

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.

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**Item D1**

**Proposed 1FE expansion of school involving demolition of blocks N & T, and the erection of a new part 2 and part 3 storey school building and visitors centre with associated landscaping works at Maidstone Grammar School for Girls, Buckland Road, Maidstone, Kent ME16 0SF - 22/503012 (KCC/MA/0108/2022)**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

Application by KCC Infrastructure Division for Proposed 1FE expansion of school involving demolition of blocks N & T, and the erection of a new part 2 and part 3 storey school building and visitors centre with associated landscaping works at Maidstone Grammar School for Girls, Buckland Road, Maidstone, Kent ME16 0SF - 22/503012 (KCC/MA/0108/2022)

Recommendation: SUBJECT TO the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (securing funding for the monitoring of the School Travel Plan and the agreement to fund additional bus services for the school should they be needed) I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions.

Local Members: Mr Dan Daley & Mr Tom Cannon

Classification: Unrestricted

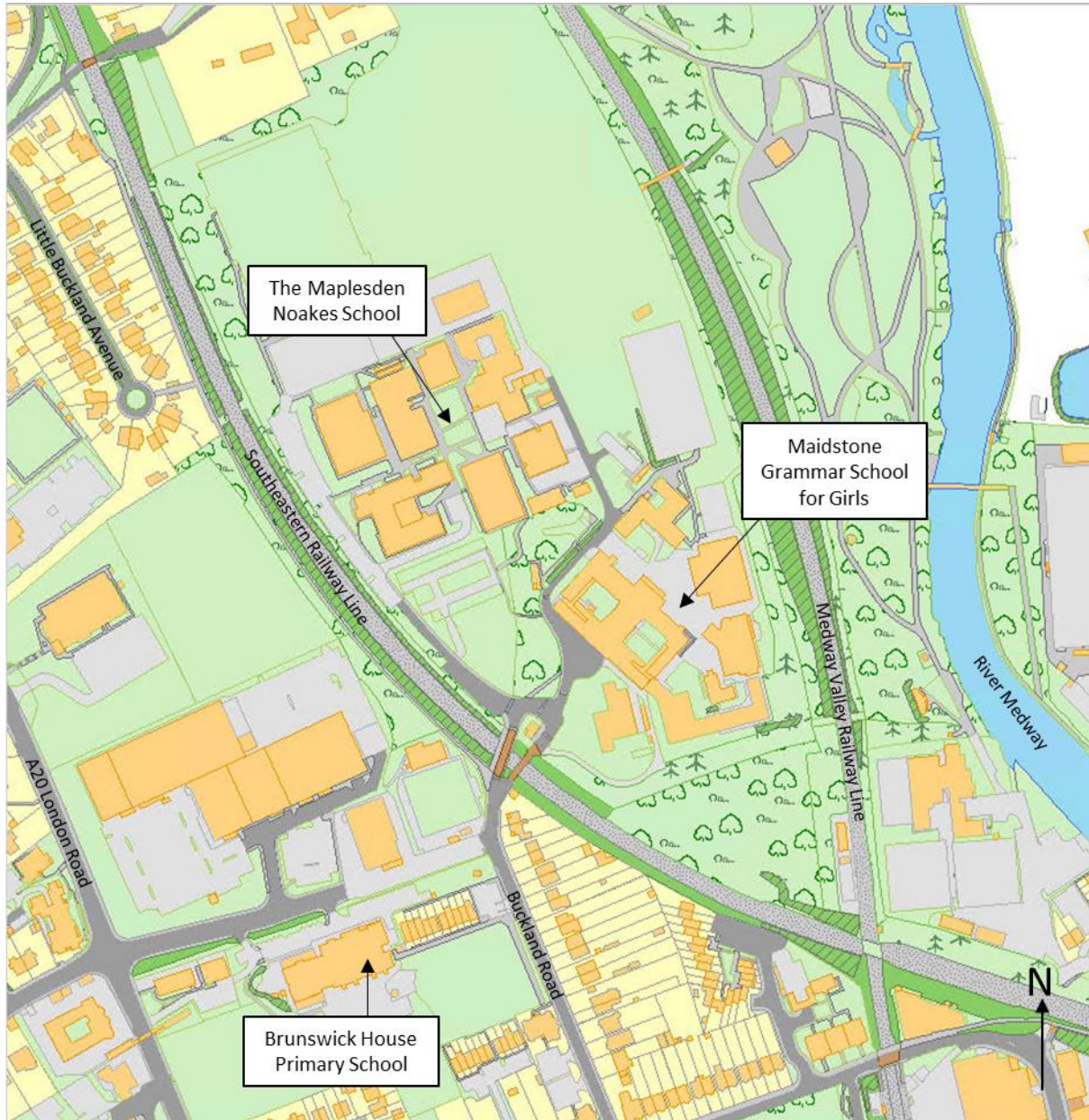
**Site**

1. Maidstone Grammar School for Girls (MGGS) is located at the end of Buckland Road, which is a residential road, and is accessed via a bridge over the London to Ashford railway line. Maplesden Noakes School is located to the north of the school (sharing the same site and access) and Brunswick House Primary School is located to the south west of the site. The latter is accessed via Leafy Lane.
2. The proposed location of the new school building is to the north of the existing sports hall, which is located at the east of the site. The Maidstone Barracks to Strood railway line runs along this eastern boundary of the school, to the rear of the proposed building, and further to the east is Whatman Park and the River Medway. The London to Ashford railway line runs to the west of the site, and to the side of this is a public footway which links Buckland Road with Buckland Lane.
3. In terms of the wider area, there is residential housing to the south, west and north of the site, including in Little Buckland Avenue, which lies to the west of the footway described above. To the east, on the other side of the river, is the Maidstone United football ground and the town centre lies to the south-east of the site.
4. The proposed new school building falls wholly within the urban area of Maidstone, as defined in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan. There are no physical boundaries between the Maidstone Grammar School for Girls and the Maplesden Noakes site and there are some shared access routes within the site.

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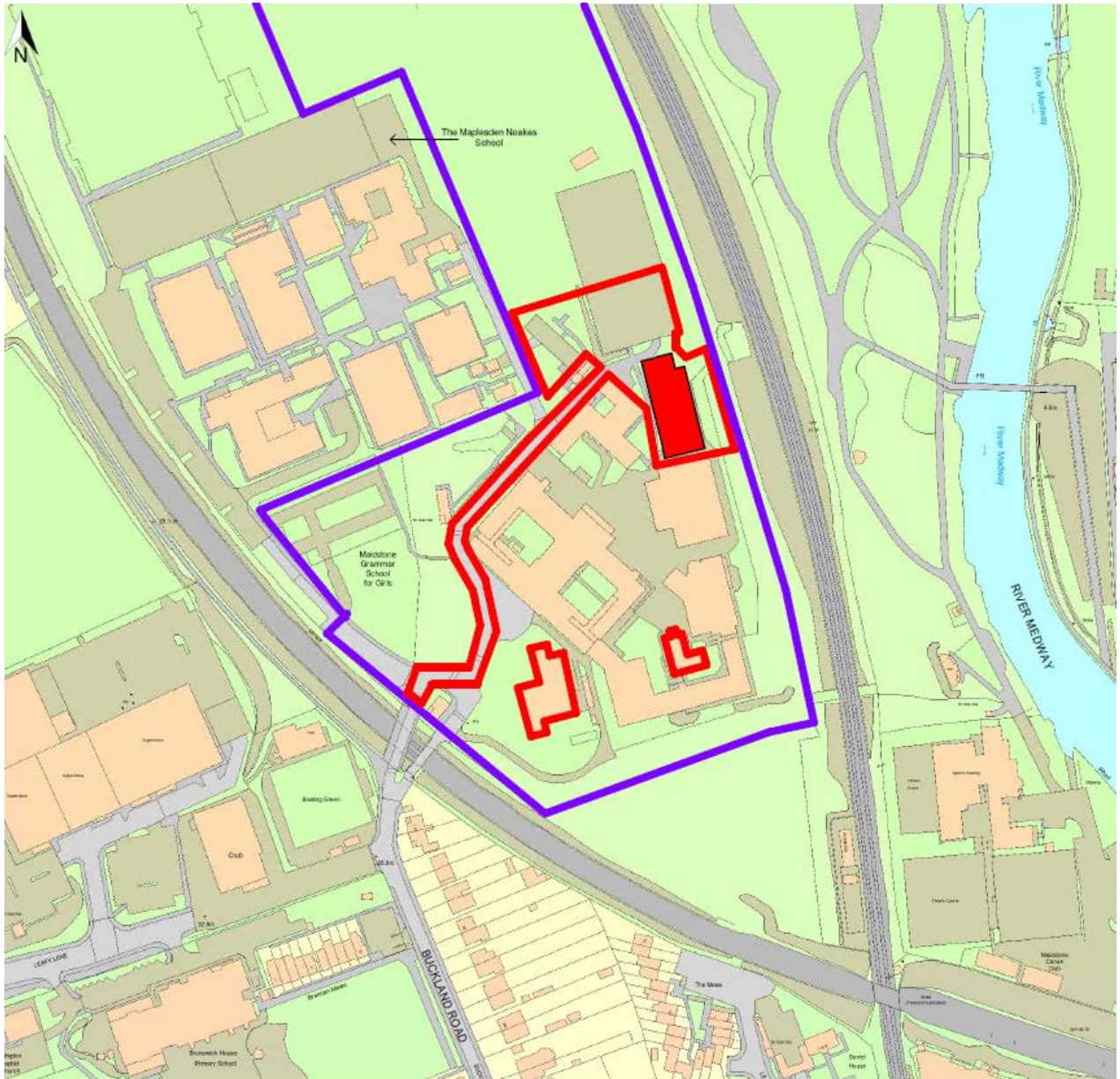
**General Location Plan**



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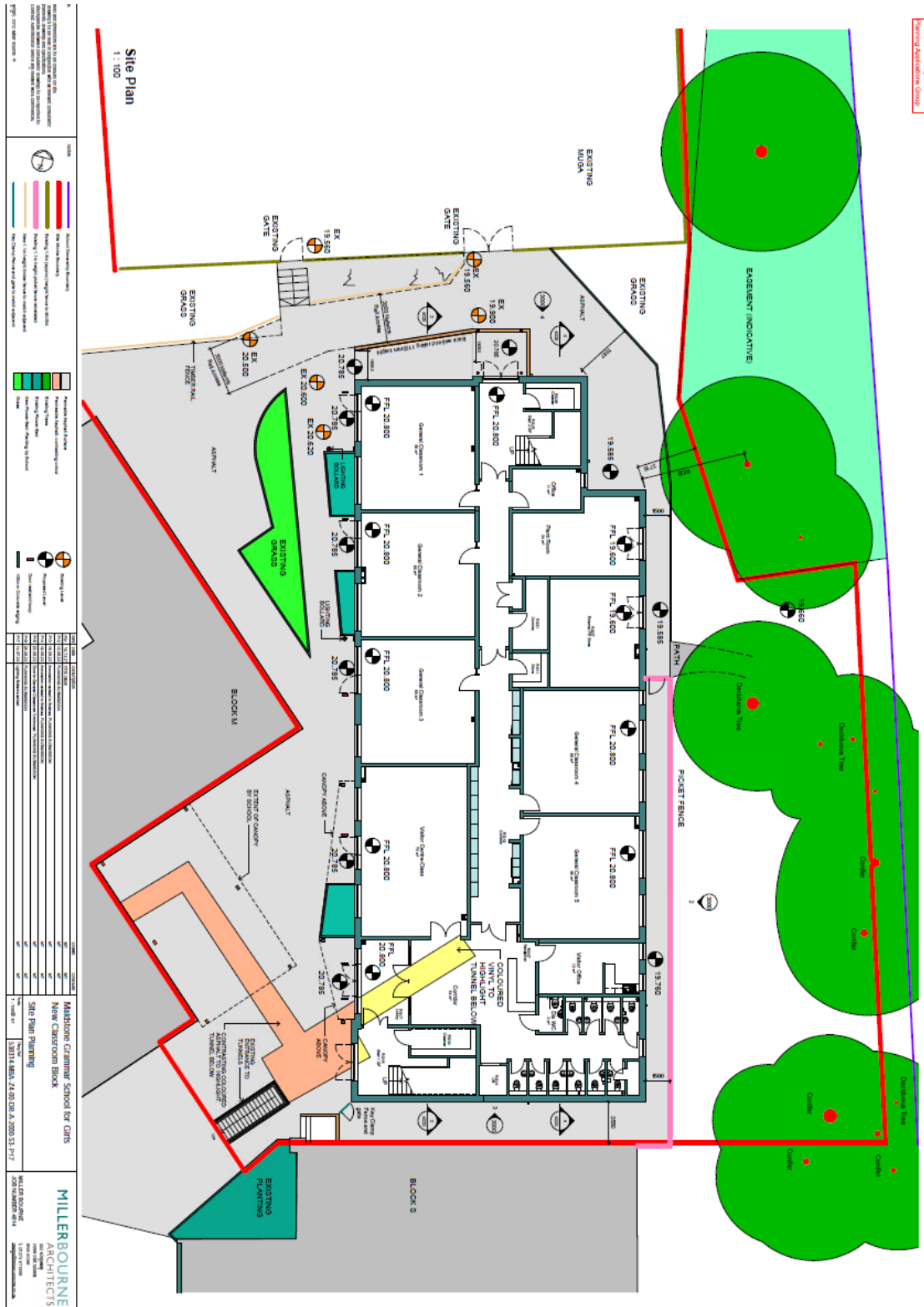
**Site Location Plan**



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**Site Plan**

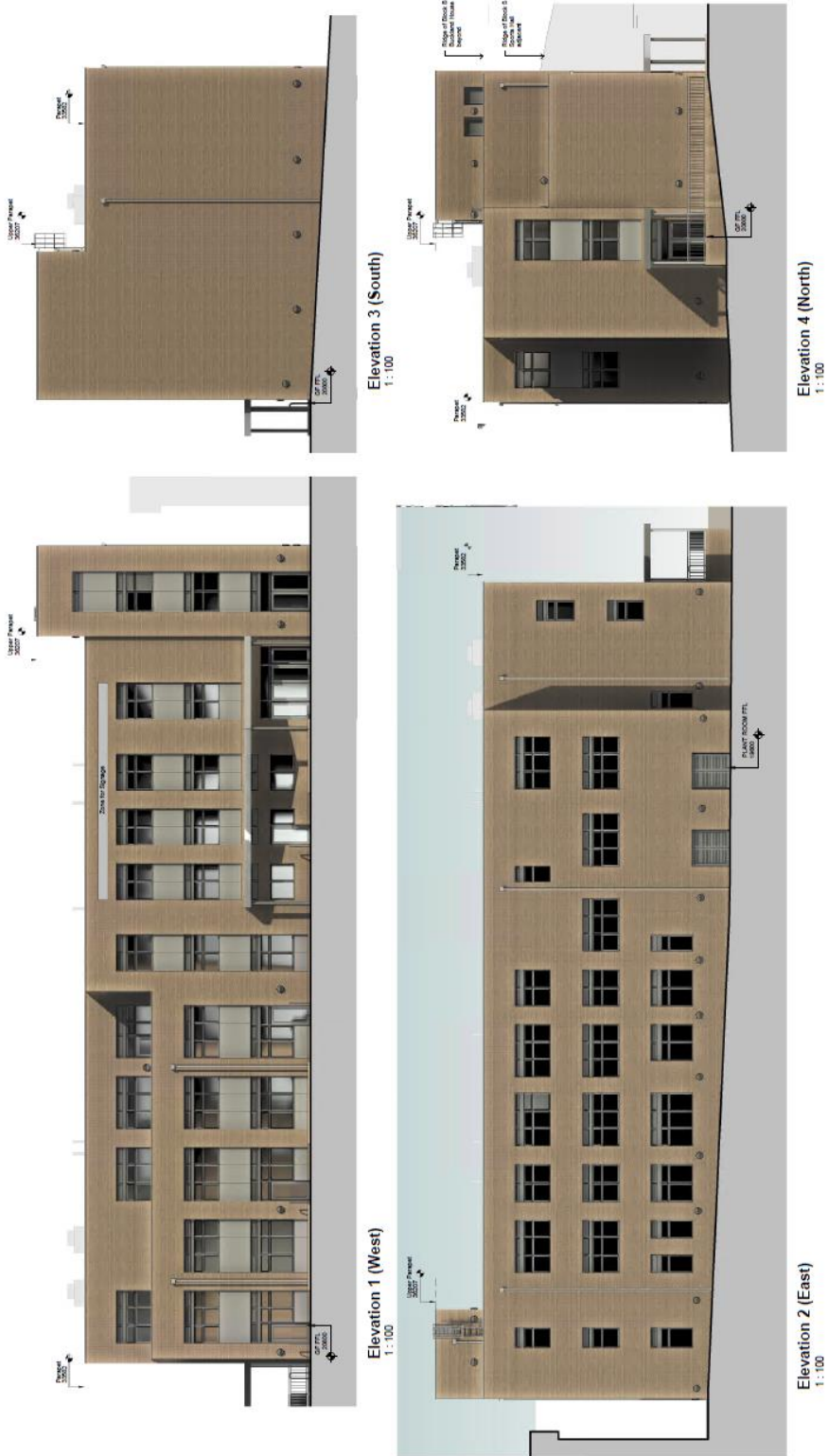


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**Proposed Elevations**



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3D Images



View from North West

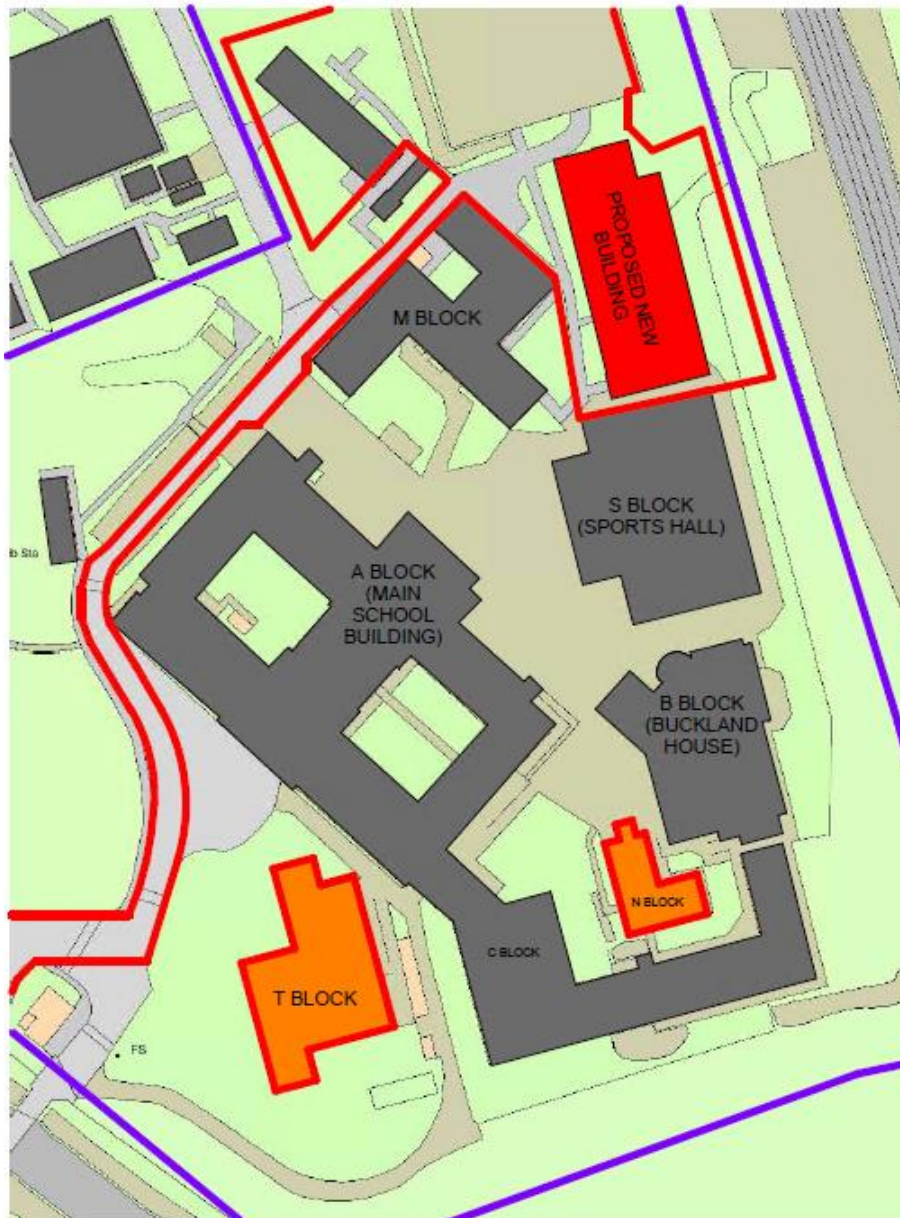


View from South West

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**Proposed Demolition Plan**



**Demolition Plan**  
1 : 500

<p>Notes</p> <p>Notes are to be checked on site, or used in conjunction with all relevant consultants' notes and specifications. Drawings to be reported to monitor before any relevant work commences.</p> <p>Other Issues: =</p>	<p>— School Ownership Boundary</p>	<p>— New Building</p>	<p>Scale</p> <p>0 10 20</p>
	<p>— Works Boundary</p>	<p>— Building to be demolished. Area to be seeded/turfed</p>	

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**Education Need**

5. This application has been submitted following an identified need for additional secondary school places in the district of Maidstone. 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 Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2022-2026 is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. This plan forecasts that for the Maidstone and Malling Selective planning group (which MGGS forms part of) there will be a deficit of Year 7 places from 2023-24 if no additional places are established. To meet the forecast demand for year 7 places, Maidstone Grammar School for Girls is proposed to be expanded by 1FE, increasing its published admission number (PAN) from 180 (6FE) to 210 (7FE) from September 2023.
  
6. The application documentation states that MGGS has provided education for girls from Maidstone and the surrounding area for over 130 years. The school was judged as 'outstanding' by OFSTED in May 2009 and is ideally located within Maidstone town to meet the forecast demand within the established travel to school patterns for the Maidstone and Malling selective group.

**Recent Site History**

7. Since 2002, the following decisions have been made concerning the site:

MA/19/502955	Proposed sports hall extension to provide shower and changing facilities, a classroom /visitor learning centre and a classroom/conference room.  It should be noted that this development, although permitted, was not implemented. It was located in broadly the same location as the current proposed development and provided similar facilities, other than those now required for the expansion of the school role.	Permitted 23/10/2019
MA/15/500376	Proposed replacement sports hall implemented (alternative application to planning permission ref: MA/14/500814 which was not built)	Permitted 19/02/2015
MA/14/500814	Proposed demolition of existing sports hall and support facility and the proposed erection of a new sports hall and support facility (alternative application to MA/12/920 which was not built).	Permitted 20/08/214
MA/12/920	Demolition of existing buildings and erection of replacement sports hall, dining hall and kitchens and music teaching accommodation together with external works (not built).	Permitted 26/07/2012
MA/09/1014	Erection of a two and three-storey classroom block on land to the rear of the existing school, the temporary re-siting of mobile accommodation before removal on completion and the formation of a car park and landscaped area at the front of the school.	Permitted 03/09/2009



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MA/08/505	Proposed Woodland Pathway.	Permitted 18/04/2008
MA/06/657	Demolition of an external wall to insert a new single storey flat roof extension; to provide disabled access into the building and to fell/remove trees to a detached school teaching block.	Permitted 13/06/2006
MA/04/1386	Construction and installation of a new electrical intake building and the installation of the new electrical mains head.	Permitted 24/08/2004
MA/03/949	The construction of a single storey, multi-purpose hall with kitchen and ancillary areas within an existing enclosed quadrangle (amended scheme from MA/02/1572).	Permitted 25/06/2003
MA/02/1572	The construction of a two storey, multi-purpose hall with toilet facilities, kitchen & ancillary areas within an existing enclosed quadrangle.	Permitted 01/10/2002

#### **Proposal**

8. The application proposes the erection of a part 2 and part 3 storey stand-alone classroom block which would facilitate the school expansion from 6FE (900 pupils in years 7-11) to 7FE (1050 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 school would therefore not be at full capacity until September 2027. The classroom block would be sited along the eastern boundary of the site, adjacent to the school sports hall. Historically this area has been a games court, but the surface is now predominantly asphalt with some seating and sheltered areas for pupils.
9. The proposed building would be rectangular in shape with a central corridor and classrooms on either side. At ground floor level there would be 5 general classrooms and a PE store, along with plant room and staff offices. At first floor there would be 5 science laboratories and a science prep room, whilst on the second floor there would be a music suite comprising 5 small practice rooms, an ensemble practice room, a general music classroom, an extensive classroom, and music store. In addition, this floor would have a further office and two workrooms. There would be a staircase at each end of the building, a lift at the southern end and a bank of toilets on each floor at the southern end of the building.
10. In addition to the school facilities the development would also incorporate a visitor centre classroom at ground floor level adjacent to the main entrance lobby, with its own dedicated visitor reception and office. This would be used as an exhibition space evoking the WW2 period and would enable the school to provide opportunities for students at primary schools to visit and gain a real-life experience of school life during the Second World War. In addition, there would be opportunities for some members of the public to visit the Air Raid Shelters out of term time. This would be through organised tours led by the School (staff and volunteers) which would be advertised via the School website and pre-booked to ensure control over numbers (see further information in paragraph 32 below). The entrance to one set of WW2 tunnels is adjacent to this main entrance and the internal floor finish would indicate where the

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tunnel passes under the building. Similarly, the outline of the tunnels would be painted on the external asphalt.

11. The building would be predominantly three stories in height with a flat roof behind a parapet wall which runs round the perimeter of the building. The second floor has a reduced footprint which would result in a flat roof over this area, which would be kept free from any roof plant. This area has the potential to be converted into two further classrooms in the future. Roof plant would be located towards the back of the roof (north-eastern boundary) whilst an array of solar panels would be positioned on the front half of the roof, orientated in a south-west direction. Access to the roof would be from the principal staircase in the southern end of the building, which creates a tower effect for the building. A canopy would be provided over the main entrance and in front of the visitor centre classroom, as well as over the access door on the northern elevation of the building.
12. The building would be a timber frame close panel construction, and the external walls are proposed to be red brick, which would match the predominant material in the school's original building. There would be a series of recessed facades in the building which would be clad with panelling in an anthracite grey colour, and aluminium faced windows, flashings, gutters, rainwater pipes etc would all be in the same colour.
13. The proposals also involve the demolition of blocks N and T on site, which would no longer be required. These are indicated in orange on the plan on page 1.7. Block N is a two storey block currently being used as temporary classrooms while some refurbishment works are being undertaken elsewhere within the school. Block T is single storey and currently used for science lessons, which would then be taught in the new science labs should the application be approved. Both blocks are at the end of their useful life and no longer fit for purpose. The land freed up by this demolition is proposed to be turfed over whilst the school considers the longer term use of the area. The proposals would not involve the felling of any trees – those closest to the proposed building are located along the eastern boundary of the site, behind the proposed building.
14. The proposals do not involve any changes to the school access or parking arrangements.

**Planning Policy**

15. 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).

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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:

- 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*);
- 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*);
- 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

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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 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 **Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan** (adopted October 2017) (summarised policies):

**Policy SP1** **Maidstone Urban Area.** Defines the focus for new development seeking to achieve a good place to live and work by seeking to achieve development in a way that contributes positively to the locality's distinctive character.

**Policy SP18** **Historic Environment.** Seeks to protect and where possible enhance the characteristics, distinctiveness, diversity and quality of heritage assets including through the development management process, by securing the sensitive management and design of development which impacts on heritage assets and their settings.

**Policy SP23** **Sustainable Transport.** Seeks to mitigate the impact of development, where appropriate, on the local road networks and protect and enhance public rights of way; ensure the transport network provides inclusive access for all users; and address the air quality impact of transport.

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- Policy ID1**      **Infrastructure Delivery.** Seeks to encourage and support infrastructure schemes that are brought forward by service providers where they are in accordance with other policies in the local plan.
- Policy DM1**      **Principles of Good Design.** Covers the principles of good design which proposed development should accord with, including reference to permeable layouts; responding to local natural or historic character and incorporating a high quality, modern design approach; high quality public realm; respecting the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties; respecting natural features such as trees and hedges; high quality design which responds to surrounding areas; maximising opportunities for sustainable development; protecting on-site biodiversity; safely accommodating vehicle and pedestrian movements; incorporating security measures to design out crime; avoiding areas at risk of flooding; incorporating adequate storage of waste and recycling; and providing adequate vehicle and cycle parking; and being flexible towards future adaptation in response to changing life needs.
- Policy DM2**      **Sustainable Design.** Where technically feasible and viable, non-residential developments should meet BREEAM very good standards addressing maximum water efficiencies under the mandatory water credits and energy credits.
- Policy DM3**      **Natural Environment.** The Policy seeks to protect and enhance the natural environment through measures to protect landscape character, avoid inappropriate development, control pollution, enhance biodiversity, maintain and manage natural assets, mitigate for climate changes, and positively contribute to the improvement of accessibility to natural green spaces. It seeks to ensure that where appropriate an ecological evaluation of development sites is made to take full account of biodiversity present, as well as arboricultural assessments and landscape/visual impact assessments.
- Policy DM4**      **Development Affecting Designated and Non-designated Heritage Assets.** Seeks to ensure that new development affecting a heritage asset incorporates measures to conserve, and where possible enhance, the significance of the heritage asset and, where appropriate, its setting. Where appropriate, development proposals will be expected to respond to the value of the historic environment by the means of a proportionate Heritage Assessment which assesses and takes full account of: any heritage assets, and their settings, which could reasonably be impacted by the proposals; the significance of the assets; and the scale of the impact of development on the identified significance. Where development is proposed for a site which includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, applicants must submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.
- Policy DM6**      **Air Quality.** Seeks to ensure that the impacts to air quality in Air Quality Management Areas and identified exceedance areas are appropriately

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considered and that the air quality impacts of the development will be mitigated to acceptable levels, and that the air quality impacts of the development will be minimised.

**Policy DM8 External Lighting.** Seeks to ensure that proposals for external lighting use the minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve the proposed purpose and that the design and specification of the lighting would minimise glare and light spillage and would not dazzle or distract drivers or pedestrians using nearby highways; and the lighting scheme would not be visually detrimental to its immediate or wider setting, particularly intrinsically dark landscapes.

**Policy DM20 Community Facilities.** The adequate provision of community facilities, including social, education and other facilities is an essential component of residential development. Where appropriate the dual use of education facilities (new and existing) should be encouraged for recreation and other purposes.

**Policy DM21 Assessing the Transport Impacts of Development.** Proposals must demonstrate that the impacts of trips generated to and from the development are accommodated, remedied or mitigated to prevent severe residual impacts; provide a satisfactory Transport Assessment and a satisfactory Travel Plan; and comply with the requirements for the policy for air quality.

**Policy DM23 Parking Standards.** Vehicle parking for non-residential uses will need to take into account the accessibility of the development and the availability of public transport; the type, mix and use of the development proposed; whether development proposals exacerbate on-street car parking to an unacceptable degree; and the appropriate design and provision of cycle parking facilities.

**Policy DM29 Leisure and Community Uses in the Town Centre.** States that proposals for community uses (Class D1) in the town centre in combination with any similar uses in the locality, should not have a significant impact on local amenity, including as a result of noise and hours of operation.

### **Consultations**

16. **Maidstone Borough Council** raise no objection to the application. They advise that the application satisfies the relevant policies of the development plan (Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017) and would be considered acceptable in terms of visual and residential amenity. There are no overriding material planning considerations that would indicate a refusal of planning permission.

**KCC Highways and Transportation Officer** raises no objection to the application, subject to the receipt of the Memorandum of Understanding to secure a mechanism for funding the provision of additional bus services if they should be needed, along with a

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payment for the monitoring of the school travel plan; and the imposition of conditions to ensure parking spaces are available for the community use, that all construction and demolition be carried out in accordance with the submitted Construction Management Plan, the provision and implementation of a School Travel Plan, the provision of 22 secure and covered cycle parking spaces prior to occupation of the new building, the permanent retention of all on-site parking spaces, the provision of measures to prevent discharge of surface water onto the highway, and the provision of wheel washing facilities on site.

**KCC Biodiversity Officer** raises no objection subject to the imposition of a condition to secure an ecological enhancement plan for the site and an informative to ensure that breeding birds are not affected during the development of the site.

**KCC County Archaeological Officer** raises no objection to the application, subject to the imposition of two conditions to secure archaeological field evaluation works prior to the commencement of development, and the implementation of a phased programme of archaeological interpretation work in accordance with a written specification to be agreed with the County Planning Authority prior to occupation of the building.

**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, that a remediation strategy be agreed before any further work takes place; that there be no piling on site without prior consent; that the drainage be carried out in accordance with the strategy submitted; and informatives included relating to the disposal and re-use of soil in relation to the potential for mobilising contamination.

**KCC Flood and Water Management Officer** raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions to ensure the detailed surface water drainage scheme is implemented as per the submitted scheme, and a verification report to demonstrate the drainage system complies with that approved.

**Public Rights of Way (West Kent PROW Team)** raise no objection to the proposal.

**Minerals & Waste Planning Policy Team** raise no objection to the application.

**Network Rail Infrastructure Limited** advises it does not have any comments to make regarding the application.

**KCC Transport Planner Schools** advise that the submitted School Travel Plan will need to be updated in relation to objectives, targets and actions, bearing in mind the Plan is intrinsically linked to the planning permission for the school's expansion.

**Local Member**

17. The local County Members for Maidstone Central, Mr Dan Daley and Mr Tom Cannon were notified of the application on 14 June 2022. No comments have been received to date.

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**Publicity**

18. The application was publicised by the posting of 5 site notices and an advertisement in a local newspaper.

**Representations**

19. In response to the publicity, 1 letter has been received objecting to the application. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:
- School expansion will exacerbate the existing traffic related problems in the surrounding area, to the detriment of the local community
  - Situation will get worse with a year-on-year increase in pupil numbers at Maidstone Grammar School for Girls and Maplesden Noakes
  - Neighbouring roads badly affected by parking by students; parked on both sides of the road it creates a chicane effect which restricts movement by large vehicles
  - Use of neighbouring roads for drop off and pick up of children also causes problems
  - Consideration should be given to introducing single or double yellow lines on one side of the road to avoid the chicane effect
  - The Controlled Parking Zone could be extended to include further neighbouring roads so that proper parking controls can be implemented
  - Many students use the large car parks for the retail outlets in Leafy Lane – if this is prevented by site owners there would be a major worsening of the situation in the whole surrounding area.

**Discussion**

20. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 15 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.
21. This application is being reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee due to the objection received from a local resident, as set out in paragraph 19 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 or on residential amenity; any highway and transportation implications linked to the proposal; sustainability issues; and landscape, tree and ecological matters.

**Principle of Development and Education Need**

22. 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



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out in paragraph 15 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 Maidstone and as such the principle of development is accepted, subject to it being in accordance with other relevant policies.

23. The educational need for expanded facilities at Maidstone Grammar School for Girls is set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 above. The School has worked with KCC Education to establish the accommodation required to support this expansion, which has resulted in the proposed new building which would make an efficient use of the space on the school site. In addition, much needed modernisation work on site would see the removal of blocks N and T which are at the end of their useful life and no longer fit for purpose. An integral part of the new building would be the provision of the visitor centre linked to the School's unique set of Second World War Air Raid Shelters, and this would allow proactive engagement with the local community and primary schools.
24. 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**

25. The proposed classroom block would be sited to the rear of the school site and would be grouped with existing school buildings and viewed within the context of these. Its footprint would be partially the same as the sports hall extension that was previously approved in 2019, under reference MA/19/502955 (see paragraph 7) and found to be acceptable. That earlier application, which was considered by the Planning Applications Committee in October 2019, provided shower and changing facilities, a classroom/visitor learning centre and a classroom/conference room. This application provides the same visitor centre facilities as previously approved plus the additional teaching spaces to accommodate the 1FE expansion. Given its location amongst the other school buildings I consider the proposed building is appropriately located.
26. The building would be part two and part three storey in design and constructed with brick elevations and vertical infill panels between the windows. The design is considered to be in keeping with the existing and original buildings on the school site and of a similar scale and massing, such that the new building would sit well within the grouping of school buildings.
27. The new building would be located at the north-eastern edge of the school site and would be well screened by vegetation. To the east of the site is the London to Ashford railway line and beyond that the River Medway. The proposal is not likely to give rise to adverse impacts as a result of noise or lighting given its location in relation to residential properties and its siting amongst the existing school buildings. The nearest residential properties are approximately 300m away in Little Buckland Avenue and approximately 195m away in Buckland Road.

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28. The new building would be lit with wall mounted lights on the external elevations, and two bollard lights at ground level, which would be controlled by a sensor and timer so that the lights would come on at dusk and be timed to go off at 9pm. The applicant has confirmed that the roof lights would not be on the same timer/sensor and it is considered appropriate to condition that these roof lights are only to be used for emergency access, so that there is no night-time glare from lights on the roof in terms of residential amenity, and they do not impact Biodiversity (see section below). As such it is considered that the scheme would accord with the aims of Policy DM8 (Lighting) of the Maidstone Local Plan.
29. The removal of blocks N (two storey) and T (single storey) would improve the appearance of the overall site layout, as both buildings are at the end of their useful life, and their removal would create some space around the remaining buildings. The applicant states that the land freed up by their demolition would be turfed over while the school considers the long-term use for these areas.
30. Overall, it is considered that the siting and design of the proposed new building (and demolition of blocks N and T) would be in accordance with Maidstone Local Plan Policy DM1 (design) and the associated NPPF objectives relating to good design.

**Highways and Traffic Impacts**

31. The application involves the expansion of the school by 1 form of entry (150 children) and the application was therefore supported by the submission of a Transport Statement (TS) which considered the highway implications of the traffic generated by the additional children on the surrounding road network. Following initial comments from the County Highways and Transportation Team a further Technical Note was submitted, and both documents have been assessed by the County Council's Highways Officer. As set out in paragraph 14 the proposed development does not include any alterations to the access arrangements for the school, or the parking provision on site.
32. The development includes a new visitor centre which would be capable of accommodating groups of up to 30 pupils visiting the underground WWII bunkers during school term time. The Technical Note (TN) has confirmed that the school site can already accommodate up to five coaches, with movement in/out of the site supervised by staff and timed so as not to coincide with pupils arriving/leaving the school. The TN also confirms that use of the visitor centre by members of the public would be limited to groups of up to 30 people at a time during periods outside of school term-time. A new visitor centre was also included in the previous planning application (MA/19/502955) for the new sports hall extension. The arrangements for this public use would be the same as those approved in this earlier application, where the facility would be open to the public in the school half term in May and the summer holiday, and the proposed hours of use would be 10am to 4pm, with a maximum of 5 tours in a day, and included use on Saturday's, Sunday's and bank holidays. As set out in paragraph 10, these tours would be pre-booked to control numbers and would be organised and led by School staff and volunteers. Although not implemented, the earlier consent included a condition to ensure that sufficient car parking would be made available within the site for this purpose. The Highways Officer has advised that subject to an equivalent condition being imposed on this permission, they are satisfied that the access and parking arrangements for the visitor centre would be able to suitably cater for all vehicles that

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could be expected to require access. This condition has been included in the recommendation below.

33. At the County Highway Officers request the applicants undertook a further traffic survey of the A20 London Road/Buckland Hill/Somerfield Road junction, in order to quantify the impact of the additional traffic movements. This was carried out on 6<sup>th</sup> September and captured traffic volumes on a neutral term-time weekday over the time period of 7am – 10am when peak conditions on the network would coincide with travel associated with the start of the school day. The survey identified 1,671 movements through the junction during the peak hour of 7:45am to 8:45am and noted that queuing was predominantly concentrated on the A20 junction arms, but that queues of up to 14 vehicles were counted on the Buckland Hill arm. The TN has identified that the proposed development could add up to 34 additional vehicular trips (68 two-way movements) by pupils at this junction. The Highways Officer has advised that an increase of this scale would be expected to fall within the daily fluctuations in traffic volumes and that the current prohibition of right turn movements into Buckland Hill by northbound vehicles on the A20 is also likely to influence route choice amongst some parents/carers. These vehicles, he suggests, may instead be minded to route via Buckland Road. Having considered the information provided in the TN on this matter, the Highways Officer has advised that any further detailed analysis of this junction is not warranted in this instance.
34. The TN also included further analysis of the parking beat survey previously presented in the Transport Statement. This focused on the on-street parking capacity that is available at 15:40, when demand is likely to be at its greatest as parents/carers congregate to collect pupils at the end of the school day. The Highway officer notes that importantly, the analysis has excluded the spaces previously defined as 'loading' spaces to reflect how these are subject to restrictions or are across private accesses and do not therefore form part of the available capacity.
35. The findings indicate that the current parking demand at 15:40 peaks at 55 vehicles across Buckland Road, Buckland Hill, Leafy Lane and Little Buckland Avenue. These streets collectively have a capacity of 95 spaces, with the northern section of Buckland Road and Little Buckland Avenue most well-used. The TN concludes that the availability of at least 40 spaces is sufficient to accommodate the additional parking demand of 37 vehicles resulting from the proposed development. The TN has also drawn attention to the demand profiles included as part of the survey data in the TS. These indicated that the overall availability of parking spaces generally improves after 15:25, reflecting how the other nearby schools (Maplesden Noakes and Brunswick House) have an earlier school day finish time than MGGS.
36. The County Highways Officer is therefore satisfied that the applicant has demonstrated there to be sufficient spare capacity to accommodate the additional drop-off/pick-up activity associated with the proposed development. They also note the commitment expressed within the TN that the school will continue to take a pro-active approach in monitoring and managing the arrival and departure of pupils. The school's current activities include on-going co-ordination with Maplesden Noakes/Brunswick House, staff supervision and support from the police. These will be the subject of on-going review as part of the planned monitoring and management within the School Travel Plan, which will also enable additional measures to be implemented if required. Furthermore, it should be noted that the school is well located to benefit from pupils travelling by train

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and bus given its proximity to the bus routes along the A20 and to the Maidstone East and Maidstone Barracks train stations, which are easily within walking distance.

37. As stated above the scheme does not include any additional on-site parking provision for staff. The TN asserts that there are typically 10-11 parking spaces available within the staff car park, and reiterates their assertion made in the TS that additional staff parking is therefore not required. The Highway Officer has advised that this cannot be verified by the photographs and survey count data in the TN as the time of day of the survey has not been defined. However, the original TS indicated that of the additional 12 members of staff required for the proposed expansion, 9 are expected to travel by car. The Highway Officer acknowledges that if some or all of this additional demand cannot be accommodated on site in the staff car park, staff would be likely to park on the surrounding streets or modify their travel arrangements. Although this potential additional on-street parking would reduce the available capacity for other road users, (including local residents and parents/carers picking up or dropping off pupils) the Highways Officer does not regard up to 9 vehicles to represent a sustainable ground for raising an objection to the proposed development. Incentives to encourage staff members to travel by non-car modes should continue to form a key component of the School Travel Plan. The School Travel Plan is discussed in paragraph 41 below.
38. An additional 22 cycle parking spaces are proposed to be provided alongside the existing cycle provision, which is planned to be refurbished. The County parking standards require at least 22 spaces to be provided for 150 pupils (at a rate of 1 per seven pupils) and therefore this additional cycle parking provision would accord with these requirements.
39. The TS indicated that the proposed expansion could result in up to 40 additional pupils travelling to school by bus. This assessment was based on travel patterns being consistent with those identified in the applicant's School Travel Plan survey undertaken in January 2022. The Highway Officer advised that growth of this scale could result in the need for an additional bus vehicle to be provided, depending on the routes used by the additional pupils and the extent of any capacity pressures. In order to ensure the future availability of bus services and minimise the number of car-based journeys to and from the school, the Highway Officer advised that a financial sum should be underwritten by the applicant that would cover the proposed school expansion and anticipated increase in bus users.
40. On the advice of KCC Public Transport, a sum of £97,500 could be required. This figure is based upon the cost of providing one additional school bus for a year at a cost £500 per day over 195 school days. Payment of the financial sum would, however, only be required if a capacity constraint attributable to the school expansion is identified. The need to trigger the payment would be determined through monitoring undertaken in support of the School Travel Plan. This would involve a review of the before and after Kent Travel Saver uptake (obtainable via KCC) and data on passenger journey numbers for affected services (obtainable via the operators). This would provide the necessary evidence to demonstrate that the additional demand is associated with the school expansion rather than other external factors.
41. The applicants have confirmed their willingness to fund this additional bus service, should it be needed, and this would be secured through the signing of a Memorandum

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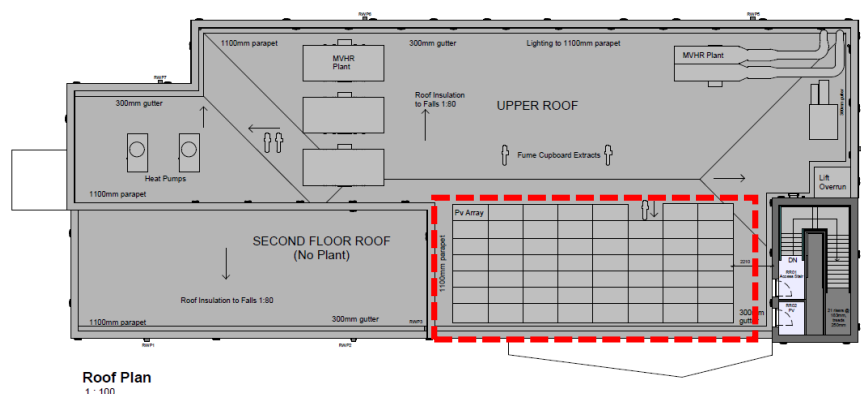
of Understanding (MoU), between the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) and Growth, Environment and Transport (GET) directorates. A draft of this MoU has been received by the Planning Authority. In addition to agreeing to pay the funds for the bus service if required, the MoU also secures a further sum of £5,000 which would be a dedicated resource to ensure the effective monitoring, scrutiny and support for the School Travel Plan over a 5 year period. A condition to secure an updated School Travel Plan is included in the recommendation at the end of this report, and this would also specify the need to encourage staff members to travel by non-car modes, as identified in paragraph 37 above.

42. Initial requests to the applicant involved asking them to consider the feasibility of providing off-site pedestrian improvements to Buckland Hill which is currently disjointed in the vicinity of the snooker club and requires uncontrolled crossing movements by pedestrians. The applicants have considered this request, however they state that there are significant width constraints and level differences which would need to be overcome to achieve a more satisfactory arrangement for pedestrians. The Highways Officer acknowledges that these constraints exist and that a requirement for the applicants to resolve them would be disproportionate to the number of pedestrian movements generated by this development/school expansion.
43. The TN has clarified that the new development would be served by the established internal access routes and parking/turning areas on site, which are currently used by service and delivery vehicles. Finally, with regard to the crash data provided in the TS and TN, the Highway Officer concurs with the view that there is no evidenced pattern of crashes associated with travel to the school on the London Road corridor.
44. The NPPF states development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. The Transportation Planning Team as Highway Authority and statutory consultee have considered all relevant aspects of this school expansion, as set out above, and have concluded that the development would not result in a severe impact on the highway. The Borough Council has not objected to the proposal and subject to the conditions requested by the Highway Officer (as set out in paragraph 16 and the recommendation below) and the signing of the MoU to secure monitoring of the STP and funds for additional bus services should they be needed, the development would accord with Policies SP23, DM1, DM21 and DM23 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.
45. It is noted that the objector considers that there are congestion and related problems caused by parking and movement of parent and student cars in a significant number of adjacent roads and that the school expansion would only exacerbate the problems. They have suggested that parking restrictions should be extended to include further neighbouring roads. However, the issue of parking on surrounding streets has been addressed in the TN and the Highways Officer is satisfied that sufficient spare capacity has been demonstrated to accommodate the additional drop off/pick up activity associated with the proposed development. A requirement in the form of an extension to the controlled parking zone would not therefore meet the planning obligation tests as it is not necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms. It is therefore considered that this cannot be justified as part of this application.

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**Sustainability**

46. The application has been supported by the submission of an ‘Energy and Thermal Modelling Assessment’ and a ‘Carbon Neutral Statement’ in order to assess the development in sustainability terms. The design of the new building has been based on the principles of passive design, seeking to achieve the ‘Be Lean, Be Clean, Be Green’ hierarchy. The Energy Assessment states that by using hybrid ventilation and adding thermal mass to the modular construction, the building would stay cool and maintain low levels of CO<sub>2</sub> whilst providing a bright and naturally lit learning environment for the students. It goes on to state that the building fabric performance has been specified to improve insulation to counteract the heat loss incurred by the natural ventilation and large glazed windows.
47. The report states that the passive approach would yield an excellent energy performance that would pass Part L of the Building Regulations (with a 51% improvement) and the energy benchmarks, without the requirement to use on site renewable energy sources. However, KCC have requested that the scheme includes a PV Array on the roof, and with the inclusion of this the building would achieve an 84% improvement on Part L of the Building Regulations. The PV Array is highlighted (dashed red) on the roof plan below.



48. The submitted Carbon Neutral Statement explains how the building has been developed to meet KCC’s carbon reduction brief, considering embodied carbon and carbon construction, operational carbon and energy efficiency, building orientation, and end of life carbon. The statement concludes that despite various constraints such as inherited feasibility design, congested site location, stakeholder requests and a reduced programme, the project team has designed a low carbon development, with no on-site emissions through combustion on site. The report also states that further carbon reduction proposals will be continuously reviewed during the design and construction phases of the project to continue to target carbon net zero.

**Biodiversity and Landscape**

49. The application included the submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and a Preliminary Ecology Appraisal (PEA). A survey was carried out for the PEA by an experienced ecologist who concluded that the site contained only common or widespread habitat types which are not of conservation concern, and there

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would be no potential impacts to habitats considered to be significant. No evidence of bats was recorded during the surveys and no potential for bats found in relation to the buildings, but the site does contain potentially suitable habitats for breeding birds (although no evidence was found for this during the survey). The CEMP outlines what actions would be taken to mitigate any potential impacts on the environment and ecology in the area during the construction phase.

50. The County Council's Biodiversity Officer has considered the documents submitted in support of the application and concurs with the findings. They state that they are satisfied that the proposals are unlikely to support protected/notable species (with the exception of breeding birds) and no further surveys are required. The control over the timing of the lights on site would ensure that there would be no impact on biodiversity due to light spill. They comment that the PEA has made recommendations to enhance biodiversity through the erection of bat and bird boxes, but feel that more could be done on site, particularly on the footprints of the buildings due for demolition. In order to address this issue they recommend that further details could be secured through the imposition of a condition for an Ecological Enhancement Plan, and this is included in the recommendation at the end of this report. In addition, in order to protect habitats on site which are suitable for breeding birds, the 'breeding birds informative' is also included in the recommendation. It is therefore considered that the scheme, with the above condition and informative in place, would accord with the aims of Policies DM1 and DM3 of the Maidstone Local Plan.
51. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment was also submitted with the planning application, and this confirms that no trees would require removal as part of the development proposal. A condition to ensure that tree protection measures are erected on site prior to the commencement of development is proposed, should permission be granted. Given the proposed location of the new teaching block, amongst the other school buildings and adjacent to the school boundary and railway line, there would be limited scope for the implementation of a wider landscape scheme. However, the Design and Access Statement confirms that new planting raised beds would be provided to the main elevation and these would be planted by the school as a school student project.

**Ground Investigation and Contamination**

52. The application was supported by the submission of a Ground Investigation and Contamination Risk Assessment Report which found that there was a low risk to controlled waters from historical land use. The Environment Agency (EA) have considered the report and advised that subject to the imposition of a condition to deal with any contamination that may be found on site during construction which hasn't previously been identified they have no objection to the development. A piling condition, which would not allow piling or other foundation design using penetrative methods without the consent of the County Planning Authority, is also requested by the EA to ensure that the development does not contribute to unacceptable levels of water pollution caused by mobilised contaminants.

**Drainage**

53. The application was supported by the submission of a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Surface and Foul Water Drainage Safety Report, both of which have been reviewed

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by the Environment Agency and the County Council's Flood and Water Management Team. The site lies within Flood Zone 1, where there is the lowest risk of flooding, and therefore the FRA concludes that no additional site-specific flood mitigation is considered necessary.

54. In terms of drainage the proposed development would be served by new, separate foul and surface water drainage systems which would combine at the final manhole prior to discharging to the existing foul drain running parallel with the railway boundary along the eastern boundary. In order to reduce flood risk off-site, the flow rates would be controlled through the use of a Hydrobrake (or equivalent) and below ground attenuation tanks to store excess volumes for all storms up to and including the 1:100 year event with a 40% allowance for climate change. The Environment Agency have advised that they are in agreement with these proposals given the underlying geology and its high potential for instability. The Flood and Water Management Officer has stated that they are satisfied that the principles proposed for dealing with surface water would not result in an increased risk of flooding from the development, and therefore raise no objection to the development. Conditions are requested to ensure the surface water drainage scheme is built in accordance with the details already submitted, and also for the submission of a verification report prior to occupation of the building, to demonstrate that the constructed drainage system is consistent with that which was approved.

**Noise Impact**

55. The application was supported by a Noise Impact Assessment Report which considered the internal educational spaces within the new teaching block from external noise sources, and the impact of the rooftop plant installations on the closest residential property. The report acknowledges that the proposed glazing and ventilation specifications of the scheme would ensure that the teaching rooms would have internal noise levels that meet the Building Bulletin for 'Acoustic Design of Schools: performance standards'. No additional mitigation measures would be required to protect the teaching spaces from external noise intrusion.
56. The closest residential property is approximately 195m away from the site on Buckland Road, and the proposed teaching block would be on the other side of the existing school buildings in relation to this property. The noise impact of the rooftop plant was assessed through the comparison of measured background noise levels at this property with the noise emission levels provided by the manufacturers for the proposed units. The report concludes that the amenity of nearby residential properties would not be affected by the rooftop plant and that no additional mitigation would be required to meet the British Standard for acceptable noise levels in residential properties. It is considered that the proposed development is located at a sufficient distance away from the closest residential properties to ensure that there would be no noise disturbance impact on local residential amenity, and the scheme would therefore accord with Policy DM1 of the Maidstone Local Plan.

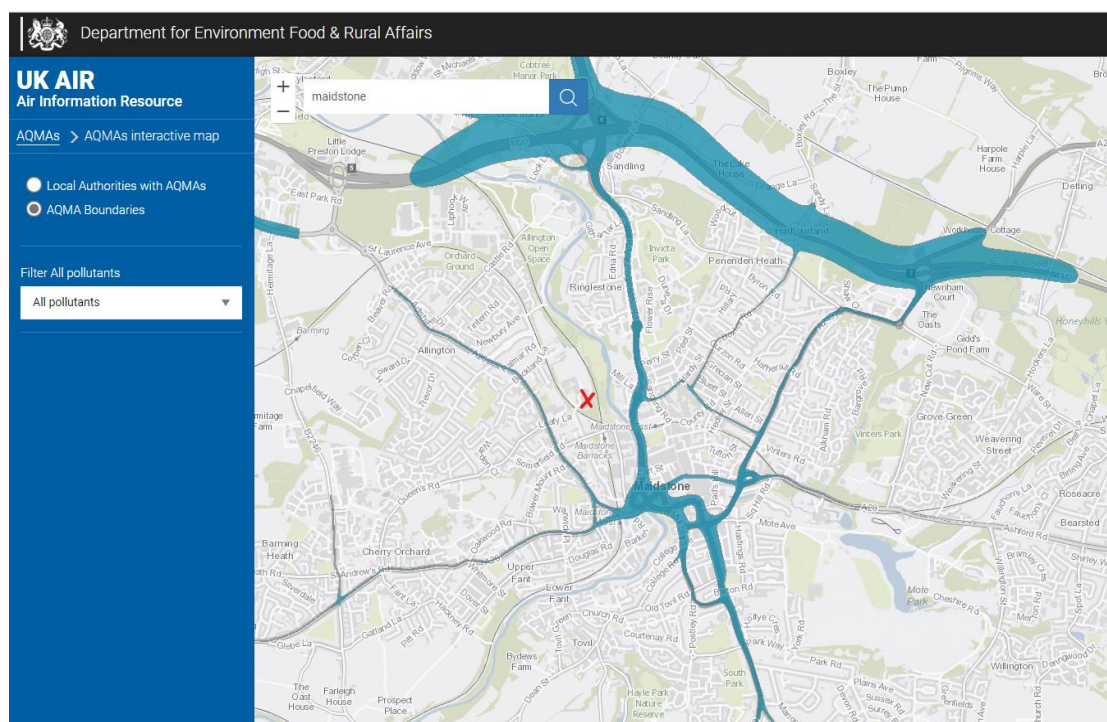
**Air Quality**

57. An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) has been designated in Maidstone, which covers all major roads in the Borough. (This was declared in 2018 when the previous AQMA covering the whole urban area, which had been in place since 2008, was



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revoked.) Maidstone Grammar School for Girls is not located within the AQMA but lies approximately 250m to the east of the A20 stretch and is shown on the map below. An Air Quality Assessment was submitted in support of the planning application, which considered both the construction phase and operation phase in relation to air quality. The report states that through good site management and the implementation of suitable mitigation measures, the effect of dust and particulate matter releases during construction would be significantly reduced, and the residual effects of the construction phase on air quality are considered to be 'Negligible'. The air quality impacts from the proposed development during the construction phase would therefore be 'Not Significant'.



58. Monitored pollutant concentrations in the vicinity of the site are below the relevant health-based objectives, therefore the report concludes that the future occupants of the proposed development would not be exposed to unacceptable air quality and the site is deemed suitable for its proposed future use. During the intended operation phase, a screening assessment was undertaken for traffic, which concluded that the net change in traffic flow was below the relevant criteria. The proposals would not change road alignments or vehicular access and would not introduce or change a bus station. As such the air quality impacts from the proposed development in the operational phase would also be considered as 'Not Significant'.
59. Policy DM6 seeks to ensure that the impacts to air quality in Air Quality Management Areas appropriately considered. Although the school is actually outside the AQMA the Air Quality Assessment has properly considered the likely impacts on air quality as a result of this development and found them to be 'Not Significant' for both construction and operation phases. The scheme is therefore considered to meet the aim of Policy DM6 of the Maidstone Local Plan.

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**Archaeology**

60. The application was supported by the submission of an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust, which states that given the proximity of the development area to the River Medway there is a possibility of finds from the Palaeolithic period surviving in the locality, especially given the general importance of such river valleys in prehistory. The report suggests there is likely to be (based on the available evidence) Anglo-Saxon, medieval or post-medieval archaeology surviving on the development site associated with the settlement at Great Buckland, which is shown on maps from the late eighteenth century onwards. The report goes on to state that whilst there may be some previous impacts to the development site as a result of the earlier construction of the existing school buildings, it is unlikely to have completely removed all earlier archaeological remains.
61. The County Council's Archaeological officer has considered the Assessment and the details of the planning application and advises that the report gives good data on the archaeological potential and can be used to guide further archaeological assessment and mitigation. They state that the archaeological issues could be addressed through the imposition of conditions on any consent, which would secure archaeological field evaluation works prior to the commencement of development, and then prior to occupation of the new teaching block the implementation of a phased programme of archaeological interpretation work in accordance with a written specification to be agreed with the County Planning Authority. These conditions are included in the recommendation below, and subject to this it is considered that the development would accord with Policy DM4 of the Maidstone Local Plan.

**Conclusion**

62. In my view the key determining factors for this proposal are the principle of the development and the educational need, together with the appropriateness of the design and siting of the new building, and any highway and transportation implications linked to the proposal. 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, highways, environmental and amenity aspects are concerned, as demonstrated in the discussion above.
63. 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 signing of the Memorandum of Understanding and the conditions set out below.

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**Recommendation**

64. SUBJECT TO the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (securing funding for the monitoring of the School Travel Plan and the agreement to fund additional bus services for the school should they be needed) I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
1. The standard 3-year time limit;
  2. The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
  3. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the details of all construction materials set out in the submitted documents and application drawings;
  4. Retention/maintenance of at least 30 car parking spaces being kept available for the use of the development outside of school times;
  5. All construction and demolition works shall be undertaken in accordance with the submitted Construction Management Plan (Rev 1.3 dated 10/01/23);
  6. Provision and implementation of a revised School Travel Plan that has been approved by the Planning and Highway Authorities prior to occupation, to include monitoring of bus users, encouragement of staff members to travel by non-car means, monitoring of cycle spaces, and monitoring and managing the arrival and departure of pupils, amongst other matters;
  7. Travel Surveys of both staff and pupils to be undertaken annually in accordance with the submitted School Travel Plan (via the Jambusters website) and compared to the targets given. Any further mitigating measures, if the targets are not met, to be submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority. Any identified shortfall in the bus services to be appropriately addressed in accordance with the submitted MOU regarding provision of bus services;
  8. The provision of 22 secure and weatherproof cycle parking spaces prior to occupation, details of which to be agreed by the Planning and Highway Authorities;
  9. Permanent retention of the on-site car parking, vehicle loading/unloading and turning facilities shown on the submitted plans;
  10. Provision of measures to prevent the discharge of surface water onto the highway;
  11. Provision of wheel washing facilities prior to the commencement of works on site;
  12. 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;
  13. The installation of tree protection fencing prior to the commencement of development;
  14. The external lights shall be controlled by a daylight sensor control and shall be switched off by 9pm at the latest;
  15. Roof lights shall only be used for emergency access;
  16. 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;
  17. 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;
  18. No piling shall take place on site without the written approval of County Planning Authority;
  19. The surface water drainage system shall be implemented as set out in the approved documents;

## Item D1

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20. Submission of a verification report covering the surface water drainage scheme, to be approved in consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority prior to occupation of the development;
21. Prior to commencement of development, the submission of archaeological field evaluation works to be submitted and approved by the County Planning Authority;
22. Implementation of a phased programme of archaeological interpretation work, prior to occupation.
23. Within 6 months of the occupation of the new School Building, Blocks N and T shall be demolished and the site made good in accordance with the approved drawings and documents.

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

1. The registering with Kent County Council of the School Travel Plan through the "Jambusters" website following the link <http://www.jambusterstpms.co.uk>;
2. 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
3. The applicant be reminded of the need to protect breeding and nesting birds under the Wildlife and Countryside Act
4. Advice on risks caused by piling resulting in contamination of ground water
5. That disposal of contaminated soil should be carried out in accordance with waste management legislation
6. That the developers should refer to the Definition of Waste: Development Industry Code of Practice

Case Officer: Mrs Helen Edwards
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Tel. no: 03000 413366
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Background Documents: see section heading
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