

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

Erection of a two-storey new standalone teaching block and sports hall, with a single storey kitchen extension and remodelling works to areas of the existing school buildings to facilitate school expansion from 4FE to 5FE at Borden Grammar School, Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4DB – 21/504168/COUNTY (KCC/SW/0150/2021)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 12th January 2022.

Application by KCC Strategic & Corporate Services for erection of a two-storey new standalone teaching block and sports hall, with a single storey kitchen extension and remodelling works to areas of the existing school buildings to facilitate school expansion from 4FE to 5FE at Borden Grammar School, Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4DB – 21/504168/COUNTY (KCC/SW/0150/2021)

Recommendation: PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions.

Local Member: Mr John Wright

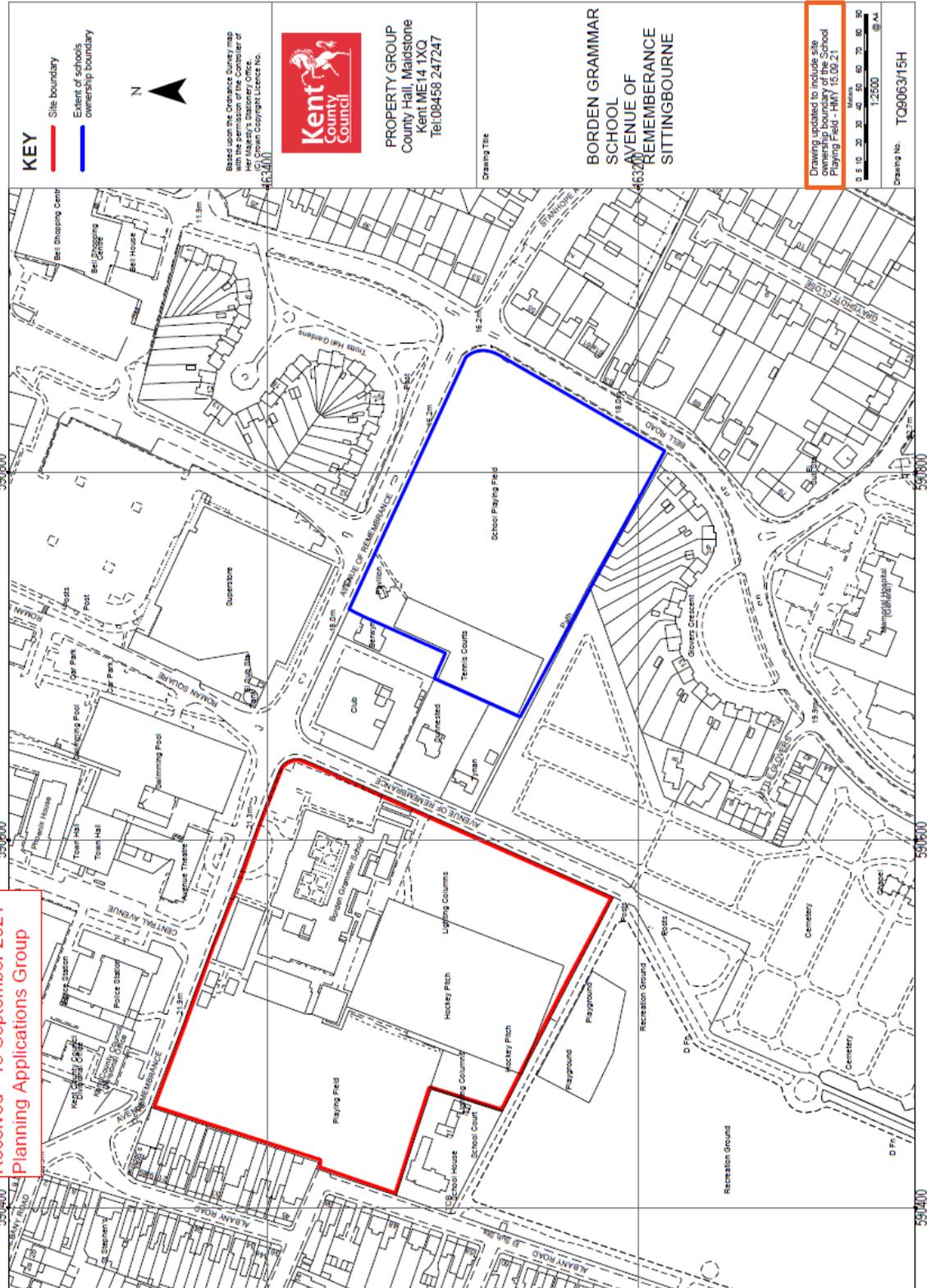
Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Borden Grammar School is a 4 Form of Entry (4FE) selective boy's grammar school, which is located within the centre of Sittingbourne. It holds specialist status in sports and achieved Academy status in 2012. It is located on the southern side of the Avenue of Remembrance and consists of the original 1920's two storey school building, which is brick built with a pitched roof, with additional two storey flat roof buildings added in the 1970's and 1990's. To the front and eastern side of the original building is the school car park; to the south of the school buildings lie hard surface courts and a full size multi use games area (MUGA); whilst to the west is the school playing fields. A pavilion building for the Old Bordenian Hockey Club is located between the MUGA and playing fields which was completed in 2003 (along with the MUGA) as a joint project between the hockey club and school. To the north of the later flat roof school buildings lie two hard surfaced courts enclosed by fencing - the location for the recent temporary mobile classroom development. The school site is fairly level with a slight change in levels to the west.
2. There are a number of accesses into the site. Along the northern frontage there is an 'in and out' driveway which provides access to the front of the original school. Along the eastern boundary there is a separate access for staff to the staff car park, and there is a service and delivery access point to the rear of the school along the eastern boundary. Field maintenance access gates are located in the railings along the northern frontage by the playing field, and there is a further set of access gates located on the corner of Albany Road to the south-west of the school site.

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Site Location Plan



Item D1

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Proposed Site Layout



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3. The Avenue of Remembrance runs along the northern and eastern frontages of the school, whilst to the west the school site is bounded by the rear gardens of terraced properties in Albany Road, and by Albany Road itself in the south-west corner. To the south of the school site lies Sittingbourne recreation ground and to the south-east the Sittingbourne cemetery. Opposite the school site on the northern side of the Avenue of Remembrance is The Swallows Leisure Centre, Sainsburys Supermarket, The Avenue Theatre, Age Concern UK building, Sittingbourne Police Station and Kent County Council local offices. The school also own the 'Sale Field' which lies to the east of the main site and is separated from the school by the Avenue of Remembrance. Access to this field is via a footway which runs between the cemetery and the property Tynan. In terms of the wider surrounding context the areas to the east, west and south are residential, whilst to the north is the town centre and central area.
4. The site is covered by designations in the Swale Borough Local Plan (2017). It is located within the 'Area of High Townscape Value' (Policy DM36) which covers an area south of the Sittingbourne town centre which includes the school site and areas of Victorian and Edwardian housing, parks, cemeteries, trees and open spaces. It also lies adjacent to the designation for the 'Central Sittingbourne Regeneration Area' (Policy Regen 1) which seeks to consolidate and expand the main retail, business, cultural, community and civic centre for the Borough. Finally, the school playing field and Sale Field are covered by Policy DM18 for Local Green Spaces, which seeks to protect the openness of such areas from development.
5. At present Borden Grammar has a school role of 644 pupils in years 7-11, and 217 pupils in the 6th form, which is co-educational – a total of 861 pupils as of September 2021. There are 93 permanent members of staff employed at the school, 50 teaching staff and 43 support workers. The main entrance (drop off area) has parking for up to 10 cars and 2 minibus spaces, and the main car park provides 50 spaces plus 1 motorcycle space.

Members' Site Visit

6. A group of Planning Applications Committee Members visited Borden Grammar School on the 15th of September to familiarise themselves with the location of the school within Sittingbourne, to view the proposed location of the new building in relation to the surrounding area, and to observe the traffic situation at the end of the school day. Members were accompanied by the Head of Planning, Sharon Thompson; Principal Planning Officer, Mary Green; Case Officer, Helen Edwards, and the Highways and Transportation Officer, Mr Alun Millard.

Education Need and Background

7. Modernisation of the school was undertaken in 2007 when the library, sixth form study area, sixth form common room, 3 classrooms, toilets, changing rooms and offices were all updated. More recently a demand for increased pupil places has been identified, which requires further development to increase accommodation on site for sports facilities, classrooms and kitchen space. The Area Education Officer for East Kent has provided background for this application which states:

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“The County Council is the Strategic Commissioner of Education provision in Kent and has a statutory duty to ensure that sufficient school places are available to meet demand. The 2021-2025 Plan forecast a continued increase in the demand for secondary school places across the Swale district. If additional capacity is not added, there will be insufficient places available to meet demand and parental preference. The forecasts indicate that there is constant need for additional places for both selective and non-selective with a shortfall of 72 Year 7 grammar places predicted in 2023/2024. To maintain sufficient grammar provision, the enlargement of Borden Grammar School is necessary. Commissioning a 1FE enlargement of Borden Grammar school and Highsted Grammar School [the selective girls school in Sittingbourne] will provide grammar places for both boys and girls, to meet predicted demand and help secure Kent’s vision for a high performing education system where every child and young person can go to a good or outstanding school.”

8. To assist with pupil numbers for this academic year (2021/2022) an application (reference SW/21/502319) was submitted in April last year for the installation of a temporary double classroom modular block. No objection was received to this application and it was approved under delegated powers on 4th August 2021. The modular classroom block is sited on the existing hard surfaced courts to the front of the school and has a temporary consent which runs until the end of August 2022.

Proposal

9. The application proposes the erection of a two storey stand alone teaching block and sports hall and a single storey extension to the existing school to enlarge the kitchen facilities, along with internal alterations to the existing school, which would facilitate a school expansion from 4FE (600 pupils in years 7-11) to 5FE (750 pupils in years 7-11). The increase would take place incrementally as an additional form (30 pupils) is added for each annual year 7 intake. The two-storey teaching block and sports hall would be sited along the northern boundary of the site. It would be set back by 2.9m from the edge of the site where it adjoins the Avenue of Remembrance (at the closest point) and set in 25m from the western boundary where the site backs onto the rear gardens of properties in Albany Road. The new building would have a rectangular footprint, running east/west along the site frontage, and would provide a 3-court sports hall, viewing area and PE office; 3 changing rooms, pupil toilets, plant rooms and stores; three general classrooms, a science lab and an ICT/Business classroom. The building would have an overall height above existing ground level of 9.15m. The original school building has a ridge height of 11.3m, whilst the flat roof school buildings have overall heights of 7.2m, although these are from a slightly higher ground level (approximately 0.8m) than the proposed sports hall/teaching block.
10. The building would be built with brickwork to the ground floor, as well as the first floor of the teaching block, similar to the original 1920’s school building. The sports hall would have an off-white render finish to the first floor and grey cladding would be used between the ground and first floor windows. A galvanised steel stair enclosure would be provided on the eastern end elevation. The flat roof of the teaching block would be hidden by a 1.1m high parapet wall to provide safe access and screening to the roof plant.

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11. The kitchen extension would be on the southern side of the original school building and would provide an additional 68sqm of kitchen space in a small extension to the existing building. The extension would have a flat roof to match and would be constructed from brickwork to also match the existing. Internal alterations to the existing school, possible as a result of the new accommodation being provided in the stand alone block, would be additional dining hall space, new toilet facilities and the drama room relocated to the existing gymnasium at ground floor level, plus a new science lab at first floor.
12. There would be no alteration to vehicular access to the site for parking and deliveries, and no additional car parking would be provided as part of the proposed development. The existing field maintenance access gates on the Avenue of Remembrance would be removed and replaced with railings to match. Access to the playing field would be retained from the existing gates off Albany Road. An additional 12 cycle spaces would be provided as part of the development, adding to the existing 38 on site at present.

Planning Policy

13. The following Guidance/Statements and Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of the application:
 - (i) **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021** and the **National Planning Policy Guidance** (March 2014), sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England, at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications but does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However, the weight given to development plan policies will depend on their consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the development plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

In determining applications, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decisions in a positive and creative way, and decision takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

In terms of delivering sustainable development in relation to this development proposal, the NPPF guidance and objectives covering the following matters are of particular relevance:

- designation of land as Local Green Space...allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services (*paragraph 101*);
- consideration of whether appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be or have been taken up and safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users (*paragraph 110*);
- whether impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity or congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree (*paragraph 110*);

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- Development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road would be severe (*paragraph 111*);
- That access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation are important in their contribution to health and well-being, and therefore that existing open space, sports and recreation facilities should not be built on unless the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality (para 98,99);
- achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Planning decisions should ensure that developments would function well and add to the overall quality of an area; be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting; establish or maintain a strong sense of place, creating a welcoming and distinctive place to live, work and visit; include an appropriate mix of development and support local facilities and transport networks; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being (*paragraph 130*);
- Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning decisions should ensure that...existing trees are retained wherever possible (*paragraph 131*);
- planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage assets conservation and any aspect of the proposal (*paragraph 195*).

In addition, Paragraph 95 states that: *It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools.*

- (ii) **Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development** (15 August 2011) sets out the Government’s commitment to support the development of state-funded schools and their delivery through the planning system. It is the Government’s view that the creation and development of state-funded schools is strongly in the national interest and that planning decision-makers can and should support that objective, in a manner consistent with their statutory obligations.

The Government believes that the planning system should operate in a positive manner when dealing with proposals for the creation, expansion and alteration of state-funded schools, and that the following principles should apply:

- There should be a presumption in favour of the development of state-funded schools, as expressed in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Local authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling the development of state-funded schools in their planning decisions. The Secretary of State will attach significant weight to the need to establish and develop

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state-funded schools when determining applications and appeals that come before him for decision.

- Local authorities should make full use of their planning powers to support state-funded school applications. This should include engaging in preapplication discussions with promoters to foster a collaborative approach to applications and, where necessary, the use of planning obligations to help to mitigate adverse impacts and help deliver development that has a positive impact on the community.
- Local authorities should only impose conditions that clearly and demonstrably meet the tests set out on the Planning Practice Guidance website. Planning conditions should only be those absolutely necessary to making the development acceptable in planning terms.
- Local authorities should ensure that the process for submitting and determining state-funded schools' applications is as streamlined as possible, and in particular be proportionate in the information sought from applicants.
- A refusal of any application for a state-funded school, or the imposition of conditions, will have to be clearly justified by the local planning authority. Given the strong policy support for improving state education, the Secretary of State will be minded to consider such a refusal or imposition of conditions to be unreasonable conduct, unless it is supported by clear and cogent evidence.

(iii) The adopted **Swale Borough Local Plan – Bearing Fruits 2031 (adopted July 2017)** (summarised policies)

Policy ST3 The Swale Settlement Strategy: Development proposals will be permitted in accordance with a settlement strategy, of which the main Borough area of Sittingbourne will provide the primary urban focus for growth, where development will support town centre regeneration and underpin the town's role as principal centre.

Policy ST5 The Sittingbourne Area Strategy: Development proposals will ensure the vitality of Sittingbourne town centre, as appropriate by, 2. (b) providing a wider range of services, including transport, education, health, leisure and cultural facilities.

Policy CP6 Community facilities and services to meet local needs: The Council will work with developers and other public agencies to identify deficiencies in infrastructure. Development proposals will, as appropriate deliver timely infrastructure and safeguard existing community services and facilities where they are viable or can be made so unless replacement facilities can be provided without leading to any shortfall in provision.

Policy CP4 Requiring Good Design: All development proposals will be of a high-quality design that is appropriate to its surroundings. Development proposals will, as appropriate, create safe, accessible, comfortable, varied and attractive places; promote and reinforce local distinctiveness and strengthen the sense of place; retain and enhance features which contribute to local character and distinctiveness; conserve and enhance landscape, biodiversity and local environs; be appropriate to the context in respect of materials, scale, height and massing; and maximise

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opportunities for including sustainable design and construction techniques.

Policy Regen 1 Central Sittingbourne: Regeneration Area: A regeneration area for central Sittingbourne, including its town centre, is shown on the proposals map. Within this area proposals which support the objective of consolidating and expanding Sittingbourne's position as the main retail, business, cultural, community and civic centre for the Borough will be permitted. [Note: the site lies just outside this identified area, on the southern side of The Avenue of Remembrance.]

Policy DM6 Managing transport demand and impact: Development proposals generating a significant amount of transport movements will be required to support their proposal with the preparation of a Transport Assessment (including a Travel Plan). In assessing impacts on the highway network, development proposals will (a) demonstrate that opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up; (b) ensure that where the residual cumulative impact of development on traffic generation would be in excess of the capacity of the highway network and/or lead to a decrease in safety, environmentally acceptable improvements to the network are agreed. If such works cannot be carried out and the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe the development will be refused.

Policy DM7 Vehicle Parking: Until such time as a local Swale Borough Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) can be adopted the Council will continue to apply extant Kent County Council vehicle parking standards to new development proposals. When prepared the Swale Vehicle Parking SPD will provide guidelines for vehicle parking for non-residential uses, which will take into account (a) the accessibility of the development and availability of public transport; (b) the type, mix and use of the development proposed; (c) the need to maintain an adequate level of car parking within town centres to ensure that viability of the centres is not compromised; and (d) that development proposals do not exacerbate on street car parking to an unacceptable degree.

Policy DM14 General Development Criteria: All development proposals will, as appropriate, accord with the policies and proposals of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise; include sufficient information to enable the application to be determined; accord with adopted supplementary planning guidance; respond to constraints and opportunities posed from climate change; reflect the positive characteristics of the site and locality; conserve and enhance the natural built environments taking into account the desirability of sustaining an enhancing significant heritage assets; be both well sited and of a scale, design, appearance and detail that is sympathetic and appropriate to the location; cause no significant harm to amenity and other sensitive uses or areas; provide an integrated landscape strategy; and achieve safe vehicular access, convenient routes for pedestrians and cyclists,

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enhanced public transport facilities, together with parking and servicing facilities.

Policy DM16 Alterations and Extensions: Planning permission will be granted for alterations and extensions to existing buildings provided they (1) are of an appropriate design and quality which responds positively to the style and character of the building being extended; (2) are appropriately scaled in relation to the building and its surroundings; (3) maintain or enhance (where applicable) the character of the street scene; (4) reinforce or enhance as appropriate local distinctiveness; (5) preserve architectural, historic, landscape, or nature conservation features of interest; and (6) protect residential amenity. [Relevant to the kitchen extension only.]

Policy DM17 Open space, sports and recreation provision: Proposals for residential and other developments as appropriate will safeguard existing open space, sports pitches and facilities in accordance with national policy.

Policy DM18 Local Green Spaces: Within designated Local Green Spaces [the school playing field and the Sale Field are designated as such] planning permission will not be granted other than for (1) the construction of new building for one of the following purposes: essential facilities for outdoor sport or recreation, cemeteries, allotment use, or other uses of land where preserving the openness of the Local Green Space and not conflicting with its purpose; (2) the re-use or replacement of an existing building, provided the re-use does not include any associated uses of land around the building which might conflict with the openness of Local Green Space or the purposes of including land within it; and (3) the carrying out of engineering or other operation or the making of any material change of use of land, provided that it maintains the openness and character of the Local Green Space.

Policy DM19 Sustainable design and construction: Development proposals will include measures to address and adapt to climate change in accordance with national planning policy and guidance and, where appropriate, will incorporate the following: (a) use of materials and construction techniques which increase energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions; (b) promotion of waste reduction, re-use, recycling and composting; (c) recognition that retaining and upgrading existing structures may be more sustainable than building new; (d) design of buildings which will be adaptable to change and re-use over the long term. Development proposals should where appropriate be located and designed to take advantage of opportunities for low and zero carbon energy and all new non-residential developments over 1000 sqm gross floor area will aim to achieve BREEAM 'Very Good' standard or equivalent as a minimum.

Policy DM21 Water, flooding and drainage: When considering the water-related, flooding and drainage implications of development, development proposals will (1) accord with national planning policy and planning practice guidance; (2) avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of

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flooding and where development would increase flood risk elsewhere; (3) provide site specific flood risk assessments, as required, carried out to the satisfaction of the Environment Agency; (4) include where possible sustainable drainage systems; (5) integrate drainage measures within the planning and design of the project; (10) protect water quality, including safeguarding ground water source protection zones from pollution, to the satisfaction of the Environment Agency.

Policy DM28 Biodiversity and geological conservation: Development proposals will conserve, enhance and extend biodiversity, provide net gains in biodiversity where possible and minimise any adverse impacts and compensate where impacts cannot be mitigated. Development proposals will be accompanied by appropriate surveys undertaken to clarify constraints or requirements that may apply to development, especially where it is known or likely that development sites are used by species, and/or contain habitats, that are subject to UK or European law. Development proposals will provide, where possible, a net gain of biodiversity overall.

Policy DM29 Woodlands, trees and hedges: The Borough Council will seek to ensure the protection, enhancement and sustainable management of woodlands, orchards, trees and hedges. 4. Unless the need for, and benefits of development in a location clearly outweigh the adverse impacts, planning permission will be refused where there (3) would be a loss of trees (including individual trees, old orchards, fruit trees, hedgerows or woodland scrub) that make an important contribution either to the amenity, historic, landscape, townscape or biodiversity value of the site and/or the surrounding area.

Policy DM36 Area of high townscape value: Within and adjacent to the Area of High Townscape Value, as defined on the proposals map [and includes this site], the Borough Council will not grant planning permission for development proposals unless they provide for the conservation or enhancement of the local historic and architectural character, together with its greenspaces, landscaping and trees.

(iv) Swale Borough Council Parking Standards (May 2020), paragraphs 93-98:

- Schools where expansion is proposed are expected to develop, update and monitor School Travel Plans.
- Staff and visitor parking should be provided for, together with overflow parking areas for community uses. Parent and pupil parking are discouraged as this is a disincentive to travelling by sustainable means. Appropriate provision should be made for the setting down and picking up of pupils in a safe environment and in a manner that does not unduly interfere with the operation of the public highway.
- Measures to discourage parking should be considered and include car sharing, parking restrictions and parking permits.

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- On all new school sites where it is likely that pupils will travel to and from school in coaches, buses or minibuses, sufficient space should be reserved to allow them to be dropped off and collected.
- Provision of secure and covered cycle parking will be a condition of any new or expanded school.
- To allow SEN pupils to attend any school, a proportional provision should be made available at all schools to ensure suitable access for emergency vehicles with the appropriate level of disabled parking to be designated.

Consultations

14. **Swale Borough Council** raise an objection to the proposal, stating: “The proposed teaching block and sports hall, due to its design, scale, siting and proximity to the Avenue of Remembrance, would constitute a prominent and incongruous development that would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, within an Area of High Townscape Value. In addition, the development would be sited on land designated as local green space and would result in the partial loss of such space. As such, Swale Borough Council would object to the proposal as it would be contrary to Policies CP4, DM14, DM18 and DM36 of Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan 2017.”

KCC Highways and Transportation Officer raises no objection to the proposal subject to the imposition of conditions to secure the submission of a Construction Management Plan, the permanent retention of the vehicle and cycle parking spaces, the inclusion of electric vehicle charging facilities for 4 spaces, and the submission of a revised School Travel Plan.

Sport England raise no objection as the development broadly meets Exception 3 of their Playing Fields Policy.

KCC Biodiversity Officer raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions which secure the submission of ecological enhancement features for approval; that a habitat establishment and management plan be submitted for approval; that the Construction Management Plan be updated to include that the ecological mitigation detailed in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Report will be implemented; and that any lighting condition requires the lighting plan to follow recommendations within the Bats and artificial lighting guidance.

KCC County Archaeological Officer raises no objection subject to the imposition of a condition to secure a programme of archaeological work.

Environment Agency (Kent Area) raise no objection subject to the imposition of conditions to ensure that if any contamination not previously identified is found on site a remediation strategy will be submitted to deal with it and that there be no infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground without written permission of the County Planning Authority.

KCC Transport Planner Schools advises that revisions would be required to the submitted School Travel Plan, which could be covered by the imposition of a condition.

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KCC Flood and Water Management Officer raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions to secure the submission and written approval of a detailed surface water drainage scheme, and a verification report to demonstrate the drainage system complies with that approved.

KCC Highways and Transportation Arboriculture Manager raises no objection.

Local Member

15. The local County Member for Sittingbourne South, Mr John Wright, was notified of the application and requested Members of the Planning Applications Committee undertook a site visit.

He also submitted information regarding the Public Consultation undertaken by Swale Borough Council regarding the Avenue of Remembrance. He stated: "Being of historical importance in that it is the only surviving intact avenue with trees and name plates commemorating the fallen in the UK. This will be an issue for the committee on how visually the Borden Grammar School extension impacts a historical open space and increases the traffic and buses that use that space. You may wish to think how its impact is minimised or enhances the area."

The Local Borough Councillor for Sittingbourne and Leader of Swale Borough Council, Mr Roger Truelove, has provided the following comments:

"I am writing as a Borough Councillor for the ward affected by this proposed development. Whilst I sympathise with the school's wish to expand its facilities, they do need to take a long term view of their needs and this proposal appears to be squeezing too much into a limited and restricted area. Difficult though it may be, they ought to be considering the use of their Sale Field. The proposed design of this development does not fit into the surrounding area. It will have a detrimental impact on the culturally important Avenue of Remembrance, it is too close and out of keeping with the local residential properties in Albany Road in an area of high townscape. The current provision of a full sized football pitch provides the town with a visual break."

Publicity

16. The application was publicised on 4th August 2021 by the posting of 6 site notices, and an advertisement in a local newspaper.

Representations

17. In response to the publicity, 37 letters have been received objecting to the application, along with 1 letter of support. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:

Principle of development

- Utilise the Sale field for a lower school which would provide a longer term solution
- Split site schools are common and easily managed
- Lack of proper consideration of other locations for the building

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- A new school should be included in new housing developments not expanding this school
- Justification for increasing school numbers unclear and would only meet a short term need, not the projected growth of households in Swale by 2038
- Current increase in pupil numbers is just a bulge year and there is no need for immediate expansion, but a longer term solution should be considered
- Insufficient number of classrooms being proposed
- An annex to the school is needed on the Isle of Sheppey to eliminate daily travel of a large number of pupils and the associated carbon footprint
- Building lacks any 'green' features (renewable energy or green roof) and is inconsistent with a net-zero approach
- Building design basic and lacks any design features relating to the original school
- School should utilise the Swallows leisure centre for any additional sports facilities they require
- Brown field land at the Bell Shopping Centre opposite should be considered first, to provide any additional school buildings
- Redevelopment by enhancing existing structures should be considered

Location of Building & Impact on Avenue of Remembrance

- New building lacks landscaping to the front as it sits forward of the existing buildings
- Building would be detrimental to the character, visual appearance and historic nature of the Area of High Townscape Value
- Building design does not reflect the character of the local area or the original school
- No evidence that it complements the Avenue of Remembrance
- Building in this location would be disrespectful to the Avenue of Remembrance and dominate it
- New building will loom over the Avenue making it feel dark and oppressive
- All other buildings along the Avenue are set back at least 15-20 feet from the road
- Location of the building would be inconsistent with the existing frontage of the school and other buildings in the Avenue
- Proposed building sits within protected green space
- Loss of green space would have a negative impact on the area – extension should be added to the rear of the school instead
- The building will further reduce the grassed area on the school site, which has been reduced by around 50% since 1994
- New building should not be constructed anywhere on the playing fields, so that the pitch can be rotated to preserve its quality, and a full sized senior pitch maintained
- Building siting would affect the key character of the Avenue of Remembrance which is "...the existing school façade, the tree lining and open sky of the playing field"
- Harm arising from the siting of the building would be highly visible due to the location on the highway
- Building should be sited where the MUGA is at the back of the school

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Impact on Avenue trees

- Application should be required to fill the gaps of missing trees along the Avenue
- No trees should be pollarded or lost to facilitate the development
- Trees may affect light into the new building putting pressure to have the trees cut back in the future
- Fear new building would need to be moved closer to the road and Avenue trees to allow the 3m run off for Sport England requirements
- Negative impact on trees to provide access for the crane for construction
- Development will have a direct impact on the trees

Residential Amenity

- New building should be located away from residents
- Noisy school activities should not be located next to neighbouring residents
- Building should not overshadow living areas or gardens of neighbours
- Loss of views of the Avenue of Remembrance from neighbouring properties
- There should be no use of the facilities outside of school hours as would be harmful to residents
- Roof plant would potentially affect nearby residents

Construction and Highway and Transportation Impacts

- Construction could further damage the boundary wall which the school have not maintained
- Construction access too narrow for large vehicles and no room for them to turn
- Roads identified for construction vehicle routes are too narrow with many parked cars
- Construction traffic using residential roads would affect pedestrian safety
- Construction traffic will damage residential roads and possibly parked cars
- Already insufficient local parking for residents
- There should be no suspension of parking on local roads to facilitate the construction
- No space on public roads for any construction vehicles or contractors to park
- Construction noise will affect people working from home, and Saturday working is antisocial
- Dust and debris from construction will affect health of residents
- Construction access times for the site would conflict with local infant and junior school opening times
- Considerate Construction Scheme gives little comfort
- Road improvements should be included due to additional traffic generated by the expansion
- Increase in traffic after the expansion will adversely affect residents due to congestion and poorer air quality
- Will result in more staff who will park in nearby roads
- No additional staff parking being proposed on site
- A satellite drop off area for pupils should be considered

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- Student travel data used (from 2014) out of date
- Future access to the playing field would not be possible from the gates on The Avenue of Remembrance (which would be removed) which will affect residents on surrounding roads
- Fire engine access would be limited once these gates are removed

Process

- Concerned site notices not re-published to explain changes in plans
- No explanation of why the deadline for comments was extended

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 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The proposal therefore needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
19. This application is being reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee due to the objection received from Swale Borough Council and those from local residents, as set out in paragraphs 14 and 17 above. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case are the principle of development and the need for education facilities; the siting and design of the new building and any impact on the wider area in particular the Avenue of Remembrance; any impact on residential amenity; loss of local green space and provision of sports facilities; any highway and transportation implications linked to the proposal; and landscape, tree and ecological matters.

Principle of Development and Education Need

20. Planning policy guidance in the form of both the NPPF and the Policy Statement for School Development are strongly worded to ensure that proposals for the development of state funded schools should, wherever possible, be supported. The guidance is set out in paragraph 13 above and in summary states that there should be a presumption in favour of the development of state funded schools; that planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement; and that any refusal would have to be clearly justified. The school site lies within the defined built-up area of Sittingbourne and as such the principle of development is accepted, subject to it being in accordance with other relevant policies.
21. The educational need for expanded facilities at Borden Grammar School is set out in paragraphs 7 and 8 above, and a bulge year has been accepted at the school for this academic year, with those students being accommodated through the temporary mobile classrooms which have been given a 1 year consent for their siting on the school grounds. There are a number of undersized rooms within the existing school, and a lack of science facilities, sports facilities, toilets and the required dining hall space and

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kitchen facilities to accommodate the 1 FE expansion, therefore the school needs to provide these through additional accommodation. The site has an established education use and the provision of such new facilities would be considered acceptable in principle in respect of the guidance on the NPPF and Planning Policy Statement for Schools Development, subject to other policy constraints which are addressed below.

Siting and Design of New Building

22. The proposed sports hall and teaching block would be sited along the northern boundary of the school grounds, alongside the Avenue of Remembrance. It would be sited lengthways along the front of the site and sit forward of the established building line created by the original school and the later extensions. In determining the most appropriate location for the siting of the building, the applicants undertook an Options Appraisal which considered 6 potential positions for the building. This document forms part of the application submission, where pros and cons of each option were considered and a balanced judgement determined which was the preferable site overall. The different siting options are outlined below.

Option 1 – Along the northern boundary with the Avenue of Remembrance (the application scheme).

Pros included the flat nature of the site; logistical/operational preference for the school; better for potential access for out of hours use; minimises the loss of external green space for sport and retains a full sized 11 v 11 sports pitch; likely support from Sport England; opportunity to compliment the Avenue of Remembrance and provide a visual offering to the streetscape; preferred location for fire brigade access.

Cons included proximity to the Avenue of Remembrance for street noise and fire management; impact upon trees; proximity to existing school buildings regarding light impact to adjacent classrooms; and access to existing services.

Option 2 – South of the site between the MUGA and the playing pitch

Pros were a lesser impact on residential areas and existing trees; and located within good proximity to the MUGA and external sports.

Cons included the inability to accommodate the full sized 11 v 11 playing pitch; weakened relationship with existing school and impact on the Hockey Club building; public access would have to be through the site; sloping site levels; insufficient space for construction next to the MUGA; difficult to meet compliance for fire tender access; likely opposition by Sport England.

Option 3 – South-western corner of the site, adjacent to School House and access gates by Albany Road

Pros included less impact to trees, relatively flat site; can accommodate full sized 11 v 11 pitch; good proximity to external sports facilities; meets fire tender access; less likely to affect buried services.

Cons included weakened relationship with existing school and impact on the Hockey Club building; impact on neighbouring properties; public access would have to be through the site; additional hard landscaping required; impact on storage hut for scouts; pitch location right at northern end of site may result in balls going into the Avenue; may affect drainage.

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Option 4 – On hard courts to south of existing school

Pros included a flat level site; can accommodate the full size 11 v 11 sports pitch; acceptable fire tender access.

Cons included loss of hardstanding playground/tennis court/external space which would need to be replaced elsewhere on the site; parking suspension required for access along narrow eastern section of Avenue of Remembrance; limited space for contractor compound; retained area of hardstanding obscured from view by new building; impact on more mature trees along this part of the Avenue, which would need cutting back for access for construction; public access would need to be via delivery and service access; likely opposition from Sport England; conflict of movement between pupils and deliveries/collections.

Option 4a – On hard courts but with square footprint not rectangular.

Pros included a flat level site; can accommodate the full size 11 v 11 sports pitch; acceptable fire tender access.

Cons included loss of hardstanding playground/tennis court/external space which would need to be replaced elsewhere on the site; parking suspension required for access along narrow eastern section of Avenue of Remembrance; limited space for contractor compound; retained area of hardstanding obscured from view by new building; impact on more; mature trees along this part of the Avenue, which would need cutting back for access for construction; public access would need to be via delivery and service access; likely opposition from Sport England; conflict of movement between pupils and deliveries/collections.

Option 5 – Sale Field

Pros included a level flat site; flexibility in terms of position and orientation of building; proximity to playing fields and tennis courts used by school for outside teaching.

Cons included remoteness from main school and not supportive of curriculum delivery; additional resourcing required to transfer students between the two sites; missed opportunity to create a statement on main school site; risk of objection by Sport England due to impact on existing sports field; visual impact on prominent junction in Sittingbourne; risk to pupils due to conflict with their movement and deliveries; challenging to meet fire tender access; would require vehicular access and parking for the new block in order to meet DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) requirements.

23. To supplement the above, the applicants have provided additional information regarding the options for siting the building on the hard courts to the south of the school – options 4 and 4a. They state that the courts are utilised 80-100% by the school during the week for both PE and by 1000 pupils during break and lunch periods from October to May due to weather conditions making the soft landscaped areas unsuitable for play. The teaching of tennis for years 7-10 requires the use of all 6 courts and the loss of any of these would limit the sports curriculum. They state that the facilities at the Sale Field cannot accommodate these losses and existing soft play areas would be lost to replace the hardstanding so the curriculum requirements can be met. With regard to the Sale Field option (option 5) the applicants state that these hard courts are also utilised 80-100% by the school during the week for PE and break and lunch periods. The site is not utilised as much as the main school grounds, however, as it requires additional supervision.

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24. Having considered the available alternative sites, the applicants have applied for their preferred option. In this position (Option 1) the location of the building allows a full size 11 v 11 playing pitch to be retained on site, and avoids an objection from Sport England on loss of playing field land; it provides the teaching and sports hall accommodation to be in close proximity to the existing school which allows better delivery of the curriculum and less time being spent for students moving between buildings; it keeps access towards the front of the school site, so that should the building be let for community uses in the future it would be easily accessed; it retains the hardstanding tennis courts which are heavily used by pupils during breaktimes; and avoids any detrimental impact on the trees along The Avenue of Remembrance which would all be retained.
25. The building would however, be forward of the building line which is established by the siting of the existing school buildings, and closer to the pavement/road frontage than the buildings are on the opposite side of the road, which are all set back a substantial distance. The Sainsburys Superstore which is located to the north-east of the school site, is also quite hard up to the road frontage and therefore in my view there is a precedent in the area for siting the building closer to the road frontage than the existing buildings. In addition, if the building were to be sited back in line with the existing school, the full sized playing pitch would be compromised and unachievable, and Sport England would object to the loss of playing field on policy grounds. The proximity of the building to the road would, in my view, be an acceptable compromise which allows the playing field to be retained as fully as possible and achieves a workable solution to provide the established educational need.
26. The design of the building is modern and comprises part brickwork and part render, with grey cladding between the windows and a galvanised steel external staircase on the eastern elevation. Although the original school has a 1920's frontage, the design of the other buildings in the vicinity of the site (such as the KCC building, Avenue Theatre, Age Concern building as well as the Swallows Leisure Centre) are all more modern brick built flat roof structures, and it is considered that the design of the building would not be out of keeping with the variety of structures along this part of the Avenue. As discussed in more detail below (in the Impact on the Avenue of Remembrance section, paragraphs 38-41) the school have suggested they could include some imagery for either the elevation of the sports hall which would front the Avenue, or something free standing in front of the building. It is considered that such images would provide a focus and some detailing for the façade of the sports hall (which doesn't benefit from windows due to the use within) as well as paying respect to the heritage nature of the Avenue of Remembrance.
27. In addition to the stand alone sports hall and teaching block, the application also includes the extension of the existing kitchen to provide a larger facility to serve the increased number of pupils. The design of this would match the existing single storey flat roof building and would be constructed with matching materials. The kitchen extension is a minor part of the wider scheme, and it is considered that it would be acceptable in both scale, size and design and would have no impact on the surrounding area, nearby properties or the wider designation of the Area of High Townscape Value. It is considered that this element of the scheme would accord with Policy DM16 which seeks to ensure extensions to existing buildings would be of an appropriate scale and an appropriate design, responding to the style and character of the building being extended.

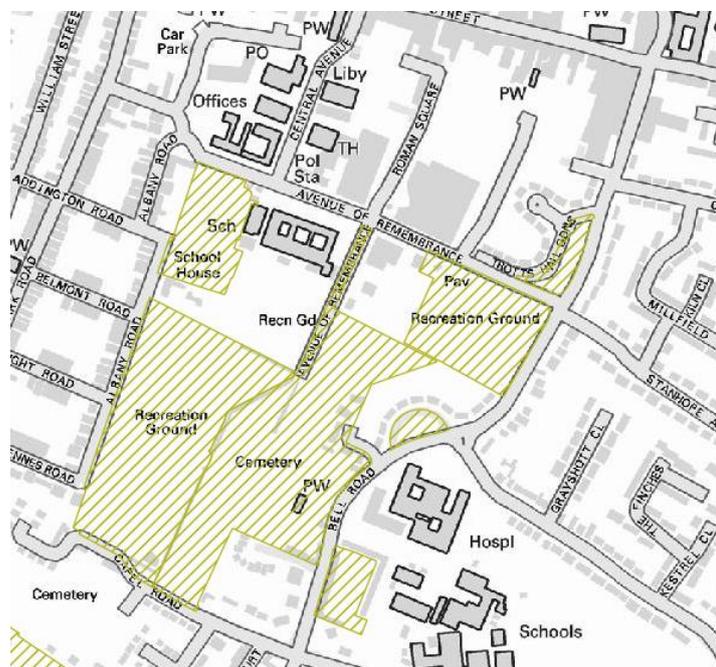
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28. Should the application be approved, any consent should include a condition requiring the submission and approval of all external materials to be used, to ensure these are in keeping with the existing school and wider area.
29. The options appraisal was provided to demonstrate that other sites were considered and discounted and the reasons for doing so but does not offer alternative options for siting now that the application has been submitted and is before you for determination. The proposed siting and design of the buildings have been considered at length and whilst it is acknowledged that the building would sit forward of the established building line, there is an established need for the additional education accommodation on an existing education site, whilst seeking to retain as much of the existing hard court playing areas and grass playing pitch as possible. It is considered that the building in this location would not be so harmful to the street scene that it should be refused bearing in mind the NPPF and Policy Statement for School guidance that wherever possible the development for state funded schools should be supported.

Loss of Local Green Space

30. The application site is covered by a 'Local Green Space' designation (Policy DM18), which applies to the existing school playing field, as well as the Sale Field, as shown on the extract of the Local Plan proposals map below.



The policy aims to protect the Local Green Spaces from development and ensure their retention for enjoyment by the local community. The Local Plan states that such spaces have been designated due to their particular importance to local communities because of, for instance, their recreational value and tranquillity, heritage or biodiversity value. There is no pre-requisite for Local Green Spaces to be in public ownership, nor a requirement for them to be open for public access. Policy DM18 will be used, the Local

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Plan states, to preserve these Local Green Spaces, and proposals for development which would conflict with the purposes of designating the land will not be permitted, other than in very special circumstances.

31. The proposed development does not accord with the exceptions listed in Policy DM18 as it is not an essential facility for outdoor sport or recreation, cemetery, allotment use; it does not re-use or replace an existing building; and it is not for a material change of use of the land which retains its openness. Swale Borough Council published a Technical Paper (No. 2) on Local Green Spaces in June 2016, which sets out the background to Policy DM18 and explains the various designated sites. The school playing field and the Sale Field were designated together in this paper (Site LGS060) and the description of the special significance of these spaces was stated as follows:

“The site lies within an Area of High Townscape Value. It forms part of the linked green spaces between Albany Road and Bell Road, which extend up to the edge of the town centre. The Avenue of Remembrance frontage trees enhance the role of this open space. It forms part of the stepping stones of green infrastructure extending into the town centre to support wildlife, together with street trees and other amenity spaces.”

32. The Policy is supported by guidance in the NPPF which states that the designation of land as Local Green Space allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them but also states that such designations should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services (para 101). Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space, the NPPF goes on to state, should be consistent with those for Green Belts.
33. Swale Borough Council have objected to the application on the grounds that the development would result in the partial loss of the local green space. In support of the application, and in order to address the fact that the development would not accord with this policy, the applicants have provided an update to their Planning Statement. They acknowledge the above policy viewpoint but emphasise that the vast majority of the green space of the playing field would remain and continue to provide the same recreational value to the school that it currently does. They note that the building would not fill in the whole gap along the frontage and therefore views of the green space (and appreciation of it) would still be achieved through the open frontage to the north-west of the site.
34. Although the technical paper makes reference to the contribution the green space makes to supporting wildlife, the submitted ecological surveys have demonstrated that there would be a minimal ecological impact as a result of the proposals and that the overall scheme would deliver a net biodiversity gain, thus enhancing the site for wildlife. The Avenue of Remembrance trees, also highlighted in the technical paper description, would not be affected by the development proposals. The applicants note that in their view the intrinsic heritage/commemorative value of this area is not in the playing field itself, but rather the tree lined street, which would not be affected.
35. The Local Green Space designation covers the entirety of the school playing field, and only excludes the MUGA and the hard courts to the south of the original school. An

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assessment of why these areas are not appropriate has been provided above. Any new building at the school would therefore need to be sited on land under the Local Green Space policy coverage. The applicants suggests that the policy would have the effect of restricting all and any essential expansion and improvement to the school, and such expansion has been established as being required on this site to maintain up to date teaching space standards, to provide the facilities for the expanded school roll and to ensure the long-term viability of the school itself. Such expansion and improvement is supported by the NPPF (and Local Plan Policy CP6) in paragraph 95 which states:

It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

- a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and
- b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

36. On the basis of the above, the applicants state that the essential need for the educational development (supported by local and national policy), the assessment which demonstrates that the proposed siting is the only realistic and viable location, the ability to retain the required sports pitch, alongside the net biodiversity gain would outweigh the minimal harm to the Local Green Space that would result.
37. It is acknowledged that the development would not accord with Policy DM18, but the Government places great importance on education provision and school development. In my opinion, although there is an objection by Swale BC, I consider that the education need and the provision of additional teaching space to suitably accommodate the increase in pupils at the school to meet community need and the provision of facilities which are suitable for use, would outweigh the loss of this part of the playing field which has been designated as a Local Green Space, especially when taking a longer term view and considering the proposals in a holistic and broader context.

Impact on Avenue of Remembrance

38. The application site lies within an area designated as High Townscape Value (Policy DM36), which includes the Avenue of Remembrance along the northern edge of the site, and includes the whole school site, plus areas of development which lie to the west and south of the site. The Local Plan states that these areas of Victorian and Edwardian housing, cemeteries, parks, trees and open spaces mark an important period in the town's post-industrial expansion and many of its street trees are a poignant reminder of the town's marking of The Great War. The objective of Policy DM36 (Area of High Townscape Value) is to encourage a high standard of design of new development, the retention and reinstatement of original features and the preservation of the spaces between buildings, landscaping and parks, alongside the retention and expansion of its street trees. The Policy itself states that development will not be permitted unless it provides for the conservation and enhancement of the local historic and architectural character, together with its greenspaces, landscaping and trees.

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39. The proposed building would be sited close to the boundary with the Avenue of Remembrance and in a prominent position within the area designated as being of High Townscape Value. Although the building would not affect the Avenue trees, it would introduce a large building into what is currently a green gap within the street scene, and it is recognised that this would alter the appearance of this part of the road. The Avenue of Remembrance has been designated as a memorial to those soldiers who lost their lives fighting in the First World War and the School are very conscious of this and the location of their grounds in relation to the road and its significance for the community. However, there is a requirement for additional educational facilities within the site and for the reasons outlined in the rest of this report the siting of the new building is as proposed. In order to show respect for the Avenue the School have suggested they include a memorial to the fallen soldiers either on the northern elevation of the building facing toward the Avenue, or in between the building and the boundary fencing.
40. Suggested images would either be poppies, as used on the road signage for the Avenue of Remembrance, or alternatively silhouette images of soldiers, as often displayed for Remembrance Sunday. It is considered that such imagery would enhance the appearance of the building within the street scene and would provide recognition of the local historic character of the Avenue, which Policy DM36 aims to protect. In order to take time to decide on the best and most appropriate images to be used, whether this should be free standing or applied to the elevation of the building, and to allow consultation with Swale Borough Council on the designs, it is suggested that a condition could be imposed on any consent for details to be submitted and approved by the County Planning Authority and installed prior to occupation of the building.
41. The majority of the green space provided by the school playing field would be retained, albeit it is acknowledged that it would no longer be readily visible from the Avenue of Remembrance with the building in the proposed location, however views of it would still be afforded to passers-by from the north-western corner of the site. It is considered that although the new building would be prominent within the street scene, it would not materially affect the Avenue of Remembrance trees and the proposed imagery would seek to enhance the Avenue and reinforce its significance in relation to World War 1. As such it is considered that there would not be overriding harm caused to the Area of High Townscape Value and balanced with the educational need which has been outlined above, the development would be acceptable, subject to the imposition of a condition to secure appropriate imagery as discussed above.

Sports Provision

42. As outlined above, the proposed siting of the sports hall and teaching block is on the edge of the existing school playing field. Sport England fundamentally oppose development which would result in the loss of, or would prejudice the use of, all or any part of a playing field in all but exceptional cases whether the land is in public, private or educational use. Policy P1 of the Sport England Policy Statement sets out the exceptions to their general presumption against the loss of playing fields, and these are:
- E1 A carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.

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- E2 The proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use.
- E3 The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming or forming part of a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins), a reduction in the size of the playing areas of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting/ancillary facilities on the site.
- E4 The playing field or playing fields, which would be lost as a result of the proposed development, would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to commencement of development.
- E5 The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facilities, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.
43. Sport England were consulted on the application and advise that in their view the application affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:
- reduce the size of any playing pitch
 - result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
 - reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
 - result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; or
 - prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.'

As such they state that they are satisfied that the development broadly meets exception 3 of the Playing Field Policy and the do not wish to raise an objection to the application.

44. Notwithstanding this view, they go on to note that the 3m run off (required for a full-size pitch in Sport England and FA pitch guidance) on the eastern side would overlap a small area of footpath. They suggest that this be reinstated to grass to match the pitch surface or alternatively the school consider reducing the size of the pitch to a compliant Youth U15 and U16 11 v 11 pitch, although they note that this would prevent the pitch being used for the older age group match play. The overlap relates to a very small section of footpath which is located by the Bordenian Hockey Club House building – 5m in length (and 1.5m wide) and located just by the halfway line of the pitch, which provides a paved access route to some storage containers located on site. The School have advised that they will remove this small section of paving and realign the access to the containers, so that no paving juts into the run off area for the sports field. A condition to ensure that this is undertaken has been included in the recommendation below. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy DM17 of the Local Plan, in that it safeguards existing sports pitches in accordance with national policy.

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Impact on Residential Amenity

45. The building would be sited to the rear of properties 19-25 (odd) Albany Road. These properties have rear garden lengths of approximately 15m and are separated from the school playing field by a boundary wall. The proposed building would be set off this shared boundary by a distance of 25m, thus providing an overall separation distance of approximately 40m. The end elevation of the new building would be for the sports hall and as such would have no windows in this elevation, just one access door at ground level. The materials on this elevation would be part brickwork and part off white render. Although there have been objections received from neighbouring residents regarding loss of amenity as a result of the location of the building and overshadowing it is considered that the distances between the houses and the new building are sufficient such that existing levels of sunlight would be maintained and the scheme would not give rise to overshadowing. There would be no loss of privacy given the lack of windows in this elevation, and although the building would alter the outlook from the rear of these properties it would be sited far enough away so as not to cause a sense of enclosure.
46. In relation to residential amenity, Swale Borough Council have raised no objection on these grounds in their response, and I concur that the development would not cause significant harm to residential amenity, and as such would not be in conflict with Policy DM14 of the Bearing Fruits Local Plan in this regard. Potential impact on noise and construction issues are addressed separately below.

Access, Parking and Highways

47. As set out above, the application does not involve the alteration of any of the existing access points into the school for staff and visitor parking, which would remain as existing and no additional vehicular parking is proposed to be provided. The application was supported by the submission of a Transport Statement and a Draft Travel Plan and the application documents have been considered by the County's Highways and Transportation Officer, who also attended the Member site visit. The Transport Statement considered the impact the proposed development would have on the local highway network and reviews the existing conditions within the vicinity of the school, and the Highways Officer concurs with the assessment, noting that that site is centrally located within the town centre where access to sustainable transport choices are good, and large areas of residential population are within reasonable walking and cycling distance. In addition, he notes that public car parks can be found nearby to accommodate demand from drop off and collection, and these have ample capacity to cater for any increased need, given the limited number of vehicles which were observed using them at present.
48. The Transport Statement (TS) has estimated that once the 1 form of entry expansion has worked through the school to full capacity after 5 years, the additional pupils are likely to generate an additional 26 car journeys to bring pupils to the school. This is based on the current modal share of transport to school, as identified through the school's survey. The survey showed that 36.5% of pupils walk to the school, 29.2% travel by bus, and 21.6% by car (15.3% as a single passenger and 6.3% shared with other pupils in the same vehicle). The Highway Officer notes that this reflects fairly closely the results of the 2014 National Travel Survey, as set out in the TS, which has 38% of secondary school children walking, 29% travelling by bus and 23% by car. The

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school is in close proximity to the public car parks, where there is plenty of capacity to accommodate these additional 26 vehicles. It is also noted that some of these journeys would also be linked with other purposes, and some pupils may only take part of the journey by car (to destinations elsewhere) and walk the final leg. It is therefore considered that the additional 26 car journeys at the start and end of the school day would not have a severe impact on the local highway network or result in parking issues, given the current evidence of the existing car journeys at each of these times.

49. Once at full capacity the school is expected to generate an additional 50 pupils who would travel by bus, increasing from the current level of 242 pupils who travel in this manner. The Highway Officer notes that there are 2 dedicated buses which wait at the school with capacity for 220 passengers. These generally serve destinations through the western side of Sittingbourne, terminating on the Isle of Sheppey. Buses originating at other schools also pass by en-route and collect overspill if necessary. However, not all pupils travelling by bus are served by the Sheppey service, and many pupils disperse to bus stops in the town centre to access routes to destinations elsewhere. The level of bus activity at the school is not expected to increase from the current number of services, and therefore the Highway Officer does not anticipate there would be any material impact on the Avenue of Remembrance. However, if another bus was required it is considered that this could be accommodated in the space available along the school frontage without obstructing the free flow of traffic. It was observed at the site meeting that two-way traffic was able to freely pass the waiting buses due to the width of the road.
50. An additional 62 pupils are anticipated to walk to school, with a further 8 likely to cycle. An additional 12 cycle parking facilities are proposed as part of the scheme to accommodate this demand (and additional uptake), and the Highway Officer suggests that details of these could be secured via the imposition of a condition, to ensure they are covered to encourage more cycling and promote sustainable transport modes.
51. The proposed 1 FE expansion would also result in an additional 5 members of staff on site, and the TS states that there is capacity within the existing staff parking areas to accommodate a further three to four vehicles, but that all staff would be actively encouraged to walk, cycle, car-share or use public transport. No objection has been raised to this matter by the Highways Officer.
52. A draft School Travel Plan was submitted with the application which has been considered by the County Council's School Transport Planner and the Highways Officer. The Travel Plan requires further modifications, but it is considered appropriate to seek these through the imposition of a condition, should permission be granted, whereby the new development shall not be brought into use until a revised version of the Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The Travel Plan should ensure that objectives for reducing the dependency on the private car are included with objectives, targets, a programme of implementation and provision for monitoring, review and improvement.
53. At the Member site visit in September, Members were able to observe the end of the school day and watch pupils leave the site. The two dedicated buses were parked outside the school prior to the end of the day ready to collect pupils, and a third bus arrived once pupils were leaving. None of the buses were observed to affect the free

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flow of traffic along the Avenue of Remembrance. Furthermore, no parent parking was observed outside the school gates, as might have been expected, and pupils appeared to disperse without congestion being caused. It was pointed out that some pupils would walk to alternative bus stops to continue their journey home and Members were able to view pupils leaving the site from both the northern boundary and the eastern boundary. Members were also able to observe the spare capacity within the existing staff parking areas.

54. One of the suggested requirements from the Highways and Transportation Officer was the inclusion of four electric vehicle charging points within the car park, however as no amendments are being made to the parking provision on site, and it has been accepted that additional parking spaces are not required, we are not able to insist that these be provided as part of the scheme. The School are aware of the request and it is likely that they would need to undertake such provision themselves in the future, given the recent increase in ownership of electric vehicles.
55. It is considered that the proposed development would accord with the Swale Borough Council Parking Standards as set out in paragraph 13 above and would also accord with the aims of Policies DM6 and DM7 of The Bearing Fruits Local Plan and the transport elements of Policy DM14. The application is therefore considered to be acceptable in relation to highways and transportation matters, subject to the imposition of conditions as required by the Highways Officer, which are included in the recommendation below and include a revised Construction Management Plan; retention of all existing parking on site; provision of additional secure and covered cycle spaces; and the revised Travel Plan.

Landscape and Trees

56. The proposed development would be located along the northern boundary of the site, set in from the boundary by 2.9m at the closest point, the north-eastern corner of the proposed building, and 3.5m at the north-western corner. The Avenue of Remembrance trees are planted within the pavement of the footway which runs along this boundary of the Avenue of Remembrance and the positions of these have been shown on the submitted drawings. The application was supported by the submission of an Arboricultural Report and Tree Survey Plan and these show that the proposed location of the new building would be outside of the root protection area and tree canopy of the trees that run along the Avenue of Remembrance here. The report states that building lines should be at least 2m outside the root protection area to allow for the movement of materials, the erection of scaffolding around the new structure and the installation of new services. The proposed development would accord with this criterion.
57. The County Council's Arboriculture Manager, who oversees trees within highway land was asked to comment on the application and has stated that he has no objections to the application. Given that there would be no impact on the trees which are planted along this section of the Avenue of Remembrance, it is considered that the development would meet the aims of Policies DM14, DM36 and DM29 which all seek to ensure that trees would be protected and would not be lost as a result of permitted development proposals. A condition to ensure that tree protection measures are erected on site prior to the commencement of development is proposed, should permission be granted.

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58. There has been no landscape scheme submission made with the application, although there is a section explaining the site layout with regard to landscape within the Planning Statement. Due to the need to retain the full size playing pitch and the provision of the run off area and shallow bund (a surface water drainage feature – see drainage section below) there would not be scope for additional landscape planting to the south of the new building. It is considered, however, that the additional landscaping is not essential for the site given the existing tree lined street in front of the application site and the proposed imagery as discussed above.

Ecology

59. The application was supported by the submission of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) which has been considered by the County Council's Biodiversity Officer. The findings of the Appraisal show that the site supports suitable habitat for roosting bats (on site and immediately adjacent buildings) and nesting birds (on-site buildings, shrubs and trees); and that there are no designated sites of importance for nature conservation located within relevant distance of the proposed development. The Appraisal recommends that a bat emergence / re-entry survey of buildings on site would need to be completed; that if any demolition of buildings, tree clearance and/or shrub clearance are to be carried out during the bird breeding season (March to mid-September) they must be checked for the presence of active birds nests before work commences; and that ecological enhancements (biodiversity net gain) should be identified for the site.
60. The buildings to which the bat survey work relate are identified in the Appraisal as the boundary wall of 19 Albany Road to the north-west of the development site; part of the boundary wall along the western edge of the school playing field site; the clay tiled roof of the original school building close to the kitchen extension; and the building to the east of the kitchen extension. The survey results were submitted to the County Council and reviewed by the County Biodiversity Officer, who has advised that the report assesses that it is unlikely that bats are roosting within the building, however as suitable features are there the occasional roosting of bats cannot be ruled out. They concur with the proposal in the report that works should be carried out using a precautionary mitigation approach, under a watching brief, for any elements of the scheme impacting areas suitable for roosting bats. This should be controlled through the submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan. The Biodiversity Officer also concurs with the findings regarding breeding birds and notes that the precautionary mitigation approach suggested in the PEA also be included in the Construction Environmental Mitigation Plan.
61. With regard to lighting, the Biodiversity Officer notes that lighting can have a negative impact on roosting bats and they therefore recommend that any lighting condition requires the lighting plan to follow the recommendations of the 'Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK' document. Finally, they state that two further conditions should be imposed on any permission given – one to secure details of ecological enhancement features to be incorporated into the site (including bat and bird boxes) and the second for a habitat establishment and management plan to be submitted to ensure that the dense scrub which the Biodiversity Net Gain Report details is established and managed properly to achieve the net gain. Subject to these it is considered that the application is acceptable on ecological grounds and would accord with Policy DM28 of the Local Plan.

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Noise and Construction

62. The site would retain its education use, and therefore ambient noise levels for nearby residential properties would not be significantly different to that already experienced. There would be roof plant sited on the building, and we have received a number of objections to the possible noise disturbance as a result of these units. The applicants were asked to consider this and have submitted an additional Noise Report which assesses the impact of the units against the lowest measured background noise levels taken at the site. The assessment was undertaken during the day based on the worst case scenario of the proposed plant items operating continuously, and the calculated plant noise levels were taken from the manufacturers technical data. The report specifies that the plant units would only be operating during the daytime (school period). The nearest noise sensitive receptors which have the potential to be affected by plant noise, are 21 Albany Road, the building opposite the site on the other side of the Avenue of Remembrance, and the school itself. The assessment demonstrates that the expected noise level from the roof plant is expected to be inaudible compared to the lowest measured background noise level, and therefore no impact on residential amenity is anticipated.
63. A Construction Management Plan (CMP) was submitted as part of the planning application, to establish the construction details and this document has been assessed by the Highways and Transportation Officer. It has also given rise to a number of objections from local residents in relation to the proposed routing of construction traffic, which are proposed to access the school playing field site via the gates at the corner of Albany Road. The objections related to the width of the roads on the suggested route, the potential damage to parked cars, safety issues of construction traffic using residential streets, and the possible suspension of on-street parking to allow construction traffic to pass, to the detriment of resident's amenity. The Highways Officer acknowledged that the route would have involved a long section of road where passing would be difficult and that the route may be intrusive if there are lots of traffic movements. As a result of these concerns the applicants were asked to reconsider the construction routing. The applicant has since engaged with the Highway Authority to devise an appropriate strategy for routing large construction vehicles to and from the site, and the revised document reflects the discussions held.
64. In this revised document the proposed route of construction traffic is via Ufton Lane and Addington Road. This route utilises existing one-way streets so vehicles would not conflict with opposing traffic where carriageway widths and on-street parking already restrict the free flow. The existing one-way system in Addington Road between Park Road and Albany Road would be reversed for the duration to allow vehicles to pass straight across Park Road to enter the construction site. The road alignment of this route and existing parking restrictions are better suited to accommodate the turning movements of the largest HGVs expected, removing the likelihood of overrunning footways and minimising the amount of on-street parking that would need to be suspended. If Park Road were to be used instead of Ufton Lane, HGVs would not be able to turn into either Addington Road or Belmont Road without overrunning the footways and requiring significant loss of on-street parking.
65. The Highways Officer notes that it is not a valid reason to refuse planning permission because of the associated construction traffic movements, and these must instead be

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managed to minimise the impact as far as possible. The revised Construction Management Plan (CMP) does address the original concerns about routing and is considered to offer the best solution for accessing the site, without having to remove or prune any of the trees along the Avenue of Remembrance which would have been the only other alternative. As discussed in paragraphs 56 and 57 above, the retention of these trees is supported by Development Plan Policy, and their removal and/or pruning would not be supported in this case.

66. The revised CMP and Logistics Plan covers the routing of construction and delivery vehicles; parking and turning areas for construction and delivery vehicles, and site personnel; timing of deliveries to avoid peak school times along with a booking system and advance instructions for suppliers; provision of wheel washing facilities; temporary traffic management and signage; and on site loading and unloading facilities. Subject to the imposition of a condition to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the latest revision of this document, there is no objection to the development from the Highways and Transportation Officer. Given that there are neighbouring residential properties to the site, if planning permission is granted it is considered appropriate to restrict the hours of construction to protect residential amenity to the standard operating hours of Monday to Friday between 0800 and 1800; Saturday 0900 to 1300; and no operations on Sundays or public holidays.

Drainage

67. The application was supported by the submission of a revised Flood Risk Assessment which identifies that the site is entirely within Flood Zone 1, where there is the lowest risk of flooding. This document identified, however, that the proposed building is in an area at low to medium risk of surface water flooding and subsequently the finished floor levels have been designed to be elevated above surface water flood levels, circa 300mm above prevailing ground levels. The surface water drainage strategy for the site incorporates sustainable drainage systems, including geocellular soakaways and filter drains, and the report states that this would reduce offsite runoff and provide betterment and alleviate flood risk downstream of the site. The discharge of foul drainage would be into the existing foul sewers and utilise the existing offsite connection to the Southern Water public sewer. The proposed development can be drained effectively, the report states, and existing surface water flooding and overland flows would be intercepted and contained by an arrangement of berms (or bunds) and a shallow infiltration basin for storm events up to the 1 in 100 year event for a duration of 24 hours. Excess flows would be diverted around the proposed development and discharged into the existing overland flow route in the Avenue of Remembrance. The report states that the proposed surface water drainage system would be able to effectively control runoff generated within the site for the proposed teaching block and would provide improvements on pre-development conditions for the kitchen extension, without increasing flood risk elsewhere off site.
68. The revised Flood Risk Assessment was considered by the County Council's Flood and Water Management Team and they have advised that they have no objection to the principles of the drainage scheme proposed in the report but have requested the imposition of two conditions should planning permission be granted - to secure the submission of a detailed surface water drainage scheme prior to commencement of development, and the submission of a verification report relating to the drainage scheme

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prior to occupation of the new building. As such the scheme is considered to accord with Policy DM21 for water, flooding and drainage.

69. The Environment Agency were also consulted on the application, and whilst they raised no objection, they requested the imposition of two conditions. The first seeks to ensure that there is no infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground, other than as permitted with the written consent of the County Planning Authority, to ensure that the development does not contribute to unacceptable levels of water pollution caused by mobilised contaminants. Secondly, they requested a condition which ensures that should any contamination be found on site that has not been previously identified, development will cease until a remediation strategy detailing how the contaminants would be dealt with has been agreed in writing with the County Planning Authority. Both of these conditions have been included in the recommendation below.

Sustainability

70. Planning policy at all levels recognises the need to address climate change and to reduce the amount of energy consumed by development. The NPPF places a presumption in favour of development that is sustainable and planning policy DM19 states that any new non-residential development over 1000sqm should meet the BREEAM 'very good' standard. The planning application was supported by the submission of an Energy Strategy report. The proposed scheme has been designed to offer a sustainable solution, which is practical and meets the needs of the school. The DfE do not request formal BREEAM certification, and therefore the proposed scheme has not followed this process. However, the development does have to adhere to the Department for Education (DfE) Output Specification 2019, which sets out detailed specifications for new buildings. When the energy requirements for schools are assessed against an environmental assessment like BREEAM it inevitably achieves a minimum BREEAM rating of 'very good'.
71. The energy approach for the new school is predominantly a passive one using a fabric first approach, whereby the thermal envelope of the building is enhanced to improve overall energy efficiency of the building. The applicants state that this is the most effective and efficient approach to construction. The passive design measures include limiting heat loss through walls, floors, roofs, windows and doors; day lighting; night cooling; natural ventilation; shading in summer; thermal heating in winter; and reduced air permeability. Mechanical and electrical services are critical to reducing energy consumption and the proposed development would include (but not limited to) dimming controls linked to daylight sensors; local light switching; movement and absence sensors for lighting control; low energy lighting; heat recovery mechanical ventilation; low specific fan power; and heating controls to optimise plant efficiency.
72. A number of Low and Zero Carbon (LZC) technologies have been considered for the building based on physical and financial viability for use on the project. Roof mounted Photo Voltaic (PV) panels are considered by the applicant's to be the most favourable for the development. This has been limited to provision being made for future installation only, however, as the scheme through its design would already achieve the equivalent BREEAM 'very good' rating required to meet Policy DM19. It is considered that the energy approach for the proposed development would meet the aims of Policy DM19 of the Core Strategy and the guidance of the NPPF.

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Archaeology

73. The application was supported by an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment which covered the wider school site and the potential for development generally on site. The assessment finds that the site has an archaeological interest, mainly concerning the presence of possible remains of medieval land management, occupation, and industrial use given its location close to the medieval historic core of Sittingbourne. The site also has broad potential for Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon archaeology as it is located close to the Roman road of Watling Street, three Roman burial sites and an Anglo-Saxon royal estate. The County Council's Archaeological officer has considered the Assessment and the details of the planning application and advises that he broadly agrees with the findings of the report.
74. Given the site's archaeological potential the Archaeological Officer recommends that further archaeological work is warranted on the site, but states that this could be undertaken after determination of the planning application, through the imposition of a condition. The proposed condition would be to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable, submitted to and agreed in writing by the County Planning Authority. This has been included in the recommendation below, and subject to this the application is considered to accord with Policy DM14 where it relates to heritage assets.

Conclusion

75. In my view the key determining factors for this proposal are the principle of the development and the educational need, the loss of part of an area designated as Local Green Space, together with the appropriateness of the design and siting of the new building, and the impact of the development on residential amenity and heritage considerations in relation to the Avenue of Remembrance. There is strong Government support in the NPPF for the development or expansion of schools to ensure that there is sufficient provision to meet growing demand, increased choice and raised educational standards, subject to being satisfied on local amenity and all other material considerations. In my view the proposed development would not give rise to any severe, significant or demonstrable harm that would be overriding as far as planning, environmental and amenity aspects are concerned, as demonstrated in the discussion above.
76. The loss of part of the Local Green Space would be outweighed, in my view, by the need for and improved education facilities on site. It has been demonstrated that there would be no loss of amenity for nearby residents, and the development would not affect the trees within the Avenue of Remembrance. Despite being closer to the road frontage than the existing buildings it is considered that the development would not affect the Area of High Townscape Value, and its local heritage value. There would be no overriding highway impacts as a result of the development, a full sized playing pitch can be retained on site and the proposed conditions would ensure that any impacts in relation to drainage, archaeology, ecology and contamination can be suitably mitigated against. A revised Construction Management Plan has been provided to ensure that construction traffic would not have an adverse effect on local residents.

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77. Support for the provision of school places is heavily embedded within the NPPF, the Planning for Schools Development Policy Statement, and local planning policy, and this development would satisfy a required need for secondary school places. In my view the development is sustainable and in accordance with the aims of the NPPF and I recommend that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions set out below.

Recommendation

78. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:

- The standard 3-year time limit;
- The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- The submission and approval of details of all construction materials to be used externally prior to the commencement of development;
- The removal of the section of paving which juts into the 3m sports pitch run off area and its replacement with grass prior to the occupation of the new building;
- The installation of tree protection fencing prior to the commencement of development;
- Within 6 months of this permission details of the 'Remembrance Imagery' to be positioned on or adjacent to the new school building shall be submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority, and installed prior to the occupation of the new building;
- No development shall commence until a programme of archaeological work is submitted and agreed in writing by the County Planning Authority;
- The development shall be carried out in accordance with the Construction Management Plan Revision 05, dated 20/12/2021.
- That works shall only be carried out on site between the hours of 0800 to 1800 Monday to Friday; 0900 to 1300 on Saturdays; and no operations on Sundays or public holidays;
- Permanent retention of all existing vehicle parking on site;
- Details of covered cycle stands to be submitted for approval, prior to their installation on site, and permanent retention thereafter;
- Revised School Travel Plan to be submitted prior to occupation of the new building;
- Submission of a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme prior to the commencement of development;
- Submission of a verification report covering this scheme to be approved in consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority prior to occupation of the development;
- No infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground, other than with the written approval of the County Planning Authority and shall only be used in those areas where there would be no unacceptable risk to controlled waters or ground stability;
- If during development contamination not previously identified is found to be present, then no further development shall take place until a remediation strategy has been agreed with the County Planning Authority;
- Details of a lighting scheme to be submitted including hours of use, level of illumination and ongoing control over any new lighting on site;
- Submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan prior to the

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commencement of development to outline the precautionary mitigation approach on ecological matters;

- Submission on an Ecological Enhancement Plan within 3 months of work commencing on site to be and agreed in writing by the County Planning Authority;
- Submission of a Habitat Establishment and Management Plan within 3 months of work commencing on site to be and agreed in writing by the County Planning Authority.

79. I FURTHER RECOMMEND that the following INFORMATIVES be added:

- The registering with Kent County Council of the School Travel Plan through the “Jambusters” website following the link <http://www.jambusterstpms.co.uk>;
- Only clean uncontaminated water should drain to the surface water system. Roof drainage shall drain directly to the surface water system (entering after the pollution prevention measures). Appropriate pollution control methods (such as trapped gullies and interceptors) should be used for drainage from access roads and car parking areas to prevent hydrocarbons from entering the surface water system. There should be no discharge into land impacted by contamination or land previously identified as being contaminated. There should be no discharge to made ground. There must be no direct discharge to groundwater, a controlled water.
- Advice that planning permission does not convey any approval to carry out work on or affecting a public highway and that engagement with KCC Highways and Transportation would be required at an early stage.
- The applicant is strongly encouraged to install photovoltaic panels in the area designated, and other renewable features into the scheme. to enhance the energy efficiency of the building.

Case Officer: Mrs Helen Edwards

Tel. no: 03000 413366

Background Documents: see section heading
