

Somerset County Council

Regulation Committee – 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Report by Service Manager – Paul Hickson

Strategic Commissioning Manager

**Application Number: SCC/3640/2019**

**Date Registered:** 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Parish:** Somerton Town Council

**District:** South Somerset

**Member Division:** Somerton

**Local Member:** Councillor Dean Ruddle

**Case Officer:** Karen Wray

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**Description of Application:** 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 an associated infrastructure

**Grid Reference: Easting** – 348143, **Northing** - 129180

**Applicant:** Somerset County Council

**Location:** Land at Northfield, Somerton

## **1. Summary of Key Issues and Recommendation(s)**

1.1 The proposed development is for the creation of a new school with associated sports facilities, parking and infrastructure. The key issues for Members to consider are: -

- Whether the principle of the development is acceptable
- Visual and landscape impact

- Residential amenity
- Archaeological impact
- Flood risk
- Ecological impact
- Highway safety

**It is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the imposition of the conditions in section 9 of this report and that authority to undertake any minor non-material editing which may be necessary to the wording of those conditions be delegated to the Strategic Commissioning Manager – Economy and Planning**

## **2. Description of the Site**

2.1 The application site which comprises 3.3 hectares of agricultural farmland is located on the northwest outskirts of Somerton approximately 500 metres from the nearest school which is located on Etsome Terrace to the east. The site abuts a residential area separated by Northfield, a public highway running adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site. Etsome Road which borders the northern boundary of the site with agricultural land beyond provides access to a single dwelling to the north west of the site. The southern and western boundaries are also flanked by agricultural land. The site, which is relatively flat is bounded by mature hedgerows with agricultural access via Bradley Hill Lane to the south. The northern and eastern boundary hedgerows have recently been breached to provide access to undertake archaeological works to the site and will form the entrance and exit to the site should permission be granted.

2.2 Following archaeological evaluation there is evidence of the remains of a Romano-British settlement on the site. The site is within flood zone 1 and not within any special landscape designated areas.

## **3. Planning History**

3.1 No relevant site history

3.2 The report however refers to a proposed residential housing scheme on the neighbouring land (Land OS 9200, Bancombe Road, Somerton) to the south of the application site and is referred to as the 'Fairfax' development. This is proposed under the following outline application but is yet to be determined by South Somerset District Council.

Application reference 18/03483/OUT – 'outline planning 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.

## **4 The Proposal**

4.1 Somerset County Council seeks planning permission under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 for the erection of a new school. The school will have a capacity for 420 pupils, with space to allow further expansion should it be needed in the future for a further 210 pupils (any future development being subject to a further planning application). The new school is to replace the existing King Ina primary school and pre-school which currently operates over two separate sites within Somerton. These sites are highly constrained restricting their capacity to expand further in their existing locations.

4.2 The proposal would consist of the formation of a new entrance off Northfield and an exit off Etsome Road to provide an in/out system. A drop off/pick up lay by would be included as part of the access arrangements and a staff car park providing 28 No. standard spaces, 2 No. visitor spaces, 2 accessible spaces and 2 No. motorcycle spaces would also be constructed to the front of the school.

4.3 The main school building which would be set back within the site would be a 2-storey elongated, rectangular building of modern design. On the ground floor would be the reception, school hall, nursery, offices, classrooms, storage space and welfare facilities. The first floor would comprise the staffroom, library, most classrooms, further storage space and welfare facilities.

4.4 To the northern end of the building a hard formal PE area would be created and to the rear of the school building 2 No. 5 a side football pitches would be laid out and a 9 a side (youth) football pitch. To the most northern point of the site a wildlife area would be created adjacent to a single detached dwelling.

4.5 An existing agricultural access off Bradley Hill Lane to the south would provide access for maintenance vehicles, emergency vehicles and continued agricultural access. In the event that a future housing development know as ‘Fairfax’ is built, this access would enable pedestrian/cycleway access from the new housing to the school as a footway/cycleway will be built as part of this proposal to link Bradley Hill Lane with the main school building.

## **5. The Application**

5.1 Documents submitted with the application are set out below

- Application Forms and Notices
- Planning Design and Access Statement (incorporating a Secure by Design Statement and Refuse Disposal Details)
- Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)/ Foul Drainage

- Archaeological 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, floor plans and roof plans, indicative proposed views, building sections, site sections and landscape masterplan.

## **6. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)**

6.1 An assessment of the proposed development in the context of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 has demonstrated that the proposal falls within Schedule 2, specifically project type (10b) 'Urban development projects' and that the proposal exceeds the applicable thresholds and criteria in so far that the development includes more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not dwelling house development. As such, it is necessary to screen the proposal to determine whether or not the effects on the environment associated with the development are likely to be significant. The screening opinion process determines whether or not the proposal is EIA development, and therefore whether or not an Environmental Statement is required.

6.2 The screening exercise has been undertaken using the selection criteria for the screening of Schedule 2 development, which is set out in Schedule 3 of The Regulations. As such, the characteristics of the potential impact have all been assessed. The appropriate design of the development; absence of sensitive areas (as defined by regulation 2 of the EIA Regulations); relationship between the site and residential properties in the locality; development of the wider area surrounding the site; and potential to use appropriate conditions to avoid, manage or mitigate the effects associated with the development, all combine to indicate that the effects would be unlikely to have a significant impact on the environment in this instance.

6.3 Taking account of the above, and for the reasons discussed, it has been concluded that the proposed development is a Schedule 2 development; but that the associated effects on the environment are not considered to be significant. Accordingly, the proposed development is not EIA development and an Environmental Statement is therefore not required to accompany the planning

application. An EIA Screening Opinion has been completed, issued and forwarded to South Somerset District Council to place on the Public Register accordingly.

## **7. Consultation Responses Received**

### External Consultees

7.1 South Somerset District Council: Officer recommendation to refuse planning permission 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 an 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 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.

7.2 South Somerset 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 provisions for the planting of just 6 specified trees. Therefore, suggested conditions requiring a tree and hedge protection plan and a landscape planting scheme.

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

- More parking could be gained by placing the water attenuation underground;
- Request 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 along Northfield and 20mph speed limit on all access roads to the school;
- Concerns over highway issues and pupil safety;
- Request a new link road from Bancombe Road (Fairfax). This will permit safer passage for both pedestrians and vehicles to the school taking pressure off Northfield.
- Concerns over the limited staff parking facilities (only one space for every 2 full time staff members most of who live outside of Somerton);
- Request for more overflow parking facilities (over attenuation tanks);

- Widening of the junction of Etsome Road, Cary Way and Northfield.

7.4 Environment Agency: No comments received.

7.5 Wessex Water: No comments

7.6 Natural England: No comments

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

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

7.9 Somerset Waste Partnership: No comments received.

#### Internal Consultees

7.10 Waste and Minerals Policy: No comments received.

7.11 County Archaeology: An archaeological evaluation has shown that there are the remains of a Romano-British settlement on the site. This consists of enclosures, pits and roundhouses. Although the evaluation report has not been completed, the applicant has sent an interim statement on which basis the County Archaeologist advises that the developer should be required to archaeologically excavate the heritage asset and provide a report on any discoveries made as indicated in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 199). This should be secured by the use of a planning condition attached to any permission to secure a Programme of Works in accordance with a written scheme of Investigation.

7.12 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 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 it appears you propose works on an ordinary watercourse may require a land drainage consent from the LFFA. For more information visit: [www.somerset.gov.uk/consent](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/consent)*

*7.13 Highway Authority: 'Concerns have been raised regarding the increased use of Northfield by pedestrians attending the school, as there is limited footway provisions 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 18/03483/OUT will create an improved method of access and help remove the need to use Northfields.*

*In the event that permission is granted it is recommended that conditions are imposed that address the following:-*

- 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 Northfield for the purpose of 'Entry Only'*
- Limit the northern access onto Etsome Road for the purpose of 'Exit Only'*
- Scheme to prevent the discharge of surface water on to the highway*
- Provisions 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 onto 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 Travel Plan thereafter.*
- Provision of visibility splays no greater than 300mm above adjoining road level 33 metres in either direction'.*

*7.14 Ecologist: No objection subject to conditions to cover the following: -*

- 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 construction works
- To require biodiversity enhancements.

The ecologist also objects to the proposed Landscaping Masterplan where amenity grassland is shown right up to the hedgerows. It is recommended that these areas are designated as wildflower meadow, especially along the frontage of the school and in the area of the attenuations. This would be in accordance with Somerset County Council's Pollinator Action plan.

**7.15 Public Consultation:** Five letters of representation have been received. None of the households have raised an in principle objection to the proposed new school but have raised the following concerns and objections which relate primarily to highway safety: -

- Welcome initiatives to get more children walking to school however change in habits takes time. For some anything other than driving is not an option. Concerned that too much reliance has been placed on pupils walking to school and therefore the reliability of the Travel Plan.
- At times Etsome Terrace is filled with parked cars and large vehicles which will cause conflict
- The drop off lane will assist with getting parents off the road, but the development will still impact on road parking. The parking provision in Northfield is questioned.
- Northfield is without any pavement for much of its length, the hazardous nature of this is recognised in the Travel Plan 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 for staff and visitors. The water attenuation area should be made subterranean to allow additional parking.
- The lack of safe pedestrian provision will do nothing to encourage pupils to walk to school
- Statements in the Travel Plan regarding the existing nature of the local highway network and traffic flow are questioned.
- On street parking in Etsome Terrace will make it difficult for school buses.

- The proposed pedestrian access shared with kitchen services is unsatisfactory.
- The idea of directing pedestrians away from Northfield and along Waverly and Highfield Way as a route to get to school is interesting but how many parents would comply with this?
- Encouraging cycling is a good idea but not when competing with other vehicles.

Other concerns relate to the design of the building where a resident has stated it is unattractive and that the development will promote uneconomic provision of playing areas. The resident states the school will have good playing facilities which will be utilised only on weekdays during term time whereas the sports grounds in Langport Road is used on weekdays during term time.

## **8. Comments of the Service Manager – Planning Control, Enforcement & Compliance**

8.1 The key issues for Members to consider are: -

- Whether the principle of the development is acceptable;
- Design, visual and landscape impact
- Impact on residential amenity
- Biodiversity
- Impact on the historic environment
- Floodrisk
- Highway safety

### **8.2 The Development Plan**

8.2.1 Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development plan consists of the:-

South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2008) adopted March 2015.

### **8.3 Material Considerations**

8.3.1 Also to be taken into account is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in July 2018.

8.3.2 The revised NPPF reiterates that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Furthermore, Paragraph 94 of the NPPF states *'it is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:*

*a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications, and*

*b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted'.*

## **8.4 Principle of the Development**

8.4.1 The proposed development is to construct a new primary school with a capacity of 420 pupils, with space within the site to allow for further expansion for up to 210 pupils should the need arise. The new school will replace the existing King Ina primary school and pre-school which currently operates over two sites, one at the southern end of Etsome Terrace and the other at Kirkham Street in the town centre. Both sites are highly constrained in their ability to expand further.

8.4.2 Somerton has seen a considerable amount of housing development creating a significant increase in pupil numbers which has put pressure on the existing schools. Based on approved and proposed planning applications for further housing development within the area this looks only to exacerbate the need for more school accommodation.

8.4.3 South Somerset Local Plan Policy LMT3 'Somerton Direction of Growth' states that the direction of growth for Somerset should be to the west of the town. The proposed site is therefore located in an area which complies with this policy. Albeit in a greenfield location, the site is immediately abutting the western perimeter of a residential area and is relatively well related to the town centre.

8.4.4 Policy EP15 'Protection and Provision of Local Shops, Community facilities and Services' of the Local Plan although not related specifically to new schools has some relevance in the determination of this proposal as a school is a community facility providing an educational service. Although the new school will replace two existing school sites it has capacity to expand to accommodate increasing pupil numbers which are likely to arise from future housing development in the western area of Somerton. The proposal therefore will clearly be beneficial to the local community and therefore the principle of building a new school in this location is considered acceptable.

## **8.5 Design, visual and landscape impact**

8.5.1 The proposed new school is of a typical modern school design of rectangular and elongated form. The external walls of the school building will be of masonry blockwork with the upper front elevation facing the residents of Northfield of aluminium faced composite cladding which will break up the visual expanse of blockwork. The roof will be a low level grey profiled roof to sit the building better into this flat landscape. The window, doors and canopy to the front of the building will be of polyester powder coated finish in a dark grey finish to reflect the colouring of the roof. All gutters, rainwater pipes and fascia's will also be in dark grey to match.

8.5.2 There are no landscape designations in the area. The site is a flat area of land, currently under cultivation but bounded by mature hedgerows on all sides. Other than where the hedgerows must be breached to form vehicle accesses the hedgerows will be maintained and will provide a certain amount of screening from views from the public highways (Northfield and Etsome Road) that run to the east and north of the site.

8.5.3 The school has clearly been designed to fit its purpose as a modern-day school, to fit within the site but to enable future expansion should the need arise. To mitigate the visual impact of the development the school building has been orientated in a north - south direction so that views that could be possible of the building on the skyline from the north are only of the narrow northern gable end. To assist further, the building will be set back a significant distance into the site away from the residential properties of Northfield. This will prevent the school dominating these residential properties.

8.5.4 As part of the scheme, landscape planting will be carried out to include tree planting. The tree planting will assist with screening over time but it will also enhance the overall setting of the school within it's curtilage. It is considered however that the site would benefit from further tree planting which as well mitigating the landscape impact of the development would enhance the biodiversity value of the site. Should permission be granted this can be achieved through a planning condition.

## **8.6 Residential amenity**

8.6.1 Although the site will be at edge of a residential area and residential properties along Northfield to the east will face the site, the main school building has been purposely set well back within the site so there would be no issues of pupils overlooking properties when sitting in classrooms. Due to the distance involved, there will be no loss of light and in this location the school building will not be overbearing on the nearby properties. The detached residential property to the north west is also a significant distance to the main school building and separated by a wildlife area and playing fields.

8.6.2 It is understandable that the development will introduce an element of noise given the site was previously open farmland. A construction environmental management plan has been submitted in support of the application to mitigate the environmental and residential amenity impacts arising from the construction of the school.

8.6.3 Once in operation the use of the playing pitches would also generate an element of noise however the pitches are located to the rear of the building away from the main residential properties in Northfield. One detached dwelling is located in closer proximity to the playing fields but a wildlife area will be created which would act as a small buffer to the playing fields. That said, the nature of a school is such that it needs to be located close to its community that it will serve and as such the associated activities and noise etc is generally accepted in residential areas and is considered to be compatible with the surrounding residential uses. The District Council's Environmental Health officer has raised no objection to the proposal and therefore it is considered that the proposed development will not be detrimental to the residential amenity of the surrounding area.

## **8.7 Biodiversity**

8.7.1 The scheme includes the provision of a small biodiversity/ wildlife area adjacent to the isolated dwelling to the north western corner of the site and this is to be welcomed. The Ecological advisor although raising no objection has made a number of recommendations to ensure the protection of any protected species and to achieve biodiversity enhancements.

8.7.2 The ecologist however does not support the provision of amenity grassland up to the hedgerows (including the attenuation pond) as shown on the submitted Landscaping Masterplan and requests that these become designated wild flower meadow in line with the County Council's Pollinator Action Plan. Should permission be granted this can be imposed by condition.

## **8.8 Impact on the historic environment**

8.8.1 The site has archaeological importance and as a result the applicant has been required to undertake site investigations. The archaeological evaluation has shown that there is remains of a Romano-British settlement on the site. This consists of enclosures, pits and roundhouses. Although the evaluation report has not been completed, an interim Statement has been sent to the County Archaeologist who recommends no objection subject to undertaking a full archaeological excavation of the site and to provide a report of any discoveries made. This can be secured by condition in the event of permission being granted.

## **8.9 Floodrisk**

8.9.1 The site is located within a floodzone 1 and therefore considered to be at low risk of flooding. A flood risk assessment supported the application and a drainage strategy. No objection has been raised by the Lead Local Flood Authority subject to a condition to secure a detailed drainage scheme before the development commences.

## **8.10 Highway Safety**

8.10.1 Although having no objections in principle to the scheme five members of the public and Somerton Town Council have raised objections and concerns on highway safety grounds. The planning officer at South Somerset District Council also recommends refusal of the scheme on highway safety grounds.

8.10.2 Some of the concerns relate to the amount of parking proposed. Requests have been made for additional parking to prevent on street parking which would reduce the potential conflict of vehicles with pedestrians.

8.10.3 The development will provide for 28 No. standard parking spaces for staff, 2 No. visitor spaces, 2 No. accessible spaces and 2 No. motorcycle spaces. The development is located within Zone B as defined within Somerset County Council's parking standards and for a development of this nature within this zone the amount of parking provision meets the necessary standard. Furthermore, a drop off/pick up bay will be created within the school site to assist in reducing on street parent parking. The County Council's Highway Officer recommends that a condition is imposed should permission be granted to ensure this facility is fully operational before the school is brought into use.

8.10.4 The proposed site is located at the end of Northfield which is a lightly trafficked road. To the southern end the road narrows and becomes sub-standard. It is unable to accommodate two-way traffic and in places lacks a continuous footway. This road however provides the most direct route to the school for pedestrians from the western end of Somerton or from the south from the area around West End and May Pole Knap. This is recognised in a Traffic Assessment and Travel Plan submitted in support of the application. These set 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 their car for such trips. Some of these measures have been challenged by the residents, the Town Council and the District Council planning officer.

8.10.5 A new access is proposed off Northfield and an access off Etsome Terrace to provide an in/out system at the school. Both roads are linear and the required visibility can be achieved at the exit. Utilising an in / out access with the egress point to the north of the site will keep the flow of traffic moving and will result in drivers naturally exiting the school to the north and continuing along Etsome Terrace thus avoiding the desire to turn back towards the school entrance to leave via Northfield and to the south where the road is substandard.

8.10.6 The Town Council request that further traffic calming measures are in place along Northfield, that the junction of Etsome Terrace with Northfield and Cary Way are improved and that a new road is 'put in' to link Bancombe Road to Bradley Hill Lane to provide a safer passage for both pedestrians and vehicles to the school lessening the need to use Northfield.

8.10.7 The Town Council's comments re the new link road relate to a new housing development know as 'Fairfax' and the provision of this road as part of the housing scheme. At present the 'Fairfax' development is at planning application stage with

the District Council. Were it to be permitted and developed, the new road and pedestrian links to the school would be provided under the housing permission. It would not be reasonable to require such infrastructure under the school proposal. The 'Fairfax' development is not a material planning consideration as there is no guarantee that the development will proceed however given the likelihood that the housing development may be completed, the school proposal includes the construction of a footway/cycleway to link from the school to a southern access point off Bradley Hill Lane. This would ultimately provide a pedestrian/cycle link to the 'Fairfax' development. Until such time as the 'Fairfax' development is built, this entrance will provide access for maintenance and emergency vehicles to the school and agricultural access to the agricultural land to the rear of the school.

8.10.8 Concerning the recommendation of refusal from the District Council's planning officer. Refusal is recommended on the grounds that the development of the school will impact upon the local road network which will result in an unacceptable congestion and risk to highway safety as a result of increased traffic congestion, increased conflict between pedestrian and cyclists with motorised traffic and on street parking.

8.10.9 The District Council planning officer in making their recommendation considered the comments provided by the Highway Authority during the consultation process. The planning officer states that the Highway Officer based their comments on the submitted Travel Plan to mitigate the impacts of the proposal **as well** as the provision of an alternative pedestrian access through the 'Fairfax' development which would avoid the use of Northfield for those travelling from the west and partly from the south. This however is not the case. The Highway Officer recognised as above that were the 'Fairfax' scheme to be built, it would significantly improve the pedestrian links to the school from the west, West End and the south of Northfield. However, the Highway Officer based their judgement on the basis that the 'Fairfax' development coming forward cannot be guaranteed.

8.10.10 The Highway Officer in an email to the District Council planning officer on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019 clarified this position. That being that the proposal to build the school in the proposed location '*does not raise sufficient concerns to warrant a safety objection on highway grounds.*' The highway officer identified that although alternative pedestrian routes will be encouraged by the school, some pedestrians will still choose to use Northfield to access the school, as is their right. The officer stated that the Travel Plan has been drafted to include active promotion of Northfield Way as an alternative access for pedestrians and that the Travel Plan can be conditioned should permission be granted. The officer confirmed that the adjacent 'Fairfax' development was only mentioned in their recommendation, in the event that it was granted permission, and that it would provide a beneficial pedestrian access which would further reduce the use of Northfield. Therefore, it can clearly be demonstrated that the highway officer has raised no objection to the scheme and has based this of solely the current situation in full awareness that even with active promotion of alternative routes some pedestrians will still choose to walk from the south along Northfield.

8.10.11 There are already pedestrians who walk along the sub standard section of Northfield so the use of it by pupils will not be introducing a new 'hazard' in the area for motorists. Secondly the amount of foot traffic that would come via this route will be insignificant compared to the amount of foot traffic which will come from the eastern side of Somerton. The nature of the road means vehicles cannot travel at the designated speed limit and with the recent closure of the southern end of Northfield to enable a new housing development, motorists are now required to drive through the new housing estate to join Langport Road (B3153) which is not a desirable route for many motorists.

8.10.13 In terms of providing further traffic calming measures and improving the junction of Etsome Terrace/Northfield and Cary Way as recommended by the Town Council, the highway officer has not made any such recommendation to support this.

8.10.14 It is recognised that the proposed development will bring a significant number of people onto Northfield that was predominantly a lightly trafficked road and currently provides access to agricultural fields and dwellings. The application includes the provision of a Travel Plan and a Traffic Assessment that has been considered by the Council's Highway Officer. The Highway Officer has considered the proposed development and whilst acknowledging further improvements to pedestrian links to the school can be provided if the 'Fairfax' development is built, does not object to the application subject to a number of conditions to address highway safety. I am therefore satisfied that contrary to the recommendation of South Somerset District's planning officer the application is acceptable on highway safety grounds and is not contrary to Policies SD1 and TA5 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

## **8.11 Conclusion**

8.11.1 The principle of the development has clearly been demonstrated and a replacement primary school is much needed for the community of Somerton. It is considered that the above assessment accords with relevant policies in the Development Plan and any effects associated with the proposal can be effectively avoided or mitigated through the design of the development and /or the use of conditions attached to any forthcoming planning permission.

8.11.2 It is noted that five neighbour representations have been received in respect of the proposal, all of which raised concerns regarding highway safety. Likewise, the Town Council and the planning officer at South Somerset District Council. These are valid planning issues. However, the Highways Authority has considered all these issues at length and has advised that there is no objection in this regard, for the reasons set out in full earlier.

8.11.3 Taking all the above into account, it is concluded that the proposal is acceptable in planning terms subject to the conditions set out below, and that the proposal accords with the Development Plan and there are no material considerations that indicate otherwise.

## 9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions and that the authority to undertake any minor non-material editing which may be necessary to the wording of those conditions be delegated to the Strategic Commissioning Manager.

### 1 Commencement of development

The development hereby permitted shall be commenced within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: Pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and County Planning Act 1990

### 2 Accordance with approved plans

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved plans: -

- KI-STL-ZZ-DR-A-XXXX-09430 Rev PL01 Access Strategy
- KI-STL-XX-XX-DR-L-XXXX-0901 Rev PL01 Tree Removal and Protection Plan
- KI-STL- XX-XX-DR-L-XXXX-09180 Rev PL01 Boundary Treatment Plan
- KI-STL-XX-XX-DR-L-XXXX-09405 Rev PL01 Boundary Treatment Details
- KI-STL-XX-XX-DR-L-XXXX- 09420 Rev PL01 Tree Pit with Stake Detail
- KI-STL- ZZ-XX-DR-A-XXXX-09003 PL01 Proposed Block Plan
- KI- STL-XX-00-DR-A-XXXX-01001 PL01 Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- KI-STL-XX-01-DR-A-XXXX-01002 PL01 Proposed First Floor
- KI-STL-XX-02-DR-A-XXXX-01003 PL01 Proposed Roof Plan
- KI-STL- XX-ZZ-DR-A-XXXX-03001 PL01 Proposed Sections
- KI-STL- XX-ZZ-DR-A-XXXX-12010 PI01 Outline Site Sections
- KI-STL- XX-XX-DR-A-XXXX-09001 PL01 Site Location Plan

- KI-STL- XX-ZZ- DR-A -XXXX- 02001 rev PL02 Proposed Elevations.

And with any scheme, working programmes or other details submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority in pursuance of any condition attached to his permission.

Reason: To enable the County Planning Authority to deal promptly with any development not in accordance with the approved plans.

### 3 Commencement

Written notification of the date of commencement shall be given to the County Planning Authority within seven days of the commencement of the development hereby permitted.

Reason: To enable the County Planning Authority to monitor compliance with conditions.

### 4 Prevention of debris on the highway

The applicant shall ensure that all vehicles leaving the site are in such condition as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. In particular (but without prejudice to the foregoing), efficient means shall be installed, maintained and employed for cleaning the wheels of all lorries leaving the site, details of which shall have been agreed in advance and in writing by the County Planning Authority and fully implemented immediately when the construction phase commences, and thereafter maintained until this is complete.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

### 5 Formation of drop off/pick up area

Before the development hereby permitted is first brought into use, the pick-up/set down arrangements and parking areas shall be laid out and constructed as shown on the approved plans.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

### 6 Formation of access in accordance with the approved plans

The development hereby permitted shall be served by a new access constructed in accordance with the approved plans. The access shall be fully operational before the development is first operational and shall be maintained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

7 Use of access as entry

The southern access taken off Northfield shall be used for the purpose of 'Entry Only' and before the development hereby permitted is first brought into use appropriate signs informing users of this entrance shall be erected and maintained thereafter.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety.

8 Use of access as entrance

The northern access onto Etsome Road shall be used for the purposes of 'Exit Only' and before the development hereby permitted is first brought into use appropriate signs informing users of this exit shall be erected and maintained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

9 Formation of footway at entrance

Before the development hereby permitted is first brought into use, a 1.8m wide footway shall be constructed around the Northfield access to the site along with an appropriate crossing point on Northfield as shown on approved plan KI-STL-ZZ-XX-DR-A-XXXX-09430 Rev PL01 in accordance with a specification to be approved in writing by the County Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

10 Provision of footway/cycleway link

Before the development hereby permitted is first brought into use, a cycleway and footpath connection measuring no less than 2m wide shall be constructed from the main school buildings to a point mid-way along the site's' southern boundary onto Bradley Hill Lane in accordance with that shown on approved plan KI-STL-ZZ-XX-DR-A-XXXX-09430Rev PL01.

Reason: In the interests of sustainable development.

11 Provision of parking spaces

The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the onsite parking and turning spaces have been properly consolidated and surfaced and marked out in accordance with the details shown on the approved plan KI-STL-ZZ-XX-DR-A-XXXX-9430 Rev PL01. Such parking and turning spaces shall be kept clear of obstruction at all times and shall not be used other than for the parking and turning of vehicles in connection with the development hereby permitted.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety to ensure the delivery of the on-site parking and turning provision.

12 Approval of Travel Plan

The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until a detailed Travel Plan has been approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. No part of the development shall be occupied prior to implementation of those parts identified in the Approved Travel Plan as capable of being implemented prior to occupation. Those parts of the Approved Travel Plan that are identified therein as capable of implementation after occupation shall be implemented in accordance with the timetable contained and shall continue to be implemented as long as any part of the development is occupied.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to promote sustainable travel options. The Travel Plan is required in advance of the development commencing to ensure that any necessary mitigating measures can be put in place in advance of the occupation of the development hereby permitted.

13 Visibility splays

There shall be no obstruction to visibility greater than 300 millimetres above adjoining road level in advance of lines drawn 2.4 metres back from the carriageway edge on the centre line of the site exit onto Etsome Road and extending to points on the nearside carriageway edge 33 metres either side of the exit. Such visibility shall be fully provided before the development hereby permitted is first brought into use and shall thereafter be maintained at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

14 Provision of cycle storage

The development shall provide for covered and secure cycle storage facilities, details of which shall have been previously submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Such facilities

shall be provided prior to the occupation of the school and shall thereafter be retained for those purposes.

Reason: To encourage sustainable transport options.

15 Surface water run-off disposal

Provision shall be made within the site for the disposal of surface water so as to prevent its discharge onto the highway, details of which shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Such provisions shall be installed before occupation and thereafter maintained at all times.

Reason: To prevent surface water run-off onto the highway in the interests of highway safety.

16 Lighting Design for Bats

Prior to the development hereby permitted first being brought into use, a 'lighting design for bats' shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The design shall show how and where external lighting will be installed (including through the provisions of technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent bats using their territory or having access to their resting places. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the design, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the design. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without the prior approval in writing of the County Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest of the Favourable Conservation Status of populations of European protected species.

17 Nesting Birds

No removal of hedgerows, trees or shrubs shall take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check of vegetation for active birds' nests immediately before the vegetation is cleared and provided written confirmation that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site. Any such written confirmation should be submitted to the County Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of nesting wild birds and in accordance with Policy EQ4 of the South Somerset Local Plan

18 Reptile Mitigation Strategy

Any vegetation in the construction area should initially be reduced to a height of 10 centimetres above ground level by hand, brushings and cuttings removed and the remainder left for a minimum period of 48 hours of fine warm weather (limited rain and wind, with temperatures of 10°C or above) before clearing to minimise the risk of harming/killing any reptiles that may be present and to encourage their movement onto adjoining land. This work may only be undertaken during the period between March and October under the supervision of competent ecologist. Once cut vegetation should be maintained at a height of less than 10cm for the duration of the construction period. A letter confirming these operations and any findings will be submitted to the County Planning Authority by the ecologist responsible.

Reason: In the interests of UK protected species and in accordance with policy EQ4 of the South Somerset Local Plan

19 Biodiversity Enhancement

The following will be integrated into the structure of the new school:  
a) Five Schwegler 1a swift bricks or similar will be built into the wall under eaves and away from windows at least 5m above ground level and at least 75cm apart on the west elevation.

A photograph showing the installed features will be submitted to the County Planning Authority within one month of the completion of the construction works.

Reason: In accordance with Government Policy for the enhancement of biodiversity within development as set out in paragraph 170(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework

20 Landscaping scheme

A landscaping scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority and shall be implemented within the first planting season following the completion of the development hereby permitted. The scheme shall include additional tree planting above that identified on the Landscaping Masterplan and the replacement of the amenity grassland up to the hedgerows, especially along the side hedgerows, along the frontage of the school and in the area of the attenuation pond as wildflower meadow.

For a period of five years after the completion of the landscaping scheme, the trees and shrubs shall be protected and maintained in a

healthy weed free condition and any trees or shrubs that cease to grow shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development does not harm the character and appearance of the area and to provide biodiversity enhancements.

21 Programme of Archaeological Work in Accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation

Before the commencement of the development hereby permitted the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, shall have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The WSI shall include details of the archaeological excavation, the recording of the heritage asset, the analysis of evidence recovered from the site and publication of the results. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To enable the remains of archaeological interest which may exist within the site to be appropriately recorded.

A pre-commencement condition is required to ensure that the heritage asset at the site can be properly recorded as this would not be feasible post commencement of the development.

22 Material Samples

Before commencement of any of the above ground building or structures associated with the development hereby permitted, samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building and structures hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and maintained as such thereafter for the duration of the development hereby permitted.

Reason: To ensure the appropriate appearance of the development hereby permitted and to ensure the use of sustainable materials.

3 **INFORMATIVES**

3.1 The applicant is advised that when undertaking the drainage strategy, they 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.

3.2 Please be aware that any works to an ordinary watercourse may require land drainage consent from the LFFA. For more information visit:  
[www.somerset.gov.uk/consent](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/consent)

## **10 Relevant Development Plan Policies**

- 1 The following is a summary of the reasons for the County Council's decision to grant planning permission.
- 2 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the decision on this application should be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The decision has been taken having regard to the policies and proposals in: -

The South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028)

The policies in the development plan particularly relevant to the proposed development are: -

SD1- Sustainable Development

SS1 – Settlement Hierarchy

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

EP15 – Protection and Provision of Local Shops, Community Facilities and Services

23 The County Planning Authority has also had regard to all other material considerations.

4 **Statement of Compliance with Article 35 of the Town and Country Development Management Procedure Order 2015**

In dealing with this planning application the County Planning Authority has adopted a positive and proactive manner. The Council offers a pre-application advice service for minor and major applications, and applicants are encouraged to take up this service. This proposal has been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework, and Local Plan policies, which have been subject to proactive publicity and consultation prior to their adoption and are referred to in the reasons for approval. The County Planning Authority has sought solutions to problems arising by liaising with consultees, considering other representations received and liaising with the applicant/agent as necessary.

The proposal is in accordance with the Development Plan and in particular the following policies:

**South Somerset Local Plan (2006- 2028)**

| <b>Policy</b> | <b>Description</b>      | <b>Policy Consideration</b>   |
|---------------|-------------------------|---|
| SD1           | Sustainable Development | In accordance as the proposal meets all planning policy requirements, as discussed above. Furthermore, there are no material considerations that indicate that planning permission should not be granted.   |
| SS1           | Settlement Strategy     | The proposal is on the outskirts of Somerton which is identified as a local market town. The Local Plan directs the bulk of growth to such areas due to existing employment and service opportunities and to minimise the infrastructure investment needed. |
| SS6           | Infrastructure Delivery | The proposal will include the formation of a footway/ cycleway to link with a possible  |

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|      |   | housing development 'Fairfax' to the south of the site which is currently subject to a planning application with South Somerset District Council.  |
| LMT3 | Somerton Direction of Growth                | The site is on the western periphery of Somerton where development is encouraged.  |
| TA1  | Low Carbon Travel                           | Although not a large employer, the development includes a number of measures to encourage sustainable forms of transport such as Travel Plans and cycle storage.   |
| TA4  | Travel Plans                                | In accordance as the proposal is accompanied by a Travel plan and a more detailed Travel Plan will be conditioned.   |
| TA5  | Transport Impact of New Development         | In accordance as the proposal has been supported by a Transport Assessment and a Travel Plan. The proposal will safeguard existing transport infrastructure. The proposal is considered to have a safe and convenient access by foot and cycle. The nature and volume of traffic and parked vehicles generated by the development have been assessed as not having a detrimental impact on the character or amenity of the area and would not compromise highway safety. The proposed development meets the County Highways parking standards. |
| TA6  | Parking Standards                           | The parking provision has been assessed and meets SCC's parking standards for the number of staff on site and the site's location.   |
| EQ1  | Addressing Climate Change in South Somerset | The development will be located within a flood zone 1 and therefor will not increase flood risk. The development will also incorporate sustainable drainage systems as required through condition.   |
| EQ2  | General Development                         | The development site is not an international, nationally or locally designated wildlife or landscaper sites. The setting back of the main school building within the site will protect the amenity of neighbouring properties and will protect the character and   |

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|------|---|--|
|      |   | appearance of the surrounding area utilising existing boundary hedgerows to set the school within a currently rural landscape.   |
| EQ3  | Historic Environments                   | Due to the potential archaeological significance of the site trial pits have been dug and a full archaeological evaluation will be carried out to record any findings to ensure the satisfactory protection of these heritage assets   |
| EQ4  | Biodivresity                            | There are no likely biodiversity issues. A habitat area is proposed and some new tree planting. Additional tree planting and the replacement of grass with a wildflower meadow will be required through condition to enhance the biodiversity value of the site.   |
| EQ5  | Green Infrastructure                    | The development will include and open area of grassed playing spaces, the maintenance of existing hedgerows that formed the boundaries of agricultural fields and the provision of a wildlife habitat area. With additional wildflower planting new habitats will be created and will connect to existing wildlife areas to enhance biodiversity. Recreational and environmental education will be provided for within the development. A new footway/ cycleway will the main school building to a potential future housing development ton the south. |
| EQ7  | Pollution Control                       | There will be some potential for noise and dust nuisance during the construction phase however measures will be in place to deal suppress dust on the highway. It is not likely that development would have an adverse impact on the nearest noise sensitive properties due to the location of the main school set within the site.<br><br>The proposal will not impact on groundwater and will not give rise to flood risk concerns   |
| EP15 | Protection and Provision of Local Shops | The development will provide a school to serve both the existing community but also  |

|  |                                   |  |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|
|  | community facilities and services | has the capacity to accommodate increasing pupil numbers as a result of future growth within Somerton. |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|