

Planning Statement

Silverwood School, Rowde Campus, Rowde, Wiltshire SN10 2QQ

Report date: April 2026



Prepared for:
Wiltshire Council

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Revision by	Version	Date
Abin John	1	18/03/2026
Abin John	2	30/03/2026
Reviewed By	Version	Date
Ben Christian	2	20/04/2026

1 Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by Vail Williams LLP on behalf of Wiltshire Council (the Client) in support of a retrospective planning application relating to Silverwood School, Rowde Campus, Rowde, Wiltshire, SN10 2QQ.
- 1.2. The retrospective planning permission is sought for three temporary buildings to teach pupils until Summer 2030.
- 1.3. Three classrooms were previously located within the listed Rowdeford House building, however due to the condition of the building, in particular concerns with the integrity of the lath and plaster ceilings which were showing signs of cracking, for health and safety reasons a decision was taken to install temporary classrooms as a matter of urgency to accommodate these displaced pupils, there being no spare classroom capacity elsewhere on the school site. Furthermore, the Council who have a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available, had a need to urgently accommodate a cohort of approximately eight pupils who were not being permanently educated due to a lack of specialist teaching places. These pupils are also being accommodated in the temporary classroom. The temporary classroom will be used to ease further specialist teaching space pressures that the Council know they will experience in the coming years.
- 1.4. The Department for Education are developing a scheme to carry out a full refurbishment of Rowdeford House which is expected to take several years to plan, obtain the necessary consents for, and implement. Consequently, the temporary classrooms will be required to be on site until this project has been completed which is currently expected to be in approximately 2030.

2 Site Location and Description

Site Context



Figure 1: Aerial View from google

- 2.1. The site is located within the administrative area of Wiltshire Council, in the northern part of the village of Rowde.
- 2.2. The site comprises a range of buildings located primarily toward the centre of the campus. These include Rowdeford House, a former largely Georgian country house which is Grade II listed.

- 2.3. The campus also contains more contemporary purpose-built educational buildings, including the Orchard Block and the Buzzard Block and the recently completed large two-storey classroom block
- 2.4. The buildings and walled garden are surrounded by areas of parkland and woodland to the north, west and south, reflecting the historic setting of the original house. To the east and north-east the site adjoins open fields.
- 2.5. Planning permission (ref. PL/2021/06782), granted by notice dated 20 October 2021, allowed for the redevelopment of the existing school to provide a high-quality permanent Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) campus.
- 2.6. The site currently operates as a maintained co-educational special school for students with SEND including some pupils with multiple and complex needs. It presently accommodates around 400 students.
- 2.7.

Site Constraints

- 2.8. According to the Government's Flood Map for Planning, the site lies within Flood Zone 1, indicating a low probability of flooding. It is noted that the main access to the campus is in Flood Zone 3 but safe access and egress from the campus can be achieved to the north via an emergency access on to St Edith's Marsh which is in Flood Zone 1.

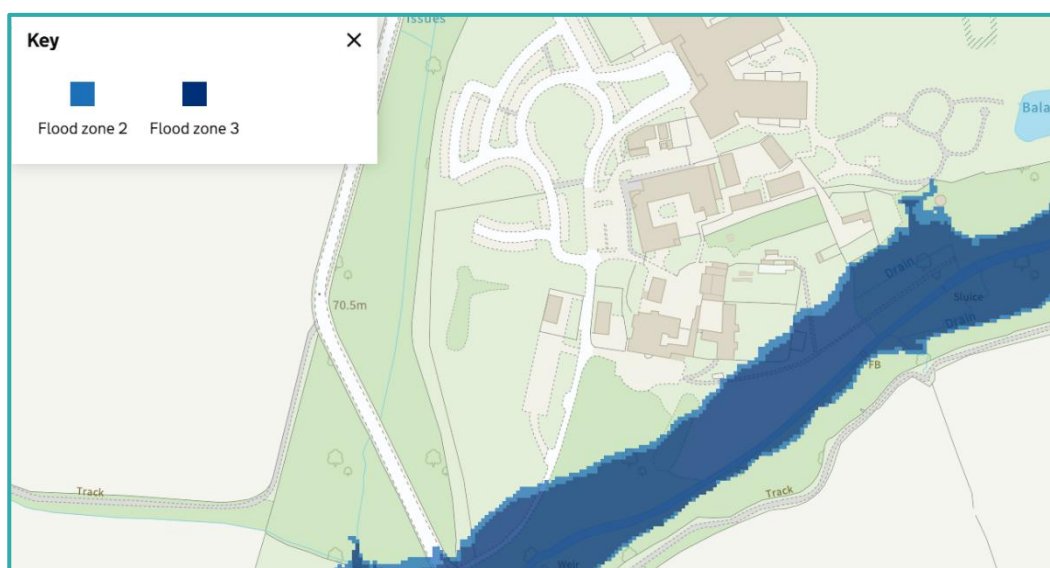


Figure 2: Flood Zone map and Surface water map

- 2.9. According to DEFRA's MAGIC Map, several statutory environmental designations are located within a 5km radius of the site. These include Roundway Down and Covert SSSI and King's Play Hill, approximately 3km to the north-east of the site. Spye Park SSSI is located approximately 4.5km to the north-west, while Seend Cleeve Quarry SSSI and Seend Ironstone Quarry and Road Cutting SSSI are situated roughly 5km to the south-west of the site.

- 2.10. According to the Historic England map, there is one Grade II listed building adjacent to the site, known as Rowdeford School, as shown in the image below. In addition, the Grade II listed Rowdeford Bridge is located near the school campus access.

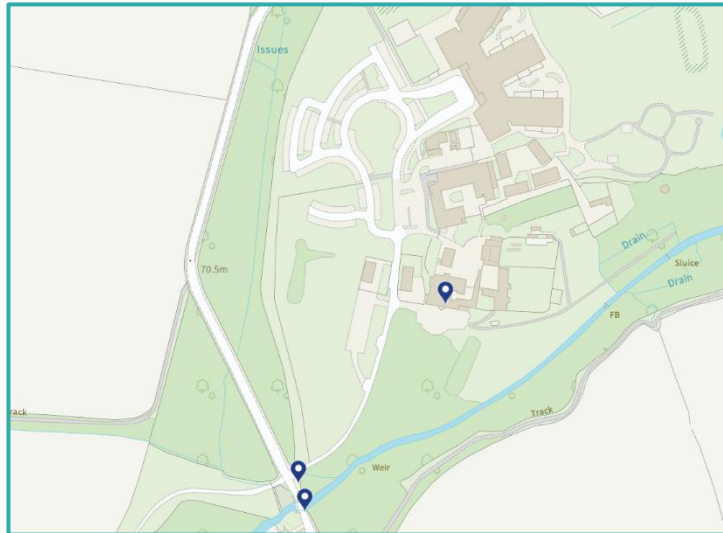


Figure 3: Historic England Map

3 Proposed Development

- 3.1. The proposed development relates to three classroom buildings located within the Silverwood School Rowde Campus with associated temporary fencing and outdoor play spaces.
- 3.2. Temporary Classroom 01 is located on the large, grassed area adjacent to the listed building. This building is being used to accommodate the additional cohort of approximately eight pupils.
- 3.3. Temporary Classrooms 02 and 03 which comprise two double classrooms each are located within the temporary car park to the west of the listed building. Each classroom accommodates approximately 12 Key Stage 3 (secondary-aged) pupils and is being used to accommodate the displaced pupils (approximately 36 pupils) from the three classrooms in Rowdeford House, and will be used to provide capacity for approximately 12 pupils in the future.
- 3.4. The applicant recognises the need to ensure the timely removal of the temporary buildings and would accept a planning condition requiring their removal in Summer 2030. This timeframe reflects the limited periods when pupils are not present on site and when the removal can be undertaken safely.
- 3.5. In the interim, and to ensure the continued operation of the school without impacting mainstream pupils, this retrospective application seeks permission for the retention and continued temporary use of the mobile classroom accommodation for a minimum period of five years.
- 3.6. Following removal of the temporary buildings, the land would be restored in accordance with the approved 2021 permission (ref. PL/2021/06782). The areas currently occupied by the temporary buildings will be reinstated as grassland.

4 Planning History

- 4.1. According to the Wiltshire Council planning portal, the relevant planning applications relating to the site and surrounding area are listed below.

Proposed Site

- 4.2. Application Reference: PL/2023/09494 | 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 2025 | Granted on 05/07/2024.
- These classrooms were proposed on the same most northly positions of the three classrooms the proposed development this planning statement relates to . The officer's report for this application established the principle of development, noting that the site is a long-established school site and that the principle of its use for educational purposes, including associated operational educational development, is therefore established.
 - This planning history record included a temporary classroom adjacent to the listed building as proposed by the proposed development this planning statement relates to.

Wider Site

- 4.3. Application Reference: PL/2021/06837 | Proposed works to create new science classroom and prep room, life skills classroom, hygiene facilities, office accommodation, Enterprise Zone, accessible entrance and accessible WC. Internal and external alterations and repairs to existing Grade II Listed Rowdeford House. Temporary removal and subsequent replacement of Grade II Listed Gate pier at the north of the site to facilitate construction vehicle movements. | Silverwood School, Rowde, Devizes, Wiltshire. SN10 2QQ | Granted on 08/10/21.
- Application Reference: PL/2021/11144 | Discharge of condition 4 of PL/2021/06837 | Silverwood School, Rowde, Devizes, Wiltshire. SN10 2QQ | Granted on 24/01/22.
 - Application Reference: PL/2021/11898 | Discharge of condition 8 and 12 of PL/2021/06837 | Silverwood School, Rowde, Devizes, Wiltshire. SN10 2QQ | Granted on 17/02/22.
- 4.4. Application Reference: PL/2021/06782 | Proposed development of Silverwood School, extending the existing Rowde Campus (formerly Rowdeford School) to provide a high quality SEND school campus for 350 students including the construction of a new two storey education building with new Hydrotherapy Pool, teaching classrooms and Main Hall, the development of existing buildings, new all-weather sports pitch, new playing fields, on-site parking, landscaping, ecological enhancements and associated works | Silverwood School, Rowde, Devizes, Wiltshire. SN10 2QQ | Granted on 20/10/21.
- Application Reference: PL/2021/10678 | Discharge of conditions 9 and 10 of PL/2021/06782 | Silverwood School, Rowde, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2QQ | Granted on 06/01/22.
 - Application Reference: PL/2022/02993 | Discharge of conditions 2 of PL/2021/06782 | Silverwood School, Rowde, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2QQ | Granted on 08/06/22.
 - Application Reference: PL/2022/04993 | Discharge of conditions 11 of PL/2021/06782 | Silverwood School, Rowde, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2QQ | Granted on 24/08/22.
 - Application Reference: PL/2023/10528 Discharge of conditions 13, 17 and 19 (School travel plan, bus shelters, carriageway and footway improvements) relating to application PL/2021/06782 (Proposed development of Silverwood School) | Silverwood School, Rowde, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2QQ | Granted on 26/01/24.

5 Planning Policy

- 5.1. The planning policy framework for Wiltshire Council is currently guided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015).
- 5.2. We have not discussed the Wiltshire Local Plan 2020-2038 as at examination Inspectors set out two options for the council, to either (i) withdraw the Local Plan from examination or (ii) request that the Inspectors draft a final report (which would recommend non-adoption).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF December 2024)

- 5.3. **Paragraph 8** sets out three overarching objectives to support sustainable development
 - a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
 - b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 5.4. **Paragraph 98** seeks planning policies should ensure the provision of services that support sustainable communities. They should also promote local health and well-being strategies, protect important services, and allow existing facilities to evolve.
- 5.5. **Paragraph 100** states that local planning authorities should ensure there is sufficient choice in educational places for both existing and new communities. The paragraph goes on to state that local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement and specifically notes that the planning balance in determination of planning applications should ‘give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools’.
- 5.6. **Section 12** of the NPPF demonstrates the need for well-designed places that is developed with communities input reflecting the area characteristics and aspiration. Developments should function well, be visually attractive, respect local character, create a strong sense of place, and optimize site potential, while promoting safety, health, and inclusivity.
- 5.7. **Paragraph 215** states where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Wiltshire Core Strategy (January 2015)

- 5.8. **Core Policy 1** identifies Large Villages as settlements with a limited range of employment, services and facilities. Development at Large and Small Villages will be limited to that needed to help meet the housing needs of settlements and to improve employment opportunities, services and facilities.
- 5.9. **Core Policy 12** identifies Rowde as large village and advises that development in Devizes Community Area should be in accordance with the settlement strategy set out in Core Policy 1.

- 5.10. **Core Policy 49** seeks to protect rural services and community facilities. The policy supports the retention of existing community uses and resists their loss unless it can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer viable or suitable for community use. For proposals affecting community facilities, preference is given to retaining the existing use, or where this is not possible, an alternative community use.
- 5.11. **Core Policy 50** states development proposals must protect and, where possible, enhance features of ecological value. Proposals should retain, buffer, and positively manage these features to maintain long-term ecological connectivity and function. Where retention is not possible, mitigation and compensatory measures must ensure no net loss of biodiversity and safeguard ecosystem services. Development must also avoid disturbance to sensitive habitats and species, particularly those linked to Natura 2000 sites, through either strategic or bespoke avoidance measures. Proposals that adversely affect the integrity of such sites will not be supported. All development should deliver biodiversity enhancements through habitat creation, restoration, or connectivity improvements, aligning with local Biodiversity Action Plans and Catchment Management Plans.
- 5.12. **Core Policy 51** states development should protect, conserve, and where possible enhance the landscape character, avoiding harmful impacts and mitigating any negative effects through sensitive design and landscaping.
- 5.13. **Core Policy 52** states development must retain and enhance Wiltshire's green infrastructure network, ensuring suitable links are provided and maintained. Where loss is unavoidable, replacement green infrastructure of equal or better quality must be provided to maintain network integrity. Development must not harm the network's value or the delivery of the strategy, and support for green infrastructure projects aligned with the strategy will be encouraged, with developer contributions sought where appropriate.
- 5.14. **Core Policy 57** requires all new developments to deliver high-quality design that respects and enhances the local character, landscape, and historic environment, while promoting sustainability, community safety, and efficient land use. Proposals must demonstrate how they integrate with their surroundings and support amenity.
- 5.15. **Core Policy 58** seeks to ensure the conservation of the historic environment. The policy requires development to protect, conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets and their settings in a manner appropriate to their significance. This includes designated heritage assets such as listed buildings, conservation areas and historic parks and gardens, as well as non-designated heritage assets which contribute to local character and identity.
- 5.16. **Core Policy 61** seeks new development to be located and designed to reduce the need to travel particularly by private car, and to encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives.
- 5.17. **Core Policy 67** states all new development will include measures to reduce the rate of rainwater run-off and improve rainwater infiltration to soil and ground (sustainable urban drainage) unless site or environmental conditions make these measures unsuitable.

6 Development Considerations

Principle of Development

- 6.1. The application site has previously had permission for temporary classroom buildings which were originally approved to facilitate the expansion of Silverwood School in accordance with planning permission ref. PL/2021/06782. Temporary planning permission was subsequently granted under application ref. PL/2023/09494; however, this consent has now expired.
- 6.2. These new temporary buildings are required due to the condition of the adjacent listed building which is currently not a safe environment for pupils. As a result of structural concerns, including cracking identified within the listed building, further investigations and works are required before it can be safely brought back into use. Wiltshire Council understand that the Department for Education is currently developing the scheme of works to be tendered for by contractors. Prior to the erection of the temporary buildings Wiltshire Council relocated pupils into the main school but this resulted in an impact on the curriculum of those in mainstream schooling. This is not considered a long term solution and therefore Wiltshire Council erected the temporary buildings with the last building being occupied in February 2026.
- 6.3. The proposal does not introduce a new land use but instead supports the continued operation of an existing educational facility, in line with NPPF paragraph 100.
- 6.4. Given the established educational use of the site, the previous planning permissions relating to the school campus, and the temporary nature of the proposal, the principle of the development is considered acceptable.

Temporary Planning Permission Timeframe Request

- 6.5. The applicant seeks temporary planning permission for the buildings for a period of up to five years. This timeframe is necessary to allow sufficient time for works to the listed building. This includes Department for Education processes and contractor appointment, the preparation and submission of a listed building consent application, including the required surveys and investigation works. The programme for these works will be coordinated with the Department for Education, who are progressing refurbishment proposals in accordance with their delivery timetable. Following determination of the application, further time will be required to discharge any planning conditions and undertake the necessary repair, and restoration works, before the building can be safely reoccupied.
- 6.6. Additional time is therefore required to secure the necessary consents and complete the associated works in alignment with the DfE's programme. The proposed five-year temporary period provides a realistic and proportionate timeframe to enable these processes to be completed without disruption to the operation of the school.

Land Restoration Plan

- 6.7. Once the temporary buildings are removed, the land will be cleared and restored through the planting of grass.
- 6.8. This follows the approved Land Restoration plans under application reference PL/2023/09494.

Heritage

- 6.9. Any temporary impact on the setting of the listed building is considered to be justified when balanced against the need to maintain appropriate educational facilities for the pupils attending the school. The temporary classrooms provide essential accommodation to ensure the school can continue to operate safely and effectively during the ongoing construction works and associated investigations relating to the listed building. This approach is consistent with paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy

Framework (NPPF), which requires that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

- 6.10. The proposal may result in a limited and temporary impact on the setting of the listed building due to the siting and appearance of the portable classrooms. However, this impact is reversible and limited to the temporary period for which the buildings are required. Once the buildings are removed, the site will be restored in accordance with the approved plans and no lasting impact on the significance of the heritage asset will remain.
- 6.11. Lucy Rutter-Dowd, the case officer for planning application ref. PL/2023/09494, concluded that:
- “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.”
- 6.12. Application ref. PL/2023/09494 previously established the principle of the temporary buildings adjacent to the listed building. As the structures are temporary in nature and will be removed following completion of the required works, their presence does not result in any permanent or adverse impact on the listed building or its setting.
- 6.13. When considered in the context of the wider redevelopment of the site and the ongoing need to provide safe and appropriate educational accommodation for pupils, the proposal represents a proportionate and pragmatic solution. The public benefits associated with maintaining the operation of an important special educational needs facility are considered to outweigh the limited and temporary impact on the setting of the listed building.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 6.14. The site is located within Flood Zone 1, which indicates a low probability of flooding. According to the Government’s Flood Map for Planning, no significant flood risk is anticipated at the site.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 6.15. Within the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), Paragraph 003 (Ref ID: 74-003-20240214) explains that retrospective planning applications are exempt from the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement introduced under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Design

- 6.16. The location of the buildings has been carefully selected to ensure they remain in close proximity to existing school facilities while maintaining a safe environment for pupils and staff. The proposed siting does not conflict with the approved site masterplan. As the buildings are temporary and the land will ultimately be reinstated to grassland, their presence will not prejudice the full implementation of the approved hard and soft landscaping strategy upon their removal. This approach is in accordance with permission PL/2023/09494 and the associated land restoration plan submitted as part of that application.
- 6.17. Further to the temporary buildings temporary Fencing has been installed around the temporary classrooms to ensure appropriate safeguarding for pupils and enable safe outdoor play.

Transport

- 6.18. The proposal would not result in any increase in vehicle movements, as the proposal does not increase the number of pupils on site or impact the current transport/parking provision. As such, the temporary buildings and their use would not give rise to any additional transport or highway impacts.

Landscape Impact

- 6.19. Given the temporary nature of the buildings and their location within an established school campus, the visual and landscape effects are limited and short term. The buildings are modest in scale and positioned within areas already associated with the operational use of the school.
- 6.20. Upon completion of the relevant works and the removal of the temporary classrooms, the land will be reinstated to grassland. The proposal will therefore not result in any permanent adverse impact on the landscape character or appearance of the site.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 6.21. Wiltshire Council is the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liable authority. As the CIL rate for development within Use Class D1 is £0 per square metre, the proposal is not CIL liable and therefore does not require the submission of CIL Form.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1. The proposal seeks permission for three temporary buildings to be used as classrooms with associated fencing and outdoor play for a period of up to five years in order to maintain appropriate educational facilities while further investigations, planning submissions and repair works relating to the adjacent Grade II listed building are undertaken.
- 7.2. The proposal does not introduce a new land use but supports the continued operation of an important Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) facility, which is recognised as a valuable community service.
- 7.3. While the temporary buildings may result in a limited and reversible impact on the setting of the listed building, this harm is considered to be less than substantial and is outweighed by the significant public benefits associated with maintaining safe and appropriate educational provision for the pupils attending the school.
- 7.4. Furthermore, the proposal would not result in any additional impacts in terms of flood risk, and transport.
- 7.5. Upon their eventual removal, the land will be restored to grassland in accordance with the approved Land Restoration plans (PL/2023/09494).
- 7.6. Taking these considerations into account, the proposal represents a pragmatic and proportionate solution that enables the continued operation of the school while works relating to the listed building are progressed. The buildings are also considered enabling development to the improvement of the restoration of the listed building. The development is therefore considered to be acceptable in planning terms and planning permission should be granted.

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