

Extension of Wyvern Special School to form new Primary School wing, construction of a Multi Agency Specialist Hub (MASH) and construction of a specialist early years nursery at The Wyvern School, Ashford – AS/10/380

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 7 September 2010.

Application by Kent County Council Property Group for the extension to Wyvern Special School to form a new Primary School wing, the construction of a Multi Agency Specialist Hub (MASH) for disabled children and the construction of a specialist early years centre nursery together with associated access roads and car parking at The Wyvern School, Great Chart Bypass, Ashford (AS/10/380)

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mr. R. King and Mr. J. Wedgbury

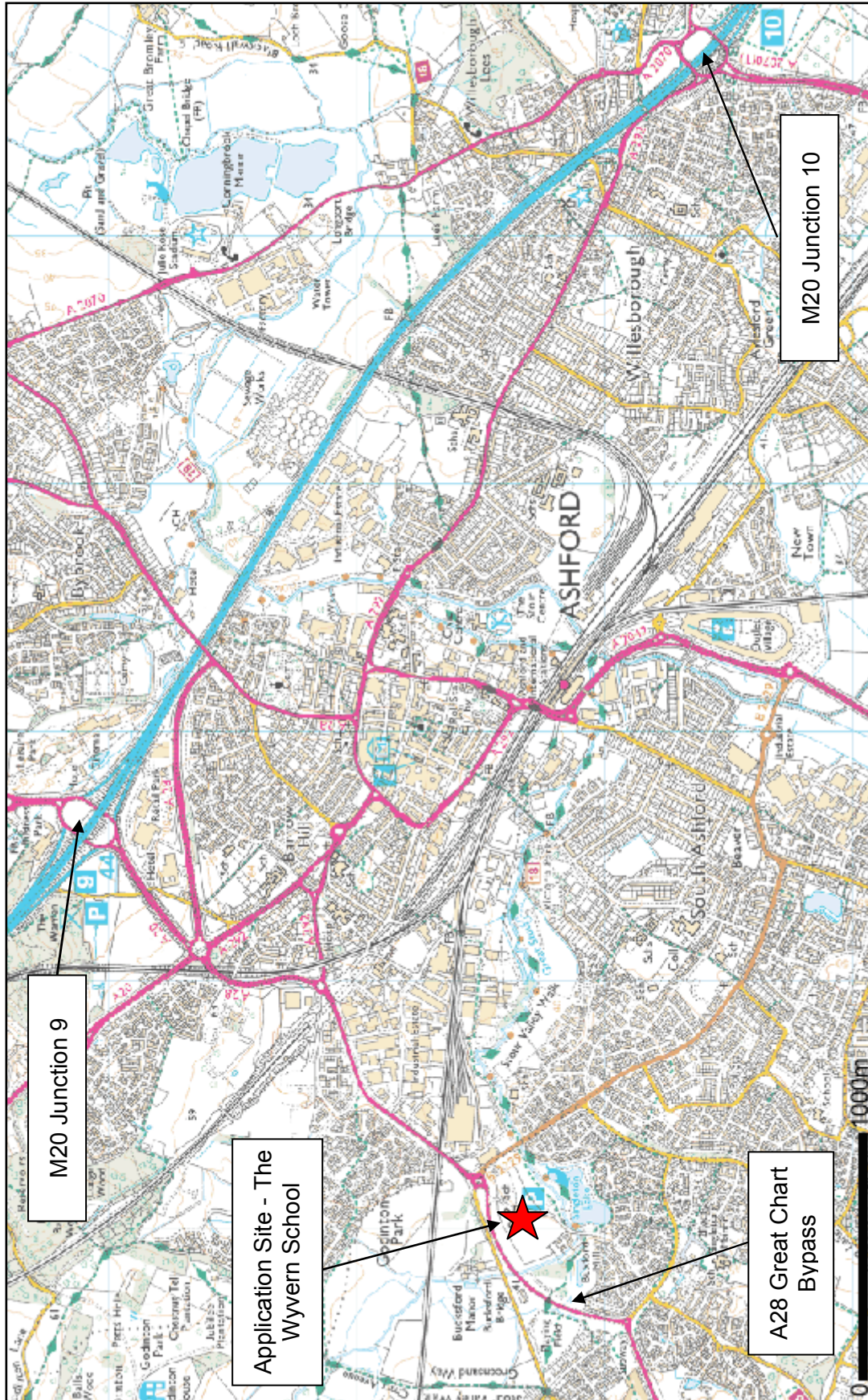
Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The application site comprises of an area of approximately 5.9 hectares located generally on the western side of Ashford to the south of the A28 Great Chart Bypass and to the west of Brookfield Road. To the southern boundary of the school grounds Bucksford Lane runs along part of the boundary with some low density residential properties to the edges of the south western corner of the site. Beyond the adjacent two residential properties which share a boundary with the school site is a Grade II Listed Building, Buxford Mill. The Great Stour River is located to the western boundary and continues to the south of the application site. To the north eastern boundary of the site with Brookfield Road there is an electricity sub station and a smaller local sub station to the northern site boundary with the A28 Great Chart Bypass. The northern boundary of the school site is separated from the A28 by a substantial earth bund and dense tree and vegetation planting which was supplemented at the time of the school construction. A public footpath runs immediately to the south of the site from Brookfield Road on the eastern boundary through Bucksford Park to Bucksford Lane.
2. The application site is within the Ashford Green Corridor. The route of the Great Stour River to the west and south of the school site is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. The school site forms part of the flood plain of the Great Stour River and as such part of the application site falls within Flood Risk Zones 1, 2 and 3 as designated by the Environment Agency.
3. The existing built development on the site is of single storey traditional masonry construction under metal profiled roof coverings. The existing building footprint forms three 'wings' set at obtuse angles to each other. The external envelope of the school building is finished with a yellow stock brick with rain screen cladding to several gable walls around the school hall. To the front of the school is an existing car park and drop off area which leads off a dedicated left in – left out entry/exit slip road from the A28 Great Chart Bypass.
4. External play and sports provision is provided on the site to the western end of the main buildings. Just south of the existing school playing fields is an area of grassed terraced land constructed from spoil from the original school building development. The site

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General Location Plan

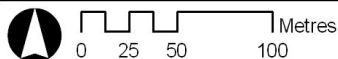
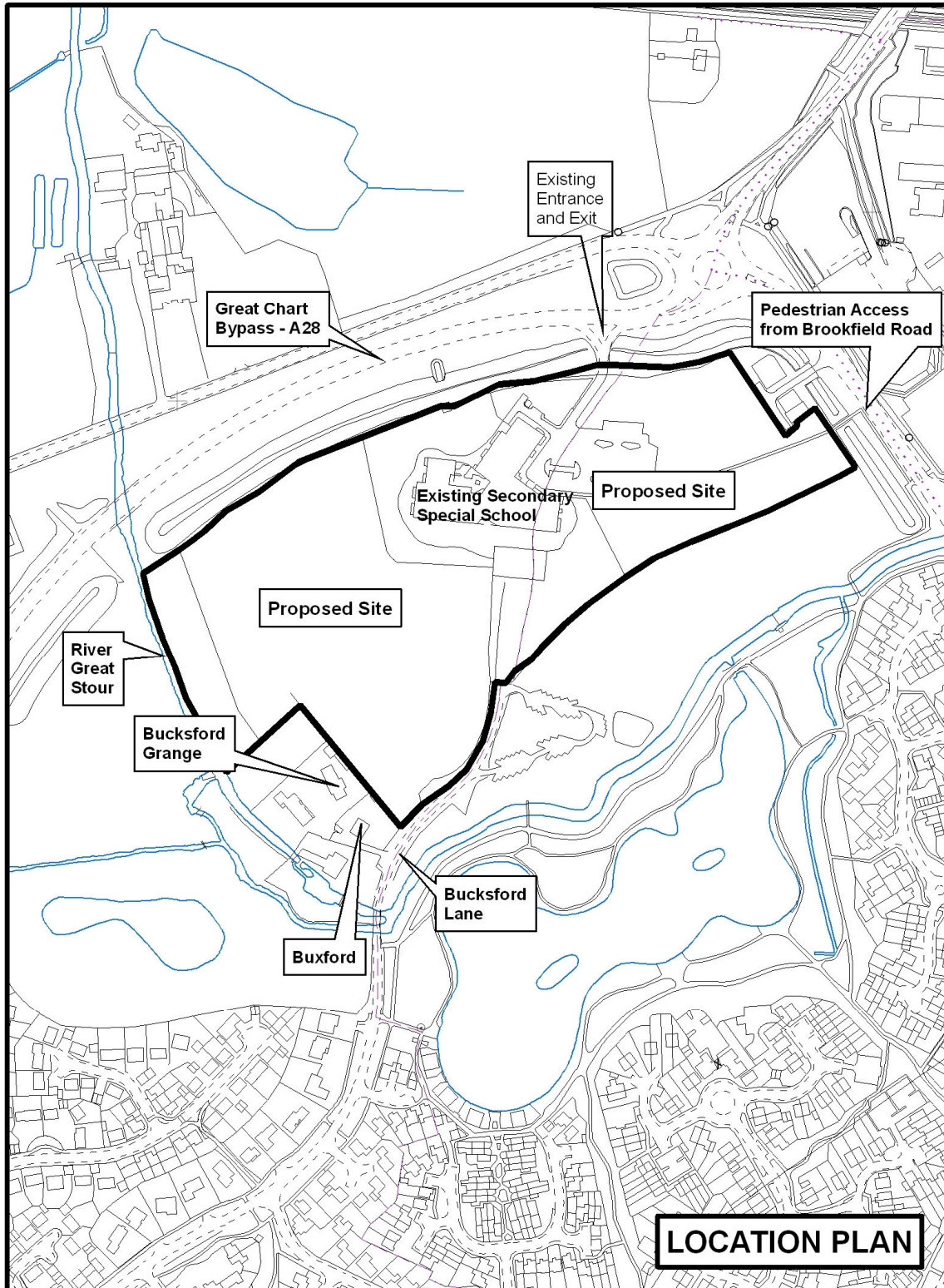


General Location Plan
Scale 1:25000

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Site Location Plan



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Proposed Overall Site Layout Masterplan



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Proposed MASH and Early Years Nursery building



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Proposed MASH / Early Years South East (Rear) Elevation

Notes

- Do not scale from this drawing.
- Any dimensions or measurements commencing with 'R' are approximate.
- All areas of disintegration shall be reported to the relevant authority.
- Dimensions are given in millimetres unless otherwise stated.
- Items are shown in situ unless otherwise stated.
- All materials, workmanship and components must comply with the relevant British Standards.
- Construction should be in accordance with the relevant details and use as appropriate to any drawings from an approved detail for the relevant work.
- Members of the public should not be allowed to enter the site of the construction.
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Note: Not all details are shown in this elevation. Details should be taken from the relevant detail for the relevant work.

South East Elevation, Ashford M.A.S.H.

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Client: Kent County Council

Drawing No: 08601-10

Issue: Planning Application

Scale: 1:200@A3

Rev: *

Date: *

Desk: *

Title: South East Elevation

Project: Multi Agency Specialist Hub - Ashford

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generally falls from the northern boundary to the southern boundary and laterally from the west to the east with an approximate difference in levels between 2.1 metres north to south and some 3.5 metres west to east.

5. Site boundaries are formed by a mixture of green powder coated weld mesh fencing and gates and wooden palisade fencing internally on the site separating differing use areas. *A general location plan is attached on page D2.2 and a site location plan on page D2.3.*

Background

6. The application sets out that this project is a joint venture between the National Health Service (NHS) and Kent County Council (Health, Education and Social Services) to provide a multi agency assessment, development and resource centre for disabled children, young people and their carers together with an extension to the existing Wyvern Secondary Special Educational Needs (SEN) school to provide a new primary element, replacing the existing primary school SEN provision currently located off-site.
7. Developing integrated processes for vulnerable groups of children and their families and promoting co-location of staff has been both a national and a Kent priority for a number of years. As a precursor, early work involved the development of Children's Centres and the strategic planning to implement the statutory duty within the Childcare Act 2006 to create local multi-agency early years networks. These networks bring a range of professionals together to improve outcomes for young children and their families. Since 2005, the NHS and KCC have worked on developing a Kent response to the Government's requirement to roll out Early Years Support, which focuses on disabled children aged 0-5 and their families.
8. The Kent Special School Review and the Kent Units and Designation Review seeks to lead towards the development of locally accessible SEN provision within Special Schools and mainstream primary and secondary schools with the intention of creating local multi-agency approaches to providing support, advice and training to promote inclusion.
9. A number of multi-agency specialist hubs (MASH) are being developed around the County, including at Sittingbourne, Thanet and this application in Ashford. It is intended that they will offer a range of services, including:
 - Provision of a single base for KCC, NHS and third sector staff;
 - Multi-agency approach to providing advice, training and outreach support for early years settings, schools and leisure providers on disabled children, young people and their families;
 - Joined up approach to providing assessments, interventions and reviews for disabled children, young people and their families;
 - Specialist centre to enable severely disabled children and young people to be able to access a short break programme;
 - Specialist centre to promote the transformation of short breaks within the local area; and
 - Local community venue for providing training, advice and support for parents and carers.

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10. In conjunction with the development of the MASH proposals at this site, the County Council has already agreed that Wyvern's Primary School and Nursery, currently located at Clockhouse in Ashford, is inadequate for the needs of the pupils and the growth predicted for their provision in the area. This has led to the concept of relocating the existing primary and nursery SEN provision onto the Wyvern School site to form an integrated and co-located site fit for purposes of 21st century education. It is the intention that the facility would provide for a total pupil roll, in terms of both the new primary and the existing secondary facilities at the site of some 194 pupils (131 existing secondary places, 41 existing primary places and 22 places for predicted growth).

Planning History

11. The planning site history dating back to 2001 is provided below:
- AS/01/1559 – Construction of new secondary special school granted planning permission by the County Council's Planning Applications Committee on 14 May 2001;
 - AS/03/150 – Revised access, re-orientation of school buildings and parking for new secondary school (*previously approved under consent AS/01/1559*) granted planning permission by the County Council's Planning Applications Committee on 8 April 2003. It is noted that this is the consent in which the new school development was carried out under;
 - AS/09/650 – Provision of two temporary mobile classroom units with associated external works. Granted temporary planning permission July 2009;
 - AS/09/709 – Enlargement of ball games enclosure including tarmac surface and perimeter fence. Granted planning permission August 2009;

Proposal

12. The application is made by Kent County Council Property Group and seeks planning permission for three main elements: a new primary school extension to the western end of the existing school with a gross internal floor area of approximately 2445 sq. metres, a Multi Agency Specialist Hub (MASH) with an internal floor area of approximately 1753 sq. metres and a Specialist Early Years Nursery with an internal floor area of approximately 182 sq. metres. Both the MASH and Specialist Early Years building would be located in a single new building to the eastern end of the existing school. Permission is therefore sought for two new purpose built community buildings within the existing Wyvern School site, together with a range of external facilities including fencing, children's play area, amenity space, landscaping and vehicle drop-off and parking facilities. Similar to other MASH proposals being developed around the County, this specific element of the proposal would be operated by Kent County Council and the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) and would incorporate a number of different health, education and social service roles all within one single centre.

New Primary School

13. The development proposes the relocation of the Wyvern Primary School facility from the Clockhouse site (located less than a quarter of a mile from the Wyvern Secondary School site) to land directly west of the existing secondary school building. This would allow both primary and secondary school children to use the same facilities which in turn would improve the level of facility provided, aid better coordination of educational functions and provide an integrated approach to schooling from early years through to secondary education. In order to facilitate the relocation of primary school pupils, the

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application proposes the construction of a purpose built single storey primary school building which would follow the lines of the existing school. The building design proposes an increased height space to the entrance and reception/common shared areas together with the dining hall and multi-function area adjacent to the reception to provide both visual interest to the external building elevations together with ensuring that internal spaces feel light and airy.

14. Pupil numbers are expected to increase, for both schools, from 173 to 194 pupils. Staff numbers would also increase by a similar proportion, from 114 to 129. It is proposed to serve the relocated Wyvern Primary School and MASH proposals from the existing left in/left out access onto the A28 Great Chart Bypass. Modifications to the internal road layout would be made including the construction of a mini roundabout within the existing school gate off which each of the different site elements would be served. Access to the relocated primary school would be via a newly constructed access way located to the north of the existing secondary school, leading to a car parking facility and drop off area specifically for primary school children and staff. The new primary school car parking area would consist of 72 car parking spaces, including the provision of 13 disabled spaces.

Multi Agency Specialist Hub and Nursery

15. The proposed MASH building and Nursery to the eastern end of the existing school building involves the construction of a part single storey and part two storey building. Most of the accommodation would be provided on the ground floor level due to the particular specialist needs of this sector of the community, although some administrative and staff facilities would be provided at first floor level. The ground floor level is raised by some 2 metres at its highest point above the existing external levels to accommodate any potential flooding under the building from the floodplain. It is noted that the location of the proposed MASH and Nursery are within Flood Risk Zone 3a with a high probability of fluvial flooding in any year of greater than 1 in 100 as defined by the Environment Agency. The elevation of the ground floor level would allow level access to be maintained from the existing school entrance and drop off point via a built up access to the nursery and main reception area of the MASH. The raised level of construction not only would allow for dry level access to and from the building but would also minimise the potential of increasing the flood risk elsewhere without hindering the ability of the land to drain or the capacity and integrity of the flood plan and any defence measures. It should be noted that the proposed Primary School wing is not located within any designated Flood Zone.
16. The specialist Nursery accommodation would be provided adjacent to the main school building, and would benefit from its own separate entrance and identity from the school and the MASH. This element of the proposal has been designed to reduce the association of the children that would attend the Nursery from children that are attending the MASH for clinical appointments. To the rear of the MASH and Nursery building a decked area would provide views across the river valley, providing space for informal play and break out areas.
17. Vehicle parking for the MASH and Nursery proposals would be provided on the north-west side of the proposed building, immediately east of the existing Wyvern Secondary School car park. A total of 90 car parking spaces would be provided, including the provision of 21 disabled spaces for the MASH and Nursery elements. In total, vehicle parking provision on site for use collectively by the Primary School, Secondary School,

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MASH and Specialist Nursery would total **162** parking spaces, including **34** disabled parking spaces. In addition, 48 new cycle parking spaces would be provided (20 for the MASH proposals and 28 for the combined schools) together with 9 new motorcycle parking spaces.

General Issues

18. The extent of proposed 'built' development footprint on the site would equate to 13 percent (7760 sq. metres) of the total site area (5.9 ha), with a further 12 percent (7005 sq. metres) allocated to internal service roads, vehicle parking and drop off areas. The applicant considers that the proposed 'built' development would not have any adverse impact upon the surrounding community in terms of the level of activity or noise as the separation between the two new buildings and the neighbouring residential properties is substantial.
19. In considering the proposed layout for the various elements of this proposal, the application details various consultation workshops which took place with key stakeholders including the users, professionals, staff and carers of children attending the facility to devise a schedule of accommodation and adjacencies which were key to designing a successful site masterplan. An initial site feasibility study had indicated the use of the land to the western side of the school as the most suitable location for all built development, away from the flood risk zone. However given the level of accommodation required for the various elements of the proposal, a significant proportion of the floor area would need to have been provided at first floor level, which once situated on this higher ground to the western side of the site, would provide a considerable mass of building which would dominate the local landscape.
20. Another key consideration which was borne out of the initial consultation workshops was the concept of the benefits of the MASH and primary school elements being linked to the existing secondary school building at nodal points where there could be a possibility to share resources and some accommodation. The proposed primary school element benefits from siting adjacent to the existing school building on the quieter western side, whilst the busier MASH element has been situated to the eastern side of the site where the existing school car parking and access provides an environment less suitable for the school accommodation.
21. The design approach has identified a quiet and noisy side to the existing development with the northern edge of the site bounded by the A28 Great Chart Bypass as the noisy side. By using the built form within the current development proposals, the applicant has been able to protect the quiet side of the building by placing the access road to the primary school staff car park and drop off area point to the north. Each classroom within the new primary school wing would have break out space to external areas which to the main would be protected by the built development from the access road and public area. Most of the classroom and educational spaces would lead directly out to the south facing playground and play space or to the western area facing the Great Stour River.
22. Although a final selection of building materials would be reserved for later consideration in the event of planning permission being granted, the application does set out an indicative external materials schedule. The design approach for both the MASH and primary school building would follow a similar nature with wall surfaces comprising a mix of panels of yellow/ochre stock brickwork, through colour render panels and hardwood timber cladding. The main building entrances would be accentuated through a change

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of materials giving them a distinctive appearance to aid wayfinding. The building roofs would be constructed of a standing seam steel sheet system with varying overhangs to the eaves to provide shading and emphasis to the roof form.

23. The proposal involves the relocation of the site's existing sports pitch area as part of the development. The existing sports provision at the site includes a team sports pitch and 6 lane 300 metre running track. The original spoil from the existing school development was used to form a raised earthwork area to the south adjoining Bucksford Lane. It is intended to recontour this plateau of land to accommodate a new compensatory sports area for the schools. A total of approximately 16,795 sq. metres of open space would be achieved as a result of the proposal, including sufficient space for the marking out of a number of the following elements: two team sports pitches (70 x 40m), two mini soccer pitches (45 x 27m) and a 300m six lane running track with 100m sprint track. In addition, a further 1100 sq. metres of new hard play space would be created adjacent to classroom areas. The application details that the external space provision exceeds that required under current Regulations.
24. The proposed development draws on the importance of external spaces as part of the scheme in terms of not only providing an attractive setting to the building, but also in terms of supporting both the education of the current and proposed school pupils, as well as the visitors, parents and carers of the MASH users. The application includes a landscape planting masterplan showing native tree and shrub planting. Reconfigured and new car parking areas are intended to be interspersed with low level shrub planting and individual architectural planting to soften the extent of these hard areas. Earthworks would also be provided to help isolate and separate the car parking provision from other areas on site.
25. The application is accompanied by an Ecological Scoping Report. The Report concluded that the proposed development is not expected to impact on any designated nature conservation sites, because the proposed works are entirely within the existing sports / playing field and not within any designated site. However, it noted that the Great Stour (Ashford to Fordwich) Local Wildlife Site is situated only 25 metres from the footprint of the works. Therefore, all necessary measures should be taken to ensure that there is no run-off during construction or operation of the new buildings into the stream. The Report also concluded that the following works or mitigation measures be undertaken:
 - Exclusion fencing be erected around the construction area prior to commencement of works to ensure that great crested newts and reptiles do not stray into the construction area and are not killed or injured as a result of the works;
 - There is no evidence of badger activity within the footprint of the works, however it may be possible that a badger set may be present within 30 metres of the construction. Therefore it is recommended that a survey be undertaken to establish the presence/likely absence or a sett within 30m of the footprint of the works;
 - No bat roosts or important foraging sites would be directly impacted by the proposed works, however bat foraging, commuting and roosting within the immediately surrounding areas may be impacted by new lighting. Therefore two activity surveys are recommended in order to inform current use of the area by bats, and any mitigation required as a result; and
 - Ecological enhancements should be incorporated into the scheme where possible to contribute towards the objectives of National Planning Policy Statement 9.

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26. The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) which identifies that the application site spans Flood Zone 1, 2 and 3, with the area at low risk of fluvial flooding being to the west of the site and the high risk (Flood Zone 3a) being located to the east of the site. The Assessment recognises that the location of the MASH and Specialist Nursery is proposed to be located within the high probability flood risk area (Flood Zone 3a) comprising of land assessed as having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding in any year. The Assessment also recognises that the proposed new primary school wing, together with the existing secondary school building, fall outside of Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3.
27. The FRA accompanying the application demonstrates that a sequential risk-based approach was used by the applicant in their decision to seek permission for the development of the MASH and Nursery within Flood Risk Zone 3a. The aim of the Sequential Test is to steer all new development to areas at the lowest possibility of flooding. The FRA details that alternative locations were examined for the proposed development within Flood Risk Zones 1 (low probability) and Zones 2 (medium probability) around Ashford, however due to costs, the nature, topography, availability and size of the alternative sites, they were rejected and the co-location onto the single Wyvern School site was considered by the applicant to be preferable. The FRA then goes on to identify that the proposed flood vulnerability category (as designated by PPS25) has to be taken into consideration in locating new development within Flood Zones 2 and 3. The flood vulnerability category for the proposed development in this instance falls within the 'more vulnerable' classification whereby National Planning Policy states that such uses should only be permitted in Flood Risk Zone 3a if the Exception Test is passed and that development is designed and constructed to remain operational and safe for users in times of flood.
28. In this instance, the application sets out the following Exception Test justification for locating part of the proposed development within Flood Risk Zone 3a as follows:
- *“The purpose of the MASH centre is to provide development and resource centre for disabled children, young people and their carers within the Ashford area, to develop integrated processes for vulnerable groups of children and their families. Promoting the co-location of staff has been a Kent priority for a number of years thus improving outcomes for young children and their families. Accordingly the MASH would provide a local community venue for providing training, advice and support for parents and carers. Co-location of the MASH services and the primary school at Wyvern School would provide a far wider community benefit in terms of sustainability and enable a form more efficient use of resources as a specialist site;*
 - *The site being within Wyvern Secondary Special School land is classified as developable previously-developed land and other developable previously-developed sites in the locality have been considered unsuitable;*
 - *The defended 1 in 100 year (1%) flood level, including for climate change is 39.577m AOD and an undefended level of 40.12m AOD. In order for the building to continue to function safely at times of flood, the finished floor level must be set above the undefended level, with a 300mm allowance for freeboard, so should be set no lower than 40.42m AOD in order to comply with PPS25. As this level is considerably higher than the existing ground levels either the ground would need to be raised, or the building raised on columns. In order to retain flood storage volumes and to avoid disrupting flood flows and the ability of the land to drain it is recommended that the building be raised on columns”.*

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29. Having considered that the proposal demonstrates compliance with all sections of the Exceptions Test, the FRA recommends that the MASH and Nursery building be constructed at a minimum finished floor level of 40.42m AOD. It is noted that the application actually details that the intended finished floor level of this part of the proposal would be constructed to 40.60 AOD. The application also proposes that the proposed Centre be constructed on columns to leave the area below the building open to retain as much flood storage capacity as possible and to limit the disturbance of flood flows and to excavate a flood storage compensatory area to a 100 year (20% climate change) standard the north of the site.

Transport Issues

30. The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement setting out anticipated travel details arising from the proposed developments. Firstly it details the existing combined school rolls (both the secondary school on site and primary school off-site) are 173 children and 114 teachers. As noted in paragraph (14) above, these figures are intended to increase as a result of predicted growth and the relocation of both schools on to the single site, to 194 pupils and 129 staff, an increase of around 12.8 percent. The Transport Statement notes the presence of a gated footpath entrance from the existing site between the school car park and Brookfield Road which joins the combined foot/cycle way that runs between Brookfield Road and Bucksford Lane. This link to Brookfield Road is intended to be enhanced as part of the proposals which would then link in with an upgraded pedestrian crossing facility to be provided in association with the new Victoria Way road link, thus allowing visitors and staff at the site excellent access to cycle and pedestrian networks in Ashford.
31. As noted above, the co-location of both primary and secondary SEN schools on to the single site would result in an increase of around 12.8 percent in staff and pupil numbers. However, unlike a conventional school, demand for school places is not dictated by relative school performance or local intake but the number of mentally and physically disabled children within the local authority area. In order to establish typical special school journey patterns, vehicle surveys were undertaken by the applicant at both the Clockhouse and Wyvern School to determine the number of inbound and outbound vehicles using the school access during morning (07:30 – 09:30) and afternoon (14:30 – 15:45) peak periods. Using the statistics from the vehicle surveys undertaken it should be noted that, as a result of the co-location of both schools on the one site, peak hour vehicle trips would increase from 120 vehicle movements (arrivals and departures) in the morning peak (08:00-09:00) to 181 vehicle movements during the same period, and from 106 vehicle movements (arrivals and departures) during the evening peak (14:30-15:30) to 181 vehicle movements during the same period. The Transport Statement details that overall traffic movements for the primary school are significantly lower than would be expected from a conventional primary school due on the whole to a greater use of minibus transport. With regard to minibus transport, it is noted that many of the mini buses that visit the secondary school also visit the existing primary school to pick up and drop off children.
32. In relation to the MASH proposals, the Transport Statement notes that the centre would provide specialist assessment and support for mentally and physically disabled children and their families. It details that the specialist children services which the centre would provide are currently being provided in a number of different centres around the Ashford District and east Kent area generally. That means that children and their parents currently have to travel to different locations, for example to undertake hearing tests,

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see a dentist, undertake education assessment, etc., which invariably results in a relatively high number of single trips being undertaken every year. By co-locating these KCC and PCT operated services into one single centre, it is intended to coordinate each of these different functions and reduce the number of child and parent visits required every year. Furthermore, by locating the MASH proposals on the same site as the Wyvern School, it would be the case that further disruption to children's daily routines would be reduced as many of the children within the school would use the MASH facilities, so reducing the need to travel and make a separate journey from their daily school trip. The Statement does however note that the bespoke nature of this specific element of the proposal means that there is no readily-available data available that can be used to forecast likely person and vehicle trip generations. Instead both KCC and the PCT have provided data on expected permanent and visiting staff attendance at the site, assuming the expected level of assessments and clinics being carried out every week.

33. The total number of staff visits per week is expected to be 374. It is proposed that only the Social Services element would operate 7 days per week, resulting in approximately 20 visits per day. The other specialist facilities would generate approximately 218 visits 5 days per week, equating to approximately 44 per day. Therefore the total daily visits are expected to number 64, but not all of these staff would be on site at the same time as many would be part time, occasional or visiting staff. In terms of children undergoing assessment, it is expected that 356 appointments would be made every week. The majority of these would comprise more than one assessment, thus reducing the need to travel for multiple assessments at different centres. Additionally, a large number of children who would undergo assessment would be expected to originate from Wyvern primary and secondary schools. KCC and the PCT have calculated that the co-location of assessment services and location on the Wyvern site would reduce external trips by 70 percent, a factor which is applied to visitors to the MASH only, and reduces daily visitor trips from 71 to 21. The applicant notes that the majority of these external trips would take place outside the morning and evening peaks with appointments being spread across the whole working day.
34. The applicant has then assumed that 75 percent of all the 64 daily staff trips coincide with the morning and evening peaks (i.e. 08:00-09:00 and 17:00-18:00). That has been derived by looking at the number of staff who would be permanently based on the site (66) and by the full and part time employment, giving a total peak hours staff trip generation of 47 people. That number was then factored from statistics taken from the Victoria Ward 2001 Census Workplace Statistics, which were used to determine both the likely mode share for the MASH proposal and the most likely route that vehicles would take to and from the site. The Census data for the Garlinge Ward indicates that 62 percent of employees travel to work by single cars. When the peak staff generation figure (47) has been factored by the modal share percentage (62%), the total peak hours trip forecast shows 29 cars per hour. A further 15 mobile visiting staff per day are expected to travel by car during the off-peak period, thus the total staff parking demand per day is expected to be 44 (29 permanent staff + 15 visiting staff). The applicant has indicated however that it is unlikely that all these staff would be on site at the same time, and therefore the demand for parking at any one time is expected to be 44.
35. Of the 21 external visitors (patients) expected at the site per day, 10 percent are expected to travel at peak times. These people would typically be the first and last appointments for the day. Given that most of this group would be bringing children with learning and physical disabilities, it is expected that most would drive. In summary, the

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potential daily car trip generation for the MASH could be up to 65 vehicles per day (44 staff + 21 patients).

36. The specialist nursery is expected to cater for no more than 12 pupils at any one time. Many of the pupils would have high demands for specialist teaching and resources, with the likely demand for places not dictated by a typical catchment area but instead by the number of disabled users in the Borough.
37. Transport modelling software has been used by the applicant to calculate the transport impact of the three elements of the proposed development on the local road network. The assessment of traffic capacity was carried out using worst case assumptions taken from KCC and PCT data and traffic surveys of existing school users. The analysis showed that following introduction of the proposals most of the local traffic network would operate within its capacity. The south bound approach to the A28/Brookfield Road/Chart Road roundabout is shown to be slightly over capacity, with a slight worsening of this situation following introduction of development traffic. However, that does assume a worst case development situation and no redistribution of traffic associated with the Victoria Way scheme, which is due to commence construction in March 2011, and no successful effect from the proposed staff and school travel plan. Traffic modelling carried out by Jacobs for the Loudon Way signalised junction (as part of the Victoria Way scheme) suggests that there will be a reduction in traffic on the A28 corridor following introduction of the scheme, by as much as 25 percent. It is therefore concluded by the Transport Statement that the current development proposals are unlikely to result in any significant additional delay.
38. As part of the proposals, the applicant has submitted an Interim Travel Plan which details a commitment to implement a full site Travel Plan, should the proposals be implemented. The Travel Plan contains a variety of initiatives, schemes and ideas of how travel concerned with the site could be made more sustainable, particularly through a reduction in the incidence of single-occupancy car journeys and raised levels of public transport use and staff commuting to the site on foot or by bike.
39. The applicant expects construction operations to last approximately 3-4 months. Site offices, staff parking and welfare facilities would be located on the construction site, with a compound provided on the western side of the site. Access would be obtained via a new mini roundabout junction located at the site access, with appropriate signage clearly indicating where construction and school traffic is to route. The existing left in/left out access onto the A28 Great Chart Bypass would be used, and it is expected that most of the construction phase would take place during the school summer holiday period in 2011. Delivery and construction HGV traffic would be accommodated on the construction site, with no requirement for waiting on the public highway or on side roads in the vicinity. Vehicles would be routed to and from the construction site via the A28, with the project management team ensuring that all deliveries and visiting traffic are aware of this requirement.

Planning Policy

40. The most relevant Government Guidance and adopted Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of this application:
 - (i) **National Planning Policies** – the most relevant National Planning Policies are set out in PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Development), PPS5 (Planning for the

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Historic Environment), PPS9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation), PPG13 (Transport), PPG17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation), PPS23 (Planning and Pollution Control) and PPS25 (Development and Flood Risk)

(ii) The adopted 2000 **Ashford Borough Local Plan (Saved Policies)**:

Policy EN13 The Council will protect and enhance the ‘Green Corridors’ in Ashford. Measures to improve their appearance and nature conservation value will be permitted provided they do not damage the green corridor environment, including the rivers and other watercourses. Proposals for new buildings will not be permitted within the ‘Green Corridors’ in Ashford – except in accordance with Development Sites policies or where the development would be ancillary to the open space use or their existing uses within them.

Policy EN23 Archaeological investigation and any appropriate safeguarding shall take place.

Policy TP6 Proposals for any building used by the public should provide an appropriate level of secure parking spaces for cycles.

Policy LE12 Proposals involving the loss of playing fields will be permitted only where there would be no significant impact on the quality or character of the local environment and (amongst others) where an alternative playing field is provided of at least equal leisure value and located so that the local community can readily use it.

Policy CF19 The Council will seek the provision of new multi-practitioner centres in the Ashford urban area.

Policy CF20 Proposals for nurseries will be permitted if there would be no significant effect on nearby residential amenity, there would be no significant traffic flow or highway safety problems arising as a result of vehicle movements to and from the site and adequate parking is provided for staff, and, the property is within a town or village or at an existing school.

(iii) The adopted 2000 **Ashford Borough Council Green Corridor Action Plan (Supplementary Planning Guidance 1 to 2000 Ashford Borough Local Plan)**

This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) identifies the site within part of Ashford’s ‘Green Corridor’ network where the overarching objective is to retain their open character and to enhance their contribution to the environment.

It identifies two sites in close proximity to the development site – Singleton Lake (to the south of the application site) and Bucksford Meadow (to the south west of the application site) which are important leisure and wildlife areas.

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The SPG is now largely superseded by the new Wyvern Secondary School development which took place around 2004, under planning consent AS/03150, granted by the County Planning Authority.

(iv) The adopted 2008 **Ashford Borough Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy**

Policy CS1 Recognises that sustainable development and high quality design are at the centre of the Council's approach to deciding planning applications.

Policy CS9 Development proposals must be of high quality

Policy CS10 All major developments must incorporate sustainable design features to reduce the consumption of natural resources and to help deliver the aim of zero carbon growth in Ashford.

Policy CS11 Development proposals should avoid harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests, and seek to maintain and, where practicable, enhance and expand biodiversity by restoring or creating suitable semi-natural habitats and ecological networks to sustain wildlife.

Policy CS15 Development proposals must show that all highway, public transport, walking and cycling needs arising from the development will be satisfied. Developments that would generate significant traffic movements must be well related to the primary and secondary road network, and this should have adequate capacity to accommodate the development.

Policy CS19 Proposals for new development within the 100 year undefended river floodplain will not be permitted unless following a Flood Risk Assessment it can be demonstrated that:

- (i) it would not be at unacceptable risk of flooding itself, and,
- (ii) the development would not result in any increased risk of flooding elsewhere.

In exceptional circumstances, where the tests above cannot be met, other development on a brownfield site may be allowed if:

- (a) the development is designed to be compatible with potential flood conditions, and,
- (b) there are no alternative sites in a lower risk zone, and,
- (c) the development would make a significant contribution to the overall sustainability objectives of the LDF, such that the wider sustainability benefits of the development outweigh the flood risk, and,
- (d) it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council and the Environment Agency that any residual flood risks are adequately mitigated to avoid an increased risk of flooding either on site or elsewhere.

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In addition, development that would harm the effectiveness of existing flood defences or prejudice their maintenance or management will not be permitted.

Policy CS20 All development should include appropriate sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) for the disposal of surface water, in order to avoid any increase in flood risk or adverse impact on water quality.

Consultations

41. **Ashford Borough Council:** raises no objections to the application.
42. **Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council:** realises the benefits of having all facilities on a single site. They do raise concern about the exit from the school grounds which is supposed to be by turning left onto the A28 Great Chart Bypass only. The Parish Council has raised concerns that this restriction is not enforced and often not followed. They consider that during the construction work and when the facilities are fully operational there will be considerably more traffic entering and leaving the site and request that the left turn only on exit of the site be more rigorously enforced.
43. **Divisional Transportation Manager:** raises no objections to the proposals, subject to the imposition of conditions to secure construction operations; the permanent retention of vehicle and cycle parking spaces; and the provision, implementation and on-going review of a site Travel Plan within six months of first occupation of the buildings.
44. **Sport England:** raises no objection to the development, subject to conditions covering: a detailed assessment of ground conditions of the land proposed for replacement playing fields; a scheme to ensure that compensatory playing fields would be provided to an acceptable quality (including appropriate drainage where necessary); and that a Community Use Scheme be agreed to cover community use of the school facilities.
45. **Environment Agency:** raises no objections to the application subject to: (i) the development being carried out in accordance with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment; (ii) that provision of compensatory flood storage on/or in the vicinity of the site to a 100 year (20% climate change) standard; and (iii) finished floor levels are set no lower than 40.42m AOD.
46. **County Council's Archaeological Advisor:** notes that the site lies on the 3rd Terrace River Gravel deposits, as confirmed by the Ground Investigation Report accompanying the application. These gravel deposits have the potential for survival of rare and sensitive Palaeolithic remains, and the overlying Alluvial deposits could contain palaeoenvironmental remains. It would be preferable if pre-determination geoarchaeological test pitting could be undertaken to clarify the nature of the River Terrace Gravels on the site and to confirm whether the proposed groundwork's could potentially disturb sensitive archaeological remains.
47. **County Council's Biodiversity Officer:** is satisfied that the Ecological Scoping Report has adequately assessed the ecological value of the site. Recommendations are made for further surveys (bats and badgers) and measures to minimise the risk of harm to reptiles that may be using habitat adjacent to the proposed development areas.

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It is noted that in this instance it is not essential for the recommended bat and badger surveys to be carried out prior to the application being determined. This is on the basis that there are no/limited bat roosting opportunities on the development footprint itself and therefore the recommendations of the bat survey are not likely to lead to mitigation requirements beyond sympathetic lighting design. Similarly, the development footprint has limited suitability for badger use, although there is potential for a sett to be present around the edge of the site. Nevertheless, a badger survey needs to be undertaken and any mitigation implemented prior to and during construction works.

Supports the principle of ecological enhancements at the site, in accordance with the general principles of PPS9.

48. **Kent Wildlife Trust:** is satisfied that an experienced consultant has carried out appropriate ecological scoping of the site and its surroundings. The Trust however urges the Council to test the proposal against the standing advice from Natural England. The Trust has no objections to the development subject to planning conditions to secure the submission for approval of a survey to establish the presence/absence of a badger sett; the submission of a detailed external lighting specification; the implementation of ecological mitigation measures set out in the ecological scoping report; the submission of a biodiversity strategy and ecological management plan to realise the enhancements identified in the ecological scoping survey and the funding of the ecological management plan in turn leading to periodic key habitat and species monitoring.
49. **EDF Energy:** has raised no objections to the proposals.

Local Member

50. The local County Members, Mr. R. King and Mr. J. Wedgbury, were notified of the application on the 17 March 2010.

Publicity

51. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notices at the site entrance, a newspaper advertisement in the KM Extra, and the individual notification of 18 residential properties.

Representations

52. To date I have received two letters of representation in respect of this application. The letters set out various grounds of objection to the proposals, the key points of which are outlined below: -
- The proposed extensions have been set out to maximise the building size due to the amount of land available with little thought of the four private dwellings situated to the south west of the schools plot, namely along Bucksford Lane;
 - The senior school in the existing building caters for 130 pupils. The extension, in effect almost doubling the school size, is designed to hold the junior school. However, when viewed in pupil numbers, the proposed junior school is only to be for 8 full time pupils and 32 part-time pupils. Hence the obvious and unexplained question is, why does the extension need to be the same size as the senior school

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whilst only catering for a fraction of the pupils (in fact only 30% of the pupils at peak time, and only a ridiculous 6% of full time students)?

- The design of the proposed new primary school pushes the buildings and car park onto what are at present sports fields. The plans for the re-situated sports field, football pitches and new addition of the running track have then been forced deeper into the field right up to the southern boundary of the school grounds, which back onto 2 private dwellings;
- Re-contouring of land to provide the new sports pitches will, most likely, be at a height to the ground that backs onto land with 2 private dwellings, resulting in overlooking of residential gardens and dwellings being achieved;
- In addition to sport activities during school time, during weekends, school holidays and summer evenings a number of local youths climb over the fence in Bucksford Lane to use the football pitch in the school ground. The football pitch at present is currently located approximately 100m from residential boundaries, yet as part of the proposals it would be located only yards from residential boundaries. Add this situation to an elevated position of the pitch, and all this constitutes a complete loss of amenity through a loss of privacy and a dramatic increase in noise and people levels. This all results from the over development of the new junior school and the knock on consequences of moving the sports area;
- Concerns raised over noise from players and spectators using the new sports pitches, particularly if the frequency of the field use is opened up to other outside organisations for community use;
- Seek assurances that the proposed 5-a-side football pitches with goal posts would be constructed on sites furthest away from residential properties;
- Concerns raised over potential balls flying into nearby residential properties causing damage to property;
- Disappointed to see that the planners, whilst investigating environmental, traffic and numerous other potential impacts of the development, decided to ignore or simply bypass local residents when setting out these proposals. If planners had liaised with residents at the end of Bucksford Lane who would be directly impacted by the proposals, issues could have been discussed and potentially allayed before they hit the drawing board;
- Concerns raised relating to proposed earthworks proposed to screen new buildings;
- Raises the question as to whether the proposed new junior school wing could be placed where the new sports pitches are intended to be located (i.e. in close proximity to residential dwellings) and the existing sports fields stay where they are at present;
- An electricity pole currently situated in the school grounds appears to be, on the proposed plan, in the middle of a football pitch.

DiscussionIntroduction

53. The application seeks planning permission for the construction of a new primary school wing to the western end of the existing secondary school to house the relocate Wyvern Primary School provision currently located off-site at the Clockhouse, the construction of a Multi Agency Specialist Hub (MASH) and Specialist Nursery for disabled children at the eastern end of the existing school, together with new and re-configured car parks, a new internal service road and the provision of new playing fields through the re-contour of currently unusable grassed land. The application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of the two residential objections received (as

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outlined in paragraph 52 above). In considering this proposal, regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies and National Planning Policy Guidance as outlined in paragraph (40) above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan and National Planning Policy Guidance unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore the proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case can be categorised under the following headings:

- the impact of the proposals on local residential amenity, particularly relating to the construction and use of replacement playing field provision;
- the nature of the proposed development in terms of conformity with national planning policy relating to flood risk;
- highway issues;
- ecological and archaeological interests; and
- any other issues arising from consultation and publicity.

Impact on residential amenity

54. There are a number of amenity considerations to take into account when determining this proposal. First, Members will note from the concerns expressed by several nearby residential properties located immediately adjacent to the south-western boundary of the school site, and adjacent to an area of undulating ground which is proposed to be re-contoured to provide replacement playing field provision, that they remain concerned that this element of the proposal would lead to a complete loss of their amenity. As can be seen from the residential concerns outlined in paragraph (52) above, there are a number of related issues centred around the creation of new playing fields within this area closest to private dwellings, the most fundamental being the ability of users of the new playing field pitches to achieve an elevated view into residential gardens and dwellings beyond. Whilst I note and support the concerns of the local residents in this instance, the key to the degree of impact upon private dwellings in this locality would be dependent on the final ground level height to which the re-contoured playing pitch surface would be constructed. To this effect, whilst the applicant has been able to provide indicative cross sections through the re-contoured playing field, I propose that the pitch level be reserved out for later consideration should planning permission be granted. That way further discussion could take place between the applicant, the County Planning Authority, Sport England and the two adjoining properties in order to ensure that a reasonable ground level is achieved, safeguarding, as far as is possible, residential amenity. Furthermore, discussions would also need to take place with the Environment Agency, given the nature of part of the site within the Great Stour floodplain, in order to ensure that any new playing field ground level was appropriate and would not lead to an increased risk of flooding to the existing school, any new development constructed on the site, or on any existing surrounding development. The latter requirement being consistent with both PPS25 and Core Strategy Policy CS19 in terms of ensuring new development does not propose a significant flood risk danger.
55. Typical concerns have been raised relating to noise emanating from players and spectators using the new school playing fields on nearby residential properties, particularly if the frequency of the field use is opened up to other outside organisations for community use outside of traditional school core hours. Conversely I note that it is

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the desire of Sport England, through Community Use Schemes, to encourage Schools to open up both indoor and outdoor sporting provisions to local teams/clubs for wider community usage and sporting benefits. In this instance I note that Sport England has requested that the applicant enters into a Community Use Scheme, which would cover aspects such as hours of use of the playing field for community usage. Clearly an increase in community use of the playing fields in this locality would have an impact on nearby residential amenity and therefore it would need to be a careful balancing act between achieving appropriate hours of use which would allow a local wider sporting benefit, whilst maintaining residential amenity as far as is reasonably possible. I note that physical constraints on the hours of use of the proposed grass playing field pitches would, to a certain extent, be determined by external factors such as the weather and daylight hours. Whilst the applicant has not been able to provide details of any intended community hours of use of the new playing fields in this instance, I propose that this issue be secured through planning condition within a Community Use Scheme in the event of planning permission being granted. I consider that this approach is consistent with the general principles contained in PPG17 and that the proposed development accords with the principles of Local Plan Policy LE12 in terms of providing alternative playing field land of at least equal leisure value and located so that the community can use it.

56. Another related concern which has been raised in this instance is with regard to the possibility of balls flying into nearby residential properties causing damage as a result of the relocated playing pitch locations. This issue is largely a school management issue, but it is anticipated that by achieving an appropriate ground level on the new playing field pitch that this problem should not occur to any significant extent. Another school management, and potentially Police matter, which has been raised by local residents in this case is that of youths entering the site and using the playing fields on an unauthorised basis out of school hours. Whilst I sympathise with the residents concerns, particularly in respect of locating playing pitches closer to their boundaries, the carrying out of activities on site in an unauthorised manner is not specifically an issue I can afford significant weight to in the decision making process, since it is a management and site security issue, and arguably no more likely to occur than it could do at present.
57. Members will note that the question of building location for the proposed primary school wing has been raised by a local resident, to the effect that they consider that a swap of the proposed new primary school wing and proposed new playing field area would be preferable. The applicant has confirmed that there is no intention to move the proposed primary school wing to the south-western corner of the school grounds, adjacent to nearby residential dwellings, on the basis that it would compromise the wider setting of Bucksford Grange and potential a Grade II Listed Building, Buxford Mill, slightly further south-west. Furthermore, a new primary school building in this part of the site would neither be practical given the length of new access road required to access it, nor would it be easily accessible or physically connectable to the main secondary school building which the current proposals seek to achieve. I am satisfied that this suggestion is neither practical nor would be supported in general terms from a planning perspective.

Flood risk

58. A key factor in the determination of this application has been the issue surrounding flood risk. Members will note that the application site spans Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3, with part of the new built development (the MASH and Specialist Nursery) falling within

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land designated as high risk from fluvial flooding within Flood Zone 3a. A Flood Risk Assessment which accompanied the application detailed the Sequential Test in which the applicant undertook in terms of identifying suitable development sites within the broad Ashford locality, for which all other development sites were rejected on the basis of cost, nature, topography, availability and size of plot. The FRA then identified the classification of the proposed development within the 'more vulnerable' classification whereby National Planning Policy states that such uses should only be permitted in Flood Risk Zone 3a if the Exception Test is passed and that development is designed and constructed to remain operational and safe for users in times of flood.

59. Justification was submitted with the application, for which the applicant considered that demonstrated that the application was compliant with the requirements of the Exception Test, as set out in PPS25. Following detailed discussions with the Environment Agency, and the submission of further information by the applicant in respect of flooding issues, it is noted that the Environment Agency has not raised an objection to the development (see paragraph 45 above) subject to a number of conditions. These conditions include that the development must be carried out in accordance with the submitted FRA, that provision is made on-site for compensatory flood storage capacity to a 100 year (20% climate change) standard and that finished floor levels of the MASH/Specialist Nursery building be constructed to no lower than 40.42m AOD. The applicant has accepted all conditions imposed by the Environment Agency and confirmed their intention to excavate an area of land north of the re-configured secondary school and MASH car park to create additional on-site flood storage capacity to the requirements dictated by the Agency. They have also confirmed that the finished floor level of the MASH and Specialist Nursery building would be constructed to a level of 40.60m AOD, above that level set down by the Environment Agency (40.42m AOD). Furthermore, the applicant has given a commitment to sign up to the Agency's Flood Warning System.
60. I am therefore satisfied that the proposed development accords with the guiding principles of PPS25, together with the requirements of Ashford Core Strategy Policy CS19. In the absence of a statutory objection on flooding grounds from the Environment Agency, I do not raise objection to the various elements of the proposed development on the Wyvern Secondary School site in this instance.

Highway issues

61. As discussed in paragraphs (30) to (39) above the highway impacts associated with this development have been well documented and discussed in detail with the Divisional Transportation Manager. In summary, the co-location of Wyvern Primary School and Secondary School onto the single site is intended to result in a pupil and staff increase as a result of predicted growth within the Ashford area by some 12.8 percent from a combined total of 173 children and 114 teachers (based on existing primary and secondary school rolls) to 194 pupils and 129 staff. Clearly the bringing together of two schools onto a single site would result in a higher proportion of site traffic, for which Transport Statement accompanying the application details that peak hour vehicle trips would increase from 120 vehicle movements (arrivals and departures) in the morning peak (08:00-09:00) to 181 vehicle movements during the same period, and from 106 vehicle movements (arrivals and departures) during the evening peak (14:30-15:30) to 181 vehicle movements during the same period. The Transport Statement does however point out that overall traffic movement generally to and from the site would be significant lower than would be expected from a conventional school due on the whole to a greater user of minibus transport.

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62. In considering the highway impacts from the MASH element of the proposal, it is noted that the centre would provide specialist assessment and support for mentally and physically disabled children, the existing services of which are currently being provided around Ashford District and the east Kent area generally. Paragraphs (33) to (35) outline associated vehicle movements in connection with this element of the proposal, however in summary the MASH is expected to generate potential up to 65 vehicles per day (44 staff and 21 patients). The Transport Statement accompanying the application does however detail that many of the Centre's clients are likely to be those pupils attending either the Primary or Secondary Special Education Needs Schools on site, thus cutting down the time, vehicle movements and the need to travel around the District to clinical appointments.
63. Paragraph (36) above details that the Specialist Nursery is expected to cater for no more than 12 pupils at any one time. This is largely constrained by the size of the nursery building and the high demands and specialist teaching requirements of the users of the nursery.
64. The applicant has used transport modelling software to calculate the highway impact of the three elements of the proposed development on the local road network. That analysis demonstrated that following the introduction of the proposals most of the local traffic network would operate within its capacity. It did note that the south bound approach to the A28/Brookfield Road/Chart Road roundabout is shown to be slightly over capacity, with a slight worsening of this situation following the introduction of the development traffic. However, this assumes worst case scenario and does not take into account the redistribution of traffic associated with the Victoria Way road scheme, due to commence construction in March 2011, which is expected to result in a general reduction of traffic in the local area by as much as 25 percent. The Transport Statement accompanying the application therefore concluded that the development proposals are unlikely to result in any significant delay to the local road network.
65. In terms of on-site parking provision the application details that a total of 162 vehicle parking spaces would be provided, including the provision of 34 disabled spaces. The applicant considers that this would be ample provision to cater for the needs of the various elements on site – the new primary school, the existing secondary school, the MASH and the Specialist Nursery facility. In addition, 48 new cycle parking spaces would be provided, together with 9 new motorcycle parking spaces. I consider this approach to be consistent with the general principles set out in PPG15, together with Local Plan Policy TP6 which requires proposals for any new public buildings to include appropriate levels of secure parking spaces for cycles. Together with the submission of a site Travel Plan within six months of the first occupation of the buildings, I consider that the proposed development would balance the need for parking provision against the overarching target to encourage staff to travel to and from work in a more sustainable pattern.
66. The application details that construction operations would be expected to last approximately 3-4 months. All activities, including offices, parking and welfare facilities would be located within the application site as to minimise potential disturbance to the local area. Access would be obtained via a new mini roundabout junction located at the site access, with appropriate access indicating where construction and school traffic should route. Furthermore, it is expected that most of the construction phase would take place during the school summer holiday period in 2011. I am satisfied that the measures proposed by the applicant in respect of construction activities are appropriate

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and proportionate to the level of the proposed development in this instance and would seek to reduce, as far as practicable, impact on local amenity. Furthermore, in order to ensure that construction activities are carried out during appropriate periods and therefore to safeguard local amenity, I would propose to impose a condition to restrict all construction activities to between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday, 09:00 and 13:00 on Saturday and no operations taking place on Sundays, Bank and Public Holidays.

67. In considering the impact of the various elements of the proposals on the local highway network, the professional advice of the Divisional Transportation Manager was sought. He considered that subject to the imposition of planning conditions to secure a number of matters (as set out in paragraph 43) there are no overriding grounds to substantiate a highway objection to these proposals. He is satisfied that the proposed development is acceptable in terms of highway capacity issues, on-site parking provision and in terms of highway safety issues.
68. Based on the professional advice received from the Divisional Transportation Manager in this instance, I am satisfied that the various elements of the proposals could be accommodated on this single site without a significant adverse impact on the local highway network. Subject to the imposition of conditions to cover a number of highway-related aspects, I do not raise objection to this proposal on the basis of highway matters and consider the proposals to be broadly in line with both national and local transport policy namely PPG15, Local Plan Policy TP6 and Ashford Core Strategy Policy CS15.

Impact on ecological and archaeological interests

69. The application is accompanied by an Ecological Scoping Report which identified that the proposed development is not expected to impact on any designated nature conservation sites, however the development would be located within 25 metres of the Great Stour (Ashford to Fordwich) Local Wildlife Site. The Report concluded that a number of mitigation measures and further survey work be undertaken including the erection of newt and reptile exclusion fencing around the construction area prior to commencement of works, badger and bat activity surveys be undertaken and ecological enhancement measures be incorporated into the scheme where possible to contribute towards objectives of PPS9. It is noted that the County Council's Biodiversity Officer is satisfied with the conclusions of the Report and notes that further survey need to be undertaken and any necessary mitigation measures put in place prior to and during construction works. I note that the required badger and bat surveys are currently being progressed by the applicant and should be available to the County Planning Authority in due course. I propose to ensure that any relevant mitigation measures be imposed on the development arising from the findings of these surveys by planning condition in the event of permission being granted.
70. Kent Wildlife Trust (see paragraph 48) has requested that a number of additional measures be secured by planning condition in the event of permission being granted, including the submission of an external lighting scheme and a site biodiversity strategy and management regime including periodic key habitat and species monitoring. I support the request for an external lighting scheme to be submitted to the Planning Authority for approval, but consider that the submission of a site biodiversity strategy and management regime, including periodic habitat and species monitoring, is not proportionate to the scale and nature of the development in this instance. I am satisfied that subject to conditions to secure the submission of badger and bat surveys together

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with any necessary mitigation measures prior to and during construction activities, the submission of an external lighting scheme, and the submission of details of site biodiversity enhancement measures that the proposal accords with general principles contained in PPS9 and Ashford Core Strategy Policy CS11. I also consider that the proposed development would not contradict with the wider objectives and principles of Ashford 'Green Corridors', as detailed in Local Plan Policy EN13 and Supplementary Planning Guidance 1 [Ashford Borough Council Green Corridor Action Plan] which accompanies the 2000 Ashford Borough Local Plan.

71. Members will note that the County Council's Archaeological Advisor has highlighted that the development site lies on an area which has potential for the survival of rare and sensitive Palaeolithic remains, such that they have requested that pre-determination geoarchaeological test pitting be carried. It is noted that these pre-determination archaeological test pitting are currently being undertaken on site and are likely to take around a week starting from the 23 August 2010. The findings of the archaeological examination will then be used to agree a specification for groundwork's, together with any further necessary archaeological excavation or mitigation measures. I therefore propose that a condition be placed on any forthcoming consent to ensure that there is scope to agree any reasonably appropriate archaeological works and mitigation as necessary. I am satisfied that this approach is consistent with the objectives of PPS5 and Local Plan Policy EN23.

Other issues arising from consultation and publicity

72. Members will note that Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council (see paragraph 42) has expressed concerns relating to the use of the left hand turn only exit onto the A28 Great Chart Bypass. They express concern that quite often traffic leaving the school site does not follow this instruction and instead attempts to cross the carriageway, turning right when leaving the site. I note that at present the entrance/exit way is clearly signposted to indicate that users should turn left only. Unfortunately it is directly outside of the jurisdiction of the County Planning Authority to specifically enforce this matter, other than to ensure that the exit layout is appropriately designed and that it is well signposted. In terms of construction traffic and ultimately as a result of final occupation of the development, it is accepted that the use of this entrance/exit slip road would inevitably increase. To this effect I propose that the applicant be reminded of correct entry/exit procedures for the site by way of an appropriately worded informative on any forthcoming positive decision.
73. Members will note that residential concerns have been expressed relating to an existing electricity pole currently located on part of the undulating school grounds, which would, as part of the proposals, form part the new sports playing pitches. Quite clearly an electricity pole in this locality would compromise the ability of the new fields to be used to their full intended capacity. I understand that the applicant is involved with ongoing discussions with the Electricity Company regarding the reposition of this pole to an appropriate location.
74. Residential concerns have been expressed relating to the lack of consultation with local neighbours, particularly by 'Planners' during the design stages of the current proposals. This concern is a little misleading as full notification was undertaken by the County Planning Authority with neighbouring properties at the end of Bucksford Lane at the point when the planning application was received. The concerns expressed by the resident here however actually relate to a lack of pre-application discussion/consultation

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undertaken by the applicant with any nearby neighbours concerning the applicant's proposals. Whilst the County Planning Authority encourages pre-application discussions and consultations with key stakeholders, including any potentially affected residents, it is ultimately down to the applicant should they wish to undertake this prior to the application being formally submitted for consideration by the Planning Authority. Nevertheless, discussions are now underway between the neighbouring properties, the County Planning Authority and the applicant relating to technical aspects of this project, particularly in relation to issues surrounding the re-contouring of the new playing field area.

75. A question has been raised by one local resident relating to the need for such a substantial sized primary school for a relatively small number of pupils. It is important to consider the special education needs of the pupils attending both the primary school and secondary school elements of this proposal in this instance, particularly given that larger space requirements and smaller teaching sizes are more akin to this type of school as opposed to mainstream schools in general. The applicant has identified a local need in this instance, taken account of projected growth for both primary and secondary school SEN pupils within the Ashford Borough and east Kent area generally, and drawn up proposals for an appropriately sized new primary school wing. Furthermore, the nature of the catchment area for the schools is largely different from traditional mainstream schools as pupils often come from further afield to attend specialist schools. In this instance I see no reason to question the specific space requirements of the proposed new primary school wing.

Conclusion

76. The proposal seeks to provide a new primary school wing, a Multi Agency Specialist Hub and Specialist Nursery within the grounds of the existing Wyvern Secondary School. The concept driving the various elements of the proposed development is the co-location of special educational needs services onto a single site, thereby providing a number of efficiency savings to both the end users of the site, the County Council and Primary Care Trust alike. Having fully considered the potential environmental, highway and amenity impacts of the proposals, together with other concerns expressed as a result of consultation and publicity, I am satisfied that there are no overriding grounds for object to the proposed development in this instance. I am satisfied that the proposed MASH and Specialist Nursery building has been designed in such a way to avoid any significant flood risk to either users of the building, the school site generally or other sites along the Great Stour River in the general locality. To this effect I note that no statutory objection has been raised to the proposals by the Environment Agency, subject to a number of conditions as set out in paragraph (45) above. Furthermore, I note that highway impacts have been fully considered in this instance and subject to a number of conditions as set out in paragraph (43), the Divisional Transportation Manager raises no objections to the proposals in terms of local capacity, highway safety and parking provision issues.
77. Whilst I note the concerns raised by several residential dwellings to the south west of the application site in this instance, for the reasons discussed I am confident that the vast majority of their concerns can be overcome through further consideration of playing field ground levels and the hours of community use of the new playing fields following a decision on the general principles of the development. Furthermore, I note that individual discussions are taking place with these neighbours, the County Planning Authority and the applicant to address their concerns as far as is reasonably possible.

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78. For the reasons set out and discussed throughout this report I therefore recommend accordingly.

Recommendation

79. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO conditions, including conditions to cover the following aspects:

- 5 year implementation period;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- development be carried out in accordance with submitted Flood Risk Assessment;
- provision of compensatory flood storage capacity on site to a 100 year (20% climate change) standard;
- finished floor level within MASH / Specialist Nursery set no lower than 40.42m AOD;
- Community Use Agreement to include hours of community use of the new playing fields;
- assessment of ground conditions of land proposed for replacement playing fields;
- scheme to ensure that new playing fields are provided to an acceptable quality (including appropriate drainage where necessary);
- playing field ground level to be agreed;
- external materials to be agreed;
- submission of detailed landscaping scheme and implementation with first planting season following construction activities;
- measures to prevent mud and debris being tracked out onto the public highway;
- parking being made on site for construction operatives and construction vehicles during construction works;
- vehicle and cycle parking (as proposed in the application) being provided prior to the first occupation of building and permanently retained on site thereafter;
- submission of a site Travel Plan within six months of the first occupation of either and/or both the two buildings (whichever date occurs first), and on-going monitoring and review thereafter;
- submission of badger and bat surveys, together with any necessary mitigation measures to be provided prior to commencement and during construction activities;
- erection of newt and reptile fencing around the construction site prior to and during all construction activities;
- submission of biodiversity enhancement measures to be incorporated on site;
- external lighting to be agreed;
- hours of construction limited;
- further archaeological works and mitigation to be agreed with Planning Authority following findings from pre-determination trial trenching; and
- surface water drainage measures to be agreed.

I FURTHER RECOMMEND that the applicant be reminded by way of INFORMATIVE of the following matters:

- requirement to sign up to the Environment Agency's Flood Warning System;
- requirement for vehicles to observe left hand turn in and out of the site entrance/exit slip road with the A28 Great Chart Bypass at all times; and
- requirement to ensure that electricity pole is relocated to suitable location

Item D2

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Case officer – Julian Moat	01622 696978
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Background documents - See section heading
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