

## 17 MARCH 2020 PLANNING COMMITTEE

6E

PLAN/2020/0034

WARD: HV

**LOCATION:** Woking College, Rydens Way, Old Woking, Woking, GU22 9DL

**PROPOSAL:** Erection of a part two storey, part single storey teaching block to front of site, a new car park to replace a tarmac surfaced tennis court at rear of site and the reconfiguration of the car park to the front of the site.

**APPLICANT:** Mr. B. Freeman

**OFFICER:** Joanne Hollingdale

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### **REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE**

The proposal is for a development type which falls outside the Scheme of Delegation.

### **SUMMARY OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

The application seeks planning permission for the erection of a part two storey, part single storey teaching block to the front of the site, a new car park to replace a tarmac surfaced tennis court at rear of site and the reconfiguration of the car park to the front of the site.

### **PLANNING STATUS**

- Green Belt
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA Zone B (400m-5km)
- Flood Zone 2 (part of the College playing field)
- Medium/High surface water flood risk area (part of the front of the site)

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**Grant** planning permission subject to conditions.

### **SITE DESCRIPTION**

Woking College is located to the south of Woking Town Centre. The application site relates to the front part of the college campus, the western access and parking area and an existing hard surfaced court at the rear of the site. The main entrance to the site is located off Rydens Way with the main car park area located at the front of the college, with the college buildings set back from the front boundary. An access runs along the western boundary of the site serving parking spaces within the site. The built area of the college campus is concentrated into the western section of the site and contains one and two storey buildings of various ages. The built area of the college is tightly constrained. The site rises from the south towards the north.

To the east of the built campus are the college playing fields and beyond these is a dense wooded area. To the north of the site is St John the Baptist Secondary School. To the west of the site is an access road which serves the rear gardens/garages of the dwellings which front Sundridge Road. To the west of the access road are dwellings which are mostly two storey with some taller flatted blocks. To the south of the college site are 2no. pairs of recently built semi-detached two storey dwellings which front Rydens Way and adjoining the south-eastern corner of the site is a single storey dwelling.

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Vehicular access into the site is off Rydens Way and there are currently 187no. parking spaces on site including 5no. disabled bays, 145no. cycle parking spaces and 12no. moped spaces.

### **PLANNING HISTORY**

There is an extensive planning history for the wider Woking College site. The most recent applications for the site are as follows:

**PLAN/2019/0416** – Installation of 2no. single storey modular buildings containing 4 classrooms. Granted 18.07.19

**PLAN/2019/0323** – Formation of staff overspill parking and associated provision of 3 metre high chain link fencing. Refused 25.05.19

**PLAN/2015/0632** - Provision of 3G artificial turf surface with fencing and sports amenity lighting, erection of single storey building providing changing rooms, clubroom, teaching space facilities and ancillary space, extension of the existing college car park, clearance and landscaping works to accommodate a new grass pitch and extended playing field (amended plans, amended description and additional information). Granted 30.03.17

### **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

The application seeks planning permission for the erection of a part two storey, part single storey teaching block to the front of the site, a new car park to replace a tarmac surfaced tennis court at rear of site and the reconfiguration of the car park to the front of the site. The application site relates to the front car park area, the access and parking area along the western boundary of the campus and one of the hard courts in the northern part of the site.

The proposed detached teaching block would be located at the front of the site and would have single storey extensions to the southern and eastern sides of the two storey part of the new building. The building would have a maximum width of 30 metres with a maximum depth of 30 metres on its longest sides. The two storey part of the building is more limited with a maximum width of 17.5 metres and a maximum depth of 16 metres. Both parts of the building would have a flat roof with the single storey having a maximum height of 3.9 metres and the two storey having a maximum height of 7.7 metres.

The teaching block would be faced with brick, render and vertical timber boarding with dark coloured aluminium framed windows. 8no. classrooms would be provided in the new teaching block along with a supervised study area, staff work area and associated facilities e.g. w.c.

Landscaping and some tree planting would be provided to the east and west of the new teaching block. To the western side of the teaching block the existing car park would be re-arranged together with some tree planting within the parking area. The remainder of the parking (32no. spaces) would be re-provided to the rear of the site instead of one of the existing hard courts.

In support of the application a Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement, Noise Impact Assessment, Travel Plan, Flood Risk Assessment, College Development Plan and Property Strategy have been submitted.

### **CONSULTATIONS**

**County Highway Authority:** Having assessed the application on safety, capacity and policy grounds recommends a condition be imposed on any permission granted (condition 5).

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**Thames Water:** No objection to the application on foul or surface water network infrastructure capacity.

**WBC Flood Risk and Drainage Engineer:** Recommend approval on drainage and flood risk grounds subject to conditions (conditions 7, 8 and 9).

**WBC Arboricultural Officer:** The proposed landscaping is considered acceptable in principle and details of the tree planting pits which should utilise underground structures will be required by condition (condition 4).

**WBC Environmental Health Officer:** The conclusions of the noise assessment report are accepted and there are no adverse comments.

**WBC Contaminated Land Officer:** No comments or conditions with regard to contaminated land.

### **REPRESENTATIONS**

0 letters of representation have been received.

### **RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES**

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)

#### Woking Core Strategy (2012)

CS1 - A spatial strategy for Woking Borough

CS6 – Green Belt

CS9 – Flooding and Water Management

CS17 – Open Space, Green Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation

CS18 - Transport and Accessibility

CS19 – Social and community infrastructure

CS21 - Design

CS24 - Woking's landscape and townscape

#### Development Management Policies DPD (DM Policies DPD) (2016)

DM2 - Trees and Landscaping

DM7 – Noise and Light Pollution

DM13 – Buildings in and adjacent to the Green Belt.

DM21 – Education Facilities

#### Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's)

Design (2015)

Parking Standards (2018)

Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight (2008)

### **PLANNING ISSUES**

1. The main issues to consider in this case are the principle of development, impact on the Green Belt, loss of open space, visual impact, impact on residential amenity, impact on parking and impact on flood risk and drainage.

#### Principle of the development

2. Paragraph 94 of the NPPF states that "*it is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning*

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*authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement that will widen choice in education. They should:*

- a) *Give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and*
  - b) *Work with schools promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.”*
3. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy, advises that community facilities “*also offer services that are essential for education, health and well-being and support community cohesion and benefit the general quality of life of residents.*”
4. Policy DM21 of the DM Policies DPD supports the provision of educational facilities and states that “*proposals for new or replacement schools and other educational facilities, expansion of educational facilities on existing sites and changes of use for school or other educational and training purposes will be permitted where the following criteria are met:*
- (i) it meets an identified need;*
  - (ii) it makes appropriate provision for on-site car parking and stopping, access to public transport, cycling and walking and the effect on traffic movement and highway safety is in accordance with Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy;*
  - (iii) where appropriate, a School Travel Plan is provided with the proposal to manage the travel needs of pupils and staff;*
  - (iv) the use of the site would be compatible with the surrounding land uses;*
  - (v) it does not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the environment, residential character and amenity;*
  - (vi) where appropriate, adequate provision is made and/or existing provision is retained for indoor and outdoor recreation, outdoor sports and amenity space to meet the needs of the school;*
  - (vii) it meets other Development Plan policy criteria, paying particular attention to Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy.”*
5. Woking College has approximately 1400 students and when assessed against the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) is in deficit by around 23 teaching spaces, being about 25% below the recommended floor area in Building Bulletin 103 (Area Guidelines for Mainstream Schools). The college wishes to ensure that it has sufficient accommodation for its current roll and to address the existing severe overcrowding problems. The proposal is for the provision of additional teaching and learning space to help to address the current level of severe overcrowding of these educational facilities. Given the very high utilisation rate of the existing accommodation, the net gain of 8no. teaching spaces is proposed to ensure current standards are maintained. No increase in student numbers or staff are proposed as part of this application and the additional accommodation seeks to ensure that existing level of overcrowding is alleviated to some degree. It is therefore considered that the proposed accommodation would meet an identified need.
6. The proposed building would be located on an existing educational site and would be sited adjacent to an existing complex of existing buildings on the site. Therefore, subject to the other material considerations outlined in this report and a condition restricting the use of the building to a school/education facility, the principle of the proposed additional educational accommodation is considered acceptable and in accordance with Policy CS19 of the Woking Core Strategy, Policy DM21 of the DM Policies DPD and the NPPF.

### Impact on Green Belt

7. The application site is located in the Green Belt and as such Policy CS6 of the Woking Core Strategy, Policy DM13 of the DM Policies DPD and Section 9 of the NPPF apply.

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These policies seek to preserve the openness of the Green Belt; the essential characteristics of the Green Belt are its openness and permanence. The erection of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate development unless it complies with one of the exceptions listed in paragraph 145 of the NPPF. The provision of a school building is not one of the 'excepted' buildings listed in paragraph 145 and therefore the proposed development comprises inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which by definition is harmful. It is also therefore necessary to consider whether any other harm to the Green Belt would result from the proposal.

8. The proposed teaching block would comprise a part two storey part single storey building of approximately 957sqm (GEA) and would be located on an existing car park. Whilst the car park is currently hard surfaced and has an impact on openness, particularly when vehicles are parked, it is considered that the proposal would result in a reduction in openness on this part of the site given the size and permanence of the proposed teaching block.
9. With regard to the five purposes of the Green Belt, as the proposed teaching block and replacement car parking would be located on existing hard surfaced areas and the proposed teaching block would be located adjacent to an existing row of development (dwellings which are located within the urban area), the proposal is not considered to conflict with any of the five purposes of the Green Belt. Nonetheless the proposed development therefore comprises inappropriate development within the Green Belt with harm to openness. There would also be a small loss of open space to provide the replacement car park in the north of the site (see paragraphs 16-19) and this limited additional harm would also be added to the Green Belt harm identified.

### Very special circumstances

10. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (paragraph 143). Paragraph 144 states that "*when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. "Very special circumstances" will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.*"
11. It is therefore necessary to consider whether any very special circumstances exist in this case which would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm. Very special circumstances can constitute one consideration or the combination of a number of considerations.
12. Ministerial statements constitute material planning considerations and in August 2011 the Government's policy statement – 'Planning for Schools Development' was issued. The Ministerial Statement states that the planning system should operate in a positive manner and the following principles should apply with immediate effect: There should be a presumption in favour of the development of state funded schools (including free schools and Academies) and Local Authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling the development of state-funded schools in their planning decisions. This Statement has not been retracted by the current Government and its content is included within the NPPF.
13. As noted under the 'principle of the development' section of this report, the proposal is to meet an immediate and significant need for additional accommodation. The college has approximately 1400 students and has an existing severe overcrowding issue and a need to expand its facilities. A Space Needs Assessment was undertaken in 2019 which

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identified that the college has a deficit of 23 basic teaching and learning resource spaces when considered against the ESFA standards in Building Bulletin 103. The college currently achieves high capacity in a relatively small floor area by having high levels of actual room utilisation but this exceeds guidance making timetabling challenging. This need and lack of existing accommodation is also supported by the following information which is included in the application:

- The proposal is supported by SCC which recognises the need for the college to expand its teaching facilities to meet current demand, commenting that the college takes students from more than 60 Surrey schools and is an increasingly popular choice for school leavers.
- SCC is aware that the college does not currently have the classroom capacity to meet its day to day needs in terms of the flexible delivery of the curriculum and the wider provision of examination and meeting space. Addressing the college's overcrowding issue through the provision of a new classroom block would support the education of local learners and contribute to the strategic objectives with the Post-16 Organisation Plan 2018-2026.
- SCC supports the college's current bid for Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) funding.
- WBC also supports the proposal and recognises the excellent role that the college plays in the community and its efforts to meet the demands of the Borough's growing school age and college age population.
- The problems experienced from the lack of space are: there are periods where there are no spare classrooms limiting flexibility; there are many small classrooms limiting approaches to teaching; the Learning Resource Centre is at capacity and used for exams and other events meaning there is no other silent space to study; the sports hall is out of use for many periods due to exams and other events and senior staff have to vacate their offices to meet the demands for individual workspaces during exams.
- The college can continue with the higher than normal level of room utilisation to mitigate the number of additional spaces required. Where possible the college has converted staff spaces to teaching spaces and other mitigations such as off-site meetings will also be utilised. With these compromises the college has calculated that 8no. further classrooms are essential for the college to operate which would address the overcrowding, although the gross floor area would remain below Building Bulletin 103 minimum for existing student numbers.
- The college only operates one site in Rydens Way and therefore any additional accommodation has to be provided on this site and the college cannot meet their statutory obligations elsewhere. There are therefore no alternative sites for the proposed development.

14. Given the above considerations it has been demonstrated that there is a clear and pressing need for additional accommodation for the college. The proposed 8no. classrooms within the new teaching block would address the existing severe overcrowding and meet an immediate and significant need for additional accommodation. In addition it is also noted that the following factors would also be benefits of the current proposal and would contribute to the case for very special circumstances:

- The proposed new teaching block can be provided on the site without impacting on existing buildings and teaching space whilst the new block is constructed.
- The new teaching block would be located as close as possible to the existing urban area.
- The College would also be willing to accept a planning condition preventing the implementation of planning permission PLAN/2019/0416 which would have

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provided 4no. classrooms in a modular building proposal as the current proposal is considered by the applicant to be a preferable alternative to this earlier proposal as the current proposal provides more classrooms (condition 11).

15. In this particular case it is considered that all of the factors detailed above could comprise very special circumstances. Whether these matters are considered to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm resulting from the proposed development will be assessed as part of the conclusion-planning balance at the end of this report once all of the other material planning considerations have been assessed to identify whether “any other harm” would result from the proposed development, in addition to the Green Belt harm already identified.

### Loss of open space

16. The NPPF has a presumption against the loss of open space unless it will be replaced by equal or better provision, it can be shown to be surplus to requirements or the development is for alternative sports and recreation provision. These requirements are reflected in Policy CS17 of the Core Strategy which states that “*there will be a presumption against any development that involves the loss of a sport, recreation or play facility except where it can be demonstrated that there is an excess of provision, or where alternative facilities of equal or better quality will be provided as part of the development.*” Policy DM21(vi) also requires that adequate provision is retained for outdoor sport and recreation to meet the needs of the school.
17. The proposal includes the replacement of an existing tarmac tennis court in the north-western part of the site which is proposed to provide replacement car parking to off-set that lost to provide the teaching block at the front of the site. The proposal would represent a loss of 723sqm of existing playing court facility to provide 32no. car parking spaces. It is noted that the 2no. adjacent existing tarmac surfaces would be retained and that these would be re-marked as netball and tennis courts. It is noted that to the east of the 2no. tarmac courts to be retained is a further existing all-weather pitch which is fenced and would also be retained. The College Principal has advised that the proposal would “*result in the loss of one tennis court in the enclosure. One netball court, one tennis court and the all-weather carpet surfaced facility will be retained.*” He further adds that the “*current arrangement of one basketball court and two tennis courts is surplus to the sports requirements of the College; the all-weather facility is needed to provide 5-a side football and hockey uses.*” It is further advised that the current facilities need significant refurbishment and so not currently provide full positive use for the college sports requirements and the remaining facilities will provide the necessary provision for the college sports department. In light of these comments it is considered that sufficient sporting facilities would be retained to meet the requirements of Policy DM21(vi) of the DM Policies DPD.
18. Planning permission was also granted in March 2017 under PLAN/2015/0632 for the provision of a 3G artificial pitch which would significantly upgrade the sports facilities for the college providing extensive and flexible areas for sport. However it should be noted that this permission expires on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and to date no details pursuant to the pre-commencement conditions have been submitted for approval. It is therefore likely that this permission will expire.
19. Nonetheless whilst it is recognised that the provision of the replacement car park would result in a loss of existing open space on the site, it is acknowledged that the loss of existing open space would be small and that it is likely that it may be surplus to requirements as the college considers that sufficient alternative sporting facilities exist within the site. However there are no specific sporting space standards to measure this

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against. Planning permission has also been previously granted for further upgrades to the sporting facilities on the wider college site. Whilst the loss of the exiting open space would result in harm which is to be added to the Green Belt harm already identified, it is considered that the additional harm is very limited due to the other sporting facilities which exist at the site. The loss of this small amount of open space is therefore contrary to Policy CS17 of the Woking Core Strategy and the NPPF. This harm is required to be added to the Green Belt harm which the very special circumstances seek to address.

### Visual Impact:

20. Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012) requires development proposals to *'respect and make a positive contribution to the street scene and the character of the area in which they are situated....'* and Policy CS24 seeks to maintain the landscape character of the area. Policy DM21(v) of the DM Policies DPD also states that proposals for education facilities should not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the environment.
21. The proposed teaching block would be located at the front of the site on an area currently occupied by car parking. The applicant states that the proposed siting for the teaching block is to enhance the presence of the college on the site, given its importance as a community asset, whilst enabling the new building to be constructed without the loss of existing teaching space. It is also noted that the positioning of the new teaching block would be as close as possible to the urban area which extends to both the eastern and western boundaries of the front of the college site where the new teaching block is proposed. The proposed siting for the teaching block is therefore considered to be acceptable in visual terms and it would also enhance the appearance of the front of the site within the street scene from the rather bland and open functional car park.
22. In terms of scale, design and appearance, the proposed teaching block would be part two storey and part single storey with the single storey elements towards the front and side (eastern) boundaries. This configuration of built structure would enable a comfortable transition in scale to the single storey dwelling adjoining the eastern boundary of the site, whilst also reducing the scale of the new building adjacent to the front boundary of the site. The existing wall, fence and hedging to the front boundary of the site would be retained (except for the re-opening of a pedestrian access in the south-eastern corner), which would maintain the immediate street frontage to the college site.
23. The design of the proposed building would be contemporary, utilising a large roof overhang, large picture style windows and vertical timber boarding. The two storey height would be 7.7 metres which is around the height of a two storey dwelling. The elevations would be primarily faced in render with some brick elements at lower level and vertical cladding to add warmth and variation to the elevations. It is acknowledged that the complex of buildings on the school site are varied in terms of their appearance and that this is a direct result of the evolution of this educational establishment over time. The design and appearance of the proposed teaching block would be a modern and contemporary high quality addition to the front part of the campus.
24. The proposed development would also take the opportunity to introduce some additional landscaping and tree planting to the front part of the site. The front boundary hedge which is approximately 3 metres in height would also be retained. The new landscaping would not only assist in softening the appearance of the new teaching block, but would also enhance the appearance of the re-arranged parking area and generally the front part of the college site. The Council's Arboricultural Officer has advised that the proposed landscaping is acceptable in principle subject to condition (condition 4).

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25. Whilst it is acknowledged that the majority of the dwellings around the site are of traditional domestic design with duo-pitched roofs, the style of the dwellings in the wider locality are varied, ranging from inter- to post-war and modern dwellings to the central reservation along Rydens Way. Interspersed with the dwellings and flats is the large functional flat roof building of the community centre and the wider locality is also characterised by the varied functional buildings of the college and also the adjacent St John the Baptist Secondary School. Given the varied character in the locality and the function of the site as an education establishment it is considered that the proposal would offer a well-designed contemporary addition to the front part of the site. In terms of the scale, design and appearance, the proposed approach is considered acceptable and would offer a positive impact to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area.
26. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policies CS21 and CS24 of the Core Strategy, Policy DM21 of the DM Policies DPD and the NPPF.

### Impact on Neighbours:

27. Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy advises that proposals for new development should achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjoining properties, avoiding significant harmful impact in terms of loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight, or an overbearing effect due to bulk, proximity or outlook. Policy DM21(iv) and (v) seek to ensure that education proposals do not give rise to adverse impacts on amenity.
28. The closest neighbouring dwellings to the proposal are No. 20 Rydens Way, No. 18 Rydens Way (the caretakers dwelling located within the site) and also the new dwellings to the south of the front boundary of the site (PLAN/2015/1217). In the areas closest to these dwellings, the proposed teaching block has been limited to single storey in height. No. 20 Rydens Way is a single storey dwelling and this dwelling has at least one window on its side elevation facing the proposal site. It is assumed that this window serves a habitable room as it is not known what room it serves. A 25 degree vertical angle is used to assess daylight impacts and given the separation distance to this neighbouring dwelling and as the closest part of the proposal would be single storey, the proposed development would not obstruct the 25 degree vertical angle line. As this relationship would be replicated in relation to No. 18 Rydens Way (although this dwelling is slightly further away) the same result would occur. The proposed teaching block is not therefore considered to result in any adverse impact to daylight to the elevations of these dwellings. In addition given the disposition of the single storey and two storey elements of the proposed teaching block and the configuration of the dwellings and gardens for these two neighbouring properties, it is not considered that it would result in any overbearing impact to the amenities of these closest neighbouring dwellings. In addition the two storey element of the proposed teaching block would be a minimum of 15 metres from the rear garden boundaries of the dwellings to the south and thus the proposed teaching block would not be overbearing to the amenities of these dwellings.
29. With regard to privacy, the first floor (east facing) classroom window would be around 21 metres from the side garden boundary with No. 20 Rydens Way, which exceeds the recommended separation distance guidelines in the SPD Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight. Over this distance and as this window would be located side on to No. 20 Rydens Way, it is not considered that this window would result in a significant reduction in privacy to the amenities of the occupiers of this dwelling, particularly when utilising their rear garden. The two storey elements of the teaching block would be off-set from No. 18 Rydens Way and therefore no significant reduction in privacy is considered to result to these occupiers.

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30. With regard to the dwellings to the south of the site, the first floor classroom would have a high level window facing south. This window would have a lower cill height of 2.1 metres and thus it would safeguard against views to the south from the users of the classroom, thus protecting the privacy of occupiers of the dwellings to the south of the application site (condition 13). A corner window is also proposed but this is limited in width (the window for the classroom primarily faces west with a small wrap around the corner to provide visual interest). Given the limited width of this part of the window and as this window would be positioned 16 metres from the rear garden boundary of the dwellings located to the south of the application site, it is not considered that this window would result in any significant adverse impact on privacy to the neighbouring occupiers to the south of the site.
31. It is also noted that the proposed site plan includes re-opening of a pedestrian entrance to the college site in the south-eastern corner of the front boundary of the site. This would involve the removal of a small section of wall/fence and hedging to accommodate the new pedestrian entrance. Although this entrance would be adjacent to No. 20 Rydens Way, the creation of the new pedestrian access is not development and could be open any time, notwithstanding that there would be increased pedestrian activity in this area.
32. With regard to noise breakout from the new teaching block a noise impact assessment has been submitted with the application. The noise assessment assumes that the new teaching block would be ventilated via openable windows. The noise assessment identifies that the predicted classroom noise break-out levels outside the nearest noise sensitive properties (Nos. 18 and 20 Rydens Way) are less than the existing ambient noise levels. Therefore the proposal would result in a negligible noise impact and when the classroom windows are closed the sound reduction performance of the building would increase resulting in even lower levels of noise break-out (and thus maintaining a negligible noise impact). It is therefore considered that the proposal would comply with Policy DM7 of the DM Policies DPD. Condition 10 would however restrict the use of sound reproduction equipment which is audible outside the premises.
33. The proposed teaching block would be too distant from any other nearby residential occupiers to result in any adverse impacts. The new car parking area to the rear of the site would be located adjacent to the neighbouring secondary school site, comprising car parking and school buildings. As such the additional car parking would not result in any adverse amenity impacts to this neighbouring site and the additional parking and associated activity in this area is not considered to result in any adverse neighbour impacts.
34. Overall the proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact on the amenities of neighbours in terms of loss of light, overlooking, overbearing and other amenity impacts and accords with Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy, Policies DM7 and DM21 of the DM Policies DPD, SPD Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight and the NPPF.

### Parking Impacts

35. There is an existing vehicular access into the site and this would be retained. The applicant advises that there are currently 187 car parking spaces on the site including disabled bays, 145 cycle bays/stands and 12 moped spaces. The Parking Standards SPD provides maximum standards for non-residential uses and for schools/colleges requires individual assessment.
36. As the proposed teaching block would be positioned on part of the existing front car park, the remainder of the front car park would be re-arranged to make efficient use of the area available and to ensure that space is available for deliveries and refuse collection. One of the existing hard surfaced courts at the rear of the site would be used to provide

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replacement car parking for that lost front the front of the site. With the replacement car parking to the rear of the site a total of 188 car parking spaces would be provided on the site which is a net gain of 1 car parking space. As noted above the proposed teaching block is to provide additional classrooms to alleviate the existing overcrowding for the existing number of students at the site. The proposal is not therefore intended to directly increase the number of students or staff at the site. The maintenance of the existing number of car parking spaces on site is therefore considered to be acceptable. In addition a Travel Plan has been submitted with the application (condition 6).

37. The County Highway Authority has been consulted on the application and subject to a condition relating to the provision of the revised parking provision (condition 5), they have no objection to the application. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of parking provision and would not be prejudicial to highway safety or result in inconvenience to users of the highway. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy, the Parking Standards SPD and the NPPF.

### Drainage and flood risk

38. Although the locations for the proposed development are in Flood Zone 1 (low risk), the majority of the front and side of the College site is located in the medium and high surface water drainage risk designations. A Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted with the application.

39. The Council's Drainage and Flood Risk Engineer has been consulted on the application and has recommended approval on drainage and flood risk grounds subject to conditions (conditions 7, 8 and 9) to ensure that the proposal complies with Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.

### Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

40. As the proposal relates to a non-residential and non-retail use the CIL rate is £0.

### Conclusion – Planning Balance

41. The NPPF sets out that it is the Government's clear expectation that there is a presumption in favour of development and growth except where this would compromise key sustainable development principles and be contrary to local planning policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
42. The role of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This often involves balancing the economic, social and environmental aspects of a proposal. In addition where a proposal comprises inappropriate development within the Green Belt a balancing exercise is required to establish whether very special circumstances exist that clearly outweigh the substantial harm to be given to the impact on the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm.
43. The proposed development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is by definition harmful. The other harm resulting from the development is the loss of openness to the Green Belt and also the loss of open space to provide the replacement car park The NPPF requires substantial weight to be given to this harm.
44. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the identified harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations. The considerations in favour of the application are as detailed in the very special circumstances section of this report and in summary are:

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- The need for the additional accommodation to alleviate the severe overcrowding.
- The proposed new teaching block can be provided on the site without impacting on existing buildings and teaching space whilst the new block is constructed.
- The new teaching block would be located as close as possible to the existing urban area.
- The College would also be willing to accept a planning condition preventing the implementation of planning permission PLAN/2019/0416 as the current proposal is the preferred alternative to this earlier proposal by the applicant.

45. The NPPF and Ministerial Statement also state that great weight should be given to the need for new development for schools. It is therefore considered that when taken together these factors would represent very special circumstances which are considered to outweigh the substantial weight to be given to the harm to the Green Belt and the other harm resulting from the proposal.

46. Other than the conflict with Policies CS6 and CS17 of the Woking Core Strategy and Policy DM13 of the DM Policies DPD, which are addressed by the very special circumstances, the proposed development is considered to comply with the other relevant Core Strategy policies, the relevant policies in the DM Policies DPD, the relevant SPD's and the NPPF. In light of the very special circumstances which exist in this case, it is considered that a recommendation of approval subject to conditions is justified in this case.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Planning file PLAN/2020/0034

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**PERMIT** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development for which permission is hereby granted must be commenced not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

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

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans listed below:

Site Location Plan (L.001) received on 13.01.2020  
Proposed Campus Plan (P.101) received on 13.01.2020  
Proposed Site Block Plan (P.102) received on 13.01.2020  
Proposed Replacement Parking Plan (P.103) received on 13.01.2020  
Proposed Site Block Plan with ground floor (P.104) received on 13.01.2020  
Proposed Site Block Plan with first floor (P.105) received on 13.01.2020  
Proposed Roof Plan (P.012) received on 13.01.2020  
Proposed Ground Floor Plan (P.110) received on 13.01.2020  
Proposed First Floor Plan (P.111) received on 13.01.2020  
Proposed Elevations (P.120) received on 13.01.2020

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

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3. Prior to the application/installation of any external facing materials to the teaching block hereby permitted samples and a written specification of the materials to be used in the external elevations shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out and thereafter retained in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority

Reason: To protect the visual amenities of the area in accordance with Policies CS6 and CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 and Policy DM13 of the DM Policies DPD 2016.

4. No above ground development associated with the development hereby permitted shall commence until a detailed landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority which specifies species, planting sizes, spaces and numbers of trees/shrubs and hedges to be planted and full details of the proposed tree pits. All landscaping shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme in the first planting season (November-March) following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development (in that phase) whichever is the sooner and maintained thereafter. Any retained or newly planted trees, shrubs or hedges which die, become seriously damaged or diseased or are removed or destroyed within a period of 5 years from the date of planting shall be replaced during the next planting season with specimens of the same size and species unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and biodiversity and to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the locality and to comply with Policies CS6, CS21 and CS24 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 and the NPPF.

5. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied until space has been laid out within the site in accordance with the approved plans to provide the approved parking spaces for vehicles to be parked and for vehicles to turn so that they may enter and leave the site in forward gear. The parking/turning areas shall be used and retained exclusively for its designated purpose.

Reason: To ensure the development does not prejudice highway safety nor cause inconvenience to other highway users and to provide adequate parking in accordance with Policy CS18 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 and the NPPF.

6. On the first occupation of the development hereby permitted the Travel Plan submitted with the application shall be implemented and thereafter maintained and developed for the lifetime of the development unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To reduce the reliance on the private car and to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes in accordance with Policy CS18 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 and the NPPF.

7. All development shall be constructed in accordance with the submitted and approved Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy Report (dated December) as submitted with the application.

Reason: To ensure the flood risk is adequately addressed for each new dwelling and not increased in accordance with NPPF and Policy CS9 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 and the NPPF.

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8. The development hereby approved shall not be first occupied until details of the maintenance and management of the sustainable drainage scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details in perpetuity. The Local Planning Authority shall be granted access to inspect the sustainable drainage scheme for the lifetime of the development. The details of the scheme to be submitted for approval shall include:
- I. a timetable for its implementation;
  - II. details of SuDS features and connecting drainage structures and maintenance requirement for each aspect;
  - III. a table to allow the recording of each inspection and maintenance activity, as well as allowing any faults to be recorded and actions taken to rectify issues; and
  - IV. a management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public body or statutory undertaker, or any other arrangements to secure the operation of the sustainable drainage scheme throughout its lifetime.

Reason: To ensure that the development achieves a high standard of sustainability continues to be maintained as agreed for the lifetime of the development and to comply with Policies CS9 and CS16 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 and the NPPF.

9. The development hereby approved shall not be first occupied until a verification report, (appended with substantiating evidence demonstrating the approved construction details and specifications have been implemented in accordance with the surface water drainage scheme), has been submitted to and approved (in writing) by the Local Planning Authority. The verification report shall include photographs of excavations and soil profiles/horizons, any installation of any surface water structure and Control mechanism.

Reason: To ensure that the development achieves a high standard of sustainability and to comply with Policies CS9 and CS16 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 and the NPPF.

10. No sound reproduction equipment which conveys messages, music or other sound by voice or otherwise which is audible outside the premises shall be installed on the site without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the environment and amenities of the occupants of neighbouring properties and to comply with Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy and the NPPF.

11. The development hereby permitted shall not be implemented in addition to or in association with the development permitted under planning permission PLAN/2019/0416 granted on 18.07.2019.

Reason: Planning permission is granted on the basis of very special circumstances including the need for the additional teaching/classroom facilities and this proposal is intended as an alternative scheme to that granted planning permission under reference PLAN/2019/0416.

12. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (or any Order(s) revoking or re-enacting these Order(s) with or without modification(s)) the teaching block hereby approved shall only be used for purposes as a school/college/non-residential education

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facility and for no other purpose(s) within Class D1 whatsoever without the prior express permission of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Planning permission is granted on the basis of very special circumstances including the need for the additional teaching/classroom facilities.

13. The first floor high level classroom window in the south elevation of the teaching block hereby approved shall be installed as a high level window in accordance with the details on the approved plans and its lower cill height shall be at least 1.7 metres above the internal floor level of the room in which the window is installed. Once installed the window shall be permanently retained in that condition unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the adjoining properties in accordance with Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 and the NPPF.

14. The first floor corner classroom window facing south shall not be implemented except in accordance with the details shown on approved plans: first floor plan (P.111) and elevations plan (P.120). Once installed the window shall not be altered in any way including in terms of its size without the prior express permission in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the occupants of neighbouring properties and to comply with Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy and the NPPF.

### **Informatives**

1. In respect of condition 4 the applicant is advised that although the landscaping scheme is only required to be submitted for approval prior to any above ground development, it should be submitted to the LPA in good time to ensure that the requirement for tree pits to be provided for the new tree planting can be provided on site at the appropriate time during construction otherwise further works may be required to ensure the tree pits are provided.
2. The Council confirms that in assessing this planning application it has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way, in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.
3. You are advised that Council officers may undertake inspections without prior warning to check compliance with approved plans and to establish that all planning conditions are being complied with in full. Inspections may be undertaken both during and after construction.
4. The applicant is advised that, under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, site works which will be audible at the site boundaries are restricted to the following hours:-  
08.00 – 18.00 Monday to Friday  
08.00 – 13.00 Saturday  
and not at all on Sundays and Bank/Public Holidays.