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Planning Statement

In Support of a Planning Application for

Erection of a Single Storey Sixth Form Block

at

Red Kite Special Academy, Corby, Northampton, NN18 0BY

On Behalf of

Northamptonshire County Council



June 2020

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council, Corby and is provided in support of a full planning application for the erection of a new, single storey sixth form block at the Red Kite Special Academy, Corby.
- 1.2 The application follows the undertaking of informal pre-application discussions with Northamptonshire County Council (the Local Planning Authority or LPA).
- 1.3 This statement sets out the content of the planning application and the proposal before assessing the merits of the application against the relevant local and national planning policy. The statement will ultimately demonstrate that the proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development, is policy compliant and should be granted planning permission.
- 1.4 This statement should be read in conjunction with the following documents:
- Design & Access Statement
 - Noise Impact Assessment
 - Ground Investigation Survey

2.0 Site Description and Context

2.1 Site Location and Context

- 2.1.1 Red Kite Special Academy is a new free special school which opened in September 2018 in Corby, providing school spaces for children with PMLD / SLD, Autism and HFA from the ages of 4-18. The school provides an environment for learning suiting a variety of educational needs, and is currently open to 63 pupils, with provision for spaces to grow to 110 over the coming years.
- 2.1.2 The main school campus covers approximately 1.6 hectares and is located on the western outskirts of Corby, Northamptonshire on a newly developed site. The main school building opened in 2018 and is a modern design finished in white render externally.

2.2 Site Description

- 2.2.1 The application site is located within the east of the school site and extends to approximately 0.3 hectares, including access required for site work. The area of works is primarily existing car parking, as well as existing amenity grassland. The site has no public access and is currently used by the school as parking provision.
- 2.2.2 The development area will be bounded by the new residential development to the north, the Beanfield Primary School grounds to the east, existing hardstanding landscaping on the Red Kite School Site to the south, and the existing Red Kite School Building to the west. The school site boundary is separated from other developments by 2-metre-high weldmesh fencing. Vehicular access to the school site is off Purbeck Drive, through a new residential development.

3.0 Planning History

- 3.1 Planning was granted on 10/03/2017 for the '*construction of a new Special Educational Needs All-Through School to accommodate 100 pupils of age range 4-18*'. This application (App. No. 16/00501/DPA) covered the whole school site including hard landscaping.
- 3.2 No further planning applications have been submitted on the specific application site.

4.0 Proposed Development

- 4.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a new sixth form block in order to facilitate the planned provision of 110 pupil spaces. The proposed development will also include the provision of pedestrian footways to access the building and landscaping works to make good the existing surroundings.

5.0 Planning Policy

5.1 National Planning Policy

5.1.1 Section 38 (7) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that development proposals must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations dictate to the contrary. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the overarching policy at a national level and is a material consideration in planning decisions which must also be taken into account. The NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved without delay and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.1.2 At Paragraph 8, the NPPF states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development; economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- **An economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- **A social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high-quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural wellbeing; and
- **An environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

5.1.3 NPPF Paragraph 91 states that: Planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

a). *promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;*

b). *are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high-quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas; and*

c). enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

5.1.4 NPPF Paragraph 94 highlights the importance of ensuring that sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. It states that *“Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:*

a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and

b) work with schools’ promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

5.1.5 Paragraphs 96 and 97 refer to the importance of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity in maintaining the health and well-being of communities. Paragraph 96 states that *“Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate”.* Paragraph 97 states that *“existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:*

a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or

b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or

c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

5.1.6 The NPPF reiterates previous Government guidance by stating that it attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It notes that *“Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”* (Paragraph 124).

5.1.7 Paragraph 127 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments, function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; are sympathetic to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials.

5.1.8 Paragraph 170 identifies that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, including by minimising impacts on, and providing net gains, for biodiversity.

5.2 Local Planning Policy

5.2.1 North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Policy 8 outlines the place shaping principles developments should abide by. Policy 8 is subdivided into a number of sections. The below outlines the response to Policy 8 section a).

Developments should:

a). create connected places by ensuring that it:

i). Connects to the maximum number of local streets, avoiding dead ends, to allow it to integrate into the wider settlement and to connect to existing services and facilities.

The existing site is located on Purbeck Drive, which is a cul-de-sac. Any connection to avoid a dead end would involve connection through to Uppingham Road, which is a major A road. This is considered to be undesirable given the SEN nature of the school. Other site boundaries are the Beanfield Primary School, and Maplefields Academy, ruling out the possibility of other links to eliminate the existing dead end.

ii). Integrates well with existing cycle, pedestrian, public transport and vehicular movement networks, and links to these routes in the most direct and legible way possible to achieve logical routes.

The existing pedestrian and vehicle access points are off Purbeck Drive, no alterations will be made as a part of the proposed development, and the existing access route is considered to be the most direct possible given existing constraints.

iii). Improves or creates open green spaces which tie into the wider network of public green spaces and routes to allow for movement across the settlement through its green infrastructure.

The proposal involves no removal of soft landscaping, and it is proposed that a mixed native hedgerow is introduced at the boundary of the proposed development to soften the boundary, promote biodiversity and provide an element of security.

iv). Provides direct routes to local facilities within or outside the site to create more walkable neighbourhoods

The proposed development is within the boundary of the existing school site. Pedestrian access outside the site is not affected, and pedestrian access within the site is maintained.

5.2.2 North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Policy 8 outlines the place shaping principles developments should abide by. Policy 8 is subdivided into a number of sections. The below outlines the response to Policy 8 section b).

Developments should:

b). make safe and pleasant streets & spaces by:

i). Prioritising the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users, and resistant developments that would prejudice highway safety.

Existing pedestrian access from Purbeck Drive will be maintained, and on the site itself safe pedestrian access will be provided via pavements, which will clearly be demarked with hard boundaries (such as kerbs and weldmesh fencing), and weather protection will be provided via a canopy. On the car parks themselves, pedestrian routes are clearly marked, and any marked pedestrian routes affected by the works will be re-routed suitably.

ii). Ensuring a satisfactory means of access and provision for parking, servicing and manoeuvring in accordance with adopted standards

Loss of car parking as a result of the development has been agreed with the school, and this will not impact the provision for parking as the original development provided an increased number of parking bays, over and above requirements. The existing drop off and pick up system for the main school will apply to the new Sixth Form Block. Access for emergency vehicles is not affected by the new Sixth Form Block.

iii). Ensuring streets and spaces are continuously enclosed by buildings or by strong landscaping with well-defined public and private space.

As part of the proposed development, landscaping works include the provision of 1.8-metre-high weldmesh fencing enclosing the pupil areas of the development. Outside the pupil area but inbound of the main boundary, a native mixed species hedgerow will be provided. This will complement the existing boundary treatment and provide security for both the “school side” and the “residential side”.

iv). Ensuring that streets and spaces, are overlooked, active, feel safe, and promote inclusive access

As part of the proposed development, landscaping works include the levelling of the pupil area, allowing unassisted access round the sixth form block, further allowance has been made for double ramped thresholds to the external doors. Any falls in the development area are to allow for surface water drainage, and have been designed to not impeded access.

v). Creating legible places which make it easy for people to find their way around

As previously noted, pedestrian routes are demarked, and pupil access around the development is enclosed safely with 1.8-metre-high weldmesh fencing. Areas for external plant are suitably closed off to pupil access via 1.8-metre-high timber fencing (also shielding the condensers from view and damping noise output), and maintenance access to the external plant area is via an access-controlled gate. The maintenance path is demarked via pea gravel and timber edging.

vi). Contributing towards enhancements to the existing public realm, such as tree planting, to add to the character and quality of the main streets and to encourage walking and cycling

The proposed development is fully within the existing school site, so there will be no impact on the main streets. Provision of a native mixed species hedge will contribute towards the biodiversity of the site and provide potential habitats for a number of flora and fauna.

- 5.2.3 North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Policy 8 outlines the place shaping principles developments should abide by. Policy 8 is subdivided into a number of sections. The below outlines the response to Policy 8 section c).

Developments should:

c). Ensure adaptable, diverse and flexible places by:

i). Creating varied and distinctive neighbourhoods which provide for local needs through a mix of uses, unit sizes and tenures:

The proposed development is a minor development fully enclosed within an existing site. The proposed development is a single unit and caters for specialist needs (IE SEN school).

ii). Mixing land use and densities within settlements and ensuring that people can move easily between them and through them by non-car modes:

As previously mentioned, the proposed development is a minor development fully enclosed within an existing site. The proposed development is a single unit and caters for specialist needs (IE SEN school). Within the site pedestrian routes are clearly marked, and any marked pedestrian routes affected by the works will be re-routed suitably.

- 5.2.4 North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Policy 8 outlines the place shaping principles developments should abide by. Policy 8 is subdivided into a number of sections. The below outlines the response to Policy 8 section d).

Developments should:

d). Create a distinctive local character by:

i). Responding to the site's immediate and wide context and local character to create new streets, spaces, and buildings which draw on the best of that local character without stifling innovation.

The existing development on the Red Kite Special Academy is finished in white render, with dark grey fenestrations and an extensive canopy which has been clad in cedar to the underside. The proposed development will also be clad predominately in white render, with dark grey render elements to break up the white render and provide a complementary finish when taken together with the existing block.

ii). Responding to the local topography and the overall form, character and landscape setting of the settlement.

The existing site is a recent development and included hardstanding landscaping works, as such the site is relatively flat. The proposed site will follow the existing topography with any changes to be minimal, to suit surface water drainage whilst providing level access.

iii). The creative use of the public realm through the use of measures such as incidental place spaces, bespoke street furniture, and memorable features.

As previously noted, the proposed development is fully within the existing site and there will be no changes to the public realm as it is outside the scope of works.

- 5.2.5 North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Policy 8 outlines the place shaping principles developments should abide by. Policy 8 is subdivided into a number of sections. The below outlines the response to Policy 8 section e).

Developments should:

e). Ensure quality of life and safer and healthier communities by;

i). Protecting amenity by not resulting in an unacceptable impact of the amenities of future occupiers, neighbouring properties or the wider area, by reason of noise, vibration, smell, light or other pollution, loss of light or overlooking.

The proposed development is single storey, to allow for inclusive access and cater for the pupil numbers specified. The single storey doesn't overlook the existing residential development. To minimise any

acoustic impact from the external plant, both a timber enclosure around the plant is proposed, and the native mixed hedgerow also provides a robust buffer / screen to dampen any noise. External lighting on the proposed development will be via bulkhead lights and controlled via timeclock to avoid unwanted light pollution. It is considered these measures mitigate potential impact on neighbouring properties.

ii). Preventing both new and existing development from contributing to, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, light, water or noise pollution and land instability.

The proposed development will involve very minimal land alterations to avoid impacts on soil stability and to complement existing topography. Air quality not impacted by proposed work. Noise to remain below acceptable levels, as per acoustic survey.

iii). Incorporate ecologically sensitive design and features for biodiversity to deliver 'Biodiversity by design'.

The proposed development involves provision of a native mixed species hedgerow, hedgerows provide habitats for a range of flora and fauna and are noted to be a big driver of biodiversity as they mature, often encompassing a mini-ecosystem within their surroundings. This also provides an opportunity for education on the school site. The use of native species ensures the hedgerow is appropriate to its surroundings.

iv). Seeking to design out antisocial behaviour and crime, and reduce the fear of crime through the creation of safe environments that benefit from natural surveillance, defensible spaces and other security measures having regard to the principles of the 'secured by design'

The existing development includes a 2-metre-high boundary fence, and the proposed development includes provision for a 1.8-metre-high weldmesh fence to segregate the new and the existing. The new 1.8-metre-high weldmesh fence will be in addition to, rather than replacing the existing 2-metre-high fencing. The new development will be secured with access control on the gate within the 1.8-metre-high weldmesh. Further natural protection will be provided through the hedgerow referred to previously.

v). Proportionate and appropriate community and fire safety measures, and:

The proposed render system used as an external treatment incorporates non-combustible materials, allowing for 60 minutes internal to external fire protection. Fire barriers are provided along the proposed elevations as per building regulations and the cladding manufacturers recommendations. Internal measures include provision of 30-minute compartments. Escape routes will be clearly noted on the fire strategy document provided to the school, and final exits will be indicated via illuminated fire exit signage. The fire strategy document has been developed in liaison with an approved building control officer to ensure all building regulations are being followed. Training will be provided to occupants to ensure the fire strategy is followed correctly.

vi). Incorporating flexible and resilient designs for buildings and their settings, including access to amenity space.

The proposed modular building system allows re-design of internal layouts, as internal partitions are not loadbearing, allowing the end user to tailor the building to any evolution in end use. The modular system also allows steel frame extensions to be 'bolted on' and, as cladding isn't integral, cladding finishes to be redesigned if desired. Internally, a suspended ceiling grid is used to ensure access to services within the ceiling void and allow re-design after the end user has received the building (if desired).

6.0 Planning Assessment

6.1 Principle of Development

- 6.1.1 The application site is located within an existing school complex on the western outskirts of Corby, Northamptonshire. The site is bound by Chesil Walk and Bridgwater Close to the north, a residential development off Purbeck Drive to the east, Maplefields Academy / Beanfield Primary School to the south, and the A6003 to the west.
- 6.1.2 Policy COM1 advises that applications for new community facilities or improvements to existing community facilities to meet the needs of local residents will be supported. The supporting text to the policy confirms that the term 'community facilities' includes pre-school, primary and secondary schools. The proposed development will provide additional teaching facilities within the grounds of an existing school complex and therefore meets the requirements of this policy. The proposal also satisfies the requirements of NPPF Paragraph 94 which requires great weight to be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools, with local planning authorities (LPA's) required to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to ensuring that sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.
- 6.1.3 The proposed development allows Red Kite Special Academy to expand pupil numbers, allowing the school to increase intake by up to 20 students by September 2022, resulting in a maximum of 83 pupils across the school site.

6.2 Siting and Design

- 6.2.1 An explanation of the design philosophy and evolution has been provided in the accompanying Design and Access Statement provided by Darwin Group Ltd.
- 6.2.2 The design will constitute a single storey element, with a nominally flat roof. The elevations will comprise a mixture of a blue engineering plinth, white insulated render and grey insulated render, with windows and doors provided in an anthracite grey colour. The proposal is simple in form, compliments the existing site and suits the school's requirements. A selection of 3D visual images is provided with the application.
- 6.2.3 The proposed building will fit comfortably within the existing school site boundary and a native mixed species hedgerow will be provided to the section of the boundary bound by the cul-de-sac off Purbeck Way to soften the boundary.

6.3 Highways and Access

- 6.3.1 The application is accompanied by a Travel Plan which considers the likely impact the proposal will have upon the local highways network. It is anticipated that the proposed development would have no impact on the existing highways, and not prejudice vehicle access within the existing site.

6.3.2 The statement identifies no apparent problems in terms of highway operation or safety in the surrounding area, the majority of pupils arrive by bus and parking provision on site is sufficient for staff numbers. It is noted that with the new sixth form block development “*car park spaces for staff still remain plentiful with only a very few spaces being lost due to the new unit. Many staff car share*”. Furthermore, it is noted that “*the majority (62%) of pupils with special educational needs travel to and from school by school bus*”, with the rest coming by car.

6.3.3 The statement concludes that the proposed development will not have a material impact upon the safety or operation of the surrounding local highway network and as such, there are no significant highways and transportation matters that would preclude the local planning authority from approving the application.

6.4 Other Matters

6.4.1 Noise Assessment: A Noise Assessment has been carried out to assess the likely noise impact upon the nearest receptors, the residential development off Purbeck Drive, resulting from the use of the Sixth Form block. The assessment concludes that internal and external noise levels will not give rise to adverse impacts upon the nearest sensitive receptors.

6.5 Sustainability

6.5.1 At an environmental level, the teaching block will be constructed off-site using modular construction techniques which results in reduced material waste, efficient factory labour, lower energy costs and better thermal performance.

6.5.2 At a social level, the proposal will provide additional teaching facilities at the school, allowing it to upgrade and expand to meet the educational needs of the surrounding area.

6.5.3 At an economic level, the proposal will generate construction jobs during the construction period and once operational, the development will generate additional jobs at the school, together with increased footfall in the town centre as potential custom for goods and services.

6.5.4 In terms of accessibility and connectivity, the site is located within Corby which is accessible by a range of transport measures including public transport, cycle and on foot. A majority of the pupils arrive on site by bus thus minimising the impact upon the local road network and reducing reliance on private car travel.

6.5.5 As a result, the proposal incorporates good sustainability credentials and is considered to be a highly sustainable form of development.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposed development will involve the erection of a new Sixth Form block on land within the Red Kite Special Academy site in Corby, Northamptonshire. NPPF Paragraph 94 requires great weight to be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools, with local planning authorities required to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to ensuring that sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. The proposed development is therefore considered acceptable in principle, subject to satisfying relevant technical considerations.
- 7.2 A Travel Plan has been provided which has considered the likely impact upon on-site parking provision and the local highways network. The statement concludes that sufficient on-site parking exists to accommodate additional demand and the proposal will not have any material impact upon the safety or operation of the surrounding local highway network.
- 7.3 A Noise Impact Assessment concluded that the use of the proposed Sixth Form Block would not generate noise at a level which would adversely impact upon the occupants of the adjacent residential property.
- 7.4 It has been demonstrated that the application incorporates high levels of sustainability, as specifically identified within the context of the three dimensions set out in the NPPF. The site is located in a highly sustainable location and is easily accessible by a range of transport measures. The proposal will provide additional school places to meet the needs of the community and will create employment opportunities at both the construction and operational stages. The design will incorporate sustainable measures and construction techniques and has been sensitively designed to complement the existing site, whilst not negatively impacting on developments in the vicinity but outside the development boundary.
- 7.5 The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy policies have been reviewed, in particular Policy 8 – the responses to which form a section of this document – and it is considered that the proposed development complies with the local planning policies where relevant.
- 7.6 Based on the above assessment it is considered that the proposed development complies in full with relevant planning policies at a local and national level and that it represents a sustainable form of development. In the absence of any material considerations to the contrary, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted at the earliest opportunity.