

Item No.	Application No. and Parish	Statutory Target Date	Proposal, Location, Applicant
(3)	22/00193/FUL Bradfield	04.04.2022 ¹	Installation of containerised biomass boiler systems St Andrews School Unnamed Road From Gardeners Lane To Buckhold Farm Pangbourne RG8 8QA The Warden and Council, St Andrews School

¹ Extension of time agreed with applicant until 12/05/2022

The application can be viewed on the Council's website at the following link:
<http://planning.westberks.gov.uk/rpp/index.asp?caseref=22/00193/FUL>

Recommendation Summary: Delegate to the Service Director of Development and Regulation to grant planning permission.

Ward Member: Councillor Mackinnon

Reason for Committee Determination: Application has received 10 or more letters of objection and is recommended for approval by officers.

Committee Site Visit: 4th May 2022

Contact Officer Details

Name: Mr. Matthew Shepherd
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This application seeks planning permission for installation of containerised biomass boiler systems.
- 1.2 St Andrews School is located within the small hamlet of Buckhold, which is to the south-west of Pangbourne. The surrounding area is identified as predominately farm landscape interspersed with small pockets of development. St Andrews School was founded in 1934 and is an independent school for children ages 3-13. The school is Grade II Listed. The Victorian mansion and stables which are the listed part of the site are to the south, some distance from the proposed development site.
- 1.3 The proposed development is for the installation of a containerised biomass boiler system to provide energy to the school. The development is for two flat roof containers that will be clad in timber. There will have two chimneys rising 3 metres above the roof of the containers; these will be approximately 5.6 metres tall from ground level to top. The containers are approximately 5 metres wide combined, and 6.3 metres long. The containers are approximately 2.6 metres tall excluding chimneys.

2. Planning History

- 2.1 The table below outlines the relevant planning history of the application site. The table only contains the past 10 years approximately of planning history. Full planning history can be found on the WBC website.

Application	Proposal	Decision / Date
22/00474/LBC2	Proposed internal and external alterations to existing shower room and computer room and installation of new flat roof to create covered walkway between Buckhold House and Harding House.	Approved 14.04.2022.
22/00473/FUL	Proposed internal and external alterations to existing shower room and computer room and installation of new flat roof to create covered walkway between Buckhold House and Harding House.	Approved 14.04.2022.
22/00953/FUL	Proposed extension to the nursery building, installation of air source heat pump and associated works.	Pending Consideration
20/01076/FUL	Alterations to car park/drop off area outside the entrance to the school building, including the provision of a loop and (net) additional 35 parking spaces.	Approved 17.07.2020.
17/01069/LBC2	Replace worn out, damaged and leaking rainwater furniture on a grade 11 listed building Replacement proposed using Alutec Heritage Black rainwater furniture (aluminium system, powder coated kin textured black to achieve closest practical match in appearance to original cast iron).	Approved 07.06.2017.

16/02178/FUL	New glazed canopy over enlarged doorway to the rear of the reception classrooms.	Approved 10.10.2016.
16/01712/COND1	Application For approval of details reserved by Condition 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of approved application 15/02379/FUL - New sports hall and squash courts and enclose existing outdoor swimming pool.	Approved 2308.2016.
15/02379/FUL	New sports hall and squash courts and enclose existing outdoor swimming pool.	Approved 15.02.2016.
14/01351/LBC2	Internal alterations to the building including: creation of 3no. 2nd floor staff flats; alterations to form 2nd floor boys' lavatories; alterations to form 2nd floor girls' lavatories; alterations to 2nd floor staircase to improve emergency exit; removal of redundant wash basins from 2nd floor corridor; creation of 3rd floor staff flat and creation of 2nd floor laundry.	Approved 22.07.2014
12/01230/COND1	Application for approval of details reserved by condition 3 Tree Protection and 4 colour of fencing of approved application 11/02576/FUL - Development of an all weather playing field.	Approved 27.06.2012.
11/02576/FUL	Development of an all weather playing field.	Approved 09.03.2012.

3. Procedural Matters

- 3.1 **EIA:** Given the nature and scale of this development, it is not considered to fall within the description of any development listed in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. As such, EIA screening is not required.
- 3.2 **Publicity:** A site notice was displayed on 09/03/2022 at the front entrance of the site; the deadline for representations expired on 30/03/2022.
- 3.3 **CIL:** Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a levy charged on most new development to pay for new infrastructure required as a result of the new development. CIL will be charged on residential (C3 and C4) and retail (A1 - A5) development at a rate per square metre (based on Gross Internal Area) on new development of more than 100 square metres of net floorspace (including extensions) or when a new dwelling is created (even if it is less than 100 square metres). Any CIL liability will be formally confirmed by the CIL Charging Authority under separate cover following the grant of any permission. More information is available at www.westberks.gov.uk/cil

4. Consultation

Statutory and non-statutory consultation

- 4.1 The table below summarises the consultation responses received during the consideration of the application. The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report.

Bradfield Parish Council:	<p>Bradfield Parish Council objects to this application for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is no transport plan indicating the proposed route of vehicles delivering pellets to the site or the frequency. 2. There is no Environmental Impact Assessment. 3. There is no indication of how the ash will be removed. 4. There is no indication of where pellets will be stored. <p>If WBC is minded to approve this application, Bradfield PC would prefer that the two “containers” are black powder coated rather than stainless steel.</p>
WBC Highways:	No comment
WBC Lead Local Flood Authority:	No response 26/04/2022
WBC Environmental Health:	The information clearly shows that the proposed biomass boiler will efficiently burn the clean wood pellets at a high temperature in order to burn off any pollutants. Being monitored 24/7 and with a regular maintenance scheme in place this proposal will have minimal effect on air quality and is in fact exempt from regulation under the Clean Air Act due to its efficiency. Based on the above I have no further comments to make.
WBC Conservation:	No objections
WBC Archaeology:	The below ground impact on any archaeological assets is likely to be minimal and the structure seems to be some distance away from the listed Victorian mansion and its stable block.
WBC Ecology Officer:	No response 26/04/2022

Public representations

4.2 Representations have been received from 12 contributors, all of which object to the proposal. The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council’s website, using the link at the start of this report. In summary, the following issues/points have been raised:

- Concern in respect to air pollution, climate change and the developments impact on the health of nearby residents and vulnerable people.
- Concern in regards to the impact this could have on people with respiratory illness, asthma, Covid, and Long Covid where inhalation of emissions from the development will contain particulates known as black carbon and this will exacerbate lung conditions.
- Concern is raised in regards to the resultant increase in heavy good vehicle traffic making regular deliveries of biomass fuels travelling to the school via roads

that are noted as unsuitable for HGV's. This is causing frequent local diversions and further road and roadside erosion.

- Concern for many young school children who play sports daily on Astroturf that is just 3 metres North West of the proposed development. These young people are going to take deep breaths of toxic soot which may endanger that health and quality of life.
- Tidmarsh lane is not suitable for heavy traffic and twice or three times a week heavy trucks will use these roads carrying pellet tot eh school. The land already suffers 70,000 vehicle movements a year from school parents and another 30,000 vehicle movement's year from school teach staff vehicles.
- The chimneys are 5.6 metres in height and the plume of exhaust flattens out on the land immediately downwind to those chimneys which means the school children, nearby wedding guest and objectors to the North West and residents of local cottages and upper Basildon are all down wind. This is wholly unacceptable.
- The unit will operate 24/7 and 365 days a years and there will be no respite for local residents.
- There is an established wedding venue nearby with potential for 100 guest visiting nearby which would be at risk from emissions.
- Concern that noise from the unit will frighten horses and riders in the local vicinity causing accidents.
- No public consultation from the school has been undertaken.
- The development is not truly renewable due to the temporary warming that happens during the process of the carbon cycle which contribute toe climate warming.
- Wood Burning accounts for 31% of air pollution in London according to Kings College London.
- The school must ensure that it only burns wood pellets which has been correctly seasoned, this allows the combustion unit to burn the wood efficiently and actually produces a carbon-neutral process.
- Concern in regards to the toxic fumes inhaled by wildlife and horses in the surrounding areas.
- We believe this scheme is contrary to conserving and enhancing the natural environment of the AONB.

5. Planning Policy

5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following policies of the statutory development plan are relevant to the consideration of this application.

- Policies ADPP1, ADPP5, CS10, CS13, CS14, CS15, CS16, CS18, CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (WBCS).
- Policies TRANS.1, OVS.5, OVS.6, ENV.27 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

5.2 The following material considerations are relevant to the consideration of this application:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-24
- WBC Quality Design SPD (2006)

6. Appraisal

6.1 The main issues for consideration in this application are:

- Principle of Development
- Character and Appearance
- Neighbouring Amenity
- Highways considerations
- Flooding and Ecology

Principle of development

- 6.2 The site lies outside of any defined settlement boundary in the open countryside where, according to Policy ADPP1, only appropriate limited development will be allowed, focused on addressing identified needs and maintaining a strong rural economy. The proposed development site falls within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Policy ADPP5 notes that the North Wessex Downs AONB will have appropriate and sustainable growth that conserves and enhances its special landscape qualities. It goes on to note that opportunities for appropriate small scale renewable energy schemes, which use local resources will be encouraged if they can be accommodated within the landscapes of the North Wessex Downs.
- 6.3 These works are required in order to support an established rural school produce energy and are therefore supported by policy CS10 of the Core Strategy and ENV27 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan. This boiler system is run by Biomass Wood Pellets which fuels the boiler, and this is considered a renewable source of energy given this fuel. The proposed biomass boiler would replace an oil boiler system with a modern and efficient biomass boiler which would proposed a supply of low carbon heating which would asset the school in reducing its greenhouse gases emissions.
- 6.4 The supporting text of Policy CS15 notes that carbon reduction is a key issue for West Berkshire. The policy goes on to note that West Berkshire District is one of the highest electricity users in the south-east, and is in the upper quartile of local authorities for CO₂ emissions within the region. This proposed development would assist the school in achieving a reduction in carbon produced and would align with CS15.
- 6.5 The principle of the proposed development is therefore considered acceptable in accordance with ADPP1, ADPP5, CS10, and CS15 of the Core Strategy and ENV.27 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan.

Character and appearance

- 6.6 Policy CS14 requires new development to demonstrate high quality and sustainable design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area. It goes on to say that good design relates not only to the appearance of the development but the way in which it functions, and that the considerations of design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard not just to the immediate area, but to the wider locality.
- 6.7 Policy CS19 seeks to conserve and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape character of the District, and adopts a holistic approach to ensure that the natural, cultural and functional components of its character will be considered, particular regard will be given to (a) the sensitivity of the area to change, (b) ensuring that new development is appropriate in terms of location, scale and design in the context of the existing settlement form, pattern and character, and (c) the conservation, and

where appropriate, enhancement of heritage assets and their settings (including listed buildings).

- 6.8 The proposed development would consist of two containers of steel construction with flat roofs and would be externally clad with timber. This would be located within the school grounds on existing hard standing. The proposed development are considered utilitarian in design and softened by the proposed wooden cladding. Given the proposed location within the existing site boundary on existing hardstanding the development is not considered to give rise to harm to the AONB landscape. Whilst there is the inclusion of chimneys these are not considered to be prominent in the landscape.
- 6.9 The proposed development is located some distance away from the Grade II listed Victorian mansion and stable block which make up the listed building elements of the site. The planning statement included a heritage impact assessment which is considered to demonstrate that the proposed development result in a very localised visual intrusion on the predominantly planned and designed historic landscape of the site. The historic character of the school extends well beyond the immediate boundaries of the proposed development area, and it is assessed that the proposed development will have only a very minor and localised adverse effect on the historic landscape character of the area.
- 6.10 The proposed new development will have a minimal impact on the setting of the listed building, and change the character of the site, resulting in less than substantial harm to the significance of this listed building. Whilst the proposal will result in less than substantial harm to the significance of this listed building, this harm is justified and would enable the public benefit of securing sustainable future for the building, so meeting the requirements of paragraphs 197 and 202 of the NPPF.
- 6.11 The application therefore complies with the statutory requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and conservation Areas) Act 1990, the NPPF (2021) and Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026).
- 6.12 The proposed development is therefore considered to comply with Policies CS14 and CS19 in regards to its design and impact on the character of the area, the setting of the listed building, and the AONB.

Neighbouring amenity

- 6.13 There has been a number of objections to the application in regards to the impact to neighbouring amenity in regards to pollution and air quality. Policy OVS.5 notes that the Council will only permit development proposals where they do not give rise to an unacceptable pollution of the environment. In order to minimise the adverse impact on the environment or loss of amenity proposals should have regard to: (a) the need to ensure the adequate storage and disposal of waste materials; (b) the installation of equipment to minimise the harmful effects of emissions; (c) the hours, days or seasons of operations; and (d) locating potential nuisance or pollution activities onto the least sensitive parts of the site or where the impacts can be best contained by physical or other appropriate measures.
- 6.14 Policy OVS.6 The Council will require appropriate measures to be taken in the location, design, layout and operation of development proposals in order to minimise any adverse impact as a result of noise generated.
- 6.15 The Council's Environmental Health Officers have been consulted on the application and requested further information be submitted. The EH Officers considered the information provided clearly shows that the proposed biomass boiler will efficiently burn the clean wood pellets at a high temperature in order to burn off any pollutants. Being monitored 24/7 and with a regular maintenance scheme in place this proposal will have

minimal effect on air quality and is in fact exempt from regulation under the Clean Air Act due to its efficiency. It was considered appropriate that the development is condition to be operated in accordance with the documents submitted.

- 6.16 The containerised units are also noted to create very little noise due to their efficiency and high specification. Any noise will be dampened by the enclosure of the boilers in the units.
- 6.17 According to the submitted documents that ash will be disposed of in general waste as an inset compostable material which could be used as fertiliser by the school on its land. Approximately 1 tonne of ash will be produced annually. The wood pellets would be stored in the second container adjacent to the plan room. The supporting documents also notes that will be 10 deliveries annually to the school which is 42 fewer movements to the school than it currently has of oil deliveries.
- 6.18 The development is considered to accord with Policy CS14 in regards to neighbouring amenity and Policies OVS.5 and OVS.6 in regards to pollution and noise.

Highways

- 6.19 The Highway Authority raise no comment on this application. It is noted in the supporting documents that that ash will be disposed of in general waste as an inset compostable material which could be used as fertiliser by the school on its land or commercially disposed of by the existing waste disposal arrangements of the school. Approximately 1 tonne of ash will be produced annually which. The wood pellets would be stored in the second container adjacent to the plan room. The supporting documents also notes that will be 10 deliveries annually to the school which is 42 fewer movements to the school than it currently has of oil deliveries.
- 6.20 The proposed containers would not give rise to issues of parking on the site given the size of the units and number of parking spaces. The proposed development is therefore considered in accordance with Policy CS13.

Flooding and ecology

- 6.21 The application falls within flood zone 1 and is therefore at least risk of flooding. CS16 of the development plan directs development to these areas. The containers are not considered to give rise to issues of flooding.
- 6.22 The containers are also located on existing hardstanding within an established site, it is therefore considered the development would have minimal impact on ecology in a developed area of the site which is of low ecological sensitivity.

7. Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 7.1 The development is not considered to have an adverse impact on the character of the area of the AONB landscape. Whilst concern has been raised by objectors in regards to emissions the Environmental Health Officer is content that the development will not be harmful. The development is not considered to give rise to issues related to deliveries on the highways. The development does contribute to the schools ability to produce energy in a more efficient and sustainable way to which weight should be attached to this benefit. Concerns in regards to emissions can be mitigated through appropriate planning conditions. The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions.

8. Full Recommendation

- 8.1 To delegate to the Service Director of Development and Regulation to GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the conditions listed below.

Conditions

1. **Commencement of development**

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. **Approved plans**

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and documents listed below:

Location Plan. Drawing number SA101/B.

Block Plan. Drawing number SA102/A.

Floor Plan and Roof Plan. Drawing number SA103/A.

South East and North West Elevations. Drawing number SA104/A.

North East and South West Elevations. Drawing number SA105/A.

Trench Details For Underground Pipeline. Drawing Number SA106/A.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning.

3. **Materials**

The materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall be as specified on the plans and/or the application forms. Where stated that materials shall match the existing, those materials shall match those on the existing development in colour, size and texture.

Reason: To ensure that the external materials respect the character and appearance of the area. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026), and Supplementary Planning Document Quality Design (June 2006).

4. **Servicing and maintenance**

The hereby approved containerised biomass boiler systems shall be operated in accordance with the submitted documents of this application predominately the Biomass Boiler Information Form V DN (004) Final. The units shall be regularly serviced and maintained to ensure efficient mechanical function.

Reason: To protect the occupants of nearby residential properties from noise and exhausts. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026), and Policies OVS.5 and OVS.6 of the West Berkshire Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

5. **Plant noise**

All plant, machinery and equipment installed or operated in connection with the carrying out of this permission shall be so enclosed and/or attenuated that noise therefrom does not exceed at any time a level of 5dB[A] below the existing background noise level, or 10dB[A] if there is a particular tonal quality when

measured in accordance with BS4142:2014 at a point one metre external to the nearest residential or noise sensitive property

Reason: To protect the occupants of nearby residential properties from noise. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026), and Policies OVS.5 and OVS.6 of the West Berkshire Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).

6. **Construction Time Restrictions**

No construction or associated deliveries of the development hereby permitted shall take place during arrival and departure times for the school during term time, unless in accordance with a construction method statement (CMS) that has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such a CMS shall include:

- (a) A site set-up plan during the works;
- (a) Parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
- (b) Loading and unloading of plant and materials;
- (c) Storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
- (d) Erection and maintenance of security hoarding including any decorative displays and/or facilities for public viewing;
- (e) Temporary access arrangements to the site, and any temporary hard-standing;
- (f) Wheel washing facilities;
- (g) Measures to control dust, dirt, noise, vibrations, odours, surface water run-off, and pests/vermin during construction;
- (h) A scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works;
- (i) Hours of construction and demolition work;
- (j) Hours of deliveries and preferred haulage routes;

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of school users and adjoining land uses and occupiers, and in the interests of highway safety. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies CS13 and CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, and Policies OVS.5, OVS.6 and TRANS.1 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007). A pre-commencement condition is required because the CMS must be adhered to during all demolition and construction operations.

Informatives

1. **Proactive actions of the LPA**

The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with a planning application. In particular, the LPA:

- (b) Provided the applicant with a case officer as a single point of contact.
- (c) Alerted the applicant to issues that were raised during the consideration of the application.
- (d) Accepted amended plans to address issues arising during the consideration of the application.
- (e) Agreed an extension of time before determining the application to enable negotiations with the applicant.
- (f) Entered into /negotiations in order to find a solution to problems with the proposed development, rather than refusing planning permission without negotiation.