

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260822
Site Address:	Crosfields School, Shinfield Road, Shinfield, Wokingham, RG2 9BL
Expiry Date:	1 July 2026
Site Visit Date:	15 May 2026
Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use of 1no. bungalow to Nursery plus internal alterations.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP15 – Employment Development
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM4 - Protection of Designated Landscape DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity DM10 - Flood Risk DM12 - Sustainable Transport Movements DM15 - Site History
Wokingham Borough Local Plan	SS16 – Safeguarded routes CE8 – Protecting renewable energy generation C3 – Active travel C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging

Update (LPU)	H2 – Presumption against residential losses DH2 – Safeguarding amenity
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
212473	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 191655 dated 13/02/2020. Condition 6. Landscaping. 8. Biodiversity Enhancement. 15. Travel Plan. 16. Parking Management Strategy. 17. Electrical Vehicle Charging Points. 21. Air Quality Assessment.	Approved 11/12/2023
200775	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 191655 dated 13/02/2020. Conditions 7 Ecology, 13 Construction Method Statement, 18 Construction environmental management plan, 22 Investigation and risk assessment for contamination, 27 Detailed scheme of recording features and artefacts of interest contained within the building.	Split Decision 15/03/2022
202024	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 191655 dated 13/02/2020. Conditions 14 Highway construction details and 30 Archaeology.	Approved 16/08/2021
212574	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 191655 dated 13/02/2020. Condition 10. Cycle Parking.	Approved 09/08/2021
203038	Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 191655 for alterations including amendments to fenestration, addition of plant equipment and acoustic screen, addition and adjustment of louvres and changes to roof.	Approved 21/12/2020
203034	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 191655 dated 13/02/2020. Condition 3 External Materials.	Approved 13/11/2020

202095	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 191655 dated 13/02/2020. Condition 5 - Arboricultural Method Statement.	Approved 29/09/2020
191655	Full planning application for the proposed erection of a new senior school building, re configuring of two entrances and demolition of existing white building.	Approved 13/02/2020
181511	Application for the submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent(161911) 15/06/2017. 3. Transport 4. Drainage 5. Archaeology 6. Landscaping 7. Tree Protection 8. Environmental Health 11. Lighting Design Strategy 13. Community use	Split Decision 05/10/2018
161911	Full application for the proposed artificial turf pitch with fencing and floodlighting, regrading of land for new football pitches and an artificial cricket wicket.	Approved 15/06/2017
112493 (F/2011/2313)	Proposed erection of a single storey extension to nursery school.	Approved 16/01/2012
012292 (F/2001/3847)	Proposed erection of new classrooms and staff accommodation at school plus relocation of tennis courts.	Approved 03/10/2001
992124 (5/0019/06950)	Details To Comply With Condition 05 Of Consent 98/66950/F For The Approval Of Visibility Splays.	Approved 10/11/1999
971414 (F/1998/66950)	Proposed Erection Of Sports Hall.	Approved 19/05/1998
971586 (F/1997/66683)	Proposed Erection Of Climbing Frame And Landscaping (Retrospective).	Approved 09/03/1998

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection.
WBC Drainage – No objection.
WBC Highways – Request further information – Travel Plan and revised Transport and Planning Statements submitted.
WBC Growth & Delivery (Planning Policy) – No comments received.
WBC Health and Wellbeing – No comments received.
WBC Education (School Place Planning) – No comments received.
WBC Ecology Newts – No objection.
WBC Ecology – No comments received.
WBC Waste Services – No comments received.
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received.
WBC Green Infrastructure – No comment to make.

External

None.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Objection. Concerns relate to: - Congestion already high and applicant's assessment disputed - Trip generation underestimated, likely higher for nursery use - Queueing and turning movements risk disrupting A327 traffic - Parking strategy unreliable - Cumulative impacts not assessed (existing traffic + growth ignored) - Conflict with NPPF / CP6 on highway safety and capacity - Conclusion: unacceptable highway impacts
Ward Member(s)	No comments received.
Neighbours	No comments received.

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

Newton Lodge is an existing residential property which forms part of Crosfields School campus located on the western side of Shinfield Road, Shinfield. Crosfields School is an independent day school for pupils aged 3 years to 16 years.

The site is within a Major Development Location and is located approximately 0.7 miles southeast of Whitley Wood, 1 mile north of Shinfield, 0.5 miles from Earley and 1.9 miles south of Reading town centre.

Proposal:

This application seeks approval for the change of use of the existing Newton Lodge residential dwelling to a nursery facility to accommodate up to 20 children. The change of use would provide childcare for children aged from two years old. The nursery facility would be part of Crosfields School Trust Ltd and would not operate separately or independently.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located within settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy (CS).

Policy CP3 of the CS states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Policy CP2 of the CS seeks to ensure that that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs, planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of:

- Children, young people and families, including the co-ordination of services to meet their needs

The proposed change of use would result in the loss of a residential dwelling. Policy CP3 of the CS which states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that:

- Do not lead to a net loss of dwellings and other residential accommodation or land

Despite the resultant loss of a single dwelling, the proposed change of use would help expand and improve an important community facility within the borough in accordance with CP2 of the CS as it helps meet the needs of a group of people (i.e. children) with protected characteristics.

It is noted that Policy SS14 of the Local Plan Update – Sites allocated for residential development includes three sites within the Shinfield area. These include ‘Land north of Arborfield Road’, ‘Land east and west of Hyde End Road’ and ‘Rustlings, The Spring and land rear of Cushendall, Shinfield Road’. The combined total would equal approximately 376 additional dwellings within the local area which would increase local demand for community facilities, such as childcare and as such, the additional childcare facility would represent a social benefit to local working parents/carers.

Paragraph 100 of the NPPF specifically references the need for satisfactory childcare facilities:

‘It is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and

b) work with early years, school and post-16 promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted’.

The Local Planning Authority affords significant weight to meeting identified needs. In this case, the existing bungalow - formerly occupied by the Head Teacher, is no longer required for staff accommodation. Its location within the school site gives rise to safeguarding constraints, meaning it would not reasonably function as a market dwelling. As such, the loss of this unit is afforded limited weight and does not outweigh the considerable benefits of the proposal. Accordingly, the principle of development is considered acceptable.

Character of the Area:

Crosfields School is a co-educational day school for ages 3-13 years. It is located along the western side of Shinfield Road. The site is surrounded by residential development to the east, ECMWF weather forecast centre to the south and open playing fields to the north and west. The existing bungalow is located to the north of the main entrance and northern carparking area. The site is located within the identified settlement boundary.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high quality design. NR1 of the Borough Design Guide (BDG) SPD requires that development be designed to respond to and exploit key features or characteristics of the site and the local context.

The only change to the external façade of the existing building is the central section of the existing bay window would be replaced with patio doors to provide access to the garden.

The existing bungalow subject to the proposed change is similar in appearance to nearby buildings, including the bungalow to the south of the main entrance and the nursery building to the west. The proposed alterations are modest and would remain in keeping with the surrounding built form. The development would not result in overdevelopment of the site or appear unduly dominant within the school campus. Accordingly, no objection is raised in respect of visual impact on the host building or the wider area.

Noise and Nuisance:

Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impact.

Given the proposed change of use is to a children's nursery, any immediate harm would be noise affecting the neighbouring buildings, which are all in control of the applicant. As such, any additional noise generated would only impact buildings within the application site.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer was consulted and raised no objection to the proposal. They commented:

"The proposal is located within the established grounds of Crosfields School.

The level and nature of activity associated with the proposed nursery use, including noise from children and traffic movements associated with drop-off and collection, is

not considered materially different from the existing lawful use of the wider school site and is unlikely to result in any significant adverse impact on residential amenity.

The site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area, and the scale of development is not anticipated to give rise to any air quality concerns.

The proposal involves the reuse of an existing building with no indication of significant ground disturbance; therefore, land contamination is not considered to be a constraint, and no condition is recommended currently”.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking, Loss of Light & Overbearing:

Policy CP3 of the CS seeks to protect neighbouring residential amenity. The proposal would not result in an overbearing impact, loss of privacy, or unacceptable loss of light, as it primarily involves internal alterations and the nearest residential properties are over 67m away. Given this substantial separation distance and the reuse of an existing building, no adverse impact on neighbouring amenity is anticipated.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Local Parish have raised an objection to the proposal due to the impact it would have on highway safety and traffic movements. The Planning Officer considers these points within the assessment below.

It is noted however, that the Parish comments were received as part of the original consultation round before further Highways documents were submitted following a request from the WBC Highways team. Subsequently, a Travel Plan and revised Transport and Planning Statements were submitted to provide additional information.

Sustainability

The Council’s Highways Officer was consulted and did not object to the proposal on sustainability terms. They agree that the site is well located to enable sustainable travel to and from the site.

Access

The existing site entrance and exist would be utilised to access the proposed nursery facility. The Highways Officer raised no objection to the proposal in relation to impact on traffic. They commented: *“Section 6 of the Transport Statement includes a TRICS trip generation assessment to ascertain the traffic impacts of the proposal for 20 nursery pupils.*

The results from the assessment show 37 two-way vehicle trips, with 8 two-way trips in the AM peak and 6 two-way trips in the PM peak. This is considered acceptable.

It is noted that the School has recently created a holding bay for pushchairs, scooters and bikes that will encourage sustainable travel to the site”.

Car parking spaces

According to WBC Parking Standards, the proposal for ‘D1 Nursery’s and Creche’ (now Class Ef Non-residential creche, day centre or nursery) will require one car parking

space per full-time member of staff. This equates to five parking spaces. A School Car Park Analysis report (Aval Consulting Group, March 2026) was submitted to support the application. It must be noted that the report was not submitted initially and the Parish comments were received before the report was submitted.

The submitted car park analysis demonstrates that existing on-site parking provision can accommodate the additional demand arising from the proposed nursery use, which would require a modest level of parking (approximately five staff spaces). The supporting assessment indicates that the forecast vehicle trips associated with the development are limited and acceptable, and that capacity within the school's existing parking areas is sufficient to absorb this demand.

On this basis and considering the sustainable location of the site and absence of objection from the Highway Authority, the proposal is not expected to result in unacceptable parking pressure or adverse impacts on the local highway network.

It will be necessary to condition the parking detail set out in the Car Park Analysis report and Annex A – Drop off and pick up flow of the 'School Sustainable Travel Plan' to ensure that the proposed parking arrangements are complied with.

Cycle storage

Secure cycle parking provision should be provided in accordance with WBC standards that require 1 cycle storage space per 5 members of staff. One space would be required for this proposal.

The submitted information states that the existing onsite cycle storage spaces are underutilised and the Highways Officer requested evidence of this. However, it is noted that the cycle plan (labelled 'Cycle Storage, Rev P3) approved under permission 212574 (approved 09/08/2021) to discharge Condition 10 (cycle storage) of permission 191655, included 6 additional cycle storage spaces for 'future staff'. Therefore, it is deemed that the existing cycle storage onsite is acceptable to serve the proposed development by utilising one of the surplus cycle spaces that already exist on site if required.

While the concerns raised by the Parish Council are noted, the evidence submitted in support of the application does not demonstrate that the proposal would result in unacceptable highway impacts. Shinfield Road is recognised as a principal A-road connecting the M4 with Reading town centre and already accommodates a range of commercial, residential, retail and service-related traffic movements. The school site is therefore situated within an established transport corridor where regular vehicular activity is already present.

Although the proposed nursery would generate additional trips, the Transport Statement identifies these as limited in scale, with 37 two-way vehicle movements in total, including 8 in the AM peak and 6 in the PM peak, which the Highway Officer considers acceptable.

Importantly, unlike the main school, the nursery would not operate around a single fixed start and finish time, such that drop-off and collection movements would be more dispersed throughout the day rather than concentrated into short peak periods. This

materially reduces the extent to which the proposal would intensify existing traffic conditions.

Furthermore, the Council's Highways Officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objection in relation to traffic impacts, concluding that the site is sustainably located and that the forecast trip generation is acceptable.

In addition, the available collision data does not indicate an existing pattern of severe highway safety issues in the vicinity, with only two recorded incidents over the period 2016 to 2026, both classified as 'slight' and occurring near the southern school entrance.

Taken together, the evidence does not support the view that the development would have a severe or unacceptable impact on highway safety or the operation of the local road network. As such, the Parish Council's highway objection is not considered sufficient to warrant refusal of the application.

Amenity Space:

The submitted site plan (01) shows the garden space of the building to wrap around the building on all sides. The garden depth would measure between approximately 6m and 14m in length, with a total of approximately 200m² of useable outdoor space.

The Early Years Foundation Stages (statutory framework) requires the following external space standards:

- Under two years old require 3.5m² per child
- Two-year-olds require 2.5m² per child.
- Three – Five years old require 2.3m² per child.

In line with the statutory framework, the required external space for 20 children aged 2 years would be 50m². Therefore, the proposed site would comply with the external space standards set for Early Year Foundation stages.

Flooding and Drainage:

The existing bungalow is within flood zone 1 of Environment Agency mapping. The Council's Drainage Officer was consulted and raised no objection to the proposal.

Landscape and Trees:

Shinfield Road is identified as a Green Route road which is defined in the MDD as a road into a settlement that is lined with trees and other vegetation which make a significant contribution to the character and environment of the area and contribute to the Borough's wildlife corridor. As the subject building and its external space are set back from the road, there would be no impact to the existing front boundary of the wider school site and therefore, no adverse impact on the setting and character of the Green Route road.

Ecology:

Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network.

Bats

The application site is located in an area suitable for bat roosts, however, as no structural changes are proposed to the main roof of the building, no bat survey is required. It will be necessary however, to attach an informative to any grant of approval to outline what should be done in the unlikely event that bats are encountered whilst carrying out the proposed development.

Great Crested Newts

The site is located within an amber area suitable for Great Crested Newts. A GNC Habitat Assessment (John Wenman Ecological Consultancy, May 2026) was submitted to support the application. The ecologist concluded that *“The development proposals involve internal works only, with no additional construction of developed land to be added to the existing house. No habitats will be lost, however there could be temporary damage to the onsite habitats if used for storage of equipment or materials while the works are being carried out.*

Based on the assumption that the pond present within the school ground supports breeding GCN, the Natural England GCN Rapid Risk Assessment Tool was used to assess the risk of the development proposals adversely affecting GCN. The Tool indicates that the works are highly unlikely to result in an offence. In line with the guidance contained in the Tool and the impact assessment presented above, the nature and scale of the proposed development is highly unlikely to breach legislation protecting GCN or their habitats.

However, in the absence of mitigation there is an extremely low risk that individual GCNs could potentially be injured and/or killed during the construction activities if opportunistically traversing across the habitats on site. To avoid this, it is recommended that reasonable avoidance measures to minimise the risk of killing individual GCNs are implemented during the construction phase”.

Therefore, it will be reasonable and necessary to condition the avoidance measures set out in Section 6.3 of the report.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain is mandatory for major and minor planning applications unless the development meets the exception criteria set out in [paragraph 17 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#) the [Biodiversity Gain Requirements \(Exemptions\) Regulations 2024](#), and [The Environment Act 2021 \(Commencement No. 8 and Transitional Provisions\) Regulations 2024](#).

As the development impacts less than 25 sqm of on-site habitat and no on-site linear habitat, the proposed development is exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

Policy CP8 of the CS states that where development is likely to have an effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA), it is required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.

The application site is within 7km of the TBH SPA but given the nature of the proposal, it would not trigger further mitigation or assessment.

Planning Balance:

Whilst the proposed development would result in the loss of a single residential dwelling, this harm is limited and must be weighed against the identified benefits of the scheme.

The proposal would deliver economic benefits through the creation of approximately five full-time jobs and by supporting the local economy through the provision of childcare facilities serving nearby employment centres, including Reading.

Social benefits are also considerable, as the development would enhance local childcare provision, meeting the needs of working families and contributing towards the creation of a more sustainable and inclusive community. In particular, the proposal would complement the existing school by extending provision to younger children, enabling parents with children of different ages to access education and childcare within a single, convenient location.

Whilst there are no significant environmental gains, and there would be a modest increase in vehicle movements, these impacts are not considered to give rise to unacceptable harm. Having regard to the presumption in favour of sustainable development, the benefits of the scheme are considered to outweigh the limited harm arising from the loss of the dwelling and minor transport impacts.

Conclusion:

For the reasons set out above and subject to conditions, the proposal is acceptable as it accords with local plan policy and guidance.

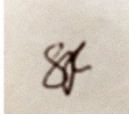
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Not required
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Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	18 June 2026
Earliest date for decision:	19 June 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	25.6.26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Major Development Location
 Thames Basin Heath SPA Mitigation Zone - 7km Linear Mitigation Zone
 Major Nuclear Site – AWE 12km Zone
 Green Route – Basingstoke Road
 Bat Roost Zone
 Great Crested Newt Zone
 SSSI Impact Risk Zone
 Landscape Character Assessment – Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay
 Shinfield Ward
 Shinfield Parish