



<u>Committee and Date</u>
South Planning Committee [Ludlow]
31 st August 2010

<u>Item/Paper</u>
11
Public

Development Management Report

Application Number: 10/02858/FUL

Parish: Ashford Carbonell

Grid 352364 - 271080

Ref:

Proposal: Erection of a new Primary School including Early Years, Community facilities and associated external areas

Site Address: Proposed New Primary School Ashford Carbonell Shropshire

Applicant: Mr Andrew Stirling

Case Officer: Julie Preston **email:** planningdmsw@shropshire.gov.uk

1.0 **THE PROPOSAL**

1.1 This is a full planning application for the erection of a new primary school on a site of just over 2 ha. at Ashford Carbonell. The proposal includes the following:

- i. Construction of a four class primary school with a gross internal floor area of 922.5 m² to accommodate a potential 120 pupils to replace the Bishop Hooper Primary School currently located in the old Caynham Primary School. The school was created by the amalgamation of the Caynham Primary School and Ashford Carbonell Primary School in 2009. The development also incorporates the privately run 'Butterflies' nursery.
- ii. Provision of a 17 space staff/visitor car park, 2 disabled bays and a 34 space visitor and drop off/pickup parking bays with a coach parking/minibus pickup point.
- iii. A new 8m wide access to the Caynham Road and associated 6m wide access roads and turning areas.
- iv. All weather multi games area 25 x 38m in size.

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- v. Grass sports pitch 33m x 60m in size
 - vi. Four hard and soft playground areas together with a small amphitheatre for outdoor drama and performance.
 - vii. Intervening areas include a productive garden, wildflower meadow, orchard and a 6m wide planted bund to screen the development along the south eastern boundary of the site.
- 1.2 The school building is located on higher land towards the north east corner of the site. It has a strong horizontal emphasis and looks out over the grounds to the south. The main part of the building has a low mono pitched roof over the south facing classrooms. Staff and administrative areas face north and have a slightly steeper mono pitched roof forming a south facing clerestory strip above the classrooms. The hall is also on the north side with a similar mono pitched roof forming a shorter clerestory window. The south elevation is predominantly glazed and a flat roofed covered play area projects 3m from the classrooms.
- 1.3 The building is predominantly clad in untreated Douglas Fir horizontal timbers with local Ludlow sandstone used as a facing material on the north elevation of the hall. The roof will be a lightweight structure planted with low maintenance sedum. Panels of stained glass will be fitted to the windows at strategic points to reflect the fact that it is a church school.
- 1.4 The new access serving the school is located 65m to the east of the junction of the main village road and the Caynham Road. The access will have visibility splays of 2.4m x 120m. A new hedgerow will be planted behind the splays where the existing hedge is removed. In terms of the layout of the site, the staff parking area is located to the north of the school building with visitor and parent drop off/pick up bays located in the north west corner of the site around a turning circle. All vehicular movements are thereby kept to the northern end of the site. Hard and soft play areas are situated adjacent to the classrooms with the slope beyond used for creating raised beds, an orchard and a small amphitheatre. The grass sports pitch and multi use games area will be sited on the flatter land at the bottom of the slope adjoining the western boundary of the site. There will be a new pedestrian access to the site from the village which will be managed by the school.
- 1.5 The submitted site plan indicates that existing hedges will be retained and gaps filled, with the exception of the hedgerow which will have to be removed and replanted to create the visibility splays. A 6m wide earth bund planted with fast growing conifers and a mix of native deciduous trees behind will be planted along the south eastern boundary to provide a substantial screen between the school and the houses on Church Lane.

- 1.6 The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, Drainage Statement, Ground Conditions Report, Tree Report, Bird, Bat and Reptile Survey and Habitat Survey.

2.0 **SITE LOCATION/DESCRIPTION**

2.1 The site is located on the northern edge of Ashford Carbonell and is roughly triangular in shape. The south east boundary adjoins the site of the former village school and the south west boundary borders the village approach road. The northern boundary runs alongside the Caynham road, connecting to the A49 half a mile to the west.

2.2 The site slopes gently down to the south west from a height of roughly 87m in the north east corner to 77m in the south west. The site is bounded with hedgerows containing a number of mature trees and is currently open pasture grazed by horses.

2.3 There are a number of houses bordering or looking over the south eastern boundary of the site but a copse of trees and an orchard provides some screening. The Old Vicarage is situated on the opposite side of the Caynham road opposite the northern boundary of the site. A public right of way runs along the top of the site connecting The Old Vicarage with the top of Church Lane.

2.4 The site is located in Ashford Carbonell Conservation Area which was extended in 2009 to include the site and other important areas around the edge of the village.

3.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 (i) That the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government be informed that the Council resolve to grant planning permission subject to conditions.
(ii) On receipt of the Secretary of State's confirmation that he does not intend to call in the application for a decision, Officers be authorised to issue the decision.

The application has to be referred to the Secretary of State under section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 because the application is a departure from the development plan for the area and the applicant is Shropshire Council.

4.0 **REASON FOR COMMITTEE DETERMINATION OF APPLICATION**

4.1 This is a major planning application submitted by the Head of Property Services on behalf of Shropshire Council and a substantial number of objections have been received from local residents.

5.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

5.1 There is no planning history relating to the site.

6.0 **CONSULTEE RESPONSES**

6.1 **SC Highways Development Control :**

The following comments are made from a highway safety and transportation perspective, in respect the above planning application:

Access:

Vehicular access to the proposed site is to be taken from the Caynham Road, which in the initial assessment of this site, was of concern to the highway authority. This route is currently subject to the national speed limit (i.e. 60 mph) and observed traffic speeds were consistent with a rural de-restricted road of this nature, with vehicular speeds in a westerly direction being particularly high. Therefore, as part of our ongoing discussions with the applicant and their design team, it has been agreed that an appropriate Road Safety/Traffic Management scheme will need to be introduced along the Caynham Road, in order to reduce vehicular speeds, improve highway safety and specifically facilitate the proposed vehicular access to the site.

Although a specific scheme has yet to be fully determined, it is anticipated that the traffic management proposals will take the form of a combination of measures, including the implementation of a reduced speed limit (Traffic Regulation Order), an appropriate gateway treatment/features, together with any other additional signing and lining works, as required.

It is understood that the total cost of these works will be met from the overall scheme budget for the new school and no funding will be sought from the highway authority. Given that this is effective an internal application, I am content that this aspect of the development can be dealt with through a Grampian style planning condition.

Accessibility:

As with all schools and particularly those in rural locations, car parking is a material consideration during both the morning and afternoon peak periods. As the proposed school site is to be accessed off the Caynham Road, which is main route to the A49, to the east, the highway authority considers it a fundamental requirement that all traffic associated with the school, including pupil dropping off/picking up, staff, visitors, deliveries and coaches, can be adequately accommodated within the school site.

It is considered that the potential parking of vehicles associated with the

school on the Caynham Road would be unacceptable in highway safety terms. Whilst it is not the Council's usual practise to actively encourage on-site car parking, as this is somewhat contrary to promoting sustainable travel, there is a need to be realistic and the reality that the majority of pupils attending this rurally located school will arrive and leave by private car.

The key issue therefore, is to determine the anticipated parking demand, so as to provide an appropriate level of car parking on-site, to adequately cater for pupil drop off/pick up, and to ensure that any potential for car parking/waiting on the adjacent highway network is avoided.

The Design & Access Statement, within the application submission, has in part addressed this issue. However, further clarification has been required to specifically consider this key issue of balancing on-site parking numbers based on pupil intake over the life of the school. As a result, additional information has been submitted which now appears to demonstrate that the proposed parking facilities should function satisfactorily, based upon the likely pupil number intake of the school at the time of opening and in the event that school pupil number increase to the maximum level (email dated 05/08/2010 from Norrie Porter).

It should be noted that whilst this car parking assessment is considered to be robust, from a highway perspective, all efforts should be made through the on-going development of a School Travel Plan, throughout the life of the school, to encourage sustainable travel where appropriate and if possible seek reductions in car borne traffic, in the interests of sustainability and to reduce carbon emissions.

Internal Arrangements:

As a result of the above, the internal layout of the site has been designed by forming a distinct separation between vehicles associated with school staff, visitors, disabled users and deliveries being located towards the eastern corner of the site, and parent dropping off and picking up together with coach parking facilities located at the western end of the site. It is considered that this offers safety benefits by managing on-site vehicle movements and the need to minimise the potential conflict between manoeuvring vehicles and pupils. The internal arrangements will need to be the subject of detailed design but the principles, submitted as part of this planning application, are considered acceptable to the highway authority.

Other highway considerations:

It is noted that the existing junction of the Ashford Carbonell village road with the Caynham Road, adjacent to this site, is not ideal and is typical

of such a rural junction. Concern has therefore been raised by the local community, particularly as following the development of this site there is likely to be an increase in vehicular movements at this location with the usual potential conflicts.

In the circumstances it is considered appropriate for this development to contribute to any potential future improvement of this junction by ensuring that any hedge/fence treatment along the site's highway boundaries are located to afford an appropriate measure of visibility from both the site access and the adjacent side road. It is my understanding that this issue has been agreed and will be addressed within the detailed design stage of the development process.

Appropriate surface water drainage provision should be made within the site, particularly in respect to the hard paved areas, such as the vehicular access, parking and turning areas.

Recommendations:

Although this development of a new rural school, at this location, is not ideal from a highway and transportation perspective, the applicants have adequately addressed the all the highway considerations. Therefore, it is considered that on balance, subject to the imposition of the following planning conditions, an objection on highway grounds could not be sustained for this proposal.

6.2 SC Ecologist :

I have read the above application including the *Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey* and the *Bird, Bat and Reptile Survey* by Ecoline (2010). The existing hedges and trees on the site should be retained (it is accepted that a small area of hedge will need to be removed to provide access for the site) and protected throughout the development works with buffer zones and Root Protection Areas which meet BS5837: Trees and Development. There is a range of bird species present on the site, potentially nesting in the hedgerows and in some of the existing nest boxes.

The County Ecologist has no objections subject to conditions requiring the provision of bird and bat boxes and informatives bringing the legal protection of bats and birds to the attention of the applicant

6.3 SC Drainage :

Please find attached below our Consultant's comments on the surface water drainage proposals. There are no specific drainage designs or calculations submitted for the proposed Sustainable Drainage System (SUDs) and it is not clear if any discharge from the site is proposed. As this development is going to be a design and build contract, the detailed drainage design will be included in the contract, and will not be available

before determination of this planning application. It may be a good suggestion to arrange a meeting with the applicant's designer with our consultant to agree in principle the proposed surface water drainage before the determination of the planning permission and condition it if planning permission is to be granted.

The Council's consultants comment as follows :

'It is stated that there are current problems with highway flooding in the area. The Design and Access Statement (para ref 'Match of site with criteria' on page 52) also says there are problems on site with drainage as run-of from the hill collects at one point in the field, believed to be the lower southern corner of the proposed site, which will also need consideration.

The drainage statement explains that a ground investigation carried out on site has indicated that the ground would be unsuitable for shallow soak away SuDs techniques, and that deep soakaways will be adopted such as tank systems under permeable paving. They acknowledge that further testing to BRE365 would need to be carried out to determine suitability. A brief inspection of the Ground Investigation submitted shows that some of the trial pits encounter mudstone bedrock at relatively shallow levels; this material is expected to have limited permeability and deep soakaways will not be effective.

The drainage assessment suggests that shallow infiltration systems may not be effective due to the ground levels, however this may be feasible if these were arranged across the slope and incorporated into the layout. '

No specific drainage designs or calculations for the proposed SuDs system have been included in the planning application, and it is not clear if any discharge from the site is proposed.

It appears that the detailed design of the school will be carried using a design and build contract, and the detailed drainage design will be included in the contract, and will not be available before determination of this planning application.

With the size of the available plot and the natural fall of the site we can be reasonably confident that a SuDs solution mimicking the existing conditions can be achieved.

It is therefore important that any permission is conditioned with a requirement to submit the detailed drainage design for approval prior to construction commencing, and that the conditions stipulate maximum run off rate and a requirement for SuDs. Implications of flooding on the highway also need to be considered.'

6.4 SC Landscape And Projects :

No response received.

6.5 SC Rights Of Way :

Public footpath 0504/1/3 runs through the site and has been considered within the application. An informative note setting out the applicant's responsibilities is recommended.

6.6 **SC Tree Officer :**

Having perused the plan attached to the above application I note some subtle changes from the pre-application layout, notably in the drive layout and positioning of the LPG tank / biomass boiler. These changes have considerable potential to impact on trees (T8, T9, T10 & T11). In order that the construction of the new parking, fuel store, & road layout in no way compromises the safety or longevity of these trees I would need to see relevant revision of the arboricultural method statement and tree protection plan.

I also note that tree T27 and group G27 have been identified for removal, which I have no particular issue with, but feel that an opportunity for replacement planting of larger trees oak / ash etc along the hedge lines of the north and west boundaries has been missed.

6.7 **SC Public Protection :** I have no comments to make in relation to contaminated land.

6.8 **SC Planning Policy :**
No response received.

6.9 **West Mercia Constabulary:**

Comments summarised as follows :

- I understand that Shropshire Council are considering seeking to obtain Secured by Design accreditation for this development. Secured by Design is a police initiative to reduce crime and disorder through appropriate environmental design of the site and appropriate physical security of the premises and grounds.
- I note that a footpath passes through the site. To reduce the opportunity for crime and disorder during and after school hours I recommend that the public footpath is diverted.
- The site is located on the edge of the village with little opportunity for natural surveillance.
- The staff car parking area has limited natural surveillance from the premises due to the blank wall of the storage areas.
- The main entrance should be suitably gated with a lockable gate.
- The existing boundary to the east is weak and vulnerable to intrusion.

6.10 **English Heritage:**
No response received

6.11 **Severn Trent Water Ltd :**

No objection subject to a planning condition requiring the submission of drainage plans.

6.12 **SC Historic Environment And Conservation :**

The Conservation Area was extended in 2009 to include the area of land the school is proposed, it backs on to Church Lane, an area which contains many modern detached dwellings.

The School will sit on the border of the Conservation Area, in the far corner of the site furthest away from the village, therefore it will have no detrimental affect on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area or that of the closest listed building, the existing School.

The proposed design of the new building will reflect the simple architecture of agricultural buildings found in this area and it will use natural materials including a sedum roof, Douglas fir timber cladding, Ludlow Sandstone and a great amount of glazing which will assist its amalgamation in to its site within the natural environment. Trees, hedgerows and an orchard are proposed to be planted which will screen the building from its surroundings and again enhance its existence within the natural context.

6.13 **Parish Consultation :**

"The Parish Council fully support the application for the new School. The Plans for the design and siting of the school meet virtually all the points raised by the parish through the workings of the Reference group which had representatives of the local community. Several public meetings have been held and regular newsletters issued by the Reference Group giving members of the public the opportunity to make comment on the proposed development of the school. Before commencement of the planning stage a local Parish Poll was held which provided the initial mandate to support the proposed replacement school for Ashford Carbonell and Caynham to be developed at Ashford Carbonell. In supporting the application there is concern about lighting of the grounds which should be low level lighting so that it does not impact on neighbouring properties."

6.14 **Ramblers Association :**

No response received

6.15 **Open Spaces Society :**

No response received

7.0 **PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS**

7.1 Twenty one letters of objection have been received making the following points:

- The lack of a Traffic Impact Assessment is a serious omission from the application. A private developer would be required to provide a traffic count, survey of speeds and an accident record.
- Based on the existing situation, a significant number of children attending the school will live in Ludlow. The access to the A49 is hazardous for right turning traffic particularly at peak times and in bad light.
- The road network around Ashford Carbonell has a number of blind bends, narrowings and blind crests, all of which suggest that the village is not a safe and logical location for a new combined primary school with a much larger catchment area. Only two or three children live within walking distance so traffic levels are likely to be considerable.
- The site is at the crossing of two narrow country lanes and heavy traffic using the access through the village will be a serious danger to children.
- The amount of car parking space is excessive for a school of this size.
- The main access route will be from the A49 across a single width bridge with limited visibility. Several accidents have happened in this location.
- There is only one sewerage pipe to serve the village which has expanded significantly over recent years. The volume is now two or three times greater than it was designed for. The system will be overloaded by 73+ people using the school toilets and run off from the car park and playgrounds, particularly as the school site is higher than the rest of the village. The school can only be built if the sewerage system is upgraded by laying suitably sized pipes.
- The site is in a Conservation Area and the development would completely change its character and the setting of the village. A modern school, large parking areas and floodlit playing fields and the removal of hedgerows to allow a 'safe' access to be constructed will transform a protected conservation area into an urban landscape. A landscape impact analysis should have been carried out.
- It is a shame to use a greenfield site
- The buildings, car park, playing fields and garden will all need maintenance – will this need a resident caretaker?
- When the government is having to make cuts in all departments, it seems odd that Shropshire Council can spend £3.9M on a new school.
- In October 2008 the County Planning Officer advised that Ashford Carbonell was not the first choice of location and the increase in pupil traffic would adversely affect the sustainability of the scheme.

- The security of properties in Church Lane will be compromised by the proposed access gate leading from the village road. The pedestrian access gate will also attract parents to park on the road to avoid the dangerous access resulting in traffic congestion.
- The Council is not dealing with the application in the manner expected of the general public. The site notice did not mention the Conservation Area and it was posted discreetly on adjacent premises. Reports have not been made available in a timely manner.
- No information has been provided to explain how the application is in line with development plan policies and the proposal conflicts with the key principles of PPS7. The proposal is not sustainable. The school should be located near where the children live to reduce car journeys and enable children to walk to school. Half the children will come from Ludlow and this proportion is likely to increase as more housing is built to the south and east of the town.
- A 'Very good' BREEM rating has been required for schools for years. A standard of 'Excellent' should have been required. We were promised a new building that would be a 'beacon' of sustainability but the use of LPG is proposed and cycle facilities are proposed to get BREEM credits even though no one will walk or cycle to the school due to its location.
- The site is within 100m of the River Teme SSSI. The ecological interest of the site is important but insufficient assessment has been made of the ecological and environmental impact of the development.
- The application should be refused or withdrawn on the basis that insufficient information or justification has been provided. The site selection process for the school has been led by the availability of the site rather than its suitability.
- Ashford Carbonell is not a village where development on the scale proposed is justified. The proposal is seriously damaging to the character and appearance of the conservation area that it is the Council's duty to protect. The application should be rejected as being lacking in justification, highly damaging to the character and quality of the local environment and the village conservation area, detrimental to the interests of road safety and contrary to policy.

7.2 Sixteen letters of support have been received making the following points:

- The layout of the site and the superb design of the school will enhance the village and the education of current and future pupils.
- The high quality of 'green' aspects to the building design and surroundings is particularly to be welcomed.

- The site is the best one put forward and will provide exciting outdoor space
- The proposal meets all the criteria of relevant local and national planning policies.
- The proposal benefits the community by providing a place where children can be educated in a rural environment.
- The school will benefit the local community by providing employment and providing community facilities outside school hours. This helps the community become a thriving and sustainable place and improves the quality of life for residents.
- The school will attract families with young children to the area and contribute to its vitality.
- The location of the school and position of the access will preserve the tranquillity of the village and protect residents from disturbance in line with local plan policies E6 and AC6.
- The design is of a high quality and provides all the facilities that could be hoped for in a school. The building is low and discreet and will have not an adverse visual effect on the rural landscape.
- The building promotes environmental sustainability
- The children need modern educational facilities. The existing school is not intended for the numbers of pupils and the location is unsuitable for the number of vehicles dropping off and collecting children.
- The provision of new facilities and a modern educational environment for the 'Butterflies' playgroup and its integration into the school will be a major benefit to young children who will become the future pupils of the primary school.
- The village needs its school – it used to have a pub, bakery and shop. Once gone these facilities don't come back.
- The comments of the local community have been taken on board and a majority of residents supported the proposal in a poll taken in the village.

8.0 **PLANNING POLICY**

8.1 **Central Government Guidance:**

PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PPS 5: Planning and the Historic Environment
PPS 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPG 13: Transport

8.2 **South Shropshire Local Plan:**

SD1: Sustainable Development
SD2: Pollution of Resources
E1 Landscape Conservation
E6 Design

AC1 Location of Development and Access to Services
AC6: Community and Recreational Facilities
AC7 Capacity of Existing Infrastructure
RE1 Resource and Energy Conservation
RE2: Water Environment

8.3 **Other Material Policy Considerations**

Ashford Carbonell Village Design Statement (2008)
Removing Planning Barriers (Schools) - Eric Pickles Ministerial Statement 26 July 2010.

9.0 **THE MAIN ISSUES**

- Principle of Development
- Impact on the Environment
- Impact on Residential Amenity
- Access and Highway Safety
- Biodiversity
- Drainage

10.0 **OFFICER APPRAISAL**

10.1 **Principle of Development**

10.1.1 Background History and the Need for a New School

Bishop Hooper School opened in September 2009 following the amalgamation of the Caynham CE (VA) School and Ashford Carbonell CE (VA) School. Pupil numbers at each school had been falling putting both schools at risk. The catchment area takes in the villages of Ashford Carbonell, Caynham and surrounding area but a significant proportion of pupils from Ludlow opt to attend the school. Bishop Hooper School is currently accommodated on the site of the old Caynham Primary School. This is an extended Victorian building with three classrooms contained in a separate prefabricated building. The facilities and gross internal floor area of 293.5 m² falls below Government recommendations. There are currently 70 pupils on the roll. The local 'Butterflies' nursery is privately run in Caynham Village Hall. The present premises are considered to be too small to house the school and associated facilities on a long term basis. Following consultations with Governors, school staff and the local community, the Cabinet of Shropshire County Council decided that the best option for the future of the school was to build a new school to serve the combined catchment area.

10.1.2 Site Selection and Alternatives

Consultation on a new site for Bishop Hooper School took place between March and May 2008. The process involved consultation meetings between Council officers and the local community. A total of 12 sites were identified and these were whittled down to seven following a desktop appraisal to identify technical problems. The remaining seven

sites were subject to a more detailed site appraisal. These sites were both the existing school sites, land at Ashford Carbonell Village Hall, the Hatchery and Square Copse, Caynham and land by Caynham and Ashford Carbonell churches.

The study concluded that the most appropriate site for the new school was the current Ashford Carbonell school site supplemented by additional land from the adjacent field to the north. Cabinet approved the appraisal in May 2008 and further consultation on the location took place with the Governors of the existing schools, the Parish Councils and a public meeting was held at Ashford Carbonell in July 2008. On 19 November 2009, after the publication of statutory notices identifying the age range, size and location of the school, Cabinet determined the notices and agreed that the new school would go ahead on the site at Ashford Carbonell subject to the purchase of the site and the grant of planning permission.

10.1.3 Public Consultation

Following the decision of the Council to proceed with the new school, a design brief was drawn up and two public meetings were held in Ashford Carbonell and one in Caynham in collaboration with the Parish Councils to gather the views of the community. A Reference Group of local residents was appointed by the two Parish Councils to meet with the design team. Architype were appointed to design the proposal and they have held meetings with the Reference Group and three public meetings in Ashford Carbonell to present their designs and respond to public concerns. The current application represents the outcome of a thorough pre-application consultation process.

10.1.4 Planning Policies

Local Planning Authorities have a duty to determine planning applications in accordance with the statutory development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In the context of this application, the South Shropshire Local Plan is the starting point and other material considerations, such as national government advice and the village design statement, should be taken into account in reaching a decision.

The proposed site for the school is not allocated for development in the South Shropshire Local Plan and the proposal as a result is a 'departure' from the development plan. Proposals for development such as schools have to be considered against criteria based policies and in this context policy AC6 Community and Recreational Facilities is the most relevant.

This policy permits new community facilities where they are in accordance with the location, siting and design policies of the plan and provided:

- they reflect the needs of the local community and are in scale and character with the area
- they are located within or adjacent to a settlement within the area they serve.

Other relevant development plan policies are listed in section 8.0 above.

Planning Policy Statements 4 and 7 are very clear that decisions on development proposals should be based on sustainable development principles. The key points of the advice for development management in rural areas include allowing good quality, carefully-sited accessible development within villages where it raises the quality of life and the environment by promoting thriving, inclusive and locally distinctive rural communities whilst continuing to protect the open countryside. Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 acknowledges that schools are major generators of travel and should be located so as to maximise their accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling although the limited potential in rural areas is recognised. The PPG recommends that proposals for new schools are accompanied by School Travel Plans to promote safe cycle and walking routes, restrict parking and car access at and around schools.

In July 2010, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government issued a Ministerial Statement titled 'Removing Planning Barriers (Schools)'. The Secretary of State has advised local planning authorities that the statement should be taken into account as a material consideration when determining applications. The advice is principally aimed at proposals for free schools but it states, without specific reference to free schools, that local authorities should:

attach very significant weight to the desirability of establishing new schools and to enabling local people to do so;

adopt a positive and constructive approach towards applications to create new schools, and seek to mitigate any negative impacts of development through the use of planning conditions or planning obligations, as appropriate; and

only refuse planning applications for a new school if the adverse planning impacts on the local area outweigh the desirability of establishing a school in that area.

In conclusion, the principle of building a new school on the site is acceptable provided the impact on the local environment including access and highway safety is thoroughly evaluated and the benefits to the community of building a new school is considered to outweigh the impact on the environment. These issues are considered in detail below.

10.2 **Impact on the Environment**

10.2.1 Design, Scale and Siting

The school is designed in a contemporary style to minimise its impact on the landscape. It has a strong horizontal emphasis with low pitched roofs. The sections and scale of the building bear a similarity to an agricultural building and the lightweight roof will be planted with Sedum to achieve a natural colour that blends with the landscape. The building will be clad in locally sourced timber and stone with extensive glazed areas and canopies over open external play areas.

The building is sited on the higher part of the site in the north east corner of the field. This enables existing trees and hedges to screen the building from houses on the edge of the village and is the position most favoured by local residents. The proposed siting of the building will reduce the visibility of the staff parking area and access. The 'drop off' parking area and the games areas make use of the flatter land at the base of the slope and are screened by the existing hedges. The intervening slope is utilised to provide an amphitheatre, raised beds and an orchard. Security has been taken into account by dividing the site into two zones. The open access zone consists of the more northern end of the site incorporating drop off and short stay parking areas and the vehicular access. It also incorporates the public right of way which will be retained. The remaining area will be a secure school zone.

Landscaping proposals are shown schematically on the submitted plan. The proposals significantly increase planting along the south east boundary of the site by establishing an earth bund planted with fast growing conifers and a mix of deciduous trees behind. Elsewhere the existing hedge will be reinforced where necessary and a new hedge planted where it has had to be removed to create the access and visibility splays. In addition, a comprehensive report has been submitted including a tree survey, method statement and tree protection statement to deal with the existing trees and hedges on the site and their protection during construction.

The design of the building and layout of the site is imaginative and well considered. The building is intended to be unobtrusive with detailing and materials relating to its surroundings. The proposal meets the guidelines set out in the village design guide for Ashford Carbonell so far as they are relevant to the proposal. The landscaping proposals require more consideration and the use of non-native evergreen trees as a fast growing screen is rarely appropriate on a rural site. The issue of planting and screening can be considered in more detail through the imposition of a planning condition requiring the submission of a comprehensive landscaping scheme.

10.2.2 Sustainability

In terms of its location, the school is situated centrally in its catchment area. Inevitably due to its rural location, most children will arrive by car. A covered cycle store will be provided to encourage cycling to school and there will be a pedestrian access gate from the south west corner of the site closest to the village but it has to be acknowledged that very few pupils will be able to safely walk or cycle to the school. A survey at the current school in Caynham in January 2010 indicated that just under 80% of pupils arrive by car. The location of the new school will increase the level of eligibility for free school transport and it is expected the figure will drop to 75%. The aim is to reduce the figure further to 70% by developing a School Travel Plan. In addition, current car use would be much lower if parents from Ludlow were able to make shared transport arrangements through the use of a minibus. The Council will help and encourage this arrangement.

The design brief for the building requires the building to achieve a 'Very Good' BREEAM standard. The design incorporates a wide range of facilities to maximise the sustainability of the building. These include the use of natural materials in construction, a sustainable water drainage system, a high level of insulation and design solutions to maximise natural ventilation and solar gain.

Sustainability would be an issue whichever site for a school was chosen to meet the needs of the catchment area. The issue has to be balanced against the need and desirability of providing a new school for children in the present catchment area.

10.2.3 Character of the Conservation Area

The site for the school is located in Ashford Carbonell Conservation Area. The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is an important consideration in determining the application. The site was included in the Conservation Area because of its position on the edge of the village and its contribution to the setting. The issue is how harmful the development would be when weighed against the wider public benefits of the proposal.

At present the site is a sloping agricultural field of no particular character. It has mature hedgerows along the lane and there are views from within the site towards the modern detached houses along Church Lane. The proposed school building is located in the corner of the site furthest away from the village. The building is designed to minimise its impact on the area and will be screened by trees, hedgerows and the proposed orchard. A large proportion of the site will remain open and screened by the existing hedges. The vehicular access to the site is from the

Caynham Road leaving the existing hedge lined approach to the village intact.

It is the Conservation Officer's opinion that the proposal will not have a detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. The visual harm arising from the development is very limited in comparison with the significant public benefit of having a new school to serve the area. This weighs heavily in favour of the proposal.

10.2.4 Landscape and the Setting of the Village

The site for the school is on land rising upwards from the River Teme which is located just over 100m to the west. The river and its flood plain are separated from the site by the lane into the village. This lane and all the other boundaries of the site are bounded by tall, mature hedgerows interspersed with a number of native trees. The site is visible but not particularly prominent in the local landscape.

The school will be visible from the Caynham Road when approaching the site from either direction. Photomontages have been provided to enable an assessment of the landscape impact to be made. The design and siting of the building and facilities make use of the topography of the site. The creation of the access will result in the removal of a stretch of hedgerow and open up views into the site, particularly in the short term. Landscaping will help the development blend into the landscape in the longer term. The school will be located in close proximity to the village and will be 'read' as being part of it. The impact of the development on the landscape is considered to be acceptable and not detrimental to the setting of the village.

10.2.5 Neighbours and Residential Amenity

The nearest neighbouring properties are located on Church Lane to the south and The Old Vicarage, a large detached dwelling set back from the Caynham Road to the north of the site. The site is visible from the rear elevations and some of the gardens to properties on Church Lane but there is a significant screen of trees both along the south east boundary of the site and within Maypole Piece, a small nature area with public access to the south of the boundary. The Old Vicarage has a number of mature trees in the front curtilage of the property and is separated from the site by the Caynham Road.

The occupiers of The Old Vicarage may be aware of a small number of additional traffic movements in the vicinity of their property and will have a view of the school building. Occupiers of properties on Church Lane may be able to see the school and grounds, particularly during the winter months, but in both cases the impact of the school development will not be seriously detrimental to their residential amenities through additional

activity or noise. A condition is recommended requiring details of any proposed lighting of the site to ensure this does not pose a nuisance to local residents.

10.2.6 Biodiversity

The application is accompanied by a Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Bird, Bat and Reptile Survey to determine the potential of the site to support legally protected species such as bats, badgers, nesting birds, reptiles and great-crested newts and consider the impact of the development proposals on vulnerable areas of the site. The Survey is also used to identify the plant communities present in the grassland and the species content of the perimeter hedges and trees.

There is a range of bird species present on the site, potentially nesting in the hedgerows and in some of the existing nest boxes but the site appears to have limited botanical interest due to the level of grazing. Additional surveys are suggested to gauge the level of bat activity and determine whether any trees are used as roosts. It is also suggested that a further survey is carried out to assess whether the site supports reptiles, particularly slowworms. The report recommends that hedgerows and trees should be protected and suggests enhancements that the school may wish to carry out to increase the biodiversity of the site. The proposal is unlikely to result in harm to a protected species or its habitat and the County Ecologist has no objection to the proposal subject to conditions.

10.2.7 Drainage

Foul water from the development will drain to the public sewer in the lane adjoining the site. Severn Trent Water's consent is required for connection to the public sewer and they have no objection to the proposal subject to planning conditions requiring the submission of a foul and surface water drainage scheme.

A Drainage Statement has been submitted with the application but the Council's Drainage Officer notes that there are no specific drainage designs or calculations submitted for the proposed SuDs system and it is not clear if any discharge from the site is proposed. Surface drainage is an important issue because the site is located within 100m of the River Teme, a designated SSSI and run off can lead to local flooding issues. The agent has been asked for more information on this issue but ultimately the design of the surface water drainage system can be controlled by a planning condition.

10.3 **Access and Highway Safety**

10.3.1 Access

Through the pre-application consultation process it was apparent that a majority of residents viewed the rural nature of the village approach road as being of great importance to the setting of the village and wanted to maintain it intact. The position of the proposed access to the school became one of the most important issues and as a result a vehicular access was proposed off the Caynham Road. Consultations with the Council's Highways Officers took place and a topographical survey was carried out. The Council's Head of Premises and Planning have provided Highways Officers with information on existing and estimated traffic generation from the school.

The proposed access off the Caynham Road will be achieved by removing a short section of hedgerow to create the access and removing and replacing the roadside hedge to achieve satisfactory visibility splays. The opportunity will also be taken to improve visibility from the existing access to the village in an easterly direction. A pedestrian access will be created in the south west corner of the site to enable access from the village. This access will be lockable enabling the school to control access as necessary.

The Caynham Road is a fast stretch of road without speed limit restrictions. In order for traffic to be able to safely access and exit the site, traffic management measures are required to significantly reduce the speed of traffic. It is anticipated that the measures will include a reduced speed limit, an appropriate gateway treatment/features together with signing and lining work. On this basis the Team Leader Highways Development Control has no objection to the proposal subject to planning conditions being imposed.

10.3.2 Traffic Generation and Parking

Due to the nature of the local highway network, the proposal intends to contain all potential traffic generated by the school on the site. The school is designed to hold a maximum of 119 pupils (limited by current admission rules) in the main school plus up to 27 pupils (limited by current staffing ratios) in the associated early years and child care facility. There are proposed to be 53 car parking spaces plus a coach and minibus drop off area within the site. Two spaces are designated for disabled drivers. Parents who wish to drop children off will be able to use the coach drop off area when it is not used by the home to school transport minibus.

Parking is divided into two areas, one for staff and disabled visitors (19 spaces including 2 disabled user spaces) and one for parents (34

spaces). The calculation for the size of each was undertaken separately. The school has an intended admission number capacity of 84 pupils, and will open with around 70 pupils on the roll. However, calculations were based on a school with an admissions capacity of 119 pupils and an early facility for 27 pupils as a theoretical maximum.

Officers are satisfied that the level of parking provision is adequate to ensure no parking takes place outside the site. It should be noted that it is not the Council's usual practice or policy to encourage on-site parking to the extent proposed but the nature of the local road network and school use means it is essential to safely accommodate vehicles on site. The school will be required to produce a School Travel Plan to encourage sustainable travel and seek reductions in car borne traffic in the interests of sustainability.

10.3.3 Public Right of Way

There is a public footpath which crosses the northern part of the site which will be retained and will form one of the main pedestrian access points into the village. The character of the path will change but in many respects the proposed development will give it an important new function.

11.0 **CONCLUSION**

11.1 This application is the outcome of a long process to safeguard the future of two rural schools with falling numbers by amalgamating the schools on one site. A number of alternative sites for a school have been considered but these have been either unsuitable or unavailable. The proposed site is a 'greenfield' site adjacent to the village of Ashford Carbonell. The proposal has been the subject of many pre-application consultation meetings with local residents which have ironed out a number of issues and concerns but nonetheless the application is locally controversial.

The development will change the character of the edge of the village but great efforts have been made to design a building and layout that minimises the impact on the conservation area and wider countryside. The site accommodates all its traffic generation on site and with appropriate traffic calming measures a safe access can be made. In your officers' opinion, the impact of the proposal on the local environment is limited and acceptable when weighed against the need and community benefit of securing a site for a new school to serve the local villages and rural catchment area. The proposal does not wholly conform with the development plan however there are significant material considerations which weigh strongly in favour of granting planning permission in this instance.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Planning application file 10/02858

HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 8 give the right to respect for private and family life and First Protocol Article 1 allows for the peaceful enjoyment of possessions. These have to be balanced against the rights and freedoms of others and the orderly development of the County in the interests of the Community.

First Protocol Article 1 requires that the desires of landowners must be balanced against the impact on residents.

This legislation has been taken into account in arriving at the above recommendation.

Environment Appraisal

The development proposed, namely the construction of a new school, does not fall within the description of development in Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1999.

Risk Management Appraisal

Any delay in making a decision on the application will prevent the new school opening in September 2011.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

Consultations undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Member Champion

Cllr Martin Taylor Smith

Local Member

Cllr Martin Taylor Smith

Appendices

None

Reason for Approval

The impact of the proposal on the local environment is limited and acceptable when weighed against the need and community benefit of securing a site for a new school to serve the local villages and rural catchment area. The site is not allocated for development in the South Shropshire Local Plan however there are development plan policies and significant material considerations which weigh strongly in favour of granting planning permission in this instance.

South Planning Committee (Ludlow) – 31st August 2010

In determining this application the Local Planning Authority gave consideration to the following policies:

Central Government Guidance:

PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS 4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PP5 5 Planning and the Historic Environment
PPS 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPG 13 Transport

South Shropshire Local Plan:

SD1: Sustainable Development
SD2: Pollution of Resources
E1 Landscape Conservation
E6 Design
AC1 Location of Development and Access to Services
AC6: Community and Recreational Facilities
AC7 Capacity of Existing Infrastructure
RE1 Resource and Energy Conservation

Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
Reason: To comply with Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 (As amended).
2. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved plans and drawings.
Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.
3. No built development shall commence until samples of all external materials including hard surfacing, have been first submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approval details.
Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the development is satisfactory.
4. No development approved by this permission shall commence until there has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority a scheme of landscaping and these works shall be carried out as approved. The submitted scheme shall include:
Means of enclosure
Hard surfacing materials

Contact Rob Mills on 01584 838340

Minor artefacts and structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting)

Planting plans

Written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment)

Schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate

Implementation timetables

Reason: To ensure the provision of amenity afforded by appropriate landscape design.

5. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and to a reasonable standard in accordance with the relevant recommendations of appropriate British Standard 4428:1989. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with the timetable agreed with the Local Planning Authority. Any trees or plants that, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become, in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced with others of species, size and number as originally approved, by the end of the first available planting season.

Reason: To ensure the provision, establishment and maintenance of a reasonable standard of landscape in accordance with the approved designs.

6. No ground clearance or construction work shall commence until the Method Statement and Tree Protection measures detailed in the report by B J Unwin dated April 2010 have been fully implemented. The tree protection measures shall be retained on site for the duration of the construction works.

Reason: To prevent trees or hedgerows on site from being damaged during building works.

7. No development shall take place until a scheme of foul drainage and surface water drainage has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be completed before the development is occupied.

Reason: To ensure that the development is provided with a satisfactory means of drainage as well as to reduce the risk of creating or exacerbating a flooding problem and to minimise the risk of pollution in accordance with policy RE2 of the South Shropshire Local Plan.

8. Details of any floodlighting or external lighting to illuminate the school and outdoor areas shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the development is brought into use. The lighting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To safeguard local amenities and the character of the rural area.

9. No development shall take place until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:
- i. the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors
 - ii. loading and unloading of plant and materials
 - iii. storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development
 - iv. the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate
 - v. wheel washing facilities
 - vi. measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction
 - vii. a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works
 - viii. details of the construction site compound
 - ix. delivery and construction hours
- Reason: To avoid congestion in the surrounding area and to protect the amenities of the area.
10. No development shall take place until details of measures to be taken to prevent mud from vehicles leaving the site during the construction works being deposited on the public highway, have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing and fully implemented. Such measures shall be retained for the duration of the construction period.
- Reason: In the interests of highway safety.
11. Before any other operations are commenced, the proposed vehicular access and visibility splays, shall be provided and constructed to base course level and completed to adoptable standard as shown on the application drawings before the development is fully occupied and thereafter maintained. The area in advance of the sight lines shall be kept permanently clear of all obstructions.
- Reason: To ensure that the development should not prejudice the free flow of traffic and conditions of safety on the highway nor cause inconvenience to other highway users.
12. The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the car parking shown on the approved plans has been provided, properly laid out, hard surfaced and drained, and the space shall be maintained thereafter free of any impediment to its designated use.
- Reason: To ensure the provision of adequate car parking, to avoid congestion on adjoining roads, and to protect the amenities of the area.

13. No building hereby permitted shall be occupied until surface water drainage works have been implemented in accordance with details that have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Before these details are submitted an assessment shall be carried out of the potential for disposing of surface water by means of a sustainable drainage system in accordance with the principles set out in Annex F of PPS25 (or any subsequent version), and the results of the assessment provided to the local planning authority. Where a sustainable drainage scheme is to be provided, the submitted details shall:
- i. provide information about the design storm period and intensity, the method employed to delay and control the surface water discharged from the site and the measures taken to prevent pollution of the receiving groundwater and/or surface waters;
 - ii. include a timetable for its implementation; and
 - iii. provide a management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public authority or statutory undertaker and any other arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

Reason: To ensure an appropriate means of surface water drainage in the interests of the water environment.

14. Prior to the development hereby permitted being first brought into use / occupied the means of access, (including the provision of a closable barrier at the entrance to the site), provision of visibility splays, construction details and implementation of a Road Safety Traffic Management Scheme on the Caynham Road adjacent to the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the access proposals and Traffic Management Scheme shall be fully implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to the school being opened to the admittance of pupils on the site.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

15. Prior to the commencement of development full engineering details of the internal parking area, coach parking, servicing area and disabled parking areas together with the provision of dedicated pedestrian footpaths facilities and disabled access provisions within the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the car parking, servicing, coach parking areas and internal footpaths shall be fully implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to the school be opened to the admittance of pupils on the site.

Reason: To ensure adequate on site parking in the interests of highway safety and to properly manage the site in the interests of pedestrian safety.

South Planning Committee (Ludlow) – 31st August 2010

16. Prior to the development hereby permitted being first brought into use / occupied, the applicant shall submit and gain approval from the planning authority for a Travel Plan which commits the school to use its reasonable endeavours to reduce car travel and promote more sustainable travel modes such as walking, cycling and the use of public transport. The Travel Plan should be reviewed by the school and planning authority on a biannual basis for the lifetime of the development.
Reason: In order to promote sustainable travel objectives and reduce carbon emissions.
17. Two Schwegler 2F bat boxes (or direct woodcrete equivalents) should be erected on the site prior to first occupation. The boxes should be 4m or more above the ground and in non-illuminated areas, as advised in the manufacturer's guidance or advice should be sought from an experienced ecologist.
Reason: To enhance the value of the site for bats
18. Ten artificial nests for small birds such as Schwegler 1FB bird box, 2H robin box, Schwegler bird houses or sparrow terraces (or direct woodcrete equivalents of the above) should be erected on the building prior to first occupation. Locations should be as advised in the manufacturer's guidance or advice should be sought from an experienced ecologist.
Reason: To enhance the value of the site for nesting birds

