

Silverwood School Build Design Community Event

3rd March 2021

Questions and Answers

Access and Road Safety Questions

Q1: Just for clarification, when you refer to widening of the road, are you talking about the actual access road inside the school, or the main road outside?

A1: The access road within inside the school grounds.

The main entrance was widened as part of the project to construct Buzzard Block. Our Transport Consultants have looked at the width of the listed entrance and do not feel that it needs to be widened any further.

As part of the proposals we will be increasing the width of the road within the school site to circa 5.5m wide to allow two vehicles to pass.

Q2: Will you reduce the speed limit on the main road from 50MPH? It is a very fast road. You have previously said about the pupils coming into the village surely a 50mph limit with Children on the footpath is a safety issue.

A2: We understand that there are concerns within the school and local community about the 50mph speed limit along the road outside the school and it has been suggested that it should be reduced to 30mph. This is not something that can be done as part of the planning application process and will require a Traffic Regulation Order to be put in place. We are happy to work with the school and the community to look at making an application and have begun conversations with our colleagues in highways about starting this process.

During the building works it is likely that we will use warning signs and possibly temporary traffic lights in an attempt to reduce traffic speed in the vicinity of the entrance to the construction site.

Willmott Dixon are reviewing access to the site and the initial thoughts are that the majority of traffic will access the site from the Chippenham direction and not through Rowde.

Q3: Have there been considerations with regard to the bridge outside the main entrance? (Extra traffic turning into the school.)

A3: We are aware that traffic is a concern for residents and we will be working hard to manage this safely and properly. We are considering a series of options for managing traffic into and out of the site, working closely with senior traffic highway colleagues at Wiltshire Council.

The small bridge on the main road near to the school entrance from the Rowde direction is listed which means that we are not able to make the road wider. We are working with a travel consultant that previously did work with us around traffic analysis in this area. We are looking at how we can improve traffic across the site during construction by temporarily segregating construction and school traffic.

Q4: The 2nd entrance to school is proposed to be used for construction traffic coming from Chippenham direction as these will be large and many and plus construction staff, some will have to turn in from the wrong side of road, how do you propose to do this safely from our experience and others who use this entrance it is extremely dangerous?

A4: We are very mindful of segregating construction and school traffic. We are considering options to create a temporary construction route to the site via the lodge gates opposite the farm. A potential challenge is that the lodge gates are listed so this would need planning permission.

We have met several times with those residents who live very close to the school site and will continue to do that.

We are exploring the option of carefully dismantling one of the Lodge Entrance Stone Piers to make the entrance wider for construction vehicles and then re-building the pier on completion of the project. Because the entrance is listed, we would need to apply for listed building consent to do this.

Q5: Is a transport plan part of the application?

A5: We will be providing a detailed travel plan and transport assessment as part of the planning application.

Q6: Will there be a crossing by the farm on the way into Rowde, as the footpath only goes so far on that side of the road, and to try to cross the road on the bend would be dangerous?

A6: The proposals do not currently allow for a crossing by the farm on the way into Rowde. We have shared our proposals with Highways colleagues and are awaiting their feedback on any highway works that they might feel are required as a consequence of the project.

Q7: The pavements are so narrow and unable to be widened many vehicles mount the pavements including lorries showing complete disregard to safety of pedestrians and lack of maintenance of these, hope you consider this?

A7: Whilst our budget will of course be focused on delivering facilities for the children and young people within the school, we are considering as part of the project to cut back vegetation that's overgrowing the pavement in the vicinity of the entrance to the school to make the pavement more accessible for all.

Heritage & Ecology Questions

Q1: There is a Ha Ha ditch within the proposed building site as this is part of our Heritage, we have been informed that this will be taken out and filled in. You state in your presentation that you are sympathetic towards the site what do you intend to do about this special feature?

A1: We have engaged with Cotswold Archaeology who have extensively researched this feature and believe that this feature is not a Ha Ha. We will discuss this further with the member of the community to ensure we understand their views and can offer reassurance.

Q2: You talk about being sympathetic with the heritage and ecology of the site so you are not allowed legally to move any rare wildlife regardless of licenses and the fact you intend to destroy the area which is feeding grounds for some of these species, so what are your intentions with the recorded very rare bats in the middle of this proposed building site and the corridor for other species? What is the latest on the bats? Moving them to another tree does not seem viable. Once developed the wildlife will move out. How is that improving it?

A2: We are aware that on the proposed site there are some badger setts, as well as a lot of other wildlife including owls and a wide range of bats. We have marked the location of them on site so that everyone knows where they are, and over the past two years have been monitoring the flight paths of the bats for example. Our build design has taken into account and worked around the wildlife habitats, trees, bat flight paths etc, and we are working closely with both ecologists in the Council and with Natural England to ensure that this whole setting, including its wildlife is protected and not harmed during the course of the works.

As a school for children with SEND we share the view that has been expressed by local people that this area should be a great opportunity for pupils to engage with the landscape, and by creating a two storey building stakeholders agreed we would preserve as much of the grounds as possible for their use.

We are planning to deliver a 10% biodiversity net gain on the site, working with the County Ecologist on how we will be able to achieve this. In essence what this means is that we will be creating more habitat than we will be removing.

Details will be included as part of the planning application which Natural England will be scrutinising.

Q3: There is a council farm no longer in use Manor Farm, Rowde, opposite new Rowde school why has this not been considered as it would be far better access and less destructive to ecology of the area?

A3: There was extensive consultation regarding where to site an expansion of the school, which led to a decision in November 2019 by Wiltshire Council's Cabinet to approve investment in an expansion on the existing Rowde site to accommodate up to 400 pupils.

Other Questions

Q1: Why are the plans so drastically different from what we were shown in November?

A1: The bubble diagrams from the November event were early concept designs and they have now been developed further, based on the feedback from all of the co-production work, to produce the more detailed plans that you now see. The position of the building remains the same, but with more detail.

Q2: Is it still the plan for the new build to be open for pupils for Sept 2023?

A2: Yes. The project remains on track for construction to be complete for September 2023. Covid has presented a number of challenges but Wiltshire Council, Silverwood School and Willmott Dixon have worked together to manage risks.

Q3: There is a long-established Residential community and Day Care facility in Rowde for adults with learning difficulties at Furlong Close. Many of the clients there will have previously attended one of the current Special Schools. Has any thought been given as to how these facilities can complement each other, sharing facilities and experiences in the personal journey from child to adulthood?

A3: As we heard at the last community event there is a long history of the school being supported by and part of the Rowde community, and there will be ongoing opportunities to work together in future.

Q4: There are also issues with regards to families & dog walkers in particular near the lodge during construction.

A4: There are no public rights of way across the land in the vicinity of the lodge. The construction site will be adequately fenced to deter trespassers and for health and safety reasons.

Q5: Will there be soundproofing?

A5: As part of our landscaping proposals, we are looking to create some “earth mounds” to act as a sound barrier externally. Within the building there will be acoustic treatments required as part of meeting the Building Regulations and specific guidance on acoustic design for Special Schools.

Q6: What space (office/ equipment etc) provision is being made for the facilities management staff on site?

A6: We are currently looking at a number of options and will be discussing these with school staff as part of the detailed further development of the design.