



Planning Statement

Tadley Court School, Hampshire

Aspris Children's Services Ltd
February 2024

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Planning Statement

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Alder King Planning Consultants on behalf of Aspris Children's Services Ltd in connection with an application seeking planning permission for the change of use of Tadley Court School, Tadley, Hampshire from a residential school use (Class C2) to day education use (Class F1).
- 1.2 This statement describes the application proposals, relevant planning history and planning policy, and assesses the proposals against the relevant provisions of the development plan.
- 1.3 The planning application comprises the following documents and drawings, in addition to this statement:
 - Covering letter
 - Completed application form
 - Site Location Plan
 - Existing & Proposed Site Plan
 - Existing and Proposed Floor Plans for all buildings on the site

2.0 Application Site & Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site comprises a range of buildings and immediately surrounding land within the grounds of Tadley Court School, Tadley. The extent of the application site is shown below:

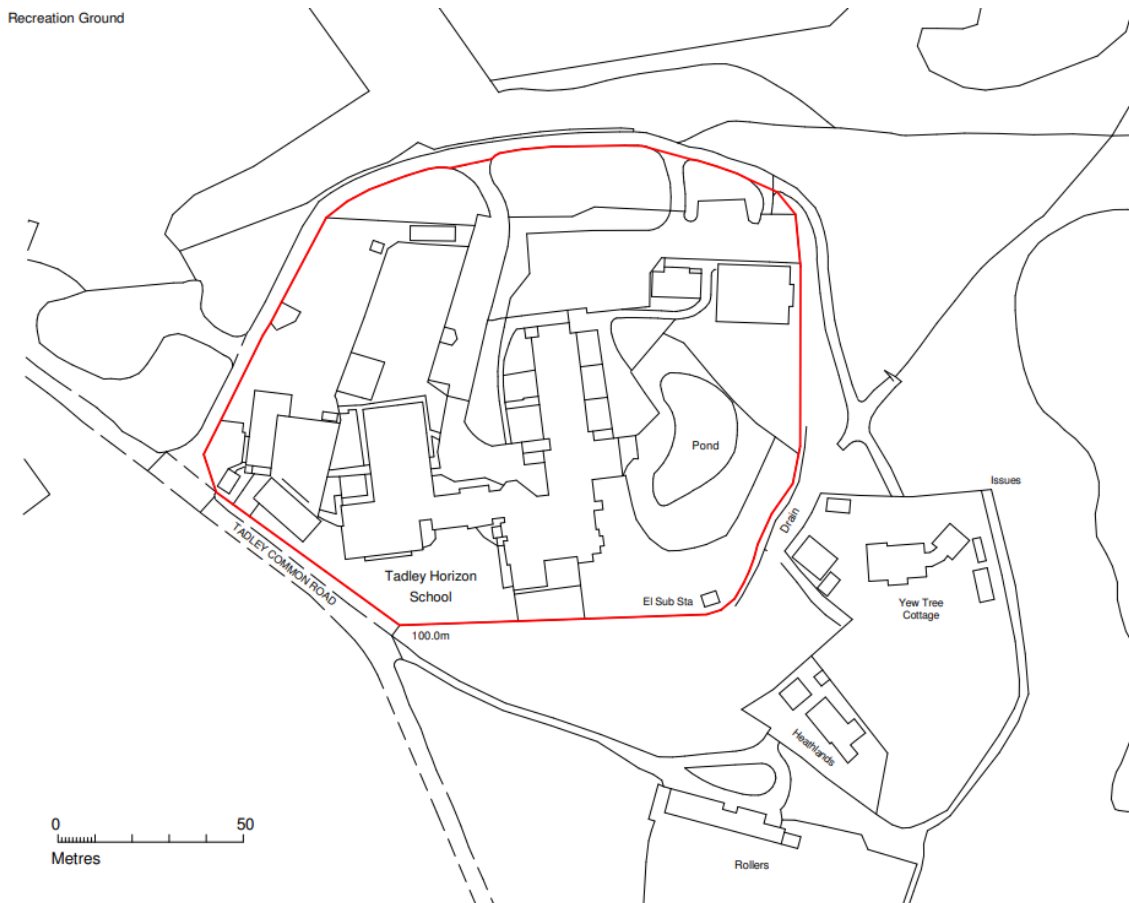


Figure 1: Site Location Plan

- 2.2 The site is approximately 1.7ha in size and located to the north of the town of Tadley. The school site is set within a small area of common, with areas of woodland around it. Beyond the common land and woodland area are the residential and commercial areas of Tadley to the south and west, Pamper Heath is to the east and AWE Aldermaston to the north.
- 2.3 The school site consists of a number of school buildings, car parks, recreational areas, education spaces, gardens and landscaping.
- 2.4 Tadley Court School is a longstanding independent specialist school for children and young people aged 4 to 18 years, with moderate to severe learning difficulties, specifically those with ASD with associated behavioural and/or communication needs, including those with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties.

- 2.5 Students at the school may also have a range of additional complex needs as a result of trauma, attachment disorders and other associated needs.
- 2.6 The school has historically operated as a residential school, but over recent years, and reflecting changing Government policy, the balance of residential to day students has shifted. The majority of students attending the school are now day students, with very few students now residing on the site. The current day students attending the school, more often than not, now reside with the applicant off-site in smaller residential family care homes.
- 2.7 The site is accessed via a private drive from Tadley Common Road. The existing access to the school will remain unchanged.

3.0 Relevant Planning History

- 3.1 The site has a lengthy planning history, with applications predominantly relating to the development and enhancement of the school and its facilities over the years. Applications of note include:
- 19/00671/FUL Erection of replacement classroom block – approved May 2019
 - BDB/72881 Demolition of existing gardening stores, extension of existing car parking and erection of new gardener's store – approved January 2011
 - BDB/71626 Erection of detached single storey classroom building for special needs school – approved February 2010
 - Erection of a detached single storey classroom building. Erection of sports hall extension to main building; installation of a rear spiral staircase and associated work – approved December 2005
- 3.2 The planning history clearly indicates the established and lawful use of the site as a residential school (Class C2).

4.0 Proposal

- 4.1 The application seeks planning permission for a change of use of the site from a residential school (Class C2) to a day school (Class F1). There are no external changes proposed to facilitate the proposed change of use.
- 4.2 There are number of internal changes being made to the school buildings, to reflect the move to a day school. The internal alterations do not require planning permission, but are clearly illustrated on the submitted drawings.
- 4.3 To be clear, the application seeks a change of use from the permitted use of the school as a residential school, where there are currently already a mix of day and residential pupils, to solely a day school.
- 4.4 The proposed change of use is required as a result of the strategy for schools run by Aspris Children's Services, which is, to separate the education and care divisions within their dedicated staffing and leadership teams by locating these elements separately. Discussions with OFSTED indicate that this is an initiative that they approve of.
- 4.5 The current planning application also reflects the fact that over the years the ancillary number of day pupils attending the school has actually increased so that it is now already the majority.
- 4.6 Furthermore, and significantly, the strategy proposed also aligns with Government guidance which seeks to provide homes for children in family settings rather than institutional ones. The applicant is seeking to create a clearer separation of children's education and home space, so that the child is able to leave school at the end of the school day and truly 'head home' rather than being accommodated within the school environment. This will ensure that the students are nurtured in a more homely environment outside of school hours, which is in line with evolving best practice amongst schools that provide such specialist education.

5.0 Planning Policy Context

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that if regard is to be had to the Development Plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 This section of the Planning Statement considers the planning policy context relevant to the proposed development as contained in the development plan and material considerations.

Development Plan

5.3 The development plan consists of:

- Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011-2029 (adopted May 2016)

5.4 The Policies map confirms that the school is located beyond the settlement boundary of Tadley and that surrounding woodland to the east and west is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

5.5 The following policies are of relevance to the current proposal:

- Policy SD1 (Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development) – confirms the presumption in favour of sustainable development, reflecting national guidance in the NPPF.
- Policy CN7 (Essential Facilities and Services) – Confirms support for the retention, improvement of essential services and facilities. In this regard education facilities are identified as an essential facility/service.
- Policy CN9 (Transport) – Confirms support to proposal which are well integrated, provide safe, suitable and convenient access, ensure delivery of appropriate parking and servicing and do not result in inappropriate traffic generation.

Material Considerations

5.6 National planning policy is set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF), the most recent publication of which was December 2023. Of particular relevance:

- At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 confirms that there are three overarching objectives which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, the objectives are economic, social and environmental. Sustainable development is a consistent theme running through both plan-making and decision taking. The NPPF advises that development proposals should be approved without delay where they accord with an up-to-date development plan (Paragraph 11c).

- Paragraph 47 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible.
- Section 8 identifies that decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places. Paragraph 97 noting that this should include planning positively for the provision services that enhance the sustainability of communities.
- Paragraph 99 of the NPPF confirms the importance of there being sufficient choice of school places to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities are encouraged to take a proactive and positive approach to meeting this requirement and widening the choice in education. Further, great weight (our emphasis) is to be given in the decision-making process to the need to create, expand or alter schools.
- Section 11, Paragraph 123 encourages making the effective use of land, including promoting and supporting the development of under-utilised land and buildings.
- Paragraph 127 of the NPPF confirms that local planning authorities should take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is developed but not allocated for specific purposes to help meet identified needs.

6.0 Planning Assessment

Introduction

6.1 This section of the statement assesses the principle of the change of use of the site to education use (Class F1) having regard to the development plan and material considerations. The key considerations are:

- Principle of education use
- Social and community benefits
- Highway impacts
- Residential amenity
- Sustainability

Principle of Education Use

- 6.2 The application seeks a change of use of the property from its lawful use as a residential school (Class C2) to a day school (Class F1).
- 6.3 The application site is located beyond the settlement boundary of Tadley and as such is classified as countryside, where more restrictive policies would generally be applied.
- 6.4 The proposal is, however, for the change of use only, of a long-established school on the application site.
- 6.5 The proposed use of the building and associated land would not change in nature or character, as it would remain in education use. However, in planning terms, this would be a change of use as the proposed use would be as a day school rather than a residential school.
- 6.6 The principle of education use of the site and buildings is well established and lawful. However, given the changing model of the applicant's education provision, it is intended to operate the site as a day school only.
- 6.7 The previously ancillary level of day students attending the school has over time increased and has now become the dominant type of students educated on site. The existing school therefore now operates predominantly as a day school and the applicant's intention is to cease the small remaining element of residential schooling shortly (as indicated in the proposed layouts submitted).

- 6.8 In considering the principle of the use, the local plan in Policy CN7 supports the retention and or improvement of essential services and facilities. In this regard education facilities are identified as an essential facility/service.
- 6.9 Policies in the development plan also support the re-use of existing land and buildings.
- 6.10 In this case, the change of use to a day school will allow the continued provision of specialist education on the site in accordance with Policy CN7.
- 6.11 The continued economic use of the building for its designed purpose also makes efficient and appropriate use of the site in accord with Policy CN7.
- 6.12 The NPPF requires local planning authorities to give 'great weight' (our emphasis) to the need to create new school places, in order to ensure that there is sufficient choice of school places available to meet the needs of communities. In this regard local planning authorities are encouraged to adopt a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement and widening the choice in education.
- 6.13 Whilst not creating a new school, the application proposal will facilitate an existing long-established school to be operated in an alternative manner, that meets current education commissioner requirements, thereby maintaining the ability to provide a valuable education resource to the local community.
- 6.14 The principle of the change of use of the existing school buildings and associated land at Tadley Court School to a day school is in full accordance with both the development plan and relevant provisions of the NPPF, noting it will help maintain an inclusive and sustainable community.
- 6.15 Given the subtle change over time and the fact the school is already predominantly operating as a day school, the reality of the proposed change of use is unlikely to be discernible.

Social and Community Benefits

- 6.16 The proposed change of use would result in the existing residential school on the site ceasing and a day school operating on the site.
- 6.17 The demand for residential places on the site has reduced over time and the number of day pupils has increased.
- 6.18 The pupils attending the school includes those placed by Local Education Authorities who are currently residing in the local area and for whom dedicated specialist provision is required to meet their specific education needs. The pupils are not able to be educated in mainstream schools for a variety of reasons and so local authority commissioners seek alternative settings, such as Tadley Court School, to provide appropriate and suitable education environments for pupils.

- 6.19 The proposed change of use will deliver a number of social and community benefits including:
- Maintaining an education use on the site, reflective of the historic use and in a location which meets the operational requirements of the applicant and needs of commissioning authorities.
 - Providing a continuity of long term employment opportunities for local people, as the proposal will allow the school to continue to meet the needs of pupils in this location.

6.20 As such, the proposed change of use will have real long term social/community benefits.

Highways Impacts

- 6.21 A Transport Statement has been prepared by SLR and accompanies the application. In brief, given the gradual change in emphasis in terms of the nature of education provided on the site, moving from residential to day schooling, there will be no ‘step-change’ or discernible difference in terms of how the school functions from an external perspective.
- 6.22 The number of staff at the school will increase marginally from the 64 staff employed on site currently, to 79. This is reflective of the increase in registered capacity of the school which will rise from 89 to 109 pupils. Noting that not all staff are on-site at any one time and the number of staff on site will correlate to the number of pupils present at the school.
- 6.23 The majority of children currently attending the school already reside off-site. Pupils are predominantly in the care of the applicant and are brought to the site from their ‘homes’ in the local area by shared vehicles. The Transport Statement from SLR assesses the number of trips likely to be associated with the proposed use, both in terms of staff movements and movements associated with the arrival and departure of pupils. This assessment takes account of the modal split of proposed staff based on census data and in terms of pupil movement uses figures for other similar sites. Whilst an increase in trips is expected resulting from the proposed change of use and associated uplift in staff and pupil numbers, the increased level of movements is limited and will not have an adverse impact on the operation of the local highways network.
- 6.24 It should be noted that unlike the residential school, the day school would only have pupils present on weekdays in term times and not at weekends or evenings. Furthermore, staffing densities for residential schools, which include a requirement for overnight and weekend staff, are generally higher.
- 6.25 No changes are being proposed to existing access or car parking arrangements, safe and suitable access is retained for users of the school.
- 6.26 Accordingly, the application proposal is acceptable from a transport perspective and accords with Policy CN9 of the local plan.

Residential Amenity

- 6.27 Given the current and longstanding use of the site, the proposed change of use would not be materially different to the existing use of the site in practical terms.
- 6.28 As described above, the site is already currently used by a significant number of day students and it is not anticipated that proposed change of use would create any adverse impacts on surrounding residential amenity.
- 6.29 In addition, the day use of the school rather than residential use, will result in reduced potential for noise and disturbance in the evenings and the weekends when adjacent residential receptors would be more sensitive to noise and disturbance.

Sustainability

- 6.30 It is clear that the proposed use of the site will deliver sustainable development in accordance with Policy SD1, making an efficient use of existing buildings on a long-established education site.
- 6.31 In considering the three overarching objectives of sustainable development as set out in Paragraph 8 of the NPPF we would comment as follows:
- Economic – The proposal will result in continued use of existing buildings, making good economic use of them in a manner consistent with the lawful use of the site. The proposal will provide continuity of employment for local people. The efficient and effective use of all buildings on the site will assist in ensuring the continued viability of the education facilities on the site.
 - Social - The proposed day school will allow the applicant to continue to provide high quality specialist education for local children with learning disabilities in a manner consistent with Government requirements.
 - Environmental – The proposal will make efficient use of the existing buildings on site. Re-use of the existing buildings minimises the need for development on greenfield sites.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of Tadley Court School from residential school (Class C2) to day education use (Class F1).
- 7.2 The proposed change of use is well considered and will ensure the continued use of the existing buildings and wider site for education use, reflecting the existing lawful use of the site. The change of use will allow the applicant to continue to meet the specialist educational needs of local children, in a way supported by commissioners.
- 7.3 When assessed against policies in the development plan and national guidance in the NPPF, it is clear that the application proposals are acceptable. Importantly here, the NPPF requires LPAs to give great weight to planning applications proposing new school places.
- 7.4 In summary, this statement concludes that the application proposals:
- Are acceptable in land use terms.
 - Make good use of existing buildings in accordance with their designed purpose.
 - Will provide community benefits through enhancing the specialist education provision at Tadley Court School.
 - Will not give rise to any significant adverse highway impacts.
 - Is acceptable with regard to residential amenity.
- 7.5 Therefore, the proposals are in full accordance with the pertinent policies of the development plan, as well as guidance in the NPPF. As such, the application should be approved without delay in accordance with paragraph 47 of the NPPF.



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