

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	261021
Site Address:	Hawkedon Primary School, Hawkedon Way, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 3AP
Expiry Date:	7 July 2026
Site Visit Date:	29/05/2026
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of a single storey modular nursery building, following demolition of existing family centre modular building.	

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 CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C3 – Active travel NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC2 – Community infrastructure

Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List
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PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
970208	Proposed Construction Of Modular Nursery Building	Approved, 12/08/1997

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Property Services – No comments received.
WBC Environmental Health – No comments received.
WBC Drainage – No objections.
WBC Highways – Further information requested.
WBC Growth & Delivery (Planning Policy) – No comments received.
WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Community Infrastructure) – No comments received.
WBC Health and Wellbeing – No comments received.
WBC CIL – No comments received.
WBC Ecology Newts – No comments received.
WBC Ecology – No comments received.
WBC Waste Services – No comments received.
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received.

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Earley Town Council – No objections.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	A total of 13 letters of support were received from the following addresses: • <u>110 Hurst Road, Twyford, RG10 0AN</u> – Supports the proposal as it would have no adverse impact on neighbours, improve nursery provision and provide a more environmentally efficient building. • <u>29 Blackdale, Cheshunt, EN7 6DE</u> – Supports the proposal due to the shortage of nursery places and the need for additional capacity. • <u>14 Worrall Way, Lower Earley, RG6 4AW</u> – Supports the refurbishment as a benefit to the school and local community. • <u>4 Wyatt Crescent, Lower Earley, RG6 3WH</u> – Supports the proposal, citing the need for additional

	nursery capacity. • <u>30 Hawkedon Way, Reading, RG6 3AP</u> – Supports the replacement of the outdated building with improved facilities. • <u>26 Felixstowe Close, Lower Earley, RG6 3UF</u> – Supports the proposal as a positive addition to the school. • <u>52 Tidmarsh Road, Reading, RG2 0DE</u> – The Nursery Manager supports the proposal, highlighting improved facilities, accessibility, energy efficiency, additional childcare places and long-term educational and community benefits. • <u>156 Maiden Place, Reading, RG6 3HE</u> – Supports the proposal as it would provide improved facilities and additional childcare places. • <u>Woodley, RG5 3BP</u> – Supports the proposal, noting the benefits of improved early years facilities. • <u>21 Uppingham Drive, Woodley, RG5 4TH</u> – Expresses full support for the proposal. • <u>Wokingham, RG40 3QJ</u> – As a member of staff, supports the proposal, citing improved facilities, increased capacity and benefits to children and families. • <u>5 Chesterman Way, Lower Earley, RG6 4HW</u> – Supports the proposal as an enhancement to the school's facilities and provision for the local community. • <u>94 The Delph, Lower Earley, RG6 3AW</u> – Supports the proposal, highlighting the need for additional nursery space and improved facilities.
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APPRAISAL

Site Description and Proposed Development:

The application site is located within the grounds of Hawkedon Primary School in Lower Earley, a predominantly residential area characterised by detached and semi-detached dwellings dating from the 1970s to 1990s. The school grounds also accommodate the Earleybird Pre-School and Family Centre Nursery, which currently operates from a modular building situated in the south-west corner of the site.

Planning permission is sought to replace the existing modular nursery building, which is no longer considered fit for purpose, with a new modular unit comprising one classroom, a sensory room, store, staff room, kitchenette and WC facilities.

The new building is proposed in order to facilitate the school in accommodating an additional intake of 6 pupils taking the number of pupils from 18 to 24, along with potentially one additional part-time member of staff.

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. 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.

Paragraph 95 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. It also states that Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive, and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. It continues to state that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications.

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 seeks to ensure that new development contributes to the creation of sustainable and inclusive communities through the provision and enhancement of community facilities, including educational uses, and that the needs of children are appropriately addressed. The principle of providing an improved classroom building, which would enhance teaching space and facilities for pupils, is considered to accord with Policy CP2.

Character of the Area:

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that 'maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment'.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states planning permission will be granted if development is 'of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life'.

R1 and RD1 of the Borough Design Guide requires that development contributes positively towards and is compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area.

The main school building is predominantly single storey in height and constructed in red brick with gabled roof forms. The school has been extended over time, resulting in a range of additional buildings with a matching form and design arranged around the original building.

The proposed modular building would be located in the south-west corner of the school grounds and would measure approximately 15 metres x 7.2 metres. It would be single storey with a mono-pitched roof and finished in coated steel cladding panels (Goosewing Grey), a black roofing membrane and anthracite UPVC detailing. Whilst

these materials do not reflect the red brick character of the original school building, the proposed unit would be positioned in a discreet corner of the site, physically separated from the main teaching blocks and therefore read as a standalone structure within the wider school campus.

The scale and footprint would be broadly comparable to the existing building it would replace, albeit marginally larger in length. In this context, and given the established presence of varied building forms and materials across the site, the proposal would not appear incongruous. The replacement of a dated modular structure with a new unit would also result in a modest visual improvement to this part of the site.

Overall, the building would be appropriate in scale and design for its intended educational use and would integrate satisfactorily within the existing school context. It would replace an existing modular structure and therefore result in only a limited material change in visual terms. It would not be prominent in public views outside the site and would have a limited impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As such, the proposal is considered to accord with Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3, as well as the principles of the Borough Design Guide.

The proposal also includes the reconfiguration of the paved path to the rear of the building, extending along its south-eastern side. This represents a minor alteration to the existing arrangement and would not result in a materially different appearance. Accordingly, it would not adversely impact the character of the area.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The nearest residential properties are located within the cul-de-sac of Eriswell Close, to the south-west of the application site. The proposed modular building would be positioned approximately 15 metres from these neighbouring dwellings and, by virtue of its single-storey height and modest scale, would not appear overbearing or result in any unacceptable loss of light.

The proposed fenestration would provide a similar relationship to neighbouring properties as the existing nursery building. Furthermore, the existing boundary fencing and landscaping would continue to provide effective screening, ensuring there would be no unacceptable overlooking or loss of privacy. Accordingly, the proposal is not considered to give rise to any adverse impacts on neighbouring residential amenity.

Noise impact:

The proposal would accommodate an additional six pupils compared with the existing nursery. The replacement building would be broadly comparable in footprint and scale to the existing structure, and no changes are proposed to the outdoor play area. Given the modest increase in pupil numbers and the absence of any significant intensification of the use, it is not considered that the proposal would result in an unacceptable increase in noise levels or disturbance to neighbouring residents compared with the existing situation.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed the proposal and raises no objection in principle, noting that the existing vehicular and pedestrian access arrangements would remain unchanged. However, further information was initially requested in relation to staffing levels, traffic generation associated with the additional six nursery places, adequacy of parking provision, and the need for an updated School Travel Plan.

In response, the agent has confirmed that full-time staff numbers will remain at 29, with any additional requirement limited to a single part-time member of staff. The application form incorrectly stating 30 full-time staff has been acknowledged as an error. It is therefore considered that there would be no material increase in staffing levels as a result of the proposal.

With regard to trip generation, the additional six nursery places would represent a very modest intensification of use. The agent has also confirmed that the nursery operates on a morning, afternoon or full-day session basis and does not coincide with peak drop-off and pick-up periods of the main school. It is also understood that a proportion of nursery users are likely to have siblings already attending the primary school, which would further limit any net increase in vehicle movements. On this basis, any associated increase in traffic generation is considered to be minimal and a formal traffic impact assessment is not required.

In terms of parking, the site currently provides 39 shared spaces serving both the school and nursery uses. Whilst policy standards are typically based on FTE staffing levels, this does not directly reflect actual peak demand due to part-time working arrangements, staggered shifts and sustainable travel patterns amongst staff. Given the very limited increase in staff and pupils, and the absence of overlapping peak demand, it is considered that the proposal would not result in a material shortfall in parking provision. A parking occupancy survey is therefore not considered necessary.

An updated School Travel Plan was also requested; however, the proposal effectively relates to the replacement of the existing nursery building with a modest uplift of six additional pupils, resulting in only a very limited change in trip generation. In this context, it is not considered proportionate to require a revised Travel Plan, and any existing School Travel Plan is considered sufficient to continue to manage movements associated with the development.

Overall, it is considered that the clarification provided satisfactorily addresses the Highway Officer's concerns, and the proposal would not result in any unacceptable highway safety or capacity impacts.

The Highways Officer is satisfied that the existing cycle parking provision is adequate, given the modest increase in staff, and raises no concerns in relation to refuse arrangements, subject to confirmation that these will remain unchanged. The agent has confirmed that no changes are proposed to refuse storage or collection arrangements.

Flooding and Drainage:

The Council's Drainage Officer has reviewed the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and supporting planning statement and notes that the proposal comprises the replacement of the existing family centre modular building with a new modular nursery building within Flood Zone 2. The assessment confirms that there would be no loss of flood storage, with finished floor levels set appropriately above flood risk levels, and that safe access, egress, and flood warning measures are in place.

The proposal is also understood to be a like-for-like replacement of the existing facility, with foul drainage connecting to an existing manhole and surface water drainage discharging into the existing system, utilising current infrastructure.

On this basis, and subject to the details set out in the submitted FRA, the Drainage Officer raises no objection to the proposed development.

Landscape and Trees:

There are no trees on the application site that are subject to a Tree Preservation Order; however, two trees are located in close proximity to the proposed building. This includes a large, mature tree to the south-west, approximately 11 metres from the development, and a smaller, medium-sized tree to the south-east at a distance of approximately 5 metres.

Having regard to the siting and scale of the proposed development, it is considered that the separation distance to the mature tree is sufficient to ensure that the building would not result in any direct physical impact or long-term harm to its health or structural stability. In addition, the proposed building would be sited largely within an existing hardstanding area associated with the current development, which further reduces the potential for disturbance to rooting zones.

While the closer tree to the south-east is situated at a reduced distance, the use of existing hard surfacing, together with the modest scale of the proposed structure, means that any impact to rooting environment is likely to be limited. As such, it is considered that no tree or landscape related impacts would arise from the proposed development.

Ecology:

The site also lies within an amber zone containing suitable habitat where great crested newts (GCN) are likely to be present. A District Licensing Officer, acting on behalf of NatureSpace, has reviewed the application and confirmed that the proposed development is not considered to fall within the scope of the District Licensing Scheme in this instance. It is therefore considered that the development would not be likely to have an impact on great crested newts or their habitats, and no further comments are raised.

Bats

The Council's Ecology Officer has reviewed the application and notes that the site does not fall within a bat roost habitat suitability zone. Accordingly, a bat roost assessment is not required in this instance.

The site is located within an established urban area, with a tree belt to the south separating the school grounds from the adjoining residential development. Whilst a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has not been submitted, the proposed development comprises the replacement of an existing building of a similar scale and footprint on an existing hardstanding. As such, no habitats of ecological value would be lost or adversely affected. Furthermore, having regard to the age, construction and existing use of the building, it is considered unlikely to support nesting birds or other protected species. Consequently, no ecology-related objections are raised to the proposal.

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
Recommendation:	Approval
Date:	29 June 2026
Earliest date for decision:	4 June 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	03.07.2026