Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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Wiltshire Council Conservation (Central)

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Officer's Title: Senior Planning Officer

Application No: **PL/2024/09494**
Siting of 1 no. temporary Classroom 01 for early years classroom and 1 no. temporary classroom 02 Key Stage 3 with play areas until August 2024
Silverwood School (former Rowdeford House) Rowde

Please find following comments in respect of the above application(s).

Recommendations:

	No comment
	Support in principle subject to amendments to the scheme (as set out below)
	Support subject to conditions (as set out below)
	Object (for reasons set out below)
X	No objections

Scope of comments: the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

Policy: From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66 (PP) requires that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing listed buildings and their settings.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 207-9 of the NPPF require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved.

The Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that "designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance."

Site and assets considered: Rowdeford House is a grade II listed country house built 1812, currently used as a school. The house is surrounded by landscaped grounds and a designed park. To the north is a stable block and to the east are walled gardens with restored glasshouses. A belt of woodland along the road ensures the privacy of the estate. To the north east in woodland the remains of a curtilage listed kennel range has been converted to a further teaching facility.

Proposal: the schedule for the construction of the new school campus are understood to be delayed and the application s seeks the temporary siting of two mobile classrooms to the west of the house to meet the need in the interim period.

Relevant planning history: PL/2021/06837 and PL/2021/06782 – construction of the new school campus to the north of the house.

Issues: impact on the listed building and its setting.

Information considered/provided: Paragraph 200 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. In this case the information is limited, although full reports have been provided in the past with previous applications and are available for use. Paragraph 201 also provides for the local planning authority to make its own assessment of impact and the following heritage recommendations are offered on this basis.

Significance of assets and contribution of setting (as appropriate): The NPPF defines significance as the "value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be **archaeological**, **architectural**, **artistic** or **historic**. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting." Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place.

The original plan form of the building remains legible and the building is rare amongst those converted to such uses in retaining many original features and much of its internal decorative scheme. Similarly, the surrounding designed landscape remains in good and legible condition close to the house within the school boundary although the wider parkland to the north has become degraded via separation from the estate and return to general agricultural use. It is agreed that the significance of the building lies not only with its historic fabric and architecture – which have significant aesthetic value – but also with its history as an excellent example of a small country estate which was associated with some notable figures. It is also agreed that the current use of the building as a school over a long period has evolved as another significant phase within its history which has attracted a considerable communal value.

Assessment: the proposed classrooms will be located within the immediate garden setting of the house and will inevitably result in a level of harm by virtue of the visual intrusion and reduction in the contribution that this setting makes to the significance of the listed building. However, the proposals relate to a temporary period only and there are provisions for the removal of the buildings and for making good the site following this. The harm caused will therefore be temporary with no residual impact.

Summary & conclusion: The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

The proposals will result in a level of harm by virtue of development within the setting of the listed building – however, this will be temporary and there will be no residual harm following the removal of the classrooms. The final planning balance falls to be assessed by the Case Officer, but it is understood that the proposed temporary classrooms are considered to provide considerable public benefits in terms of meeting an urgent need in an unplanned situation (whilst the new campus is delayed) in providing educational accommodation for vulnerable children. On this basis, it is expected that the modest level of purely temporary harm to the listed building will be considered to be outweighed by the wider public benefits of the proposals.

The retention of the classrooms beyond the period would, however, result in the harm being consolidated and I would suggest that conditions be added to secure the removal and making good in a timely manner.