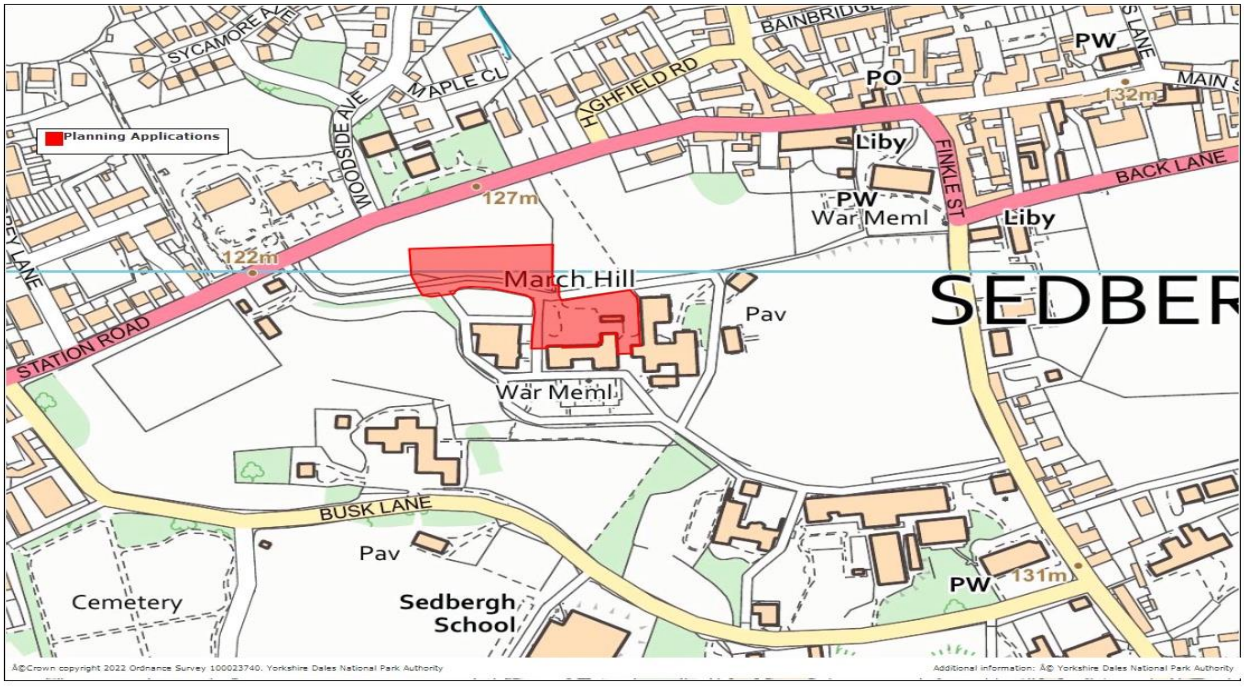
YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Committee:	Planning	**Parish:**	Sedbergh
Date:	25 October 2022	**Officer:**	Mark Williams
Applicant:	Sedbergh School	**Application No:**	S/03/730
Site Address:	Sedbergh School, Station Road, Sedbergh, LA10 5HG		
Proposal:	Full planning permission for erection of a Technology Centre (Use Class F1) to the north of Sedbergh School; creation of a replacement car parking area and demolition of the existing toilet block		



REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

1. This application is reported to Committee for the following reason: in the opinion of the Head of Development Management it is in the best interests of the National Park Authority that the application is considered by the Committee.

2. A site visit was undertaken by Members of the Committee on 30th September 2022 and a note of the visit is appended to this report.

APPLICATION SITE

3. The Sedbergh School campus lies to the south and west of Sedbergh town centre, with separate clusters of buildings set within playing fields and other open spaces. The application site sits within a group of buildings to the west of the town centre which are reached via a tree-lined drive off Station Road to the north.

4. The application site itself comprises an area of lawn set above a public footpath which passes immediately to the north in a west-east direction. The site faces the rear elevation of a classroom building, a Grade II listed building, across an open car park. To the west is Powell Hall, another Grade II listed building. To the front of the classroom building is the War Memorial, a Grade II* listed building. To the east is a modern classroom block, dating from the 1970s.

5. A small toilet block, sits at the east end of the application site. This is a listed building by virtue of being within the curtilage of the listed classroom building. The western end of the application site is dominated by a group of mature trees. The site lies within the Sedbergh Conservation Area (CA) which extends across the whole town and school campus.

6. A public footpath runs along the drive to the north of the application site, running from the town centre in an east-west direction. An informal path also runs north of the site, across March Hill onto Station Road. However this is not a public right of way and is not used by pupils but seems to be used regularly be local residents.

PROPOSAL

7. It is proposed to erect a detached building to the north of the classroom building for use as a Technology Centre (Use Class F1). The proposed develoment also includes the creation of a replacement car park to the north of the existing drive, and the demolition of the toilet block.

8. The proposed building would be two storeys high, with four gabled forms to the front and rear reflecting the gables on the classroom block. The gable at the east side would be wider and taller, projecting to the rear to relate to the eastern gabled wing of the classroom block. There would be an external staircase and terrace on west elevation. The east wall of the proposed building would align with the east wall of the classroom block to the south. The north elevation would align with the north elevation of the Maths block to the east.

9. The roof and side walls would be clad in bronze shingles. The gables would have vertical slatted cladding, with vertical windows set back, with projecting fins in between. The external staircase would be finished in Ashlar cut stone

10. The proposed building would provide c1400 sqm of learning and ancillary spaces over two floors. This would include a Manufacturing Hall, teaching workshops and a flexible events space.

11. The proposed building has been designed to provide a new courtyard space to the rear, between the new building and the classroom block. This would be for an informal break-out space for pupils, with areas of seating, the external staircase also doubling as an informal seating area.

12. A new car park would be created to the north of the existing drive to compensate for the loss of the existing car park. The new car park would sit behind the existing avenue of trees and fence line, and would comprise a sweep of 27 spaces with one access/exit and turning head. This would have a ‘grasscrete’ surface.

13. Landscape planting would be carried out in the immediate vicinity of the development, specifically in the open field to the north. A wider scheme of tree planting is also being carried out over the whole school estate.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

14. The following applications are relevant:

S/03/726/LB - Listed building consent to refurbish the existing toilet facilities and add a new wheelchair accessible cubicle and for the conversion of an existing classroom to install eleven new toilet cubicles, wash basins, and another wheelchair accessible cubicle at Powell Hall, Sedbergh School, Station Road, Sedbergh. Approved

S/03/480 – Full planning permission for replacement windows and door at Maths & Biology Building, Sedbergh School. Approved 03/01/2010.

CONSULTATIONS

15. The comments of statutory and non-statutory consultees are summarized below:

Economy and Culture, SLDC

South Lakeland District Council's Economy and Culture team support this application. The proposed technology centre would be a significant asset to Sedbergh and the wider area, benefiting the community, its economic development and local education and skills provision. Plans for the development have been worked on with the Sedbergh Economic Partnership and as set out in the Community Access Opportunities Report included in the application it would contribute towards the objectives of the Partnership's Framework for Growth.

The development would assist in building the wider South Cumbria area's reputation as a centre of science, technology and engineering with the opportunity to link the centre to the advanced manufacturing and engineering businesses in Kendal, Ulverston and Barrow-in-Furness and to local universities.

It would provide opportunities for other local schools, such as those listed in the Community Access Opportunities Report, to make use of the facilities and improve their education provision. There would also be opportunities to link local businesses in the Sedbergh and wider area to the facilities, educators and students at the centre, helping to drive their growth and innovation and creating mutually beneficial connections.

The centre would create high quality jobs at Sedbergh School, helping to attract and retain skilled people in the area and securing the School's reputation as a major local employer and outstanding independent school.

Establishing the centre as an events and conference venue for use by community groups, cultural organisations and enterprise, careers and education services would be of great value to the community and help to drive economic and cultural development in the area.

Overall, the technology centre would be a unique facility in the South Lakeland and Yorkshire Dales area and deliver a significant economic development and community project that benefits both the School and the wider community.

Highways & LLFA - not yet received.

CEHO South Lakeland DC – not yet received.

United Utilities Water Ltd - The proposals are acceptable in principle to United Utilities and should planning permission be granted request conditions are applied concerning foul and surface water drainage.

Wildlife Conservation Officer – not yet received.

Trees & Woodlands Officer – Objection (see full response on Citizens Portal). The location of the proposed development sits at the end of a tree lined drive that is indicative of a parkland style setting. In order to facilitate the build, a group of large mixed deciduous trees will be felled. These trees give setting and context to the built form within the grounds. It is understood that the school has planted and will continue to plant trees the loss of these trees will have a negative impact on the landscape being clearly visible from public rights of way and main roads.

The landscaping plan shows the formation of a grass covered car park. This has not been discussed or assessed within the supplied Arboricultural Impact Assessment. This is proposed to be located behind the trees marked 11G in the assessment. These are a group of decent quality mature, mixed deciduous trees lining the drive to the school. There does not appear to be any drawings related to this part of the development with regards to the technical aspects of construction and any proposed level changes. As such it is difficult to comment with any precision with regard to the impacts on the trees surround the proposed car park. While the drawings shows the trees to be retained, the change in surface and compaction of the soils caused by construction and future vehicle movements are likely to have a negative impact on the health if the trees.

The landscaping plan shows some trees to be planted around the proposed development and a small number around the proposed car park. While these are barely enough to cover the loss of the mature trees (albeit in 30 years' time), they do little to screen the impacts of the building and the car park and I would suggest that an improved landscape plan is sought.

The inclusion of the car park into the drawings renders the Tree Protection Plan out of date and not adequate to secure condition against. No Arboricultural Method Statement was submitted.
It is my opinion that the development could be placed elsewhere on the site with less impacts on the trees, the historical character of the school and its relationship with the landscape. As such it is considered that the proposed scheme can avoid the loss of mature trees, is contrary to Policy W3 and should be refused.

However, if the Committee is minded to grant permission condtions are recommended in relation to tree protection measures for the retained trees.

Senior Listed Building Officer (SLBO) - Objection due to harmful impact on 4 designated heritage assets (Sedbergh Conservation Area, setting of 2 listed school buildings and demolition of curtilage-listed toilet block). See full text of objection on Citizen Portal and discussion of main issues in Assessment section below.

Sedbergh PC - Members supported the underlying principles of this application and raised no objections. (One Member abstained)

Historic England - In this case we are not offering advice. This should not be interpreted as comment on the merits of the application. We suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation and archaeological advisers.

Fire Officer South Lakeland - No objections.

PUBLIC RESPONSES

16. Advertised by site notice. Expiry date: 24th August 2022. 6 No. responses received raising objections on the following grounds:
    - Harm to setting of listed buildings
    - Harm to Conservation Area
    - Scale and impact on public right of way
    - Inappropriate design and materials

- Landscape harm
- Loss of mature trees
- Alternative site should be found

ASSESSMENT

Key Issues:

- Planning policy
- Siting
- Design
- Listed Buildings
- Conservation Area
- Archaeology
- Trees and Landscape
- Highways
- Biodiversity
- Flood Risk/Drainage
- Economic Benefit
- Community benefits
- Parish Council comments
- Equality Act

PLANNING POLICY

17. Local Plan Policy SP2 (National Park purposes) states that:

    Development will be permitted that furthers the statutory National Park purposes of:

    a) conserving and enhancing natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage;

    b) promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

    Development that prejudices these purposes will not be permitted, although an exception may be made where development can demonstrate an overriding need and the harm can be mitigated or, as a last resort, compensatory measures can be agreed.

18. Local Plan SP3 (Spatial strategy) states that new development will be located within or adjacent to the settlements listed in Table 1. Sedbergh is identified as a Local Service Centre in the Settlement Hierarchy set out in Table 1 of the Local Plan.

19. Local Plan Policy SP4 (Development quality) sets out design principles for development in the National Park. The design of development should be informed by, and respond positively to the site, its surrounding context and landscape setting, so that the scale, height, proportions, massing, form, materials and appearance of buildings are sympathetic and complementary. Development should conserve or enhance the archaeological, architectural and historical character and appearance of the site and its setting. The design of any new development should be of a high quality, have visual interest and reinforce local distinctiveness;

20. Local Plan Policy L1 (Heritage assets) states that where a proposal results in substantial harm to or loss of a designated heritage asset it must be clearly justified, demonstrating that:

    a) there is no less harmful, viable option, and;

b) the amount of harm has been reduced to the minimum possible, and;

c) there are other significant public benefits that outweigh any harm caused.

SITING

21. The proposed Technology Centre was originally intended to be sited on the site of the existing Art & Design classrooms in the former Buskholme Quarry on Busk Lane, to the south-west of the application site. The site was discounted for several reasons. It was considered to be located too far from the School's core teaching facilities. The Technology Centre will form a core part of the School's curriculum with an emphasis on inter-disciplinary work. For that reason it was considered necessary to be sited close to existing classrooms. Furthermore the development of the quarry site would entail the temporary loss of existing teaching accommodation and disruption to pupils education.

22. Due to the siting requirements of the Technology Centre the School do not consider there to be any suitable alternative sites across the campus. This is a central location within the campus which will also provide a clear arrival sequence. To some extent any alternative site within the school campus would produce similar heritage issues, the proximity to listed buildings, impacts on the Conservation Area, the loss of playing field or important open space, and potential conflicts between the balance of built form and open space that characterise the campus and Conservation Area.

DESIGN

23. The layout, massing and design of the proposed building have been influenced by its immediate surroundings, particularly the listed classroom building and Powell Hall. The footprint aligns to the eastern edge of the classroom block and the northern edge of the Maths block. The massing is designed to respond to the two principal listed buildings, providing a building of sufficient stature in its own right without dominating the group. In that respect the proposed building would be no taller than the classroom block.

24. The design elements of the proposed building are clearly intended to reflect the gables on the classroom block, but also help to break up the massing of the building. While the proposed materials, in particularly the use of bronze shingles, would be uncompromisingly modern, the colour palette would be relatively muted, responding to the stonework of the existing building, the surrounding landscape and the School's own brand.

LISTED BUILDINGS

25. Section 66 of the Town & Country Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservations Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

26. The application site falls within the setting of three listed buildings, all listed for group value. It would also involve the demolition of a building (toilet block) which is listed by virtue of being within the curtilage of a listed building (classroom block). The proposed building would sit to the rear of the classroom block to the east of Powell Hall. The classroom block is a Grade II listed building, listed for group value along with the other two listed buildings on site. It dates from 1879-1889, built in a Tudor style and was designed by Austin & Paley, architects from Lancaster. The classroom building is 2-storeys high with an attic storey, built of sandstone with a green slate roof. The rear elevation, facing onto the car park, has a series of gables extending through the eaves, with a projecting gable to the east.

27. Powell Hall, also a Grade II listed building, lies to the west of the classroom block. It was also designed by Paley & Austin and dates from 1904-6. It is built of sandstone with a green slate roof. The building fronts onto a drive and lawn to the north. The east elevation, facing the application site, is distinguished by 3 wide full-height windows alternating with narrower bays which have 3-light mullioned clerestory windows.

28. The War Memorial Cloister, a Grade II* listed building, is the most recent of the group, being built in 1924 with an addition dating from 1945-50. This sandstone ashlar building is set into the slope to the south of the classroom block with a flight of steps leading up to a grassed forecourt in front of the classroom block. The cloister has a wide U-plan: a 5-bay arcade flanked by short but wide 3-bay arcaded wings.

29. The detached stone Toilet block to the rear of the classroom block is not listed in its own right, but by virtue of being within the curtilage of the listed classroom block. The proposed development would involve the demolition of the toilet block and could potentially affect the setting of the three other listed buildings. These impacts are considered in turn.

    Demolition of toilet block

30. The toilet block is a single storey stone building sitting to the north of the classroom block. It is listed by virtue of being within the curtilage of that listed building. On its own merits this building is certainly of poorer quality and of much less interest than the grouping of the three main listed buildings. Furthermore its relatively small scale means that it appears somewhat incongruous in the setting of the much more imposing listed buildings. While the SLBO has attributed some historic interest to the building, it is only listed because it lies within the curtilage of the much larger listed building, and its demolition is considered to cause less than substantial harm.

    Setting of listed buildings

31. The setting of a heritage asset such as a listed building can be defined as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced (NPPF, Annex 2, Glossary). Its extent is not fixed and is a matter of planning judgement. The setting itself is not a designated heritage asset.

    Setting of classroom building

32. The setting of the listed classroom block to the east of Powell Hall will be directly affected by the proposed building. This setting has already been compromised by the Maths block to the east and the car park directly to the north. Nonetheless, the proposed building would represent a major intrusion close to this listed building and within its setting.

33. This building (the earliest of the group) appears to have been orientated to face south across the school grounds into the open countryside beyond, and this is part of its heritage significance. This also has the effect that the building is prominent and stands out, particularly in views from the south. The rear elevation also faces open countryside across the landscaped grounds of the school, although the car park immediately to the rear does tend to detract from this part of the setting.

34. Consequently, the proposed building would disrupt the relationship of the listed classroom block with the school grounds and the countryside beyond. By way of mitigation, the new open space created between the two buildings would provide an academic ‘cloistered’ character, more in keeping with the setting of the listed building than the current car park.

35. Nonetheless, it is considered that the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the setting of this listed building.

Setting of Powell Hall

36. The proposed building will also be close to Powell Hall and within the setting of this heritage asset. It will be positioned at a diagonal from Powell Hall. At present Powell Hall is the first of the group of buildings encountered on the approach to the school along the tree-lined drive. Although set back from the drive behind a lawned area, it makes a prominent statement on the entrance to this part of the school campus. The proposed building would fundamentally alter this relationship. Indeed the external staircase has been designed in part to create a new 'entrance experience' to this part of the school. This, together with the physical presence of the proposed building and loss of trees, would harm the setting of the listed building at Powell Hall.

37. That said, the relationship between Powell Hall and the other two listed buildings would remain unaltered. Similarly, unlike the classroom block, Powell Hall would retain its setting with regard to the landscaped grounds and open countryside to the north. It is therefore considered that the harm caused to the setting of Powell Hall is less than substantial.

Setting of War Memorial

38. The application site lies on the opposite side of the classroom block from the War Memorial, which sits to the front. Indeed the Memorial blocks public views of the lower part of the classroom block from Busk Lane to the south and was no doubt intended to read in conjunction with the main building.

39. Due to the presence of buildings to the west (Powell Hall) and east (Maths block) the proposed building would not be viewed in context with the War Memorial. While the setting of a listed building extends beyond a mere visual connection it is considered that the way in which the Memorial is experienced will not be affected by the proposed development. The relationship of the Memorial to the classroom block and Powell Hall will remain undiminished. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not affect the setting of the War Memorial.

CONSERVATION AREA

40. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that, with respect to any buildings or other land in a Conservation Area, special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that Area.

41. The site lies within the Sedbergh Conservation Area (CA). The site forms part of Character Area 2 (School Zone) within the Sedbergh Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA). The site is not identified as a significant open space, within the CAA. However the open fields to the north area identified as Important Open Space for the purposes of Local Plan Policy C13 (see Landscape section).

42. The proposed development will create a change that will be perceptible in three views noted as important to the CA:

View 1 - across the school parkland landscape from Finkle Street
View 2 – from around the parish church
View 10 - from Winder Fell and from Castle Haw to the north.

The impacts of the proposed development on these identified views are considered below.

43. Approaching the site along the public footpath from the east, the change from the tight-knit building in the town centre to the parkland setting of larger school buildings is apparent. On this approach the proposed building will first be encountered behind, and then in the context of, the modern Maths block, which currently dominates views on this approach. As the proposed building would not project forward beyond the public footpath it would not alter the overall relationship between the town and the school.

44. On the approach along the drive from the west, the proposed building would appear far more prominent, and indeed has been designed in part to provide a more legible entrance to this part of the school. However as the building would not project into the open space to the north of the drive, it would not disrupt the overall relationship between the town and the school. It would read as a continuation of the current cluster of academic buildings on this site.

45. In terms of short-distance views, the greatest impact will be from the footpath to the north, down March Hill. While regularly used by the public, this is not a public right of way and so was not assessed in the CAA. In this view the later Maths block again dominates, with the group of trees partially screening the two listed buildings.

46. In longer distance views from the north, including from Winder, the new building would appear as the most prominent of the group. This impact would be exacerbated by the removal of the trees, which currently help to screen the two listed buildings. However in such longer distance views the overall character of the CA would remain – clusters of school buildings set within a well-treed parkland landscape including playing fields. As mentioned above, the proposed building would be viewed as a logical extension or 'rounding off' of the current group and would not extend into open countryside.

47. Notwithstanding the impacts of the proposed building itself on the character and appearance of the CA, the loss of the group of mature trees will have a significant harmful impact.

48. The conclusions drawn from the CAA are that the school is of major importance to the historic development of Sedbergh, and that it contributes significantly to the CA, namely the imposing historic buildings and surrounding green spaces which have been specifically provided to create a buffer to the town. Essentially, the contrast between the dense character of the town and the spacious layout of the school site is a unique, key characteristic of the Sedbergh CA.

49. The application needs to be assessed on whether it preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the CA, i.e. the imposing historic buildings in their green setting. It is obvious that the proposed works would have a negative impact, resulting in the loss of some green space as well as concealment of and significant encroachment into the setting of two of the imposing listed school buildings.

50. Although it represents a major intervention in the CA, there is some logic to developing this site in heritage terms. The proposed building would not extend beyond the envelope of the existing buildings and would form the latest addition to the loose cluster of building on this part of the campus. The overall relationship between the school buildings, their green setting and the tighter grain of the townscape would remain undiminished by the proposed building. So while the development could not be said to enhance the CA it would preserve its essential character.

ARCHAEOLOGY

51. Following discussions with the YDNPA's Archaeologist, an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) is being prepared. However there are no know archaeological features, designated or non-designated, within the site or within close proximity of the site.

52. Initial findings suggest that the archaeological potential of the application site is likely to be low; however, the level of survival of any potential archaeological remains is unclear, given the uncertainty surrounding the extent of made ground across the site and, whether this indicates ground disturbance or not. It is considered likely that a proportionate programme of investigation could be secured by planning condition and could take the form of a targeted watching brief during demolition and ground-breaking construction activities.

53. As a next step a walkover survey is due be undertaken to further inform the DBA as well as a visit to the archive within Sedbergh for further research on the historical background of the study area. An update, including the comments of the Archaeological Officer, will be provided at the meeting.

HERITAGE – CONCLUSION

54. In the opinion of the Senior Listed Building Officer the proposed development would result in substantial harm to the setting of the listed buildings and the CA. Para 201 of the NPPF states that, where a proposed development will lead to *substantial harm* to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

    a) The nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of this site; and
    b) No viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable it conservation; and
    c) Conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
    d) The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

55. However case law has established that the threshold for substantial harm is a high one, which could be described as a situation in which very much (if not all) of the significance of a heritage asset is 'drained away.' In this regard it is worth noting that the fabric of the three listed buildings would not be directly affected by the proposed development, the impacts being limited to their setting. In these terms, the setting of the listed buildings is a matter of planning judgement. As discussed above there is no dispute that the proposed building will have a negative impact on the setting of both the classroom block and Powell Hall. These two buildings, together with the War Memorial, are listed for group value. It is clear that the most recent building, the War Memorial, was designed and sited deliberately in line with the classroom building such as to make a very public statement when the buildings were viewed from public vistas from the south along Busk Lane. This setting will not be affected by the proposed building.

56. The siting of Powell Hall would appear to be less considered. It does not sit full square with the earlier classroom block such that the space between the buildings exists as no more than a thoroughfare - it does not appear to be a deliberately designed open space. The classroom block itself (the earliest building) does appear to have been aligned so that both the front and rear elevations face the surrounding fells. Although whether it was designed to offer views out is more a matter of conjecture. However there is no doubt that the proposed building would have a negative impact on the setting of the classroom block and, to a lesser extent, Powell Hall.

57. The proposed building would see the development of an open space which sits between the classroom building and the open fields beyond the drive. However the modern Maths building to the east already extends to the drive and the proposed building would extend no further north. In that respect the proposed building would not alter the overall relationship between the school and the town. The setting of the classroom building would be affected, just as it has over time with the erection of Powell Hall, the War Memorial and the Maths block. However, while this would undoubtedly be a harmful impact, it is considered as less than substantial in that the significance of the heritage asset is not 'drained away'.

58. The impact of the proposed building on the setting of Powell Hall is similarly considered to be less than substantial. The proposed building would sit diagonally across from Powell Hall. The relationship of Powell Hall to the classroom block, the drive and open fields beyond would remain unaltered.

59. In terms of impacts on the CA it is considered that the relationship between the school buildings, their open setting and the town would be preserved, though not enhanced. Any harm to the character and appearance of the CA would therefore be less than substantial.

60. In conclusion it is therefore considered that the harm caused by the proposed development to the various heritage assets, individually and cumulatively, is less than substantial.

61. Para 202 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to *less than substantial harm* to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. The public benefits of the proposed development are discussed below.

TREES AND LANDSCAPE

62. Local Plan Policy W3 (Protecting trees, hedgerows and walls) states that if the NPA considers that the loss of a tree that is of landscape, nature conservation or historical value is unavoidable, it will require a scheme of replacement or mitigation that will compensate for the loss.

63. The application is accompanied by a Pre-development Arboricultural Report. This includes a survey of 250 trees within the vicinity of the application site, contained within 15 groups. Of these 250 trees, 10 were classified as Category A (high quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 40 years) and 58 as Category B (moderate quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 20 years).

64. The proposed development would result in the loss of a total of 9 trees, a mix of Sycamore, Beech and Lime. Six of these trees are Category B, with three being Category C (low quality with an estimated life expectancy of at least 10 years, or young trees with a stem diameter below 150mm). The three Category C trees are at the east end of the group, closest to the front of the lawned area.

65. A single Category A Oak tree would remain on the lawn to the front of Powell Hall. In addition, the avenue of trees lining the drive would remain unaffected by the proposed building or the new car park.

66. The group of trees to be felled form a significant landscape feature within the CA and help to frame/screen the existing group of listed buildings. The loss of these trees would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the CA and harm to the setting of the listed buildings.

67. In mitigation, some limited planting is proposed in the open fields to the north of the application site, which will help to soften views of the proposed building and car park in the medium to long term. In addition, the school has submitted plans showing their tree planting plan across the whole estate, though this does not compensate for the landscape harm caused at the site it is some compensation in terms of loss of tree cover, biodiversity and habitat.

68. The Authority's Tree and Woodlands Officer has objected to the loss of the trees identified for removal and in relation to the potential impact of the construction of the parking area on the root systems of the avenue of trees along the entrance road. These comments have been forwarded to the applicant for further comment however it is noted that the car park layout has been designed to avoid root zones and there would be minimal change in ground levels.

69. The site of the proposed car park forms part of an Important Open Space, as defined fo the purposes of Local Plan Policy C13. Within these areas development proposals will only be permitted where they will not result in the loss of, or significantly harm, their qualities or functions. As the construction of the car park will retain the open character of this space and, subject to appropriate landscaping, it is not considered to cause significant harm to this Important Open Space or its contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.or the visual quality and intrinsic character of the landscape.

HIGHWAYS

70. Vehicular access to the proposed development would be gained from the existing gateway off Station Road, which would remain unaltered. The proposed development involves the setting out of a new 27-space car park to replace the spaces lost by the new building. The new car park would be sited to the west of the new building, north of the access drive.

71. The proposed car park would sit behind the existing boundary fence which runs along the north side of the drive. The existing avenue of trees along the drive would not be affected. It would have a 'grasscrete' surface in order to mitigate its impact on the wider landscape.

72. Amended plans were produced on the advice of the Highway Authority, showing a turning space at the end of the car park., and further comment from Highways will be reported to the meeting.

BIODIVERSITY

73. Local Plan Policy W2 (Biodiversity enhancement) states that new development that would have an impact on biodiversity will be required to make a proportionate on-site contribution to wildlife enhancement in accordance with Table 7 and the Yorkshire Dales Design Guide.

74. The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, at Bat Survey and a completed Biodiversity Metric. The Bat Survey concludes that the toilet block has moderate bat roost potential, while the trees have low to moderate potential. A planning condition could be added to any permission granted, requiring a scheme of mitigation and biodiversity enhancement. This would be informed by further bat survey work.

FLOOD RISK/DRAINAGE

75. The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment. The application site lies within Flood Zone 1 (low flood risk) and the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in accordance with Local Plan Policy CC2 and advice in the NPPF. Foul water arising from the development would discharge

into existing drainage system. The proposed car park would have a fully permeable surface and water would infiltrate directly into the ground.

ECONOMIC BENEFIT

76. Local Plan BE1 (Business development sites) states that the expansion or redevelopment of existing business uses in or adjacent to the list of settlements in Table 1 will be permitted, subject to satisfying the requirements of Policy SP4 (Development quality).

77. The YDNPA's Management Plan (2019-2024) provides numerous measurable objectives for the Authority to pursue by 2024. These include Theme E, Objective E8:

    'Deliver at least one significant economic development project in each of Craven, Eden, Richmondshire and South Lakeland, and increase the number and quality of jobs so to increase gross added value (GVA) by 10% by 2024.'

78. Sedbergh School is the largest employer in National Park, employing c450 people, including 101 full-time and 64 part-time teaching staff (2021 figures). The proposed development would create 7 full-time jobs at an average cost of £60k each. It would also help the School to achieve the planned growth in pupil numbers from 570 to 620.

79. By way of judging the wider economic benefits of the proposed development, an independent study of the impacts of the building of the Hirst Centre in 2017/18 concluded that that development provided an additional 100 FTEs and £1.7million GVA for Sedbergh and 114 jobs and £1.8million for a 50-mile radius.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

80. The application is accompanied by a Community Access Opportunities Report, which identifies the potential direct benefits of the proposed development for the local community. The School has already made contact with three local primary schools who have expressed an interest in using the proposed Technology Centre, particularly for Design & Technology and Computer science. The building could also be made available for local community groups and organisations.

81. While details of the proposed community use have yet to be firmed up a condition of any permission granted could require more details to be submitted prior to the first use of the building. A similar condition was added to the permission for the School's sports facility at Hirst Hall on Busk Lane (Ref S/03/591).

PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

82. The Parish Council has no objection to the proposed devlopment and support the underlying principles behind it.

EQUALITY ACT

83. The Authority has a duty under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share it. The relevant characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

84. It is considered that there are no overt reasons why this proposal would affect anyone with the protected characteristics such that the application should be permitted or refused on equality grounds.

CONCLUSION

85. The NPPF requires the Authority to apply 'great weight' to the need to conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations. These protections transfer the Authority's first statutory purpose into planning guidance. However in pursuit of the first statutory purpose the Authority has a duty towards the social and economic wellbeing of the communities within the Park. This is a proposal were there are conflicts between landscape, heritage and wildlife considerations and social and economic benefits.

86. The main impacts of this proposal arise from the siting of the building in close proximity to listed buildings resulting in the loss of large mature trees of significant amenity value.

87. Para 202 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

88. It is considered that the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to several heritage assets; the setting of Powell Hall and the classroom block, and to the Conservation Area, both through the erection of the new building and the loss of trees. Having regard to the importance of Sedbergh School to the local economy and community, the public benefits of the proposed development, including economic development and community use, are given significant weight in this balance to the extent that they outweigh the less than substantial harm caused to the heritage assets. Furthermore the building itself is considered to be of high quality design and materials, that would create a visually interesting and highly sustainable feature building as well as a useful enclosed courtyard space. It is considered that the positive aspects of the proposal would, on balance, outweigh the negative impacts on the historical environment.

89. The loss of the mature trees is highly regrettable and has prompted much discussion with the applicants over alternative sites, building size and design. The trees have significant amenity value in their own right but also contribute to the setting of the listed buildings, the character of the conservation area and the scenic beauty of the area. However their loss is only likely to have a significant impact on the immediate vicinity of the site given the amount of mature tree cover on the campus and around Sedbergh. Views from Winder and other elevated positions will not be significantly affected given the number of trees in the vicinity of the site such that the visual quality and intrinsic character of the National Park landscape will not be significantly affected. Nevertheless it is considered that more significant planting of mature trees (than is shown on the submitted plans) in the open space to the north of the site and around the proposed car park is needed to soften the impact of the proposal without detriment to the open pastoral character of this part of the Conservation Area.

RECOMMENDATION

90. It is recommended that permission is GRANTED subject to conditions including the following:

Time Limit

Approved plans

Sample of materials

Sample panel

Landscape planting

Biodiversity enhancement

Highway conditions

EHO conditions

Sustainable Drainage Systems

Community Use agreement

YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

NOTE OF PLANNING COMMITTEE SITE VISIT

Date & time of visit: 10.00am 30/09/2022

Application site: Sedbergh School, Sedbergh

Attendance

Members:

M Corner, N Heseltine, R Heseltine, I Mitchell, Y Peacock, N Swain, L Bateman, A Murday, S Lancaster

Others: M Williams (Senior Planning Officer), R Graham (Head of Development Management).

NS	Opened the meeting at 10.00am at the car park r/o the Main Building
MW	Led Members to the front of the War Memorial and explained the site context – the school campus, the listed buildings (War Memorial [Grade II*], Main Building and Powell Hall), Conservation Area, arrangement of school buildings in clusters within campus comprising open spaces, pasture, playing fields etc. Views across to the new Sports hall (Hurst Centre) were considered.
MW	Led Members back up to the front of Main Building and Powell Hall and then to the plan of the school campus, pointing out the arrangement of buildings within the campus, the spatial relationship with the town and the location of the first site considered (Art and Design buildings).
RG	NS asked about the original site and RG explained that this site was ideal from a landscape and heritage perspective, being within what may have been a small building stone quarry. However the site was eventually discounted because of the high cost and practical implications of demolishing and relocating Art and Design and the boiler house to another location on the campus.
MW	Led Members to the site and explained the proposal including: position of new buildings, removal of trees, demolition of toilet block building (curtilage listed structure), design of new buildings and materials, relationship to Main Building, Powell Hall, footpath, entrance drive, and surrounding land, views within and without the Conservation Area, from Winder (hill) and the town. MW explained the Senior Listed Building Officer's objection on the grounds of the impact on the setting of the listed buildings, demolition of toilet block and on the Conservation Area.

RH Commented that the architecture of the rear of the Main Building was more visually appealing than that of Powell Hall and that the fenestration on the proposed building didn't follow that on the existing buildings.

LB Asked why the proposed building was sited in the field rather than the car park which requires the removal of several mature trees. The trees sequester a significant amount of carbon.

NH Asked about compensatory tree planting?

There followed a general discussion with a number of Members asking questions about alternative sites. The land in front of Powell Hall was raised. Members also asked questions about the design and what benefits there would be for the town.

Officers explained that the proposal included compensatory planting, that the building would be constructed to high sustainability standards. Officers explained the design concept and use of materials insofar as it represents a modern architectural solution – a modern design, using contemporary materials, that respects the architecture and character of the listed buildings but also reflects its function as a technology centre.

RG Explained that the School is the largest employer in the National Park, that it is very important to the local economy and the vitality of Sedbergh, that it must compete with other major private schools in the country, many of which benefit from significant investment. The Tech Centre proposal is supported by businesses and organisations within Cumbria and is an important project for the School and for its growth and competitiveness. It was explained that there would be use of the facility by local schools and businesses.

MW Led the group to March Hill opposite the site which provides an elevated view of the site and adjacent buildings. The following were noted and discussed: the removal of trees, the relative height of the existing and proposed buildings (proposed being lower), the design and appearance of 1970s Maths building, the position of the proposed car parking area.

MC Asked about the land in front of Powell Hall as a more suitable site? Officers explained that the site was not large enough for the Tech Centre which has a critical floorspace requirement and that there would be similar problems with being located in close proximity to a listed building.

NS Closed the meeting at 10.55am.