TA). I consider one of the main desire lines from the south would be along Northfield. It is acknowledged that Northfield does not meet current highway standards of incorporating a minimum width of 5.5m with footways either side. The applicant's proposal to cater for pedestrian traffic travelling from/to the south of the site is to implement a routing scheme along Waverley, Highfield Way and Northfield Way. This represents a detour from the desire line. I am of the opinion that parents/children are unlikely to adopt such a route even if being encouraged by a member of staff. My view is that where possible, infrastructure should be implemented to encourage safe access to the school on the desire line that parents and children would take. From the school site heading south, this would mean providing a new 2m wide footway on the west side of Northfield from the site access southwards to the Bradley Hill Lane junction and then continuing southwards on the west side of Northfield down to the Bradley View junction. The verge on that side of the road appears to form part of the public highway. From the Bradley View junction an existing footway continues southwards. As it narrows I believe an assessment could be carried out to establish whether it could be widened. It is acknowledged that there then becomes a point where it would not be possible to provide a footway in addition to the existing carriageway. At that point, a shared surface arrangement could be installed with a change in surface treatment and the provision of appropriate signage for the short length to the new housing development scheme.

Bradley Hill Lane – The currently submitted residential development proposal promoted by Fairfax provides a potential opportunity to create a vehicular link from Northfield through to the northern section of that development scheme, even if it operated in one direction only. I consider it important to maximise permeability by all modes of transport, particularly given the direction of growth planned for Somerton. It is accepted that the lack of a vehicular link by Fairfax would not make that scheme unacceptable, but by locating a large primary school off Northfield, the school is likely to attract vehicular traffic from that direction.

In light of the above, I believe the applicant should be encouraged to re-assess the proposed pedestrian access strategy from/to the south along Northfield and to proposed improvements to facilitate safe pedestrian movement in that direction, and to consider the potential for creating a vehicular link to the school from Bradley Hill Lane should the Fairfax scheme be permitted.

On-Site matters

The proposed drop-off/collection zone would only be able to accommodate a maximum of 10 cars at any one time. The TA indicates in Table 7.7 of that report that there could be some 250 arrivals by car (single occupants or car sharing). While the objective of the Travel Plan would be to encourage as many parents and children as possible to access the school other than through the use of private vehicles, I think in reality the number of drop-off/collection spaces would be insufficient, particularly at the end of the day when parents would be waiting to collect children. It would appear possible to redesign this area to maximise the number of temporary parking bays that could be provided. This could include proposing an improved arrangement for delivery/service vehicles and coaches."

For the reasons set out above it is not considered that it has been adequately demonstrated that the impact of the new school upon the local road network will not result in an unacceptable congestion and risk to highway safety as a result of increased traffic generation, increased conflict between pedestrian / cyclists with motorised traffic and increased on-street parking. The proposal is therefore recommended for refusal on this basis.

Visual amenity

Somerton is a hill top town and the site, which is fairly flat and level with surrounding development, is close to the northern escarpment where the land drops away to the low lying moors beyond. The

development, which includes a two-storey school building, therefore has the potential to intrude into skyline views from the north. The layout of the site however has been carefully considered in this regard with the main school building orientated so that the narrower gable end faces to the north which should have a minimal presence in such views. The position of the building set back deeply within the site will mean that it should not be unduly dominant or appear at odds with the much more modest neighbouring residential development.

It is intended to retain the surrounding native hedgerows and to position any security fencing on the inside of the hedgerows in order to mitigate the appearance of the fencing. The Tree Officer has raised concerns about the limited amount of tree planting, a point also raised by the Somerset Wildlife Trust, and it is considered that there is opportunity to increase this so that the presence of the school can be further softened as well as to aid biodiversity. This matter and any tree / hedge protection measures however can be dealt with acceptable by condition, and as such is not a matter to object to the proposal for.

Overall the layout and appearance of the new school, including its associated infrastructure and access arrangements, broadly accords with that discussed at pre-application stage is considered to have only limited visual amenity and landscape impacts which in turn can be acceptable mitigated by an appropriate landscaping scheme.

Residential amenity

The location of the school is edge of settlement with residential development to the east and northwest and agricultural land to all other sides. The position of the school building within the site is towards the centre of the site where it is set away from neighbouring properties and where it will not result in any significant overlooking, overbearing or loss of light concerns. The nature of a community school is such that it needs to be located close to the community which it is to serve as such the associated activities and noise etc is an accepted element of residential areas and considered to be compatible with surrounding residential uses, such as in this instance. The Council's Environmental Health Officer was consulted on the proposal and has confirmed that they have no objection to it. On this basis the proposal is not considered to give rise to any substantive residential amenity concerns.

Other matters:

- Flooding / Drainage – The site is located within flood zone 1 and is therefore considered to be at low risk of flooding. The submission was supported by a Flood Risk Assessment and drainage strategy which has been considered by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), who has raised no objection to the proposal subject to a condition to secure a detailed drainage scheme.
- Archaeology – At the recommendation of the County Archaeologist further survey work was requested by the application prior to the application being determined. This work has now been undertaken however the associated report is yet to be provided for approval by the County Archaeologist. Therefore the following recommendation is made subject to no further recommendations or objections being made by the County Archaeology.
- Ecology – The Council's Ecologist has raised no objection to the proposal subject to a number of recommendations and conditions.

Conclusion

The need for a replacement primary school and the benefits that this will bring to the community of Somerton is not in doubt and can only be fully endorsed as a matter of principle. However, the substandard nature of the approach roads to the new school site, specifically Northfield Road which is narrow, poorly aligned and lacking in adequate footpath provision raises significant concerns. It is clear

from the applicant's own Travel Assessment and Travel Plan that the school is anticipated to generate a significant level of traffic on a daily basis all of which will need to come along either Etsome Terrace or Northfield Road. Whilst Etsome Road is better able to accommodate such increases in traffic this is unlikely to be the preferred route for everyone approaching from a southerly and westerly direction, instead Northfield Road as the most direct route is likely to be the more desirable route.

The Travel Plan includes provisions to encourage pedestrians to approach the school by a more circuitous route, directing them by the use of traffic guards, away from Northfield Road and instead along Waverly and Highfield Road where there is a continuous footpath before egressing back on to Northfield Road close to the school site. The TP also promotes the use of walking buses so that the children can be walked to school along this alternative route in groups. The effectiveness of such a scheme in this instance however is questionable and it is unclear whether there will be the enthusiasm and resources to put these measures in place let alone maintain them in the long-term. The use of Northfield Road by pedestrians is likely to be highly desirable due to its direct route to the school, this however will mean pedestrians and traffic having to share the same space raising the likelihood of conflict between walkers and vehicles to the detriment of their safety.

To encourage more people to walk to school as opposed to driving is something to be viewed positively and is fully endorsed. However, it is not considered that the Travel Plan is realistic about the likely habits of commuters to the school or that adequate consideration has been given to potential improvements for pedestrians along Northfield Road, for example through the provision of additional pavements where possible or shared surfaces where it is not. It is clear that for the reasons stated earlier in this report that the proposed footpath link through the adjacent Fairfax site cannot be relied to provide a suitable and safe alternative route to the school.

Unfortunately, for these reasons, the proposal is considered to be unacceptable on highway safety grounds, contrary to policy TA5 of the South Somerset Local Plan and the provisions of the NPPF.

In terms of the other impacts of the proposal it is accepted that these can be adequately mitigated through condition. The only proviso to this relates to Archaeology, at present a further archaeological report is awaited, subject to this being submitted and the County Archaeologist being content with this, the proposal is not considered to raise any other substantive concerns. A verbal update on this will be given to Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse consent for the following reason:

It has not been adequately demonstrated that the proposal, as a result of its location, the substandard nature of the approach roads and the lack of pedestrian and cycle provision, will not result in an unacceptable level of congestion on the local highway network or bring pedestrians / cyclists into unacceptable conflict with other road users. It is not considered that the provisions set out within the Travel Plan are sufficient or realistic to encourage pupils and staff to walk / cycle in the long-term rather than to drive which might otherwise mitigate such concerns. The proposal is therefore contrary to the aims and objectives of Policies SD1 and TA5 of the South Somerset Local Plan and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.
