

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL  
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE AGENDA

Winchester City  
Council  
Planning Department  
Development Control

TEAM MANAGER  
SIGN OFF SHEET

## Committee Decision

<b>Case No:</b>	08/00130/FUL	<b>Valid Date</b>	25 January 2008
<b>W No:</b>	15067/04	<b>Recommendation Date</b>	
<b>Case Officer:</b>	Mr Dave Dimon	<b>8 Week Date</b>	<b>25 April 2008</b>
		<b>Committee date</b>	
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Application Refused</b>	<b>Decision:</b>	<b>Committee Decision</b>

**Proposal:** Community centre/place of worship (use class D1- non-residential institutions)

**Site:** Overway Fontley Road Titchfield Fareham Hampshire

Open Space Y/N	Legal Agreement	S.O.S	Objections	EIA Development	Monitoring Code	Previous Developed Land
	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Y/N</b>

COMMITTEE ITEM SIGN OFF		
	<b>REFUSE</b> for the reason(s) listed	
	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>CASE OFFICER</b>		
<b>TEAM MANAGER</b>		

**AMENDED PLANS DATE:-**

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**Item No:** 4  
**Case No:** 08/00130/FUL / W15067/04  
**Proposal Description:** Community centre/place of worship (use class D1- non-residential institutions)  
**Address:** Overway Fontley Road Titchfield Fareham Hampshire  
**Parish/Ward:** Wickham  
**Applicants Name:** Wessex Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat  
**Case Officer:** Mr Dave Dimon  
**Date Valid:** 25 January 2008  
**Site Factors:**

**Recommendation:** **Application Refused**

**General Comments**

This application is reported to Committee because of the number of objections / letters of support received and at the request of Wickham Parish Council whose request is appended to this report.

This application comprises a re-submission of an earlier scheme refused under delegated powers in August last year and which was recently dismissed at appeal. The reasons for refusal of the previous application were:

1. Development as proposed is situated within the countryside and the area that is defined as the Meon Strategic Gap where no development should take place which could be more suitably located elsewhere, or where the development would, either on its own or in association with other development, compromise the integrity of the Gap. The proposal is therefore contrary to the provisions of Policies G1, C1 and C2 of the Hampshire County Structure Plan (1996-2011) Review and Policy CE1 of the Winchester District Local Plan Review 2006.
2. The proposed development is within an area of countryside unrelated to any existing settlement and cannot be considered as an essential facility or service for the local community by reason that it serves a much wider population than that within the immediate surrounding area of Wickham. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated that this site is essential to meet the operational needs of the applicants and, that there are no suitable alternative sites within the local built-up areas. The proposals are therefore contrary to Policy C2 of the adopted Hampshire County Structure Plan (1996-2011) Review and Policies and CE.4 of the adopted Winchester District Local Plan Review.
3. In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the proposal involves development that cannot be reconciled with national planning policy guidance in PPG13 in that it would result in development that would be inappropriately located away from existing urban areas and would thus over-rely on the private car for access and transport purposes. This would result in an unacceptable increase in the number and length of car journeys to the detriment of the environment and the locality. The proposal therefore conflicts with the strategy of the adopted Hampshire County Structure Plan Review particularly Policies T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5 and Policy T.1 of the adopted Winchester District Local Plan Review.
4. By reason of its scale, design, form, siting and massing the proposed development would appear as an incongruous structure that would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside and is therefore contrary to Policy UB3 of the adopted Hampshire County Structure Plan Review and Policies DP.1, DP.3, DP.5, of the adopted Winchester District Local Plan Review.
5. The proposals include the creation of a new dwelling within the countryside for which there has been no justification provided to demonstrate that there is an overriding need for such additional accommodation and is therefore contrary to Policy C2 of the adopted Hampshire

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County Structure Plan (1996-2011) Review and Policy CE.22 of the adopted Winchester District Local Plan Review.

6. The proposals fail to provide adequate information with regard to the presence of ecological interest on the site, including the potential for the existing buildings and site to accommodate protected species, such as bats, and for any impact the development may have on the nearby SINC or any remediation measures in regard thereto. The proposals therefore do not accord with the requirements of Policies E11 of the adopted Hampshire County Structure Plan (1996-2011) Review or CE.10 and CE.11 of the adopted Winchester District Local Plan Review.
7. Insufficient information has been submitted in order to demonstrate that the proposed development would not lead to contamination of the local controlled aquifers and waterways and is therefore contrary to Policy E1 of the adopted Hampshire County Structure Plan Review and Policy DP.13 of the adopted Winchester District Local Plan Review.
8. Insufficient information has been submitted in order to demonstrate that the proposal is a sustainable form of development. The proposal therefore does not accord with the provisions of Policies E3 and E4 of the adopted Hampshire County Structure Plan (1996-2011) Review and Policy DP.6 of the adopted Winchester District Local Plan Review.
9. The proposed development is contrary to Hampshire County Structure Plan Review policy R2 and Winchester District Local Plan Review Policy RT4 in that it fails to make adequate provision for on site public recreational open space to the required standard and/or a contribution to off site open space provision and would therefore be detrimental to the amenities of the area. (NB: this is only relevant with regard to the residential unit.)

The current scheme differs from its predecessor in the following respects: The size of the building has been reduced by approximately 41% and its design and form has been substantially changed from buildings set around a central rectangular courtyard to that of a rectangular footprint with smaller single storey wings to each side of the entrance. The height has also been reduced and the design simplified from the previous Tudor castellated theme.

The separate residential unit has been omitted and also the 56 spaces of grass overflow parking that were previously shown, with the main parking area now providing 27 spaces adjoining the west side of the building and not abutting the woodland to the north as was shown previously.

### **Site Description**

The application site extends to about 2 hectares and is situated on the northern side of Fontley Road and just east of the Pegham Coppice Industrial Site. It contains an existing bungalow 'Overway', which is set back from the road and on the west side of the access drive that serves the site, as well as various existing corrugated iron and other storage buildings, portable units and containers in various states of disrepair, which are located more centrally and grouped around the access track and surrounded by open unused land. The eastern part of the site comprises a separate field that is used for horse grazing.

The land drops in level from west to east across the irregularly shaped site and hedges and trees form its boundaries. To the west and north a belt of woodland adjoins the site, beyond which is Pegham Coppice, a SINC which hides from view the buildings of Pegham Industrial Site.

These dilapidated buildings on the site are associated with the previous uses, most recently as a builder's yard, although there is no sign of any existing active use.

### **Proposal**

The proposal is to clear the existing site and provide a single storey building for purposes of

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a community centre (D1 use class) for the Wessex Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamatt. The accommodation would extend to approximately 587 sq metres footprint, comprising a main hall that divides into two separate halls, plus 4 classrooms, kitchen, office, library, washrooms and ancillary service rooms. The building form is mostly flat roofed, other than over the hall area, which would have a hipped tiled roof, and the external walls would be of parapet form concealing the flat roofed areas and would be of facing brickwork with stone detailing. The height of the building would be generally 3.75m to the top of the parapet with the height of the hall rising to 4.725m at parapet level and 6.25m at ridge level. The fenestration would be of Georgian style timber windows with curved heads to the hall windows.

The building would occupy a similar position to the existing buildings, and permitted industrial development, on the north west and higher part of the site, but is partly cut into the contours. Access to the site would be in the same position as the existing, with a new road swung around the south west side of the building to a parking area for 27 cars facing the western entrance elevation to the building.

The proposal is supported by a detailed landscaping proposal that includes proposed woodland planting to reinforce the boundary planting fronting Fontley Road and the planting of trees within the site and along the access drive to create a parkland appearance.

### Relevant Planning History

- **LDC191** Use of premises for storage and distribution of building materials and equipment; use of 1No. building as a joinery workshop; siting of storage containers and a portable office (Lawful Development Certificate) – Certificate granted in 1997.
- **W15067** Five dwellings and garages- OUTLINE - Overway Fontley Road Titchfield Fareham Hants PO15 6QR - Application Refused - 08/09/1997
- **W15067/01** Replace builders yard with industrial development - OUTLINE - Overway Fontley Road Titchfield Fareham Hampshire PO15 6QR - Application Withdrawn - 02/05/2006
- **W15067/02** Replace builders yard with industrial development (OUTLINE - considering siting and access) (RESUBMISSION) - Overway Fontley Road Titchfield Fareham Hampshire PO15 6QR - Application Permitted - 10/01/2007
- **W15067/03** Community centre/place of worship (use class D1- non-residential institutions) Overway, Fontley Road, Titchfield, Fareham, Hampshire - Application Refused - 09/08/2007 - Appeal Dismissed - 01/05/2008

### Consultations

#### Engineers (Drainage)

The applicant has not stated how the site is to be drained of foul water. Policy DP6 (iv) requires that sustainable drainage is provided for any new development and in this location the use of a sewage treatment plant is required subject to the EA issuing a consent to discharge.

A drainage strategy must be submitted for approval by the LPA prior to the commencement of the development. Should the strategy be acceptable then no objection will be raised subject to building regulation approval being gained.

#### Engineers (Highways)

A Transport and Draft Travel Plan (dated Jan. 2008) has been prepared by Mentor Milestones Ltd and is submitted in support of the application. This report explains the anticipated typical travel generation to and from the site and indicates that the majority of visits to and from the site will occur during evening and week-ends and not coincide with the normal peak hours expected on the adjoining public highway. The types of vehicle will change from vans & lorries to private cars, mini-buses & cyclists and the total projected traffic generation is likely to be reduced from 49.94 vehicles per day to 13.02 per day.

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Having examined the layout plans, it is apparent that, of the 558 sq. m. of community centre, only approximately 319 sq. m. could be used as public meeting areas; the remainder comprises of ancillary accommodation such as kitchen, store, w.c. etc.

The recommended car parking requirement is for 29 car parking spaces, whereas only 27 are being proposed. However, there is sufficient space within the site to accommodate the shortfall of 2 spaces without the need to overspill onto Fontley Road.

The visibility splays at the junction of the vehicular entrance with Fontley Road have been obstructed by vegetation overgrowing what appears to be an expansive area of highway verge. The existing visibility splays could be greatly improved by the removal and/or trimming back of this vegetation in order to provide the optimum visibility available from a minor road set back "x-distance" of 2.4 metres and the applicants should make representation to Hampshire Highways Winchester to request any works required.

The proposals are unlikely to give rise to a material increase in traffic visiting the site and could even result in a reduced traffic generation and are unlikely to interfere with or cause demonstrable harm to users of the public highway network.

Landscape

The formal style is considered to be inappropriate in the local countryside. However, as the building is low, and providing that local brick and soft colours are used, it will not intrude significantly given substantial screening.

The landscape proposals show such substantial screening to the boundaries, in the form of woodland planting and standard trees within a parkland, which in time will form a strong screen around the building. It is considered that the woodland species should be planted at larger sizes - a mixture of feathered whips from 1.2-1.8-2.5 metres high and 10% standard trees of 6-8cm girth - 10-12cm girth. This strip should be planted in advance of building works to give a partial screen by the time the building is occupied.

Natural England:

No objection, but recommend sustainability issues should be considered as vitally important. Further biodiversity enhancements could be incorporated, including native planting, wildlife ponds, nest boxes, bat boxes and access points. We strongly suggest that the information contained in Section 3.0 of the Bat Roost Survey (Paul Hope; December 2007) is implemented and adhered to with respect to lighting and licensing. Should bats be discovered at any stage during the works, all work should stop immediately and Natural England be contacted for further advice.

As the application site is close to the River Meon (Winchester) and Pegham Copse Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's), we recommend that the views of Hampshire County Council's Ecologist be sought prior to determining this application to ensure that the proposals accord with the SINC-related policies in the County Structure Plan and the Local Plan.

Hampshire County Council (Ecology): Objects

This site is in a sensitive location, immediately adjacent to designated Ancient Woodland and the Pegham Coppice SINC, and has the potential to support protected species. The recently carried out Ecological Impact Assessment, which has been submitted, provides a good analysis of the ecological interest of the site, and the mitigation measures necessary to lessen the ecological impacts of development. However, certain ecological issues need to be further investigated.

The changes made to the layout and landscaping since the last application will help to minimise the impact of the development, and hopefully provide ecological enhancement of this site, in line with PPS9. Particularly relevant is the now-proposed positioning of the building and car park further away from the adjacent Ancient Woodland SINC. In addition, the planting species and locations have been amended on the basis of the Ecological Impact Assessment. These

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amendments are positive from an ecological perspective. The buffering of existing woodland with native planting, plus the reinstatement of hedgerows, is supported.

I recommend the following:

- 1) Clarification should be sought regarding use by bats of any of the trees on site. This does not appear to have been investigated, with the focus of the bat surveys being the existing buildings. As far as I understand some tree works may take place, and it is important that such works do not impact on any bats, which may be using them.
- 2) The Ecological Impact Assessment identifies the potential for reptiles on the site. Due to the timing of the assessment reptile surveys have not been included and the report acknowledges that reptile surveys will be necessary later this year. If permission is granted reptile surveys, along with any resulting necessary mitigation, will be required through condition, prior to any works commencing on site.
- 3) If this permission is granted you may wish to ask for methods statements under condition, which detail how environmental impacts through construction will be minimised. This may include timings of works (for example avoiding the bird breeding season, since vegetation will be removed), and protection of retained habitats through fencing during construction. It may also include pollution prevention control measures, specifically relevant to the nearby River Meon SINC. Any advice from the Environment Agency on this or other matters should be referred to.
- 4) Any works should be carried out in line with the submitted landscaping scheme, which will help to minimise ecological impacts and improve existing habitats. This scheme in part acts to provide buffer planting to the adjacent designated site, plus retaining and improving bat flight corridors and wildlife corridors. The applicant should be encouraged to manage retained areas with wildlife in mind, for example by leaving areas of grass particularly around the periphery of the site, to develop into rougher grassland which can support reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates.
- 5) You may wish to specify the development of a lighting scheme which aims to minimise lighting impacts upon the adjacent SINC, wildlife corridors and bat roost within the existing bungalow.

Southern Water:

No objection, subject to the following observations:

The applicant has not stated details of means of disposal of foul drainage from the site and since there is no public foul sewer in the vicinity alternative means of foul sewage disposal will need to be examined. The owner of the premises will need to empty and maintain the works or septic tank to ensure its long term effectiveness.

No public surface water sewers are available to serve this development so alternative means of draining surface water from this development are required.

Southern Water can provide a water supply to the site and the developer is required to make a formal application for connection and on-site mains. An informative to be added advising of this should this application receive planning approval.

Environment Agency

No objection in principle but, as the site overlies a minor aquifer, request that the stated advice on groundwater protection be taken into account, particularly as regards the investigation of localised contamination, as recommended in the desk study report dated August 2007. Further consultation with the EA should be undertaken in the event of any contamination being identified.

Environmental Protection:

No objection. Recommends conditions be attached to any consent granted regarding contaminated land surveys prior to and post occupation. Also details of lighting should be submitted to and approved by the LPA in writing, prior to commencement of the development.

Hampshire Constabulary:

No objection, however, recommends perimeter boundaries should be sufficient to deter unlawful entry. Parking areas should be lit to BS 5489 standard.

Due to the secluded position of the building and the value of items within, good security by design is essential.

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Fareham Borough Council

No objection to the principle of the use, however visibility splays should comply with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and not Manual for Streets. This would appear not to be possible due to the alignment of Fontley Road and Titchfield Lane. In addition, request for overflow parking to accommodate peak time visitors to avoid cars parking on surrounding road networks.

**Representations:**

Wickham Parish Council

Support - the principle of community use on this site is strongly supported as the current permission for industrial use would severely impact on the inadequate local road network and be detrimental to the amenity of nearby residents.

Request application is heard by Committee if officer delegated decision is to refuse.

36 letters received objecting to the application for the following reasons:

- Size of development too large for location.
- Unsustainable location – no public transport.
- No local need, visitors come from afar.
- No pedestrian access.
- Busy road
- Additional traffic, road safety.
- Access to site at beginning of hill, on bend with junction.
- Location is Area of Special Landscape Quality
- Design & usage inappropriate for location.
- Not in keeping with rural area
- Harmful to environment and ecology of the area.
- Contrary to Local Plan
- Noise
- Impact on amenity and enjoyment of neighbouring properties
- Contrary to National Planning Policy PPG4, PPG24.
- Contrary to S.14 Hampshire County Council Core Strategy for Minerals and Waste.

19 letters of support received.

- Improvement on current industrial use
- Current buildings unsightly.
- Strong links with county council, churches and schools and police
- Less traffic than with current industrial use.
- Ecological protection of site
- Positive contribution to local community

**Relevant Planning Policy:**

Hampshire County Structure Plan Review:

G1, T5,

Winchester District Local Plan Review

DP.1, DP.3, DP.4, DP6, DP.13, CE1, CE3, CE.4, CE.5, CE.10, CE.11, CE.19, CE.20, CE.22, CE.26, T.1, T.2, T.3 and T.4,

National Planning Policy Guidance/Statements:

PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

PPS 9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

PPS 11 Regional Spatial Strategies

PPS12 Local Development Framework

PPG 13 Transport

PPS 22 Renewable Energy

PPS 23 Planning and Pollution Control

PPG 24 Planning and Noise

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Supplementary Planning Guidance

None of relevance in this case

Other Planning Guidance

Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan

Movement, Access, Streets and Spaces

Parking Standards 2002

Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCS): Winchester District

Winchester District Landscape Assessment

**Planning Considerations**

- Principle of development
- PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- Design and layout
- Impact on character and appearance of the area.
- Ecology

Principle of development

The site lies within the countryside in an area defined as the Meon Strategic Gap under the provisions of saved County Structure Plan Review Policy G1 and Policy CE.1 of the Winchester District Local Plan Review. Policy G1 states that permission will only be granted for development, even in accordance with other policies of the Plan, where:

- (i) it cannot more suitably be located elsewhere; or
- (ii) it would not compromise, individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development, the integrity of the gap.

Policy C1 states that development that would undermine the appearance or functions of the Meon Strategic Gap will not be permitted.

Within the defined countryside there is a presumption against new development, other than for purposes where a countryside location is essential. Paragraph 4.4 of the Local Plan clarifies that development will not be permitted unless it accords with the provisions of Policies CE.5 - CE.27 of the Winchester District Local Plan Review. These policies set out the criteria for the types of development that may be permitted in the countryside as an exception to the general presumption against development. Policy CE.4 addresses the need for essential facilities and services to serve local communities.

Paragraph 4.9 provides explanatory text to Policy CE.4 and clarifies, among other things, that exceptions to countryside policy for the provision of facilities and services to serve a local community must be based on a demonstrated need, in the absence of a suitable site in a settlement.

In this case, the applicants contend that the proposal does serve the local community and refers to the fact that the present premises, which the applicants have used for the last 14 years, comprise a converted bungalow in Wickham Road, Fareham. These premises are inadequate for the organisation's needs and the application site was acquired with a view to the provision of larger purpose built facilities. The Wessex Jamaat is attended by people from a wide area and the application states that the community population which it serves can be defined in the following proportions, Portsmouth (39%), Waterlooville (2%), Fareham (34%), Southampton (22%) and Bournemouth (3%).

Although the applicants have stated that many of the attendees from the urban areas could use a variety of means of transport to the site, which includes train, there is not a train station within close proximity to the site, nor is it regularly served by a local bus service. Therefore, there would be a reliance on the private motor car in order to travel to and from the site, although the supporting Transport Assessment and Travel Plan to the applications states that various measures, including car sharing and use of private mini buses, could be adopted through the Travel Plan to reduce car dependency.



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Nevertheless, as regards justification for the proposed location, it is clear that there is no essential need for the development to be sited as proposed. It does not fundamentally serve the local community and would not be well related to any existing settlement.

In considering this point, the Inspector who recently determined the appeal against the previous application commented in paragraphs 25 and 26 of his decision letter as follows:

*“As I have concluded that the proposal would harm the rural character and appearance of the area and the adjacent SINC, I have gone on to consider whether the need for it could outweigh that harm. I respect the right of the appellants to seek to move to larger and better premises, through new build if appropriate, and acknowledge that an assessment of whether or not their current premises are adequate is a matter for them. However, it is evident that the majority of members attending the appellant’s meetings or events come from Portsmouth or Southampton, though with a significant minority from Fareham. In the light of this I do not consider that the exceptions to restrictive policies provided in Local Plan policy CE.4 which permit essential facilities and services to serve local communities could be held to apply here. This is because this membership distribution does not suggest to me that the proposal would provide a truly local facility (which local people have interpreted to mean serving needs arising within Titchfield, Funtley, Wickham and Fareham)”*

*“Nor do I consider that it has been shown that “there are no suitable alternative sites within the defined built-up area of the settlements which the development is intended to serve”, as advised in Policy CE.4. Although the search for new sites has apparently been extensive (the Design and Access Statement mentions 52 sites) the reasons given for rejection are often very brief so that it is difficult for me to attach much weight to them. In addition, although the search area has been widely drawn, I am not convinced that all types of possibility have been considered in that search area and am aware for instance that some religious groups have successfully adapted warehouse premises in urban areas to meet their needs. So I do not consider that any need to move is sufficient to outweigh the harm caused by the proposal, and identified above”.*

There is no justification in this case for the proposed development to override these strong policy provisions. The proposed development does not constitute an essential facility or service to serve the local community and it would be seriously prejudicial to, and undermine, the function of the strategic gap to prevent coalescence of urban areas and protect their separate identities.

#### PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

PPS7 promotes more sustainable patterns of development by focusing most development in, or next to, existing towns and villages. Decisions on development proposals should be based on sustainable development principles, ensuring an integrated approach to the consideration of: social inclusion, recognising the needs of everyone, and effective protection and enhancement of the environment.

Good quality, carefully-sited accessible development within existing towns and villages should be allowed where it benefits the local economy and/or community. Most developments which are likely to generate large numbers of trips should be located in or next to towns or other service centres that are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, in line with the policies set out in PPG13, Transport.

New building development in the open countryside away from existing settlements, or outside areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled.

The appeal Inspector, in examining the issue of sustainable development for the recent appeal, concluded that the proposal could satisfy the requirements of Policy DP.6 of the Local Plan as regards the construction of the building, with appropriate sustainability objectives secured through a condition in the event of permission being granted.

As regards the location of the development, however, he commented that the site could be

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regarded as being in an unsustainable location. Nevertheless, he accepted that, on the evidence before him, traffic generation at the site would be likely to be less overall than if it were redeveloped for the permitted industrial use, although he felt that the traffic pattern and make up would probably be quite different, with much of the use of the premises occurring in the evenings / night and at weekends and the associated traffic would largely comprise cars in contrast to the vans and lorries more likely to visit the industrial premises during peak daytime hours. He also commented that, in comparing the proposed development to the existing facilities in Wickham Road, the numbers of people attending will increase over time beyond current experience to an unknown figure.

Design/layout

Policies DP.1 & DP.3 of the Local Plan set out the general design criteria that all new development should satisfy and DP.4 provides for the maintenance and enhancement of the districts landscape, including the retention of areas of ecological importance.

Additionally, any development must satisfy the requirements of other relevant policies in terms of:

- responding positively to the character, appearance and variety of the local environment in terms of the proposed design, scale and layout;
- maintaining and enhancing the Districts landscape,
- not conflicting with the interests of protecting and enhancing areas of ecological importance;
- ensuring that any contamination risks are appropriately evaluated and addressed by suitable mitigation strategies;
- ensuring that the proposal promotes sustainable forms of development;
- the development being capable of being served efficiently by public transport, cycling and walking.

In considering the appeal proposal, the Inspector concluded that the development would “have a significant and detrimental visual impact appearing as an incongruous building in a rural setting and be out of keeping with the countryside.” He also considered that, because the scale of the proposal would increase the amount of built development in an obvious and imposing way, it would contribute to a lessening of the value of the Meon strategic gap.

The current proposal is for a significantly smaller scheme (see proposal section of this report) and of a less pretentious architectural style. It does, however, still occupy the high part of the site and will appear as a large building with sides that are 29.6 m wide x 26.6m deep and will, because of its elevational form and detailing, particularly in terms of the fenestration and formal style, be an incongruous feature in the countryside. The footprint will also be large when taking into account the adjoining car park area. The applicant contends that the current proposal does address the concerns that led the Inspector to find the previous scheme unacceptable in terms of scale, form and design. It is also shown that that the proposal keeps within the size limits of the extant industrial permission for the site as well as being of a lower overall height than the approved industrial buildings. Additionally, the applicant argues that the supporting landscaping proposals, especially the boundary woodland planting, demonstrate that the development can be largely screened from public view. However, it is considered that the formal nature of the tree planting within the site would contribute to the alien appearance of the development in the countryside.

Impact on character and appearance of the area.

The smaller size, bulk and height of the current scheme, compared to the earlier scheme, and the more substantial landscaping proposals will result in a reduced visual impact, although the form of the development will remain incongruous to the countryside character of the area. The effectiveness of the proposed planting would, in time, probably minimise the visual impact of the development but the acceptability of such development in the countryside is not just a matter of mitigating its visual impact.

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The use of the site is unrelated to any settlement and the associated activity of congregations of people regularly visiting the site, especially when it is dark, will impact on the character and appearance of the area as much as the building itself, and in terms of lighting and vehicles entering and leaving the site there will be a resultant impact on local character which will conflict with the rural ambience of the area, although the extant industrial permission would have its own impact that would not be too dissimilar to the impact of agricultural development within the countryside and would not occur mainly outside of daytime working hours. The extant permission has, by contrast to the proposed development, been permitted in accordance with the provisions of PPS7 and the Local Plan policies for the re-use of established employment sites within the countryside. Isolated community uses unrelated to the needs of a local community are not appropriately located on sites such as this.

Ecology

Refusal reason 6 on the previous application related to insufficient information in regard to the potential impact of the development on protected species. In the case of this application there is a supporting ecological report, which was prepared in connection with the appeal against the previous refusal. The report has been informed by a survey undertaken in November 2007 and followed by a bat roost survey. The appeal Inspector concluded that there were no ecological grounds to warrant refusal as necessary safeguards could be achieved through the use of appropriate conditions. The views of Natural England and HCC ecology now accord with this.

Landscape/Trees

There are no objections to the proposal in terms of landscape or trees, and a comprehensive landscaping scheme supports the application.

Highways/Parking

As stated in the consultations section of this report there is no highways objection to the proposed development.

Other Matters

The previous application included the provision of a residential unit for caretaker's accommodation, in the form of a one bedroom flat over a double garage, although this was withdrawn by the applicant when the appeal was lodged and this application does not include such a provision.

There is an existing dwelling 'Overway' within the site, although it appears that this is subject to an agricultural occupancy condition from its original approval in Jan 1968 Ref DRD 1429/2. This existing property is located adjacent to the proposed vehicular access and could therefore provide a degree of natural surveillance of the access and site. However the application does not clarify the intended use of this property.

**Recommendation**

That permission be REFUSED for the following reasons.

**Reasons**

1. The development as proposed is situated within the countryside and the area that is defined as the Meon Strategic Gap, where no development should take place that could be more suitably located elsewhere, or where the development would, either on its own or in association with other development compromise the integrity of the Gap. The proposal is therefore contrary to the provisions of Policies G1 of the Hampshire County Structure Plan (1996-2011) Review and Policy CE.1 of the Winchester District Local Plan Review 2006.

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2. The proposed development is within an area of countryside unrelated to any existing settlement and cannot be considered as an essential facility or service for the local community by reason that it serves a much wider population than that within the immediate surrounding area of Wickham. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated that this site is essential to meet the operational needs of the applicants and, that there are no suitable alternative sites within the local built-up areas. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy CE.4 of the adopted Winchester District Local Plan Review.
3. By reason of its design, form and siting the proposed development would appear as an incongruous structure that would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside and is therefore contrary to Policies DP.1, DP.3, and DP.5 of the adopted Winchester District Local Plan Review.

**Informatives**

1. The Local Planning Authority has taken account of the following Development Plan policies and proposals:-

Hampshire County Structure Plan Review: G1, T5,  
Winchester District Local Plan Review Proposals: DP.1, DP.3, DP.4, DP6, DP.13, CE1, CE3, CE.4, CE.5, CE.10, CE.11, CE.19, CE.20, CE.22, CE.26, T.1, T.2, T.3 and T.4,