



PLANNING STATEMENT

**Retention of classroom unit with associated air conditioning
units at:**

Luckley House School, Luckley Road, Wokingham, RG40 3EU

PREPARED BY

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the retention of a classroom with 4no. associated air conditioning units originally approved for a temporary period in July 2023. The classroom was erected 3 years ago and has been in use since this time. The classroom space is required permanently for the following reason provided by the Bursar of the School:

"While the school needs additional teaching space, we are not currently in a position to embark on a major capital project of redevelopment in line with the 'masterplan'. We have other priorities within the School and these classrooms have served us well over the last few years and are now something we want to keep for the long term."

- 1.2 This Planning Statement describes the site and proposal and sets out how the proposal complies with the policies and guidance as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 and the Wokingham Local Plan.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 Luckley House School is a private co-educational secondary school which occupies large grounds to the south-east of Wokingham Town Centre, accessed from Luckley Road. The original building on the site, Sir Ernest Newton House built in 1907 is a designated Grade II listed building. Drake Hall is one of several new buildings added over the second half of the 20th Century to provide necessary accommodation for the school.

- 2.2 The whole school is within the settlement of Wokingham (a major development location) and thus the principle of adding more buildings should be acceptable in principle.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 There is extensive planning history for the site, as follows:

970643	Proposed single storey extension to school to form conservatory	Approved 22/08/1997
981824	Proposed alterations and extension to existing assembly hall	Approved 24/07/1998
980610	Proposed upgrading interior and extension to Assembly Hall	Approved 24/07/1998
011892	Proposed erection of two storey library building with classrooms for school use	Approved 20/02/2002
041945	Proposed single storey rear extension to art room	Approved 18/11/2004
082049	Proposed erection of two storey building for music with classrooms and rehearsal room for school use.	Approved 08/08/2008
081627	Proposed erection of new maintenance building	Approved 18/07/2008
110948	Proposed construction of new entrance into school site from Luckley Road, plus revision of traffic circulation and improvements to roads, parking and related infrastructure.	Approved 09/09/2011
112183	Application for variation to condition 2 of planning consent F/2011/1038 for the amendment of plan numbers (the revised drawings include changes to car parking layout and access for pedestrians and vehicles)	Approved 13/01/2012
140268	Construction of a new performing arts centre, following demolition of redundant swimming pool	Approved 29/05/2014
120451	Application for variation of condition 2 of planning approval F/2011/1038 for the amendment of plan numbers (the revised drawings include changes to road, parking & footpath layouts and site access control).	Approved 07/06/2017
190673	Full application for the proposed construction of a reduced size multi-use synthetic turf sports pitch with a 3m - 4.5m high fence and 6no 12m column floodlights	Approved 14/06/2019 plus conditions discharged
201056	Full application for the proposed changes to fenestration, including the replacement of existing UPVC windows with aluminium windows, plus re-cladding to the southeast and southwest elevations of Drake Hall	Approved 09/06/2020
210025	Full application for the erection of a 1.7m high brick wall following demolition of the existing wooden fence.	Approved 17/02/2021
210529	Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 190673 for a reduction in pitch size from 80m x 50m to 74m x 50m and	Approved 02/03/2021

	a reduction in fence height from 3m and 4.5m to 1.2m, including relocation of floodlight columns.	
230992	Full application for the proposed erection of a temporary classroom for a period of three years plus installation of associated air conditioning units.	Approved 13/07/2023

4.0 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal seeks the retention of a single storey building clad in a fibre cement system with the appearance of wood stationed on pads (and thus no foundations necessary) within the grounds of the school. The building is 15m long and 12m wide measuring 3.5m high with 4no.air conditioning units located at both ends of the building at ground floor level. The classroom provides 4 classrooms and there are no other locations within the school site to provide a better solution at present.
- 4.2 The classroom is located on the old parking area in the north-eastern corner of the school site. The classroom is shown below:





View from Luckley Road



- 4.3 The school was working with an architect on a masterplan for the development of more teaching space on the school site. The school has reached pupil numbers of 368 (they are registered with the DfE for 380). However, as the pupil numbers are stable and not intending to increase much more the previously approved temporary classroom has served the school well and they seek to retain the building on a more permanent basis. The school's finances are being focused on enhancing sports facilities with the aim that parents will continue to choose Luckley House School as their first choice for their children.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 The statutory Development Plan comprises the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy DPD (2010) and the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) (MDD). Supporting adopted Supplementary Planning Documents including the Borough Design Guide (2012) is also of relevance and the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) is a material consideration.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 5.2 The NPPF requires, at section 12, high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Paragraph 130

states that development should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change. Schemes should also create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

5.3 Paragraph 95 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 authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

- a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and
- b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

Core Strategy (CS)

The relevant CS policies are:

- CP1 – Sustainable Development
- CP3 – General Principles for Development
- CP6 – Managing Travel Demand
- CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals

MDD Local Plan (MDD)

The relevant CS policies are:

- CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC02 – Development Limits
- CC07 – Parking
- TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
- TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The main issues for consideration are as follows: the impact on the character and appearance of the area, impact upon the neighbours and the impact on trees/biodiversity. Due to the significant distance of the temporary classroom from the main listed building, there are not considered to be any adverse impacts on heritage matters.

Principle of Development

- 6.2 The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 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.
- 6.3 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. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy 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. It will be demonstrated below that the proposal would meet the criteria of policy CP3.
- 6.4 The officer's report for the previously approved classroom stated the following, which remains applicable for this application:

"The site is located within a major development location and as such the principle of development is acceptable, providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy aims to ensure that new development contributes to the formation of sustainable and inclusive communities through the provision of community facilities (including development for education), and that the requirements of children are addressed. In this respect, the modular classroom building provides additional

teaching space for the benefit of children and young adults, therefore the development complies with the requirements set out in policy CP2 and the NPPF and the principle of development would be acceptable”.

Character of the Area

- 6.5 Luckley House School occupies a large site with the main school building being designated as a Grade II listed building. Several new buildings and additions have been added over the second half of the 20th Century to provide necessary accommodation for the school. The location of the classroom is within the grounds of the school, set away from the boundary fence by the intervening trees and foliage. There is a very wide verge between Luckley Wood and the edge of the school and thus the classroom would barely be noticeable from the public highway. It is stationed on existing car park land and tucked within the edge of the school site.
- 6.6 The proposed classroom is finished in Marley board, a fibre cement cladding system with the appearance of wood which is acceptable in this setting. The building is low-lying with a hipped roof and set on pads to ensure there is no damage to the ground below. Overall, the proposal would not have an adverse impact upon the character and appearance area or listed building.
- 6.7 The officer’s report confirmed the following, which remains relevant to this application and we trust you will form the same conclusion for this application:

“Whilst temporary in nature, the proposed building would not appear at odds with regards to its design in relation to other buildings located within the school grounds and is appropriate for its intended use and compatible in scale and appearance to its surroundings. Due to its location, the proposed building would have limited views from the public realm above the existing fence line however this would not appear out of character with the surrounding residential properties. The proposed air conditioning units would be located at the ground level of the proposed building. The submitted plans indicate the air conditioning units would be placed within cages. Due to the location of the units, they would not be visible

from the streetscene therefore no detrimental impact would occur upon the character of the streetscene or the existing school grounds.

Overall, the proposed classroom building will have a minimal visual impact when considered in the context of its immediate surroundings within the school site, as well as the surrounding area. As such, the proposal would not result in a detrimental impact upon the character of the surrounding area and therefore would accord with policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy”.

Heritage impact

6.8 Section 66 of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 makes it clear that the LPA shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings. Chapter 16 of the NPPF reiterates the importance and expands upon the requirements of assessing listed buildings and their setting. Policy TB24 of the Local Plan supports development that will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets.

6.9 Luckley House School was listed at Grade II on the 15th of July 1987. The list entry states:

Large country house in landscaped surrounds, now private school. 1907 by Sir Ernest Newton in a free Elizabethan style. Brick with red brick quoins, hipped, tile roof. Hplan with large mid and late C20 extensions on north east. 2 storeys and attics. 2 large chimneys, one on each wing, with clustered diagonal shafts and offset heads on rectangular bases; similar on ridge of centre section but smaller. Brick plat band, bold moulded and modillioned eaves cornice. Square leaded casements. North west front:- Symmetrical. Centre part, 3 wide bays centre bay slightly projecting with 2 panelled large semi-circular moulded hood; approached by 2 stone steps. 3-light casement over, 4-light at ends on both floors. One small bull's eye to right of entrance. One bay projecting wings either side, flat roof dormer with 2-light casement on right. South east, garden front:- symmetrical, similar to north west front, with 3 flat roof dormers in centre section, one in each wing. Similar central porch with garden door leading

to small, paved terrace. Each projecting wing has large octagonal bays on ground floor with 8 single lights and copper domed roof; Two, 3-light casements over.

- 6.10 The previous application accepted that “whilst there would be some impact on the significance of the listed building due to proliferation of built form within its setting, the temporary nature of the structure renders the works reversible and are of no long-term consequence”. Whilst the building is now to remain in situ, it continues to act as temporary in nature and could easily be moved from the site. Taking into account the existing development at the School, existing relationship and separation between the listed buildings and the modest scale and nature of the proposed development, it is considered that the proposal will not impact upon the immediate or wider setting of the listed building. In essence, it would not have any harmful impact on the setting of the listed building and on heritage grounds and the proposal would satisfy policy TB24.

Neighbouring Amenity

- 6.11 The classroom unit is used for general teaching of pupils and any noise levels arising from the unit is similar to current levels. The classroom unit benefits from openable windows on either side, to provide natural ventilation and adequate natural lighting, and are not close to the site boundary and overlooking of any neighbouring properties will not be applicable.
- 6.12 Due to the limited scale of the classroom and its intrinsic link to the school, it would not result in any detrimental impact upon the living conditions of the adjoining neighbouring properties by way of overlooking, loss of light and nor would it appear overbearing. The air conditioning units are a considerable distance from neighbouring houses have not caused any harmful noise in the past 3 years. Overall, the proposal is considered to comply with policy CP3 of the Core Strategy which aims to protect neighbouring amenity.

Highways Access and Parking Provision

- 6.13 The school has 98 car park spaces plus 12 visitor’s spaces making a total of 110 so the loss of 10 spaces would not make an impact as there is no increase in the number of staff and hence

staff parking needs. There are always empty spaces available. There are no highways issues associated with the proposal on the grounds of highways access and safety or upon the existing parking provision as there will be no change in the numbers of staff, compliant with Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan.

Trees and ecology

- 6.14 As this application is seeking the retention of a building which has been in situ for almost 3 years, there are not considered to be any impacts on trees or ecology.

7.0 OVERALL CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This approach is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 7.2 The NPPF also states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Further, that great weight should be given to the need to expand or alter schools through decisions on applications. The proposed retention of the Modular building will continue to provide valuable facilities which are required for the continued operation of teaching at Luckley House School.
- 7.3 Due to the distances between neighbouring properties, there will not be any adverse impact on residential amenity. There are no highway safety or tree implications nor ecological implications.
- 7.4 For the reasons given above, the retention of the classroom, situated within the grounds of the school, would continue to have very limited impact on the setting of the listed building, upon neighbours or the green environment and hence thus complies with the principle aims

of Local Policies CP1, CP3, CP9 and CC07 and to the NPPF. Overall, it is considered to be fully policy compliant, and permission should be duly granted planning permission.