

SECTION D
DEVELOPMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Background Documents: the deposited documents; views and representations received as referred to in the reports and included in the development proposals dossier for each case; and other documents as might be additionally indicated.

Item D1

New sports hall and extended tennis courts at The Skinners School, Tunbridge Wells – TW/09/1033

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 8 September 2009.

Application submitted by The Governors of the Skinners School for a new sports hall and extended tennis courts at The Skinners School, St Johns Road, Tunbridge Wells (Ref: TW/09/1033)

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mr R Bullock

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

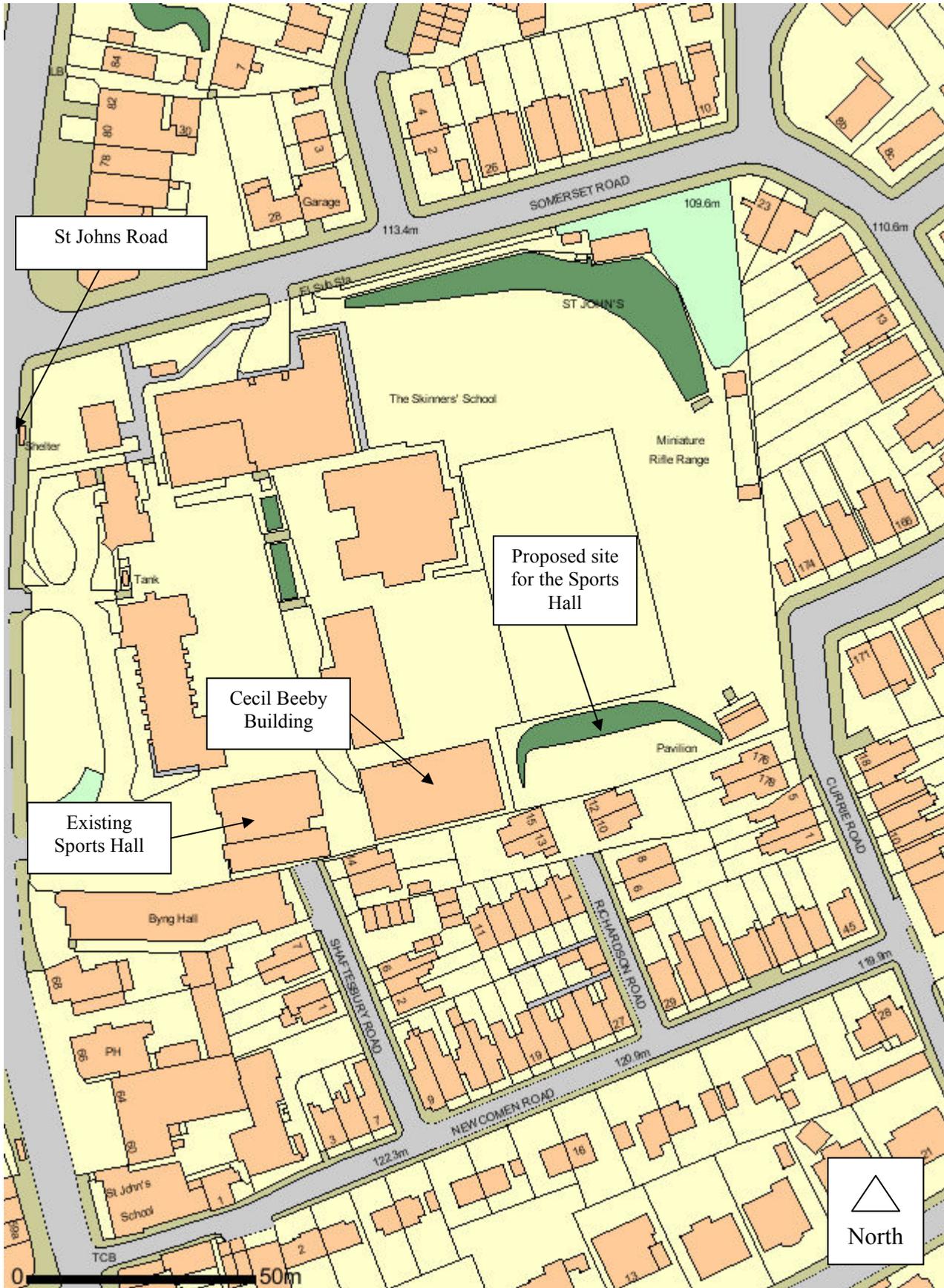
1. The Skinners School is located to the north of Tunbridge Wells town centre, to the west of St. Johns Road. The main school buildings are located to the west hand side of the site, parallel to the frontage with St. Johns Road. Beyond that, surfaced and fenced games courts and open recreational grassland extends to the east. Apart from the frontage of the school, which faces a dairy, the Skinners School site is surrounded by residential roads with traditional red brick two storey properties either facing or directly backing onto the site. The proposed location for the two storey sports hall is to the south eastern side of the school site, on an area of grass bank which raises in level from the existing edge of the sports courts to the site's boundary with properties in Richardson Road. Part of the tennis courts would also accommodate the sports hall and, therefore, it is proposed to extend the courts to the north and east, towards Somerset Road. A site plan is attached.

Background

2. A planning application for a Sports Hall on the Skinners School site, submitted in 2006, was withdrawn following a Members Site Visit on the 6 November 2007. That application, which was submitted by a different Architectural practice, proposed to locate the sports hall on the eastern boundary of the school site, between the existing tennis courts and the rifle range. That application met with objection on a number of grounds including overshadowing, loss of light, design and massing, and highway concerns related to community use. Following the Members' Site Visit, the applicant was requested to consider an alternative site for the Sports Hall, hence the subsequent submission of this latest planning application.
3. Following the submission of this current application in March this year, the applicant has amended the proposed development due to objections from neighbouring properties and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, and concerns raised by the County Council's Noise Consultant. The current application as first submitted met with objection on the grounds of design and massing, proximity to neighbouring properties, loss of light, privacy and overlooking, noise pollution, proposed extended hours of use and traffic and parking implications. The application as first submitted is essentially the same as the scheme that will be discussed throughout this report. However, the applicant has

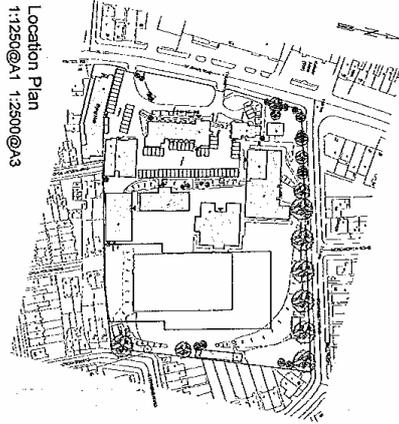
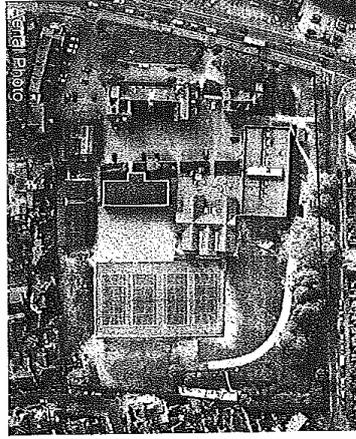
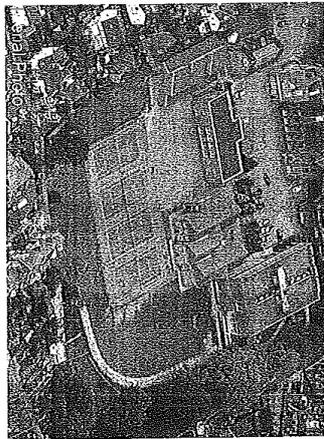
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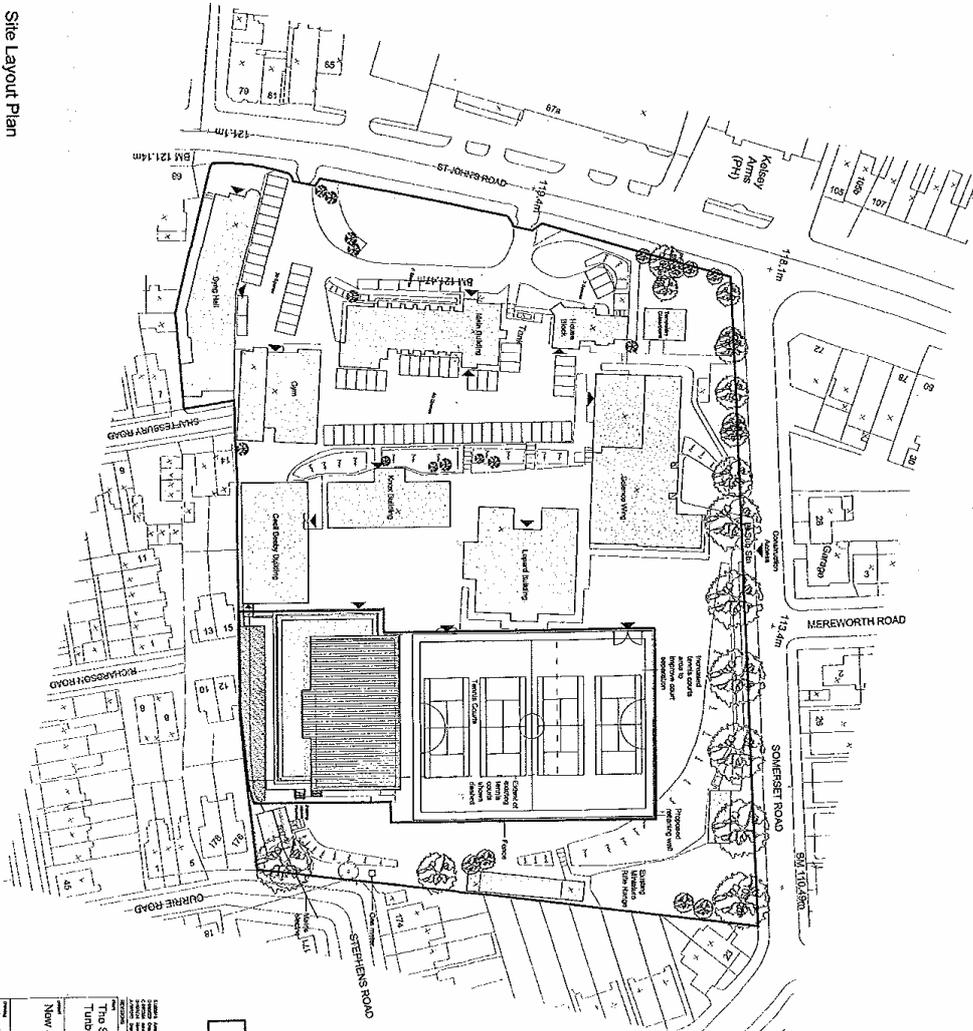
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Location Plan
1:1250@A1 1:2500@A3

Site Layout Plan
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PLANNING

13.1.11.133

THE SKINNERS SCHOOL
TUNBRIDGE WELLS
NEW SPORTS HALL

Site Location and
Layout Plans

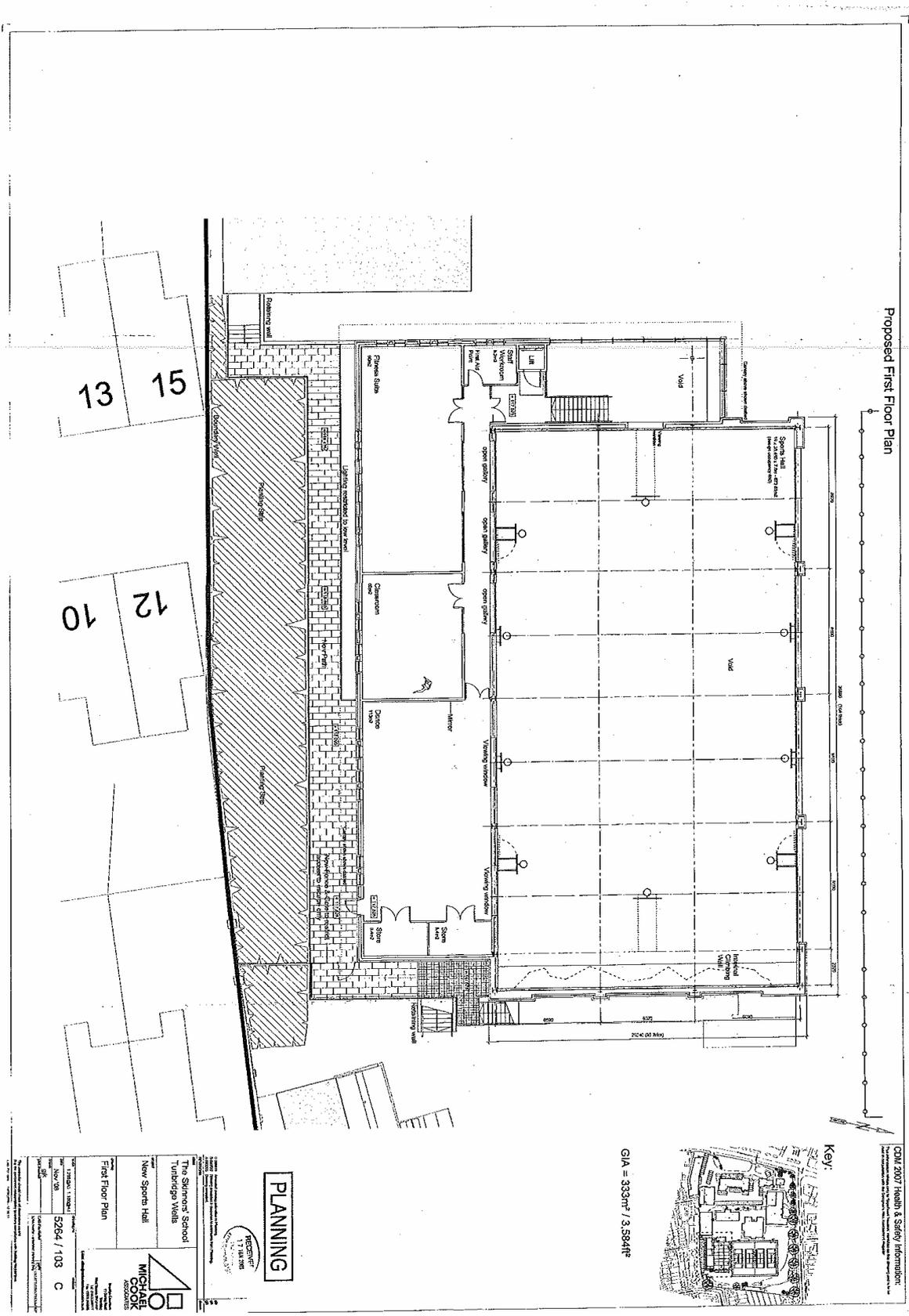
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MICHAEL COOK
ARCHITECTS

CDM 2007 Health & Safety Information

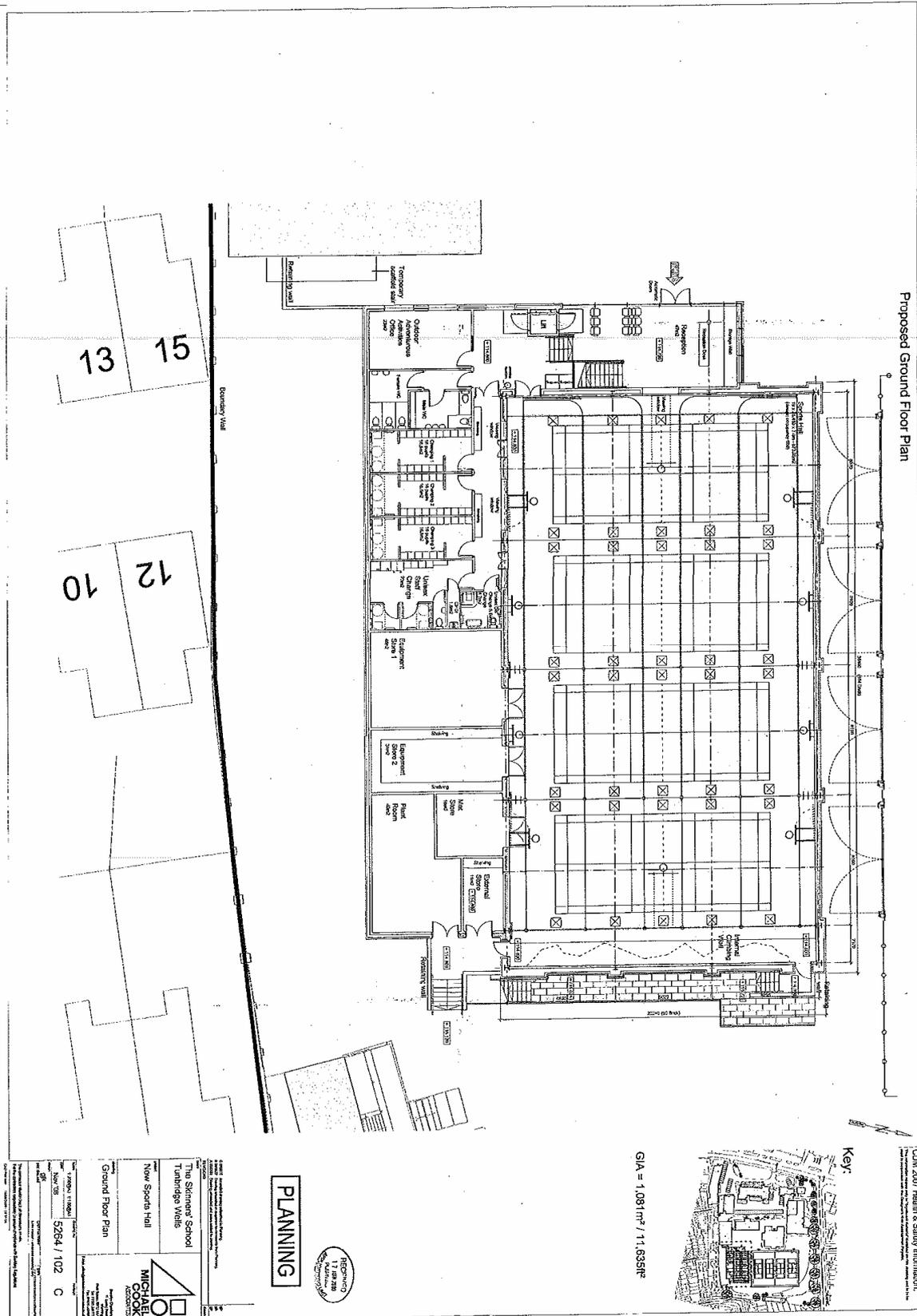
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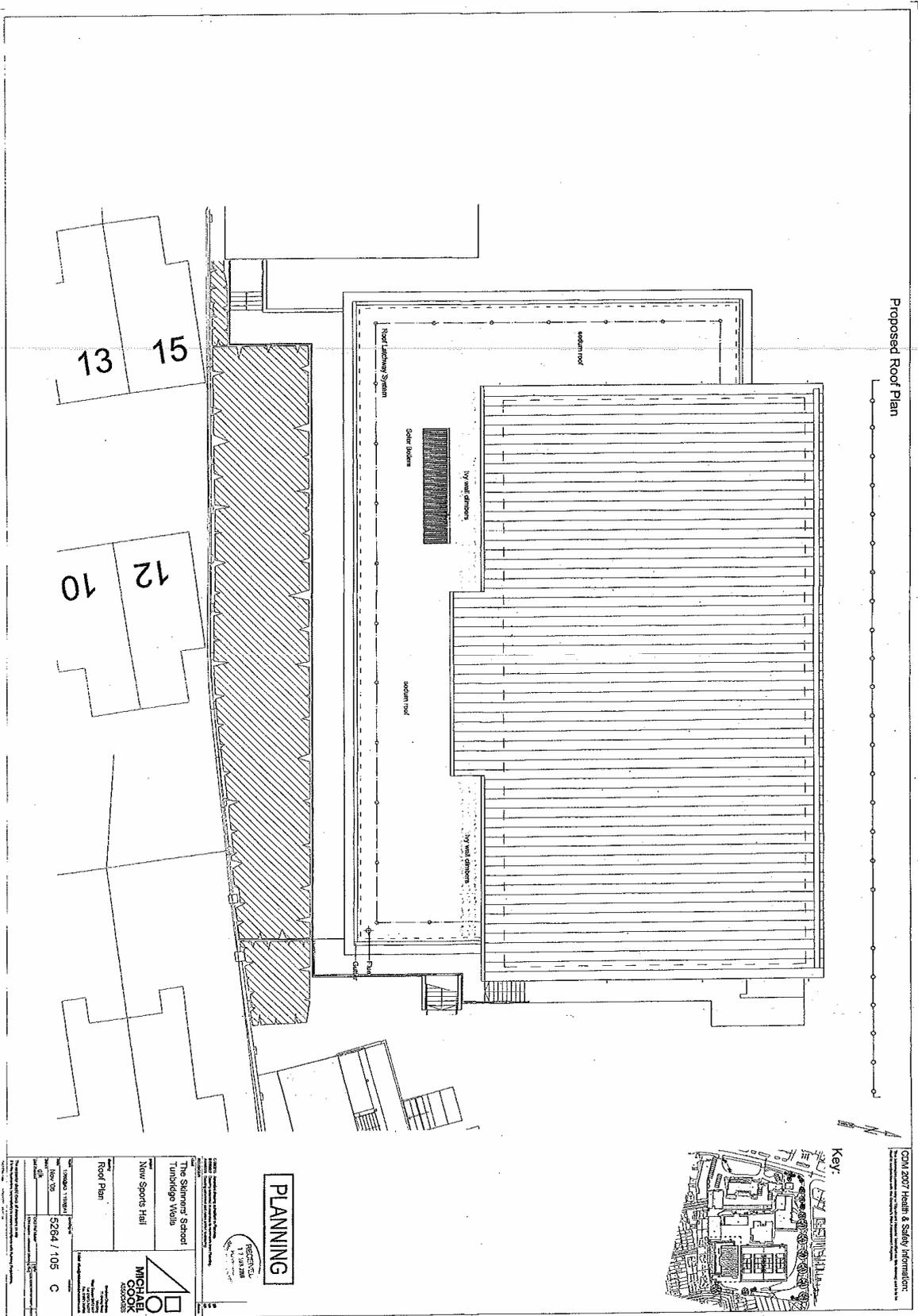
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made a number of 'minor' amendments to the proposed development in an effort to overcome the concerns and points of objection raised.

4. The amended proposal attempts to address the design and massing concerns by introducing brick piers to the eastern elevation, amending the curve of the roof to make it appear more slender, resulting in a reduction in height of 1m, and the introduction of climbing plants to the eastern and high level southern elevations. In addition, a sedum roof is now proposed to finish the flat roof element of the sports hall in an effort to improve the outlook from neighbouring properties. However, the most significant amendment is that the building has been moved 5 metres further north, away from the southern boundary, increasing the distance between the proposed building and the boundary from 4.2m to 9.2m at the western end of the building and from 2.5m to 7.5m at the eastern end. In addition, the increased distance between the sports hall and the boundary has enabled the applicant to introduce a landscaping/tree planting strip to the south, including defensible planting to aid security. It is the revised submission that will be outlined and discussed throughout this report. As part of the determination of the current application, a group of Planning Application Committee Members visited the site on the 22 July 2009, at which time the revised submission (as outlined above) was discussed (notes attached as Appendix 1).

Proposal

5. This application proposes the erection of a new sports hall and extended tennis courts at The Skinners School, Tunbridge Wells. The sports hall would be sited along the southern boundary of the school site, on part of the existing tennis courts and extending towards the site's boundary with properties in Richardson Road. The sports hall would be sited between the existing school pavilion and the Cecil Beeby teaching block, and the tennis courts extended to the north and east to compensate for the court lost to accommodate the sports hall, and to allow larger run off areas.
6. The applicant advises that the existing school gym does not meet the guidance provided by Sport England for the provision of sports facilities in secondary schools, and is in a poor state of repair. Ofsted considers that the accommodation available for physical education is unsatisfactory, that the gymnasium is small and that restricted indoor facilities place restraints on activities during inclement weather. The applicant further advises that due to the location of the existing gym within the school site, it is not practical to extend, or demolish and rebuild, on this existing site. Therefore, it is the School's intention to convert the existing gym into a library following the completion of a replacement sports hall, although that is not included within this planning application. The applicant advises that alternative sites for the sports hall have been considered, including providing the hall at the School's remote playing fields in Southfields, approximately a mile away from the school site. In addition, alternative sites within the main school campus have been considered, although these have been discounted for various reasons including operational difficulties, proximity to existing school buildings, tree removal and the blocking of access for emergency services.
7. The proposed sports hall would accommodate a four court sports hall, fitness suite, classroom, dance studio, changing facilities, equipment stores, a reception area and office space. The building would measure approximately 40 metres in length and 28 metres in width. The accommodation would be spread over two floors, although the upper floor accommodation would not be as high as the main sports hall element of the building, and would be located under a flat sedum planted roof extending towards the southern boundary of the site. In addition, the building would be lowered into the ground

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by 900mm and, due to the existing banking towards the southern boundary, the lower floor would effectively be under ground. The ancillary accommodation to the south of the building would appear single storey when viewed from properties in Richardson Road, extending a maximum of 3.5 metres from ground level. The floor to ceiling heights have also been kept to a minimum to reduce the height and massing of the building. The tallest element of the sports hall has been located to the north in order to minimise its impact upon neighbouring properties. The curved zinc roof would be 8.5m high at the tallest point, and climbing plants would be planted along the 'step up' in height from the flat sedum roof to the eaves of the curved roof in an effort to mitigate its impact. The lower height flat roof element of the scheme would be approximately 9.2m from the boundary at the western end of the building, and 7.5m at the eastern end, whereas the 'step up' to the eaves of the curved sports hall roof would be approximately 17m from the boundary at the western end and 15m at the eastern end. The side elevation of properties in Richardson Road are essentially on that boundary line, and a property in Currie Road is within 3 metres of the boundary wall.

8. Due to the proximity of the sports hall to the boundary and neighbouring properties, the applicant has undertaken a detailed 'Overshadowing Analysis' to ensure that the development would not have a detrimental impact upon neighbouring properties with regards to loss of light and any overshadowing. The analysis was done using a 3D modelling programme, and produced a series of images showing the shadow that the proposed building would create at varying times of the day, over varying times of the year. The 3D modelling showed that all shadows created by the sports hall would fall within the school site, and that properties to the south and east of the site would not experience any overshadowing as a result of the proposed development.
9. The elevations of the sports hall would be predominately formed from a combination of brickwork, zinc cladding, curtain walling and Kalwall glazing. The School's existing building stock is predominately finished in a red facing brick, as are local residential dwellings. In light of this, a red stock brick is also proposed for the Sports Hall. In order to minimise the pitch of the main roof a metal roofing material is proposed, and the flat roof elements of the scheme would be covered with sedum. The applicant has given consideration to the use of slate or more traditional finishes, but these would result in an overall increase in building height. Existing school buildings use lead work on key details, including turrets to the original school building. The proposed zinc material would allow hand tooling and detailing to be incorporated in to the sports hall design, whilst being similar in appearance to lead. Curtain walling and aluminium windows are considered to be robust materials which would ensure that the sports hall had a long life, whilst maximising daylight within the facility. Natural light to the sports hall itself would be provided via Kalwall glazing to the north elevation. This product provides diffuse natural light, and its location on the north elevation would ensure that no direct sunlight enters the sports hall itself. The applicant advises that this, together with careful orientation, would ensure minimum solar gain to internal spaces. It is anticipated that this development would achieve a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good', and would incorporate sustainable features such as a sedum planted roof, a solar boiler and a high thermal mass design.
10. An extension to the tennis courts is proposed to ensure that no external courts are lost as a result of the development, and to increase the separation between the courts to meet Lawn Tennis Association standards. The courts would be extended to the north and east, and would be finished in a synthetic material. A 3m high weld mesh fence would secure the court area, with access gates for vehicles and pedestrians. The applicant states that the colour of the fencing is yet to be agreed.

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11. The proposed development would not increase staff or pupil numbers, although community use of the facility is proposed (see paragraph 12). Access to the site would remain as existing, via the two pedestrian and vehicular entrance points on St Johns Road. In addition, the applicant advises that adequate parking is provided within the school site, all of which would be made available for any out of hours community use.
12. The Skinners School currently offers its facilities for hire to the 'Tunbridge Wells Community'. The existing spaces that are currently regularly let (mainly during school term times) include the main school hall, the dining hall, gymnasium, Byng Hall and a number of teaching classrooms. The existing facilities are let, in most instances, to small external groups, clubs and organisations associated with sports, dance and keep fit related activities. Lettings currently take place at the end of the school day, between 4pm and 10pm, and all parking is accommodated on site. On Saturdays the Italia Conti Dance Academy franchise currently takes over the whole site for the day, starting at 9am and finishing at approximately 6pm. Should planning permission be granted for the proposed sports hall, the applicant does not expect, or wish for, excessive growth to the current lettings activity. It is envisaged that those classes currently using the gymnasium would migrate to the new sports hall. However, the applicant states that there may be some scope for additional lettings to be accepted in the new dance suite, although these numbers would be low. The hours of use proposed are 8.00am to 22.00pm Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 18.00pm on Saturdays and 10.00am to 18.00pm on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

This application was accompanied by the submission of a Design & Access Statement, Contamination Assessment, Drainage Assessment, BB93 Noise Assessment, Renewable Energy Assessment, Statement of Community Involvement and a School Travel Plan.

Reduced copies of the submitted drawings showing the site layout, elevations, and access are attached.

Planning Policy

13. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of the application:
 - (i) The adopted **South East Plan 2009**:
 - Policy CC1** - The principle objective of the Plan is to achieve and maintain sustainable development in the region.
 - Policy CC4** - The design and construction of all new development, and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be expected to adopt and incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques.
 - Policy CC6** - Actions and decisions associated with the development and use of land will actively promote the creation of sustainable and distinctive communities.
 - Policy S3** - Requires Local Planning Authorities to work with partners to ensure the adequate provision of school facilities to ensure access is available for all sections of society to education

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facilities with good public transport access. Mixed use approaches, including community use, are to be encouraged.

Policy S5 - Increased and sustainable participation in sport and recreation should be encouraged.

Policy NRM10 - Refers to measures to address and reduce noise pollution.

Policy W2 - Sustainable design, construction and demolition should be encouraged to minimise waste production.

(ii) **Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan (2006):**

Policy EN1 - Seeks all proposals to be compatible in nature and intensity with neighbouring uses and not cause significant harm to character and amenities of the area in terms of daylight, sunlight, privacy, noise or excessive traffic generation. Seeks the design of the proposal to respect the context of the site and not cause significant harm to residential amenities.

Policy TP4 - Seeks new development to be located where the road hierarchy has adequate capacity to cater for the traffic which would be generated by the development, and not compromise the safety and free flow of traffic or for other road users. Seeks a safely located access with adequate visibility.

Policy CS3 - Proposals for school provision will only be permitted if proposals are located within the Limits to Built Development, as defined on the Proposals Map, unless they are allocated in accordance with Policy CS2 or represent an extension to an established school development

Consultations

14. **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council:** initially objected to the proposal but following the revised submission raises no objection to the application, providing the following can be secured by requesting further amended plans of by way of planning condition:

- the provision of soft landscaping, comprising appropriate tree planting along the southern and eastern site boundaries, such that views of the building would be screened from views from public vantage points and neighbouring dwellings;
 - measures to prevent access by people, other than for emergency purposes, to the area between the southern boundary and the building;
 - imposition of appropriate conditions to control hours of construction and hours of opening of the sports facilities and to control noise emissions;
- (The Borough Council has provided a list of suggested conditions.)*

The Divisional Transport Manager: raises no objection but requests that a condition be imposed to ensure that the existing vehicle parking within the site be available at all times to outside users when the hall is in use out of school hours.

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The County Council's Noise Consultant: comments as follows:

“The applicant has provided a noise assessment in which maximum octave band noise levels have been suggested at 1m from a roof plant enclosure on the southern roof elevation, and 1m from a set of Louvered doors located on the western façade of the proposed sports hall. The suggested maximum octave band noise levels have been established to ensure that noise levels at the closest residential properties do not exceed NR35 (Noise Rating Curve).

It is understood that the applicant has undertaken the assessment using this method having undertaken consultation with TWBC and it is appreciated that the maximum octave band noise levels presented in the assessment are likely to ensure that noise levels at the residential properties will not exceed NR35. However, I would advise that using NR curves for establishing maximum noise levels does not limit the potential for tonal elements of the source and does not consider the existing background noise environment that residents of nearby properties currently experience. As such I would recommend the use of BS4142 as an appropriate document for establishing noise level limits from plant items, and would therefore recommend the following as a condition:

“The noise rating level (derived in accordance with BS4142) from all fixed plant associated with the sports shall not exceed the measured background noise level (L_{A90}) at the closest residential receiver”

With regards the issue of noise from activities within the sports hall, I would advise that conditions regarding the requirement for closed windows and closed doors during activities in the hall are appropriate in ensuring noise from within the hall does not disturb residential amenity.”

The Environment Agency: raises no objection but requests that a sustainable surface water drainage scheme for the site be agreed.

Sport England: does not object to the principle of the development, but offers guidance and advice to the applicant with regards to the design and layout of sports facilities. It is requested that a condition of consent should be imposed to ensure the design and layout of the development is fit for purpose and of an appropriate standard and quality of design.

Local Member

15. The local County Member, Mr Roy Bullock, was notified of the original application on the 2 April 2009 and the revised proposal on the 18 June 2009. Mr Bullock requested that a Members Site Visit be undertaken, and sought assurances that pupils would not be able to access the area of land between the building and the site boundary. It was suggested that locked gates be provided at either end of the building. Mr Bullock attended and spoke at the Members Site Visit. Notes of the meeting are attached to this report in appendix 1.

Publicity

16. The original application was publicised by advertisement in a local newspaper, the posting of a 4 site notice(s) and the individual notification of 88 nearby properties. The

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revised proposal was advertised by the individual notification of 22 nearby properties, all of which submitted representations regarding the original application.

Representations

17. As of Friday 28 August 2009, I have received letters of representation from 23 local properties regarding the original proposal, and 19 local properties with regards to the revised proposal. A summary of any letters of representation received after this date will be reported verbally to Members.

A summary of the main planning issues raised/points made to date are set out below:

- Local residents have not been adequately consulted or invited to pre-application events held at the school, and the plans/amended plans have been difficult to view;
- The amendments made to the application make little/no difference to local opinion and are considered to be a token effort by the applicant to tick the 'respond to residents' box;
- The building would be too high and large, and located too close to neighbouring residential properties. The visual impact would be detrimental to the locality and the building is out of scale with surrounding development and would be overbearing in nature;
- The building is far too big for this small over congested site. The footprint of the building is the equivalent to 10 terraced houses and gardens;
- The design of the building is not in keeping with the Victorian and Edwardian architecture in the locality and would be an eyesore;
- Planting/landscaping and a sedum roof would aid in mitigating the impact of the building;
- The building is of an industrial appearance;
- The building would block out sunlight to neighbouring properties and create excessive overshadowing;
- The development would affect the privacy and security of neighbouring properties;
- The efforts to secure and landscape the area between the sports hall and the boundary are noted. This area should be maintained and not left to become overgrown scrub;
- The development would blight views from local properties and have a detrimental impact on the street scene;
- Property prices would be adversely affected;
- External lighting would cause a nuisance to neighbouring properties;
- The sports hall would create significant noise pollution throughout the school day, from both its use and its ventilation plant. Windows and doors would also be opened in hot weather;
- It is understood the sports hall would be used until late in the evening after school hours, at weekends and during school holidays. That would cause increased noise disturbance and nuisance to neighbours;
- Opening hours should be restricted and use should only be for sports activities and not social functions, meetings, parties, etc;
- Bats roost in the adjacent pavilion, and their flight path would be adversely affected;
- Additional traffic would cause further congestion, pollution and parking problems;
- The school site is already overdeveloped and further development here would lead to the loss of more open space, used by the students at break times;
- Can fire/emergency vehicles access the proposed sports hall?;
- Adequate consideration has not been given to developing the existing gym, or alternative locations within the site. It is also suggested that the sports hall be located at Chestnut Avenue, Southfields, where the School have their sports pitches;
- It is suggested that the reasons given as to why the Southfields site cannot be used are flawed and inaccurate;

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- The need for the sports hall is questioned, especially given that other sporting facilities are located in close proximity to the school;
- Concerns are expressed over noise, dust, structural damage to properties, traffic and mud on the road associated with construction works.

In addition, I have received a petition against the proposed development signed by 55 local residents.

A Borough Councillor for St. Johns, Cllr. Tracy Moore, has relayed the concerns of some residents in her ward, which fall under the following headings:

- Commercial use of the new Sports Hall;
- Security;
- Roof material;
- Consultation with neighbours.

A second Borough Councillor for St. Johns, Cllr. Lesley Herriot, objects to the proposed development for the following reasons:

- the plans may have been amended but there are only small differences that will still impinge on the lives and homes of those nearby;
- the hall is too large and intrusive, and is not in keeping with local architecture. Using the same colour bricks will not enable the sports hall to 'fit in';
- noise will impact on local residents;
- the building would dominate the skyline and cut out light to neighbouring homes;
- the grass roof appears to be a token gesture;
- the Southborough playing fields site would be more suitable;
- construction traffic could pose great problems;
- many residents have seen views from their gardens and their sunlight disappear over the years due to developments at the school;
- there has been no proper consultation and many residents are unaware of the amendments.

A third Borough Councillor for St. Johns, Cllr. Chris Woodward, expresses the following concerns over the proposed development:

- the development is too large for the site, and has the School provided good evidence that pupil need alone justifies the need for the enlarged facility;
- it is imperative that the impact on neighbours amenity is the absolute minimum. Proper attention may not have been given to this in the application as submitted;
- the amendments to the scheme are appreciated, although concerns remain regarding the positioning and impact of plant/ventilation systems, noise implications of the development and anti-social behaviour/activities;
- it is requested that the use of the sports hall cease at 9.30pm, and the site be vacated by 10.00pm;
- trees and landscaping should be planted to the south and east of the building, and a management plan for this should be provided;
- there should be explicit measures and a management plan to ensure the street scene for residents of Stephens Road is pleasing.

Discussion

18. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan policies outlined in paragraph (13) above. Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this

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proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. Issues of particular relevance include siting, design and massing, impact upon residential and local amenity, community use and highway implications.

Siting, massing and designSiting

19. Development Plan policy requires new developments to be of a high quality and well designed. Applications will be considered in accordance with a number of design principles including the appropriateness of scale and massing, use of good quality materials, the design respecting the character and appearance of existing buildings, and safeguarding the amenity of neighbouring properties. This application proposes the construction of a two storey sports hall on the south eastern side of the school site, on an area of grass bank which raises in level from the existing edge of the outdoor sports/tennis courts to the site's boundary with properties in Richardson Road. As a result of the development, a tennis court would be lost, hence the applicants proposal to extend the existing courts to the north and east, towards Somerset Road. The siting, massing and design of the proposed sports hall has met with objection from local residents and will therefore be discussed in detail below.
20. The proposed siting of the sports hall has been amended throughout the consideration of this application in an effort to alleviate the concerns of neighbouring residents and the initial Borough Council objection. The building was moved approximately 5 metres further north, away from the southern boundary of the site, and minor changes were made to the design of the sports hall. The implication of the siting of the development with regards to residential amenity will be discussed later in this report. However, the principle of siting the sports hall in the location proposed first needs to be considered and discussed. Local residents have requested that the proposed sports hall be located at the school remote playing fields at Southfields, or that if the sports hall needs to be located within the main school site, that alternative sites are considered, including redevelopment of the existing gym.
21. The applicant has made a case of need for the new sports hall, as outlined in paragraph 6 of this report, which I consider to be acceptable. The existing gym is unsatisfactory and due to its small size, restricts the ability of the School to provide facilities for physical education in inclement weather. Having accepted that a new sports hall is required, the siting of the building needs to be considered. First, many local residents have suggested that the new facilities should be provided at the School's remote playing fields in Southfields, accessed formally via Chestnut Avenue. However, the applicant considers that locating the new sports hall at the Southfields site would be operationally impractical. PE takes place in one hour lessons, timetabled during the school day alongside other lessons. For this reason, it makes practical sense to provide PE facilities on the School's main site as this would minimise disruption which precede and follow PE classes. In addition, if built at Southfields, the sports hall would be a mile from the main site. This would necessitate PE staff having to walk pupils a mile to Southfields, along St Johns Road. The class would then have to get changed, take their lesson, shower and change and walk back in time for the next lesson. All of this is impractical within the time frames given for each lesson. I do appreciate that the School already have to undertake such a walk for outdoor sports, and that a side entrance to Southfields may be used by the school, reducing the travelling time between sites. However, this situation is far from ideal and should not be exacerbated by the provision

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of indoor sports facilities at the Southfields site. I therefore conclude that the new sports hall would be best located on the main school site if possible.

22. Having concluded that the sports hall should be located on the main school site, the first option to consider is refurbishment of the existing gym, or the provision of a replacement facility in the same area of the site as the existing. The existing facility is way below the current standards for sporting facilities, and would need to be extended to conform to modern day sporting standards. Extending the existing facility, or a complete demolition and re-build on the same area of the site is, however, not possible due to the constraints of the site and the close proximity of existing school buildings. I am satisfied that the applicant has considered the possibility of refurbishing/demolishing the existing gym and redeveloping the site, and that this is not possible due to space constraints and the proximity of existing buildings. Therefore, is it appropriate to consider alternative locations within the school site.
23. A previous planning application proposed to locate a new sports hall on the eastern boundary of the school site. This met with objection and, following a Members Site Visit in November 2007, was withdrawn. This site was not considered suitable as the sports hall would have had an overbearing impact on neighbouring properties, which are at a much lower level than the sports hall would have been, and the building would have directly blocked sunlight to these properties. That site is, therefore, in my opinion, not appropriate for such a development. The applicant has considered various alternatives within the school grounds, including sites between existing school building, and various locations across the green space and tennis courts which occupy the eastern half of the site. However, analysis of the various locations considered has shown that they are not suitable or practical for a number of reasons including operational difficulties, proximity to existing school buildings, the need to provide hard play/sports facilities, tree removal, direct blocking of sunlight and the blocking of access for emergency services.
24. I am satisfied that the applicant has explored and analysed all reasonable alternative locations within the main school site, and that the proposed site, adjacent to the southern boundary, is the only site suitable in principle. The proposed site would not necessitate tree removal, would not result in a detriment to hard play/sports facilities, would work operationally and practically for the school, and would not impede access to the emergency services. However, the implications of the siting with regards to neighbouring amenity needs to be considered and this will be discussed later in this report. However, having accepted the siting of the sports hall in principle, the massing and design of the building needs to be addressed.

Massing

25. The two storey sports hall would accommodate a four court sports hall, fitness suite, classroom, dance studio, changing facilities, equipment stores, a reception area and office space. The building would measure approximately 40 metres in length and 28 metres in width and the accommodation would be spread over two floors. Sports halls are large buildings as they are designed to accommodate the necessary sporting facilities to the required guidelines and standards. However, the applicant has considered the massing of the building, and has tried to lower the height of the building and reduce its impact in a number of ways. First, the upper floor accommodation would not be as high as the main sports hall element of the building, and would be located under a flat sedum planted roof extending towards the southern boundary of the site. In addition, the building would be lowered into the ground by 0.9 of a metre and, due to the existing banking towards the southern boundary, the lower floor would effectively be underground. The ancillary accommodation to the south of the building would,

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therefore, appear single storey when viewed from the properties in Richardson Road, extending a maximum of 3.5 metres from ground level. In addition, the floor to ceiling height has been kept to a minimum to reduce the overall height of the building. The tallest element of the sports hall has been located to the northern side of the building, away from the sites boundary, in an effort to reduce its impact upon neighbouring properties. The curved zinc roof would be 8.5metres high at the highest point.

26. The impact of the massing of the building on the amenity of adjoining residents will be considered later in this report. However, I consider that the applicant has made all reasonable efforts to reduce the massing of the building and to keep the height as low as possible. Subject to mitigation, such as planting (to be discussed later in the report), and good design, I do not consider that the massing of the building would have an unacceptable impact on the street scene or would be significantly out of character with the surrounding area.

Design

27. The existing building stock on the Skinners School site is of various ages and qualities of design, but its generally red brick, with a variety of pitched and flat roofs. Surrounding residential properties are also mainly traditional red brick 2 storey terraced properties. The elevations of the proposed sports hall would be predominately formed from a combination of brickwork, zinc cladding, curtain walling and Kalwall glazing. The proposed brick would be a red stock to match the existing buildings, and buttresses have been included to the northern and eastern elevations to echo those on the existing school buildings. In order to minimise the pitch of the roof a zinc roof is proposed, in addition to the sedum roof which would be used on the flat roof sections of the building. Zinc is a quality material that would patinate over time, and has been selected by the applicant to ensure a minimum pitch whilst avoiding industrial looking aluminium or low quality single ply alternatives. In addition, the zinc roof would echo the lead work details on the existing school buildings. The applicant has given consideration to this use of slate and more traditional roof finishes, but use of such materials would necessitate an increase in roof pitch, resulting in a substantial increase in roof height. Curtain walling and aluminium windows are proposed, which would ensure that the sports hall has a long life, whilst maximising daylight within the facility. Natural light to the sports hall itself would also be provided via kalwall glazing to the north elevation, which diffuses light.
28. The design of the building has been developed to minimise height and massing, whilst sitting sympathetically within the surrounding buildings. Due to the high quality materials proposed, and the design features incorporated into the elevations of the building, I do not consider that the sports hall would be industrial in nature. On the contrary, I consider that the applicant has made all reasonable efforts to reduce the impact of the building on the street scene, and has selected materials which would be sympathetic to the local area, reducing the visual appearance of the building. Therefore, subject to the imposition of a condition requiring details of all materials to be used externally, including colour finishes, to be submitted for the prior written approval of the County Planning Authority, I do not consider that the design of the sports hall would have a significantly detrimental impact on the street scene or the character of the local area.

Amenity

29. Although the siting and massing of the sports hall is considered to be acceptable in principle, the impact of the development upon the amenity of neighbouring residents needs to be discussed and assessed. The siting and massing needs to be considered in relation to proximity to neighbouring properties, overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of

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light, and whether or not the building would be overbearing in nature. In addition, community use, hours of use, noise and light pollution and security issues also need to be discussed. These matters have also been raised as concerns by neighbouring residents.

Siting and massing

30. Local residents have expressed much concern and objection over the scheme as proposed and consider that the sports hall would be too close to neighbouring properties, would result overlooking and a loss of privacy, a loss of light/overshadowing, and would be overbearing in nature. As previously discussed, the applicant has amended the application since first submitted in a response to concerns expressed by local residents. Most significantly, the height of the building was reduced by 1 metre and the building was moved 5 metres further north, away from the southern boundary. This has increased the distance between the proposed sports hall and the boundary from 4.2m to 9.2m at the western end of the building and from 2.5m to 7.5m at the eastern end. The increased gap between the building and the site boundary has enabled the applicant to introduce a landscaping/tree planting strip to the south of the building which would aid in screening the development, and would include defensible planting for security purposes (to be discussed later in this report).
31. As also previously discussed, the ancillary accommodation to the south of the main 'sports hall' element of the building, would be lowered into the ground and, due to the existing banking on site, the lower floor would effectively be underground, with the upper floor extending to a maximum of 3.5m from ground level. This element of the scheme, which would be the part of the building closest to the southern boundary would, therefore, appear to be single storey and would actually be at approximately the same level as the top of that the existing boundary wall. In addition, this section of the building would have a flat sedum roof, which would reduce its impact and soften the appearance of the building. Views from neighbouring properties would essentially be over the roof of this section of the building. The southern elevation of the building would have windows facing the site boundary, but these would not be openable and, due to the levels of the site and the building, would look out onto the planted area and the boundary wall. Views would not be afforded into neighbouring gardens, and only the side elevations of the closest properties could be seen. The higher section of the building would not have any glazing in the southern elevation. Therefore, I do not consider that overlooking and loss of privacy should occur as a result of this development. The applicant has, in my view, taken all reasonable steps to ensure that the privacy of neighbouring residents would not be adversely affected and that the development would not overlook gardens or afford views into residential properties.
32. The tallest element of the sports hall has been sited to the northern side of the building in an effort to reduce its impact on neighbouring properties. The curved zinc roof would extend to a maximum height of 8.5 metres, which due to the levels changes on site, would sit approximately 1.5m lower than the adjacent Cecil Beeby teaching block. The 'step up' in height from the flat sedum roof to the eaves of the zinc roof of the main sports hall would be approximately 17m from the boundary at the western end of the building, and 15m at the eastern end. Climbing plants would extend from the sedum flat roof to the eaves of the zinc roof, again softening the impact of the building. However, the distances between the site boundary, which is essentially the side elevation of closest residential properties, and the tallest element of the building are considered to be acceptable and conform to the wall to window distance guidelines given within the Kent Design Guide. By moving the building 5 metres to the north, the applicant has made all reasonable efforts to mitigate the impact on neighbouring residents, whilst

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continuing to occupy this site within the school grounds, which as discussed above, is considered to be acceptable in principle. Due to the design of the building, which is stepped in height and uses the level changes on site to lower the building and reduce its height and massing, I consider that the distance between the development and local properties is acceptable and, due to the positioning of windows and careful design, would not overlook neighbouring properties. I therefore see no reason to object to the proposal on the grounds of proximity to neighbouring properties, or issues of loss of privacy and/or overlooking.

33. As discussed above, the height and massing of the building is considered to be acceptable in principle, but loss of light and whether or not the building is overbearing needs to be addressed. Local residents have expressed concern that the development would block out sunlight and would be overbearing in nature. The applicant has submitted daylight studies which demonstrate that there is no overshadowing of neighbouring properties as a result of this development. All shadows that would be cast by the sports hall would lie within the school grounds, at all times of year and at all times of day. I am therefore satisfied that the development would not overshadow neighbouring properties. In addition, due to the height of the building, its distance from the boundary, the level changes on site and the stepped increase in height, I do not consider that the building would result in a significant loss of natural day light. I do not, therefore, consider that the building would be overbearing in nature such as to warrant a refusal. The siting and massing of the building would, in my view, be acceptable and would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon residential amenity.

Community use, hours of use and noise implications

34. As outlined in paragraph 12 of this report, The Skinners School currently offers its facilities for hire to the 'Tunbridge Wells Community'. The applicant has stated that should permission be granted for the proposed sports hall, the school does not expect, or wish for, excessive growth to the current lettings activity. It is envisaged that those classes currently using the existing gymnasium would migrate to the new sports hall. However, the applicant does confirm that there may be some additional lettings to be accepted in the new dance suite, although these numbers would be low. The hours of use proposed by the applicant are 8.00am to 10.00pm Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 6.00pm on Saturdays and 10.00am to 6.00pm on Sundays.
35. Local residents have expressed concern over the use of the facility out of school hours by the wider community, and the noise and highway implications of this proposed extended use. In addition, a Borough Councillor has suggested that the use of the sports hall cease at 9.30pm, in order that the site can be vacated by 10.00pm. However, the applicant has submitted an acoustic report with this application which demonstrates that noise from within the building would not impact upon the amenity of neighbours, a view supported by the County Councils Noise Advisor. To further ensure this, all windows to the southern elevation would not open, and there are no windows in the sports hall itself, and doors would remain closed during use. I consider that conditions of consent should be imposed to ensure that this is the case. Subject to these conditions, I do not consider that use of the building would unreasonably result in noise generation that would impact upon the amenity of local residents. In light of this, I also consider the hours of use proposed by the applicant to be acceptable, and see no overriding reason to require an earlier finishing time on weekday evenings. Subject to conditions ensuring that the sports hall is used for the uses proposed only, and not for social functions and private parties, I consider use until 10.00pm Monday to Friday to be acceptable. Therefore, should permission be granted the sports hall could be used

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between the hours of 8.00am to 10.00pm Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 6.00pm on Saturdays and 10.00am to 6.00pm on Sundays.

36. Concerns have also been expressed with regard to the impact that noise from plant associated with the sports hall could have on residential amenity. However, the acoustic report submitted with this application has addressed the noise produced by plant on the building, and the County Councils Noise Advisor is satisfied that, subject to a planning condition, noise levels would not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of local residents. Therefore, should permission be granted, the following condition would be imposed. Subject to this, I see no reason to refuse the application on the grounds of noise.

“The noise rating level (derived in accordance with BS4142) from all fixed plant associated with the sports shall not exceed the measured background noise level (L_{A90}) at the closest residential receiver”

Lighting

37. Local residents have expressed concern that lighting from the building would have a negative impact on their amenity. The applicant advises that lighting to the west elevation would be via in-ground directional uplighter fittings, which would be photocell controlled with time switch override off facilities. The south elevation, behind which lies the landscaped area and escape route from the Cecil Beeby building, would be lit via low level bollards or in-ground fittings, controlled by PIR movement detection. This lighting would only be activated in an emergency, to obviate any nuisance light spill to adjacent buildings/properties. The north elevation would be lit via high level wall mounted up and down lighting, controlled in conjunction with the west elevations lighting. Lastly, the east elevation would be lit via wall mounted or overdoor mains/emergency bulkhead fittings, again photo-cell controlled with override off facilities.
38. Although the applicant has provided these details, I consider that for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of residential amenity, details of all external lighting of the building should be submitted pursuant to planning condition for consultation and approval with the County Council’s Lighting Advisor. Subject to the imposition of this condition, I do not consider that the development would have a significantly detrimental impact on the amenity of the locality or neighbouring properties with regards to external lighting.

Security

39. Local residents have expressed concern that the development would increase security risk and encourage anti-social behaviour. Primary concerns relate to use of the area between the building and the southern site boundary, which is also home to an emergency only exit point from the Cecil Beeby building. Due to the linear nature of the space that would be created, concern is raised that pupils would gather here as the area would be out of the visual surveillance of school staff. However, the applicant is proposing to plant this area, including the use of defensible planting. In addition, it is proposed to fence this area off, discouraging access and increasing security. The Borough Council suggests that details of measures to prevent access by people, other than for emergency purposes, to the area between the southern boundary and the building be required pursuant to condition. I also consider this to be appropriate and, therefore, should permission be granted, details of fencing to this area would be required pursuant to condition. In addition, planting details would also be required pursuant to a landscaping condition, which would also require details of a 5 year

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programme of maintenance. This would ensure that the area did not become overgrown scrub or a neglected area of the school site. Subject to these conditions, I do not consider that the proposal would have an impact on the security of neighbouring properties, or encourage anti-social behaviour.

Landscaping & Ecology

40. The applicant is proposing to provide soft landscaping and tree planting along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site to screen views from public and neighbour vantage points. The applicant has stated that they would like to develop these proposals with a landscape officer and local residents, as agreed at the Members Site Visit in July (notes attached). Details of such planting are therefore unavailable at this time. The applicant is also proposing to landscape and plant the area between the sports hall and the boundary of the site, including the use of defensible planting. In addition, climbing plants are proposed to the eastern elevation of the building, and to the high level southern elevation to mitigate the 'step up' in height from the flat sedum roof to the eaves of the curved zinc roof. The Borough Council has requested that details of landscaping be provided, which should comprise details of tree planting to the southern and eastern site boundaries to screen views of the development. I consider that a condition should be imposed which requires details of all soft and hard landscaping to be submitted for approval, including details of planting to the southern and eastern site boundaries, planting between the sports hall and the southern site boundary and planting to the eastern and southern elevations of the building itself, and a 5 year maintenance plan. This would ensure that the required planting was provided and maintained, mitigating the impact of the development on the amenity of neighbouring residents and the wider street scene.
41. Local residents have also suggested that bats roost in the adjacent pavilion building, and that the proposed development would adversely affect their flight path. In response to these concerns the applicant has submitted a bat roost survey report, which concludes that the proposed development would not destroy, or significantly affect, any local bat roost. Linear features would remain available to the adjacent southern and eastern site boundaries, and foraging is likely to be enhanced by the development proposals. In light of this information, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact upon bats, including their roosts and flight paths.

Access and parking

42. Traffic generation and impact upon the local highway network are further concerns expressed by local residents. Use of the sports hall during the school day would be for existing pupils only and would, therefore, not impact upon the local highway network. However, community use of the facility in the evenings and at weekends has the potential to attract additional vehicles to the area and, therefore, could have a detrimental impact upon the local highway network. However, the applicant advises that out of school hours all car parking spaces within the school grounds would be made available for use, and would be accessed via the two entrance points to the site on St Johns Road. There would be no access, vehicular or otherwise, to the sports hall other than via the existing entrance points on St Johns Road. In addition, it is not intended to significantly increase the existing level of community use of the site and, therefore, any increase in vehicular movements would be minimal. The Divisional Transport manager is satisfied that the car parking on site has the capacity to accommodate the number of visitors expected out of school hours, and the development is therefore in accordance with the principles of Development Plan Policies with regards to access and car parking. Subject to the imposition of a condition to ensure that all existing car parking on site is

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available at all times when the hall is in use outside of school hours, I do not consider that the proposed development would have an unacceptable impact upon the local highway network.

Extension to tennis courts

43. Due to the location of the sports hall, one of the tennis courts on the school site would be lost to the development. The proposals therefore include an extension to the existing tennis court area to replace this tennis court and to increase the separation between the courts to meet Lawn Tennis Association standards. It is proposed to extend the courts to the north and east, necessitating the construction of a retaining wall in the north east of the court area due to level changes on site. It is proposed to enclose the tennis courts with 3m high weld mesh fencing, and provide low level kick boards for sports use. I consider that details of the fencing type and colour finish should be submitted for approval pursuant to planning condition, and that the kick boards should be covered in a noise absorbing material in order to mitigate adverse noise impacts. Subject to conditions covering these matters, I do not consider that the extension of the tennis courts would have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the locality and/or local residents.

Drainage and Land Contamination

44. The Environment Agency raise no objection to this application but request that a sustainable urban drainage system for the site be agreed. Therefore, I consider that subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the submission of details of a sustainable urban drainage system prior to the commencement of the development, the development could be controlled to ensure that it would not result in unacceptable pollution levels. In addition, should permission be granted a condition would be imposed to ensure that if during development contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development shall be carried out until the developer has submitted, and obtained written approval from the County Planning Authority, details of how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with. Again, this would ensure that the development would not result in an unacceptable level of pollution, in accordance with the principles of Development Plan Policy.

Construction

45. Given that there are neighbouring residential properties, if planning permission is granted it would, in my view, be appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of construction and works on site in order to protect residential amenity. I would suggest that works should be undertaken only between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays. In addition, should permission be granted details of a 'construction code of practice' would be required pursuant condition, which should include details of measures to ensure that dust, noise, mud on the local highway network, and other matters associated with construction, would be mitigated as far as reasonably possible so as to minimise disruption to local residents. Details of construction access and contractors car parking should also be included within the code of practice.

Conclusion

46. In summary, I consider that, subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, this proposal would not have a significantly detrimental effect on residential

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or local amenity, the street scene and character of the area, or the local highway network. In my view, the development would not give rise to any significant material harm and is in accordance with the general thrust of relevant Development Plan Policies. There are no material planning considerations that indicate that the conclusion should be made otherwise. However, I recommend that various conditions be placed on any planning permission, including those outlined below.

Recommendation

47. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO conditions covering:

- the standard time limit;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- the submission of details of all materials to be used externally;
- details of all external lighting;
- a scheme of landscaping, its implementation and maintenance, to include planting to the southern and eastern site boundaries, the area between the sports hall and the southern site boundary and the southern and eastern elevations of the building;
- details of fencing, gates and means of enclosure, including colour finishes, including fencing of the tennis courts and the area to the rear of the sports hall;
- kick boards surrounding the tennis courts to be covered in a noise absorbing material;
- windows on the southern elevation not to be opened and doors to remain closed when building is in use;
- the noise rating level from all fixed plant associated not to exceed the measured background noise level (L_{A90}) at the closest residential receiver;
- contaminated land;
- details of sustainable urban drainage system;
- restriction on hours of use, including school and community use;
- restrictions on type of use, including school and community use;
- hours of working during construction;
- details of a 'construction code of practice';

Case officer – Mary Green	01622 221066
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Background documents - See section heading

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APPENDIX 1

NOTES of a Planning Applications Committee site visit to The Skinners' School, Tunbridge Wells on Wednesday, 22 July 2009.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr R E King (Chairman), Mr R Brookbank, Mr C Hibberd, Mr G A Horne, Mr R J Lees, Mr J F London, Mr R J Parry, Mr R A Pascoe, Mr C Smith and Mr K Smith. Mr J R Bullock (Local Member) was also present.

OFFICERS: Mrs S Thompson and Mr J Crossley (Planning); and Mr A Tait (Legal and Democratic Services).

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL: Cllrs C J Woodward and Mrs L E Herriott with Mrs L Middlemiss (Planning).

THE APPLICANTS: The Skinners' School (Mr S Everson, Head Teacher and Mr P Johnston, Bursar); Michael Cook Associates (Mr S Eatock).

ALSO PRESENT were some 15 members of the public.

(1) The Chairman opened the meeting. He explained that its purpose was for the Committee Members to familiarise themselves with the site and to listen to the views of interested parties.

(2) Mr Crossley introduced the application by explaining that it was for the construction of a sports hall containing 4 game courts and ancillary accommodation. It would be 2 storeys high, with the sports hall itself on the first storey.

(3) Mr Crossley then explained the background to the application. He said that the School's deficiencies in indoor sports provision had been criticised by OfSTED. Currently, it consisted of an old gymnasium which could not readily be converted into a new sports facility. For this reason, the School wanted to apply for a new facility and convert the gym into a library.

(4) In 2007, an application had been submitted to construct a sports hall on the eastern boundary beyond the tennis courts. This application had attracted objections, particularly on the grounds of the impact it would have due to its close proximity to neighbouring residents. The School had therefore withdrawn this application in order to develop a new proposal.

(5) Mr Crossley went on to explain the new application. The hall would now be located away from the eastern boundary towards the southern side of the site. It would be cut into the southern bank, and be built on the location of some of the existing tennis courts. The tennis courts themselves would be moved to the north. The cricket pavilion in the south west corner would remain.

(6) Mr Crossley then said that the new proposal had also been amended by pulling the southern edge of the sports hall a further 5m away from the boundary. It was intended to fence off the gap between the sports hall and the neighbouring properties and to introduce a planting scheme.

(7) The ground floor of the sports hall would be 0.9 m below the existing ground level. This would result in the Hall only rising about 3 metres above the level of the bank despite being 8 metres in height.

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(8) Mr Crossley then described some of the design details and modifications. The building would be red brick with a lightweight, zinc main roof and a flat sedum (“ice plant”) roof. This living roof would vary in colour from red to brown to green during the year.

(9) Mr Crossley explained that the proposal had attracted opposition which had prompted the amendments. Further consultation had taken place on the amendment and further views were awaited.

(10) Mr Crossley said that Tunbridge Wells BC had objected to the unamended proposal on the grounds of noise, residential amenity impacts and the effect of the cluttered development on the street scene. Twenty two local residents had also objected and a petition had been received containing 55 signatures, objecting on grounds of traffic, access and design. These objections also related to the original proposal.

(11) Mr Crossley concluded his presentation by saying that it was intended for there to be community use of the facility. The hours of use might need conditioning if permission were granted. The applicants had asked for the hours of use to be 0800 to 2200 Monday to Friday, 0900 to 1800 on Saturdays and 1000 to 1800 on Sundays and Public Holidays.

(12) Mr Eatock (Michael Cook Associates) said that the applicants had considered a number of locations on the site with the intention of producing the least impact on neighbouring properties. The option of building in the north of the site had been rejected because of the overshadowing impact on the neighbouring properties along Somerset Road that would arise and (crucially) because it would block access to the site for emergency services in the event of a fire.

(13) Mr Eatock continued that the proposed location of the hall had been moved as far away as possible from the neighbouring properties along Newcomen Road. The building had been designed so that it would come up to the height of the boundary wall. There would consequently be no overshadowing impact. The building itself would also reduce noise impacts from the play areas. The lights would be low and would not cause light spillage. Windows had been designed to minimise amenity impact.

(14) Mr Eatock confirmed that there was no intention to increase traffic or pupil numbers as a result of the proposal.

(15) Mr Everson (Head Teacher) said that this proposal represented the School’s final chance to have a sports hall on site. He asked everyone to consider the very small number of schools which were also in the position of not having one.

(16) Mrs Middlemiss (TWBC Planning) said that her authority was still considering the amended plans. Its objections to the original proposal had mainly been on the grounds of the visual impact of the building, particularly on the neighbouring properties to the south and on the street scene of St Steven’s Road (which approached the site head on from the east.)

(17) Mrs Middlemiss then said that the revised proposal represented a significant improvement in that it moved the building away from the southern properties, set it lower in the ground and introduced planting. The end elevation was now more elegantly designed and would therefore improve the view from St Steven’s Road. She welcomed Mr Eatock’s assurance that it was intended to provide planting along the site boundary.

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(18) Members then moved up the bank to the south in order to note the proposed boundary of the sports hall, and to gain a better visual understanding of the impact on and proximity to the neighbouring properties.

(19) Cllr Woodward (TWBC) noted the size of the proposed building and asked whether there were any commercial objectives in bringing forward the proposal. Mr Everson replied that the aim of the proposal was not to bring in additional revenue. Mr Eatock added that the building was designed to the standard size of school sports halls in Kent. The actual sports area itself would be the size of 4 badminton courts. The storage space would be below the sports area whilst the second storey would contain the fitness, sports science and multi-use rooms.

(20) Local residents raised a number of issues, which are summarised below:-

(a) Youngsters already threw litter over the garden fence and also climbed over the boundary wall to retrieve footballs. The provision of a sports hall, together with associated planting and fencing would encourage this behaviour.

(b) The School should make use of the Sports Hall facilities at St John's Primary School instead of building one on site. Mr Everson replied that it would not be feasible for the Skinners School to ask another School not to use its own facilities for a blocked off period.

(c) The Skinners School was having great difficulty in making any proposal for a sports hall acceptable. This strongly suggested that it was metaphorically attempting to fit a pint into a half pint pot.

(d) The School could make use of the sports facilities at Chestnut Avenue in Southfield (about 1 mile to the north). Mr Everson replied that PE lessons lasted for 1 hour. The pupils would have to walk to Southfield, change twice and shower before walking back to Skinners for their next lesson. It was not simply a matter of scheduling the PE lessons to immediately precede the Games sessions (also at Chestnut Avenue). This was because the PE Teachers also took the Games periods.

(e) A resident from St Stephen's Road asked how high the planting would be. Mr Eatock replied that this could be discussed with the neighbours as they would have their own views about the preferred outcome of the planting scheme.

(f) Several people asked questions about the exact height of the building in relation to the neighbouring properties. Mr Eatock said that the building would drop in height by about a metre from east to west. The highest point on the western side would be the top of the boundary wall. On the eastern side, it would come up to half way up the windows in the pavilion.

(g) A resident asked how the applicants had come to the conclusion that they could not move the building any more than 5 metres further away from the site. Mr Eatock said that the main reason for this was that the School was required by Sport England to replace the tennis courts. Mr Everson added that the courts in Southfields could not be used for the same reason that he had given for PE lessons.

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(h) Mr Eatock answered a question by saying that the access to the site for construction vehicles would be via the northern gate along Somerset Road. The construction period itself would be some 9 months.

(21) Mr Eatock replied to a question about noise from the building by saying that the targets would need to be met by acoustic insulation. Although he did not have figures for ambient noise levels to hand, the design of the building would ensure that there was no increase in background noise. Acoustic testing would take place once the building had been constructed. The flue outlet on top of the roof would be pulling in fresh air and blowing out exhaust. There would be no generators and the windows would not be capable of being opened.

(22) Mr Bullock (Local Member) said that the current positioning of the proposed sports hall was much better than before. There was a dire need for a better gym on site. It was incredibly difficult to find a suitable alternative site away from the School. Tunbridge Wells BC had been involved in a search for the new academy, but even this had proved extremely difficult.

(23) Mr Bullock went on to say that he was pleased that the building was well away from the wall. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that the area between the wall and the sports hall was “sanitised” as it was very undesirable for youngsters to be able to make their way on to the flat roof.

(24) Mr Bullock then said that it was important to minimise the effect of the site on the neighbouring environment. The sports hall should be available for use by the community without this use imposing on the neighbouring properties. He would support the proposal providing that his concerns were met.

(25) In response to a question from Mr Lees, Mr Eatock said that the results of a recent bat survey were still awaited.

(26) Mr Eatock then replied to a question from Mr Parry by saying that he did not anticipate any change to the land profile as a result of the development. He was also confident that no ground piling would arise as a result of cutting into the ground.

(27) Mr Bullock said that the hours of use for the sports hall should be consistent with those approved for the other schools in the Tunbridge Wells area.

(28) Mr Crossley said that when deciding what hours of use to recommend, the Planners had to take account of factors such as lighting, noise, traffic, the sport activity being accommodated and proximity to residential properties. This meant that the methodology was consistent, even though it might not appear so to local residents.

(29) Members then inspected the existing gym.

(30) The Chairman thanked everyone for attending. The notes of the meeting would be appended to the report to the determining Committee meeting.