



The site would be accessed via an existing roundabout on Hitchin Road which currently served the Fairfield development and the four semi detached houses to the north.

The site lies within the open countryside but not within designated Green Belt.

### **The Application:**

Full planning permission is sought for the construction of a two form entry lower school on the site. The school is a single storey building of traditional form and scale. The school would provide two classrooms per year group with a capacity of 300 pupils. There is also an early years nursery which would be able to accommodate 30 children per session. Outdoor play space is provided along with a larger football pitch which, along with the school hall, is proposed to be available for community use outside of school hours.

Access would be gained via an existing roundabout on Hitchin Road and a network roadway which, in isolation appears convoluted however shows a relationship between the other scheme when read against application CB/16/01455/OUT which seeks outline planning permission for 180 dwellings, commercial floorspace and open space.

### **RELEVANT POLICIES:**

#### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012)**

#### **Core Strategy and Development Management Policies - North 2009**

DM3 High Quality Development

DM4 Development Within and Beyond Settlement Envelopes

CS3 Healthy and Sustainable Communities

#### **Development Strategy**

At the meeting of Full Council on 19 November 2015 it was resolved to withdraw the Development Strategy. Preparation of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan has begun. A substantial volume of evidence gathered over a number of years will help support this document. These technical papers are consistent with the spirit of the NPPF and therefore will remain on our website as material considerations which may inform further development management decisions.

#### **Supplementary Planning Guidance/Other Documents**

Central Bedfordshire Design Guide (March 2014)

### **Relevant Planning History:**

None on this site however the following consent is relevant at a site north of this current application site.

Application Number      CB/15/01355/OUT  
Description              Outline Application: new lower school (All matters reserved).  
Decision                  Approve (At the Committee meeting of 22 July 2015)  
Decision Date            21/08/2015

Tis application was submitted alongside the following application which is also on this agenda and referred to in this report.

Application Number      CB/15/01455/OUT  
Description              Outline Application: mixed-use development comprising flexible-use commercial unit (Use Class A1 (shop) A3 (cafe) D1 (surgery) B1 (offices); 180 dwellings; landscaping; open space; access; parking; and associated works (all matters reserved except access)  
Decision                  Recommended for approval and also on this agenda  
Decision Date            -

### **Consultees:**

Fairfield Parish Council      The Parish Council has concerns with the appropriateness of the proposed school location and it's scale, however support the provision of this new community facility.

The school is proposed to be on the east side of the Hitchin Road, with the majority of residential dwellings in Fairfield are located on the west side of the road. This therefore requires that many children cross the Hitchin Road to attend the school and there are associated risks.

The Parish Council has asked for clarification as to why a two form entry school is proposed, when only a single form entry school would appear to be necessary. No answer has been forthcoming and therefore this over provision appears un-justified and the associated additional funding to be utilised in constructing a larger than necessary facility, may be better allocated to additional secondary schooling facilities in the area. Should CBC be able to justify the proposed school size with forecast figures, then we would be supportive of the proposed scale.

With regard to the proposed vehicle and pedestrian access to the site, we have concerns with the design of the Eliot Way access / roundabout via which the proposals will be accessed. The eastern arm of the roundabout is currently only utilised by a small number of dwellings and those residents have voiced significant concerns over the difficulty of exiting onto the roundabout. While there is no adverse safety record at the junction, the proposed increase in traffic using the

junction is significant. We ask that the applicant is required to submit an independent road safety audit for the new junction arrangements, prior to any planning decision being made. This should also account for the impact of the proposed new pelican crossing, just south of the Eliot Way junction. This crossing will be heavily utilised during peak hours, due primarily to the location of the new school and as such, queues will build across the roundabout, blocking vehicle traffic seeking to enter / exit the school site. According to the latest site plan, this crossing appears to be the only proposed safe crossing route from the existing dwellings in Fairfield to the new school.

There are conflicting plans within the submissions, particularly the revised site / master plan and the plans within the Transport Assessment. The conflicts relate in particular to the proposals to provide a new footway along the eastern side of Hitchin Road, from a point just south of the Eliot Way to the junction with Dickens Boulevard, plus a proposed pelican crossing to the north of the Dickens Boulevard junction. These items are relied upon and set out in the Transport Assessment, however appear to have been removed from the latest site plans.

Should this application be approved, we would ask that CBC ensure that all associated highway improvement works, pedestrian crossings, traffic orders and footway works are secured by planning condition as pre-commencement items. The Transport Assessment submitted in support of the school proposal appears to be the same document as that submitted with the outline application for adjacent residential development and it is not clear what highway infrastructure / improvements are to be provided in association with each application. We are therefore concerned that the school could be approved, with no requirement for highway improvement or pedestrian safety works.

## Highways

As you are aware this proposal has been the subject of pre-application discussion and I am able to confirm that the current submission accords with those discussions and agreement in principle therefore there is no overriding highway objection to the development. The supporting Transport Assessment includes reference to off-site highway improvement works required to facilitate appropriate vehicle access to the site together with footway linkages along and controlled pedestrian crossings of Hitchin Road in order to provide sustainable connections with the main Fairfield settlement. It is imperative that these improvements are in place before

the school is first brought into use.

Pollution Team

#### Noise impact

I am concerned that the proposed Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) for school and community use has been located adjacent to the boundary of existing residents in Hitchin Road. Noise from the use of multi purpose sports areas can be significant with the impact of balls on the hard surfaces, kick boards, people noise from players and spectators, noise from impacts with hockey sticks, whistles etc. The applicant proposes to site the multi purpose sports area very close to existing residential boundaries and no noise mitigation measures are proposed. No noise assessment has been submitted. The previously approved School site (CB/15/01355) was located significantly further away from existing houses on Hitchin Road and the playing pitches were shown to the far east of the site much further away from existing residential properties and partially screened by school buildings to the north of the site. Pollution would like to object to the revised school application because the applicant has not demonstrated that noise from the proposed MUGA will not be detrimental to the amenity of existing residential properties on Hitchin Road.

#### Odour

The proposed school development may be adversely affected by odour from Letchworth Sewage Treatment Plant to the south of the proposed development. Justified sewage odour complaints were investigated by Central Bedfordshire Council in 2009 and we are currently investigating further odour complaints. The proposed school will experience sewage odour from the treatment works. However I note that the proposed school is located further from the sewage treatment works boundary than a small number of existing properties on Hitchin Road. I would suggest that Anglian Water are consulted on the proposed development.

#### Land Contamination

The existing and past agricultural use of the land may have resulted in contamination of the site. I would therefore ask that a land contamination condition is attached to any permission.

Landscape Officer

I have no objections to the principle of the development proposals but have the following comments / queries:

Regarding the site peripheries and integration within the landscape setting the retention of existing mature trees,

managing and reinforcing vegetation boundaries is a real positive

- Detail on proposed maintenance, access and management of these landscape edges would be appreciated.

The proposed 3G pitches are shown on plan as not including lighting

- confirmation on this would be appreciated as there may be a visual impact on the wider landscape at dusk / night time.

The external 'soft play area and ecology area' associated with the nursery is shown as an area for potential building extension

- the future loss of natural green space on site, which is already limited, and loss of an area specifically dedicated to ecology and habitat and outdoor learning is not acceptable, this valuable area and uses needs to be protected and remain undeveloped in the future.

The submitted drawings: Landscape Proposals (TLP 101) and Boundary Treatment (WH SK014) appear to show retaining walls and fencing to the 3G pitch area

- sections describing changes in levels and boundary treatments / heights and in relation to adjoining levels would be appreciated. Confirmation on colour of 3G fencing would be appreciated.

Regarding the proposals and SuDS

- it is disappointing that a green / brown roof is not included on the flat roof area of the building; although it would not be visible from the ground a green roof would contribute to biodiversity and assist in temperature control of the building / management of surface water run off forming the 1st stage of a SuDS management train.
- it is not clear how surface water run off is to be managed within the school site area and 3G pitches; conveyancing via piped solutions is not acceptable and SuDS features conveying surface water run off should be integral to the design of the building, landscape and linked to education.

Regarding the proposed layout and arrangement of space:

Seating areas for waiting parents is a real positive - could this include a canopy in case of wet weather ?

- A sheltered buggy and scooter parking area may be useful.
- Similar facilities may be beneficial at the Yr 1 - 4 entrance.
- Would sheltered cycle parking bays for older pupils be beneficial?

The access route for pupils walking to Yrs 1-4 entrance is convoluted, requiring crossing the main car parking area and manoeuvring around parked vehicles - potentially 240 pupils will be using this entrance twice a day therefore I recommend the layout of the access and car park be reconsidered:

- Pedestrian desire lines need to inform the layout of the car park, be more direct and create an interesting 'journey' to school, with a sense of arrival to the learning day - there is no imagination in the layout and design.
- Pupils and carer's having to cross a car park and having to manoeuvre around parked cars within confined spaces is not acceptable.
- The access gate for Yrs 1-4 is small with a restricted fore court. There is inadequate space for waiting carers and siblings.

Whilst understanding the desire to continue the vernacular of Fairfield hospital development I suggest there is opportunity to consider placemaking relating to this development and especially the school via design and materials and the inclusion of public art across the development and including the proposed school.

## Green Infrastructure

The application for the school site is part of the wider development proposed for the area, which has a green infrastructure network designed into the proposals.

The development as a whole also includes SuDS which comprise a number of features that integrate with the GI network.

However, this site fails to demonstrate a net gain in green infrastructure, with particular deficiencies in the SuDS.

The Sustainable Drainage Strategy usefully covers the whole development site, which puts the proposals for the school part of the site in context, and demonstrates that the system has been designed for the whole development site, not just the school site.

However, what is proposed for the school relies on

attenuation below the car park and hard play areas. This does not demonstrate a satisfactory water treatment train, and relies on underground storage that offers no wider biodiversity or amenity benefits.

Section 5.3.5 of the Sustainable Drainage Strategy notes the challenges of green roofs in residential areas. However, there is no consideration of the use of a green roof for the school site - given that this is a significant impermeable area, and that green roofs offer source control, this is a disappointing oversight.

The proposals for the school site fail to meet the local requirements for sustainable drainage set out on Central Bedfordshire Council's adopted Sustainable Drainage SPD. The proposals fail to enhance biodiversity or demonstrate multifunctional use, and they are not designed for easy access and maintenance.

In order to be considered acceptable, the applicant should amend proposals for surface water management on the school site. They need to demonstrate a water treatment train, including source control. The use of a green roof on the school site should be explicitly investigated, and SuDS features included that are multifunctional, enhance biodiversity and are designed for easy access and maintenance. Design guidance is provided in CBC's Sustainable Drainage SPD. The current proposals, with sub-surface storage as the only surface water management feature are unacceptable.

#### Trees and Landscape

The site is currently grass with boundary hedge features and the proposed development will require some soil levelling to accommodate the sports pitch.

Boundary hedgelines are to be protected using tree protection fencing at a distance and detail as described in BS5837 2012 Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction. Recommendations.

Detailed landscape proposals including species, sizes and densities of planting will be required.

#### Ecology

Having looked at the submitted documents I have no objection to the proposals but offer the following comments;

- The school building will be single storey to have a flat roof over the central activity space. I wonder what the possibility would be to have elements of this roof as a green, sedum roof to aid with rainwater management?
- I note that the all-weather pitch is to be replaced with

a grass pitch which is welcomed as, although this will be managed grassland, it will be more ecologically sound. Previous comments relating to the all-weather pitch were concerned over the potential desire for floodlighting and I would reiterate this would not be appropriate in this location.

- As the pitches are to be grass now there is more opportunity for the natural edge to be further enhanced than shown on the current landscape proposal plan.
- I welcome the proposed 'ecology area' to the west of the site with fruit trees and outdoor learning. However, this location is also identified for future expansion for 2 classes. I understand that should this be the case the ecology area could be relocated but it would undoubtedly mean the loss of the fruit trees. I would ask, therefore, that clear consideration be given to the location of planting to ensure it is not lost in years to come.
- I acknowledge a number of measures have been included which will benefit biodiversity but as the NPPF requires development to deliver a net gain I would also like to see the inclusion of integrated bird and bat boxes, these would work particularly well under the eaves of the gable end on the western elevation which sits in a treed corridor.

Sustainable  
Drainage

Urban We consider that outline planning permission could be granted to the proposed development and the final design and maintenance arrangements for the surface water system agreed at the detailed design stage, if the following recommendations and planning conditions are secured.

The final detailed design including proposed standards of operation, construction, structural integrity and ongoing maintenance must be compliant with the 'Non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems' (March 2015, Ref: PB14308), 'Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Drainage Guidance' (Adopted April 2014, Updated May 2015), and recognised best practise including the Ciria SuDS Manual (2016, C753).

To ensure future homeowners and subsequent homeowners will be aware of any maintenance requirements / responsibilities for surface water drainage; further measures should be proposed by the applicant and may include, for example, information provided to the first purchaser of the property and also designation/registration of the SuDS so that it appears as a Land Charge for the property and as such is identified

to subsequent purchasers of the property. Any methods involving designation or registering a Land Charge are to be agreed with the LPA.

Please note that Land drainage Consent under the Land Drainage Act 1991 must be secured to discharge surface water to the Pix Brook, and details of this provided with the full detailed design.

Internal Drainage Board The proposal is part of a larger development which is shown on the plan provided. However this shows a flood storage area to be located within the Board's byelaw strip and Floodzone 3 which is not acceptable. Although the surface water discharge rate can be agreed with the Board prior to obtaining its consent and can be covered by condition the location of the development within its byelaw distance and Floodzone 3 cannot.

The Board therefore must object to this application until revised plans are provided showing this area clear of all development.

Environment Agency We have no objection to this application.

Flood Risk / Surface Water Drainage  
Please consult the LLFA.

Contamination

The site is located above a Principal Aquifer. However, we do not consider this proposal to be High Risk. Therefore, we will not be providing detailed site-specific advice or comments with regards to land contamination issues for this site. The developer should address risks to controlled waters from contamination at the site, following the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Environment Agency Guiding Principles for Land Contamination.

Infiltration Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

The water environment is potentially vulnerable and there is an increased potential for pollution from inappropriately located and/or designed infiltration (SuDS). We consider any infiltration (SuDS) greater than 2.0 m below ground level to be a deep system and are generally not acceptable. All infiltration SuDS require a minimum of 1.2 m clearance between the base of infiltration SuDS and peak seasonal groundwater levels. All need to meet the criteria in our Groundwater Protection: Principles and Practice (GP3) position statements G1 to G13.

In addition, they must not be constructed in ground

affected by contamination.

Anglian Water	No comments received
Leisure Officer	No comments received
Sport England	Raised no objections
Education Officer	This response is in support of the planning application to create a 2-form entry lower school and nursery within the parish of Fairfield.

There is a high level of demand for lower school places in Fairfield, and further housing development planned within the parish will create a need for additional lower school capacity. Fairfield Park lower school was expanded on the existing site to 2 forms of entry for September 2013, Shefford Lower School also expanded by 1 form of entry for September 2013 and an additional form of entry has been provided at Roecroft Lower School from September 2015.

Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) to secure sufficient school places to provide appropriate education for pupils in its area. There is no capacity to further expand the existing sites of local lower schools so the provision of a new lower school building as per this planning application would enable Central Bedfordshire Council to meet its statutory duty as set out by the Education Act 1996.

On 5 April 2016, the Executive at Central Bedfordshire Council considered a report from the Executive Member for Education and Skills that set out the outcome of the consultation exercise for the commissioning of the new lower school places within the Parish of Fairfield from September 2017. The Executive approved the proposal of the Governing Body of Fairfield Park Lower School to permanently expand onto the second site, subject to the granting of planning permission under Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 by 1 September 2016.

The Local Authority and the Head Teacher of Fairfield Park Lower continue to have extensive design discussions with Lochailort Investments Ltd to develop the two form entry lower school on the new site. The submitted design is in accordance with Building Bulletin 103 (BB103 guidance which was adopted by the Local Authority (in Dec 2014) as guidance in creating future design briefs for new school buildings, school refurbishment or conversion projects.

Discussions have been productive and positive. Whilst further work is required in the immediate future on the detailed designs of the school build, progress so far has been constructive and well planned.

It is clear that this proposal represents an opportunity to expand Fairfield Park Lower School onto a new second site and create much-needed local lower school places. The early handover of the new school site to Fairfield Park Lower School before September 2017 remains the objective of all parties and the progress made so far is encouraging.

Public Art Officer

Central Bedfordshire actively encourages the integration of Public Art into new developments. It is the Council's preference that developers and promoters of projects should take responsibility for funding, management and implementation of Public Art within schemes either directly or through specialist agents, in consultation with Town and Parish Council and Central Bedfordshire Council.

Central Bedfordshire requires Public Art to be provided on all public facing development including educational establishments.

The proposed new lower school east of Hitchin Road offers an array of exciting opportunities to include Public Art especially at interfaces with the wider public realm, promoting community and local distinctiveness / sense of place.

Key requirements for successful Public Art projects are:

- Integration of proposals within the initial design stages
- Ideally artists should be appointed as part of the design team
- The involvement of local communities in participating in the development of arts projects
- Public Art should be site specific responding to place and people. Consideration should be given to local materials, history and appropriateness of artwork to its environments and audiences.
- Public Art should be uniquely created and of highest quality

Public Art can include:

- Street furniture and lighting
- Integrated architectural features, structures and floorscapes

- Water, landscaping, planting and play
- Interpretation and way marking
- Interactive works, audio visual, performance
- Standalone pieces.

Public Artists can include:

Artists and artisans, artist architects, landscape artists - with experience in working in collaboration with developers, design teams and local communities.

If the application were to be approved I request a Condition be applied with suggested wording but await your advice on this:

- *No part of development shall be brought in to use until a Public Art Plan is submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority . The Public Art Plan shall be implemented in full and as approved unless otherwise amended in accordance with a review to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

The Public Art Plan should detail:

- Management - who will administer, time and contact details, time scales / programme
- Brief for involvement of artists, site context, background to development , suitable themes and opportunities for Public Art
- Method of commissioning artists / artisans, means of contact, selection process / selection panel and draft contract for appointment of artists
- Community engagement - programme and events
- Funding - budgets and administration.
- Future care and maintenance.

Involvement of local community is essential, especially future pupils of the school, therefore I recommend the Public Art Plan ties in with build programmes in relation to times scales / phasing for adjoining development if approved.

The Central Bedfordshire Design Guide, Section 4 Public Realm is available on the CBC website and offers comprehensive advise on the integration of Public Art within development. I would also be very happy to lies with the applicant / developer to provide advice and support if required.

Sustainable  
Officer

Growth

More information is required in regards to proposed sustainability standards.

The proposed development should as far as practicable comply with the requirements of the development management policies DM1: Renewable Energy and DM2: Sustainable Construction of New Buildings.

Policy DM1 requires all new non-domestic development with a floor space of 1000m<sup>2</sup> or above to meet the development's 10% energy demand from renewable or low carbon sources. Policy DM2 encourages all new non-domestic development with a floor space of 1000m<sup>2</sup> or above to meet BREEAM Excellent rating.

The above policies are reflected in the Sustainable Design for Schools Guidance that requires all new schools to be built to BREEAM excellent or equivalent standard. To demonstrate compliance the applicant is required to provide information specified in the Appendix of the Guidance.

I note that the school have a large south orientation with sloping roof which would be ideal for installation of PV panels that can provide a significant proportion of school's electricity demand. PV panels are popular with schools as they reduce schools energy bills. If installation of PV panels is not possible as part of the new build project for financial reasons I would strongly recommend ensuring that the roof is PV ready: structurally strong enough to take additional load and with necessary connections for PV panels to be installed at a later date should the school wish to do it.

Policy DM 1: Renewable Energy requires that as a minimum 10% of schools energy demand is delivered from renewable or low carbon sources. The policy is technology neutral and PV is not the only technology which would be suited for this development. A consideration should be given to Heat Pumps as these can provide cooling when required. Thermal modelling should be undertaken to ensure that risk of overheating is minimised and appropriate measures are installed to deal with any issues identified.

The elevation drawing shows that trees will be planted around the school. This is welcome as trees can provide shading and minimise solar gains in south facing classrooms. However, the selection of species and their positioning should be carefully considered so trees do not shade PV panels if these were to be installed.

However before renewable energy technologies are

considered |I would strongly recommend ensuring that the development is highly energy efficient, and exceeds the current Building Regulations standards for fabric energy efficiency (TFEE) to reduce energy demand.

The project should also consider and include other sustainability measures specified in the Sustainability Checklist such as water efficient fittings, sustainable and recycled materials with low environmental impact, installation of Automated Meter Reading Equipment (AMR) to monitor school's energy performance. All design consideration and decisions should be recorded in the checklist.

Should the planning permission be granted, to ensure that the development is implemented to the above policies standards, I request inclusion of the following conditions:

- The development is to achieve BREEAM excellent rating or equivalent;
- The development is to deliver 10% of its energy demand from renewable and/or low carbon sources.

### **Other Representations:**

#### Neighbours

3 letters have been received. 2 have raised the following objections:

- Outside of Fairfield settlement
- School would be better placed to the south of existing settlement. Proposed location is wrong and unsafe.
- Peak morning traffic will cause chaos
- Traffic analysis information is out of date (2013)
- Unclear why the school has doubled in size.
- Sewerage processing facility is already inadequate let alone with consented developments.
- No consideration given to upcoming neighbourhood plan.

One letter is in support of the application in terms of its design but raises concerns over the access and congestion around the school.

### **Determining Issues:**

The main considerations of the application are;

1. Principle
2. Affect on the Character and Appearance of the Area

3. Neighbouring Amenity
4. Highway Considerations
5. Other Considerations

## **Considerations**

### **1. Principle of development.**

- 1.1 The response from the Education Officer has confirmed that there is a need for lower school provision in this catchment area. It is also acknowledged that there are no allocated a school sites in this area and little space within settlement envelopes for development on this scale.
- 1.2 North of this application site, within the red line area of CB/16/01455/OUT, outline planning permission was granted with all matters reserved for the development of a new lower school, ref: CB/15/01355/OUT. The permission remains extant although it is acknowledged in light of the current submissions it is unlikely to be implemented. The report acknowledged that the development was in open countryside, a location in which new development is restricted, however it also confirmed a demonstrable need for education places and concluded that the public benefits of the scheme outweighed the impact on the open countryside.
- 1.3 Due to the comparisons of the location with this current application the views previously made remain pertinent. Detailed considerations below will address the impact of the proposal on issues including the character of the area but in terms of the principle of development the benefits of providing school spaces is considered to outweigh the restrictions of policy DM4 and is considered to be acceptable.

### **2. Affect on the Character and Appearance of the Area**

- 2.1 The school has been designed to have traditional detailing and one that is reflective of the existing Fairfield Lower School. All floorspace is provided at ground floor level only and the design incorporates areas of higher ceilings such as the hall. The plans indicate that the proposed external material would be traditional and also reflective of the existing lower school and wider Fairfield settlement. Gable and roof detailing, along with proposed openings make for interest on the external elevations and the design of the school is therefore considered to be of high visual quality and appropriate to the Fairfield settlement.
- 2.2 The removal of the initially proposed all weather pitch means that the playing fields will be grassed which reduces the extent of development on the site. Hard landscaping is limited to the immediate curtilage of the building and is mixed with structural soft landscaping it combine to provide a softer rural setting for the school which is appropriate for its location.
- 2.3 The proposal would extend the built environment into the open countryside. Within the Mid Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment the site is described as having a moderate to low character and visual sensitivity to change resulting in landscape with a moderate to low value. The land slopes down towards Pix Brook (to the east) where there are tree belts and woodland. The

proposed school will be visible from Hitchin Road although not overly prominent as it is sited to the rear of existing dwellings immediately west of the site which provides a gap between the site and the existing public realm. Although it is of a relatively low scale for a large footprint building the school and its curtilage development will materially change the character of the area in this location.

- 2.4 The proposed school would have a clear impact on the existing character and appearance of the rural area, however as discussed above there is a demonstrable need for additional school places in this location. The school is proposed adjacent to existing residential development on Hitchin Road and close to the sewage works. It is therefore surrounded by existing built form for the most part and would not therefore be isolated and prominent within the rural area. Furthermore it forms part of a large scale development proposal including the consented redevelopment of the nearby former pig testing unit and the proposal, also on this agenda, to develop land north of this site for 180 dwellings among other things. If the latter scheme is consented and both are built out then the school site would sit as part of this larger development and therefore would not be isolated for this reason either.
- 2.5 Therefore the proposal is not considered to result in substantial visual harm to the character and appearance of the area and the overall impact of this proposal is considered to be outweighed by the benefit of providing needed school places for residents living within the catchment area. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable and therefore compliant with Policy DM3 of the Core strategy and Development Management Policies Document (2009)

### **3. Neighbouring Amenity**

- 3.1 There are existing neighbouring dwellings adjacent to the application site to the west. There will be impacts on these dwellings by virtue of the physical presence of the building and noise from the use itself. In terms of visual impact the proposal will be visible from these properties which will materially change the outlook. The location of the school in relation to these dwellings is such that there would be suitable distance between them to ensure that the proposal, while visible, is not prominent or overbearing to these residents. As a result it is considered that there would be no harm to neighbouring residential amenity through the visual impact of the development.
- 3.2 In terms of noise impacts there will be periods of audible noise during the week day when pupils use outside facilities and this is common in any school location. It is common for dwellings to be located close to schools and while there would be a noise impact at day time this would be for a short part of the day and not be apparent once the school day ends. The noise will be apparent to neighbouring residents but not to the extent that it would be considered to detrimentally harm amenity.
- 3.3 The playing fields are also proposed to be available for community use which means there will be instances where the football pitch will be used outside of school hours. This will also create a noise impact in times of use. The extent of use is limited as no floodlighting is proposed. The use of the pitch will also create an increase noise impact to neighbours, greater than currently

experienced but the cumulative impact is still not one that is considered to amount to significant and demonstrable harm that would warrant the refusal of planning permission.

- 3.4 The comments from the Pollution officer and the objection raised are noted however this objection was raised to the all weather pitch which has been removed from the scheme and therefore this issue is addressed. On the basis of the above consideration it is concluded that there would not be significant harm to neighbouring residential amenity as a result of the school proposal.

#### **4. Highway Considerations**

- 4.1 The proposal was subject to pre application discussion which has seen amendments to the road layout that would serve the development proposed. The arrangement as proposed in the application seeks to remove any ability for parents to park within the school grounds. Parking is proposed for teachers and visitors to the school with arrangements made for users of the football pitch outside of school hours.
- 4.2 The Highway Officer raises no objection to the scheme subject to conditions. The layout of the road is considered to be able to accommodate traffic during the peak drop-off and pick-up times during the day without causing highway issues to Hitchin Road or residents in the area. The layout allows for pedestrian movement around the school site that is not compromised by vehicles and this results in a safe arrangement. A condition is proposed requiring the submission and implementation of a school travel plan to encourage alternative ways to get to school.
- 4.3 The parking facilities for the community use element of the site are also considered to be adequate to accommodate the extent of use. the management of these would be established through a community use agreement which is proposed as a condition.
- 4.4 On the basis of the above the proposed development does not raise highway concerns and the scheme is therefore considered acceptable subject to conditions to secure detail and implementation.

#### **5. Other Considerations**

##### **5.1 Community use**

The football pitch is proposed to be available for community use outside of school hours. The proposal has been designed to ensure access can be gained without affecting the school and separate changing facilities are proposed to cater for users. No objection is raised by technical consultees to the scheme and the applicant seeks to secure the community use through a 'community use agreement' which would establish the management of the pitch. This is considered reasonable to secure through condition to ensure it as a public benefit of the scheme.

##### **5.2 Loss of agricultural land**

In terms of the loss of agricultural land, the land is graded as Grade 3 under the land classification system. The system classifies land into five grades, with Grade 3 subdivided into Subgrades 3a and 3b. The best and most versatile

land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a by policy guidance. This is the land which is most flexible, productive and efficient. It is not clear whether the application site is Grade 3a or 3b, however in general grade 3 land is considered to be good to moderate in the scale and therefore the loss of the land for the school would not result removal of excellent or very good agricultural land. The loss of the agricultural land need to be balanced against the benefits of the school place provision.

5.3 Implementation

The applicants state that, if consented, the school will be constructed in time to be open for September 2017, ready for that school year. It is not possible to secure implementation by condition on a planning permission. However the applicant is proposing through application CB/16/01455/OUT to sign up to a S106 agreement which would limit the delivery rate of residential development at the adjacent site and consented pig unit site until this development is practically complete.

5.4

5.5 Drainage objection.

It is noted that the Internal Drainage Board has objected on the grounds of the proximity of development to Pix Brook, east of this application site. The comments are noted but this school scheme does not propose development close to the Brook and it is considered that the objection relates to the adjacent outline application CB/16/01455/OUT and this will be addressed in that report. Therefore there are no drainage concerns with this proposal.

5.6 Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbouring objection has referenced the Parish Council's intention to pursue a neighbourhood plan for Fairfield. This is acknowledged however no draft document has been produced to date and the neighbourhood planning process is very much in its infancy. As a result little weight is given to this concern. As the plan progresses greater weight can be applied to it as a material consideration but the intention cannot be used as a reason to delay the determination of development proposals submitted to the Council.

5.7 Off Site Highway Works

In considering the Parish Council's comments regarding pedestrian safety the applicant has responded to advise that a number of off site highway works are proposed including 3 signalised crossing points on Hitchin Road and a continuous footpath on the eastern side of this road. This would greatly improve pedestrian links to this school site from the existing Fairfield settlement however the works are not proposed as par of this application. They are proposed under the adjacent application CB/15/01455/OUT and are proposed to be secured through S106 agreement.

5.8 Therefore the works required to improved pedestrian accessibility are proposed under a separate scheme. Each application has to be considered on its own merits however, in this instance there is a clear link between the two applications. The securing of the off site highway works can be done through the other application with relative confidence, through appropriate triggers, that they will be implemented in a timely manner and in place at an appropriate time.as a result there are no overriding concerns in resect of pedestrian

movement and safety.

#### 5.9 Public Art

A contribution of public art has been requested as part of the scheme. The comments from the relevant Officer are noted however it is considered that, while potentially positive, public art is not required to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms and is therefore not considered reasonable to secure such a commitment either by condition or S106 agreement.

#### 5.1 Human Rights/Equalities

0 Based on the information submitted there are no known issues raised in the context of Human Rights/Equalities Act 2010 and as such there would be no relevant implications with this proposal.

### **Recommendation:**

That Planning Permission be granted subject to the following:

### **RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS / REASONS**

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this permission.  
  
Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 2 Development shall be carried out using the external materials itemised in the approved Materials Schedule and as shown on approved plan 17632/SK012 unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.  
  
Reason: In order to ensure an appropriate visual appearance in the interests of the visual amenities of the locality.
- 3 No development (excluding site preparation, drainage, utilities, access, levelling and foundation works) relating to the construction of the school shall take place until details of how the development will achieve 10% or more of its own energy requirements through on-site or near-site renewable or low carbon technology energy generation have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out as approved.  
  
Reason: In the interest of sustainability.
- 4 Hard and soft landscaping shall be carried out in accordance with approved plans B15027/401, B15207/402 and B15207/403 in the first planting season following the commencement of development unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the development would be acceptable in accordance with Policy DM3 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2009

- 5 The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until a Landscape Maintenance and Management Plan for a period of ten years from the date of its delivery in accordance with Condition 4 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of the management body, who will be responsible for delivering the approved landscape maintenance and management plan. The landscaping shall be maintained and managed in accordance with the approved plan following its delivery in accordance with Condition 4.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the site would be acceptable in accordance with Policy DM3 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2009

- 6 The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until a scheme setting out the type, design, lux levels and measures to control glare and overspill light from external lighting and measures to ensure lights are switched off when not in use has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. After commencement of the use the lighting shall be operated in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To balance illuminating the school facility for maximum use and security with the interest of amenity and sustainability.

- 7 Development shall be undertaken in accordance with the proposed levels shown on approved plans 17632/SK006/A and 17632/SK008 unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to ensure that an acceptable relationship results between the new development and adjacent buildings and public areas.

- 8 No development (excluding site preparation, access, levelling and foundation works) relating to the construction of the school shall take place until a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on the agreed Flood Risk Assessment and Sustainable Drainage Strategy (FRA, April 2016) and an assessment of the hydrological and hydrogeological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The scheme to be submitted shall include provision of attenuation for the 1 in 100 year event (+30% for climate change) and restriction in run-off rates as outlined in the FRA. The scheme shall also include details how the system will be constructed, including any phasing, and how it will be managed and maintained after completion.

The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved final details before the development is completed, and shall be managed and maintained thereafter in accordance with the agreed management and maintenance plan.

Reason: To ensure the approved system will function to a satisfactory minimum standard of operation and maintenance and prevent the increased risk of flooding both on and off site, in accordance with para 103 NPPF

- 9 Prior to the installation of any fixed plant, machinery and equipment to be used by reason of the granting of this permission, details (including an acoustic specification) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and maintained in that form thereafter.

Reason: to protect the amenity of future occupiers.

- 10 The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until full details of Equipment to be installed to effectively suppress and disperse fumes and/or odours produced by cooking and food preparation at the school have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include the method of odour abatement and all odour abatement equipment to be used, including predicted noise levels of the equipment in operation and the equipment shall be effectively operated for so long as the commercial food use continues. The approved equipment shall be installed and in full working order prior to the use hereby permitted commencing.

Reason: In order to prevent the adverse impact of odours arising from cooking activities on the amenity of nearby residents.

- 11 The kitchen ventilation system approved in accordance with condition 10 above, shall be so enclosed, operated and/or attenuated that noise arising from such plant shall not exceed a noise rating level of -5dBA when measured or calculated according to BS4142:2014, at the boundary of any neighbouring residential dwelling.

Reason: To protect neighbouring residents from any adverse impact from noise arising from the kitchen extract ventilation system.

- 12 The use of any part of the development hereby permitted shall not commence until a Community Use Agreement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and a copy of the completed approved agreement has been provided to Sport England. The agreement shall apply to the pitches at the school, the changing facilities to be identified within the agreement and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access outside of school hours, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review, and anything else which the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Sport England considers necessary in order to secure the effective community use of the facilities. The development shall not be

used at any time other than in strict compliance with the approved agreement.

Reason: To secure well managed safe community access to the sports facility/facilities, to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport, to accord with Policy CS3 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2009 and to protect the amenity of nearby residents in accordance with policy DM3 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2009.

- 13 Prior to first occupation of the school building the off-site highway works shown for indicative purposes on plans 102 and 103 shall be constructed in accordance with full engineering details to have been first submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority

Reason: To ensure the provision of appropriate access arrangements and associated off-site highway works in the interests of highway safety.

- 14 Prior to first occupation of the school detailed plans and sections of the proposed roads, including gradients and method of surface water disposal shall have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and the approved works constructed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed on-site highway works are constructed to an adequate standard.

- 15 Prior to the opening of the school/nursery hereby approved, a School Travel Plan shall be prepared and submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The plan shall contain details of:

- the establishment of a working group involving the school, nursery, parents and representatives of the local community
- pupil/staff travel patterns and barriers to the use of sustainable travel
- measures to reduce car use
- an action plan detailing targets and a timetable for implementing appropriate measures and plans for annual monitoring and review for 5 years.

There shall be an annual review of the Travel Plan (for a period of 5 years from the date of approval of the Plan) to monitor progress in meeting the targets for reducing car journeys generated by the proposal and the resulting revised action plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To promote sustainable modes of travel and to reduce the potential traffic impact of the development on the local highway network

- 16 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in

complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers Drawing Numbers 17632-SK005 B, 17632-SK006 A, 17632-SK014 A, 17632-SK001, 17632-SK002, 17632-SK003, 17632-SK004, 17632-SK007, 17632-SK008, 17632-SK009, 17632-SK010, 17632-SK011, 17632-SK012, 17632-SK013, 17632-SK100, 17632-SK101, 17632-SK103, 17632-SK104, 15530-1006 D, B15027.101, B15027/401, B15207/402, B15207/403, Materials Schedule, Design and Access Statement, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (April 2016), Statement of Community Involvement, Planning Statement (April 2016), Ecological Appraisal (ELMAW March 2016), Archaeological Investigation Scheme (Albion Archaeology March 2016), Economic Benefits Assessment (April 2016), Transport Assessment (April 2016), School Framework Travel Plan (April 2016), Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (March 2016), Ground Investigation Report (April 2016).

Reason: To identify the approved plan/s and to avoid doubt.

## **INFORMATIVE NOTES TO APPLICANT**

1. This permission relates only to that required under the Town & Country Planning Acts and does not include any consent or approval under any other enactment or under the Building Regulations. Any other consent or approval which is necessary must be obtained from the appropriate authority.
  
2. The final detailed design shall demonstrate that the surface water drainage system is designed in accordance with the standards detailed in the 'Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Drainage Guidance' (Adopted April 2014, Updated May 2015). This shall include but is not limited to:
  - Detailed information relating to the site and site investigation results (including any site specific soakage tests and ground water monitoring shown in accordance with BRE 365).
  - Details of the final proposed development, peak flow rate and storage requirement, with full calculations and methodology.
  - A detailed design statement for the entire surface water drainage system. Details of permeable surfacing are to be provided in accordance with the 'CIRIA RP992 The SuDS Manual Update: Paper RP992/28: Design Assessment Checklists for Permeable/Porous Pavement'.
  - Integration with water quality, ecological and social objectives.
  - A method statement detailing construction of the drainage system..
  - Maintenance requirements and responsible parties.
  - Details of any additional consents or permissions required.

- Detailed plans and drawings of the final detailed design and locations of drainage infrastructure (to an appropriate scale and clearly labelled).
3. The British Standard for Topsoil, BS 3882:2007, specifies requirements for topsoils that are moved or traded and should be adhered to. The British Standard for Subsoil, BS 8601 Specification for subsoil and requirements for use, should also be adhered to.

There is a duty to assess for Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM) during development and measures undertaken during removal and disposal should protect site workers and future users, while meeting the requirements of the HSE.

Applicants are reminded that, should groundwater or surface water courses be at risk of contamination before, during or after development, the Environment Agency should be approached for approval of measures to protect water resources separately, unless an Agency condition already forms part of this permission.

4. The applicant is advised that in order to comply with this permission it will be necessary for the developer of the site to enter into an agreement with Central Bedfordshire Council as Highway Authority under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 to ensure the satisfactory completion of the access and associated road improvements. Further details can be obtained from the Development Control Group, Development Management Division, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford SG17 5TQ.
5. The applicant is advised that if it is the intention to request Central Bedfordshire Council as Local Highway Authority, to adopt the proposed highways within the site as maintainable at the public expense then details of the specification, layout and alignment, width and levels of the said highways together with all the necessary highway and drainage arrangements, including run off calculations shall be submitted to the Development Control Group, Development Management Division, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford SG17 5TQ . No development shall commence until the details have been approved in writing and an Agreement made under Section 38 of the Highways Act 1980 is in place.
6. The applicant is advised that no highway surface water drainage system designed as part of a new development, will be allowed to enter any existing highway surface water drainage system without the applicant providing evidence that the existing system has sufficient capacity to account for any highway run off generated by that development. Existing highway surface water drainage systems may be improved at the developers expense to account for extra surface water generated. Any improvements must be approved by the Development Control Group, Development Management

Division, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford SG17 5TQ.

- 7. The applicant is advised that parking for contractor's vehicles and the storage of materials associated with this development should take place within the site and not extend into within the public highway without authorisation from the highway authority. If necessary the applicant is advised to contact Central Bedfordshire Council's Highway Help Desk on 03003008049. Under the provisions of the Highways Act 1980 the developer may be liable for any damage caused to the public highway as a result of construction of the development hereby approved.

**DECISION**

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