

Construction of a Multi Agency Specialist Hub (MASH) at land annexed from Garlinge Primary School & Nursery, Westfield Road, Margate – TH/10/227

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 construction of a Multi Agency Specialist Hub (MASH) for disabled children together with associated access roads and car parking at land annexed from Garlinge Primary School & Nursery, Westfield Road, Margate (TH/10/227)

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mr. R. Burgess

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The application site comprises an area of approximately 0.65 hectares located within land currently forming part of the Garlinge Primary School and Nursery grounds. The site is generally flat with a slight rise of approximately 1 metre from north to south, laid with a grass surface, and has a variety of boundary treatments with nearby residential properties consisting of a mixture of steel palisade fencing and timber close boarded fencing. The application site in principle forms part of the School's playing field / open space provision, although the land is claimed to be surplus to the requirements of the School needs and therefore is not utilised during day-to-day operations. The buildings of the Primary School and Nursery are located to the south-west of the application site and have their own vehicular entrances leading off Caxton Road and Westfield Road. There is an existing playing field which separates between the application site and the existing primary school and nursery buildings.
2. The application site fronts on to and has an existing vehicular access point off Westfield Road. It is located within a predominantly residential area with traditional two storey early Twentieth Century terrace housing fronting Westfield Road to the north and north-west, a residential estate built in the 1990's of mixed two-storey residential dwellings to the east and south, and a public recreation ground and playing fields owned and maintained by the District Council to the south. Ridge heights of adjacent residential dwellings are between 7 and 8 metres above adjacent ground level. To the east of the residential estate is Hartsdown Technology College, a mixed ability secondary school. The application site is accessed from the A28 (Canterbury Road) via George V Avenue.
3. The application site lies outside of the identified urban confines as defined by Local Plan Policy CC1. The site also lies within an area designated as a Chalk Plateau Landscape Character Area (Policy CC2), characterised by a generally flat or gently undulating landscape with extensive, unenclosed fields under intensive arable cultivation. Having visited the site several times, I note that the particular parcel of land in question is surrounded almost entirely by existing residential development and there are no ground level long distance views towards the coast. As the application site consists of land capable of forming a playing field there is a policy presumption against development in this locality, as set out in National Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, unless there are exceptional overriding circumstances. This policy presumption is reflected by Sport England's adopted Playing Fields Policy and by Policy SR12 of the Adopted Local Plan.

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General Location Plan

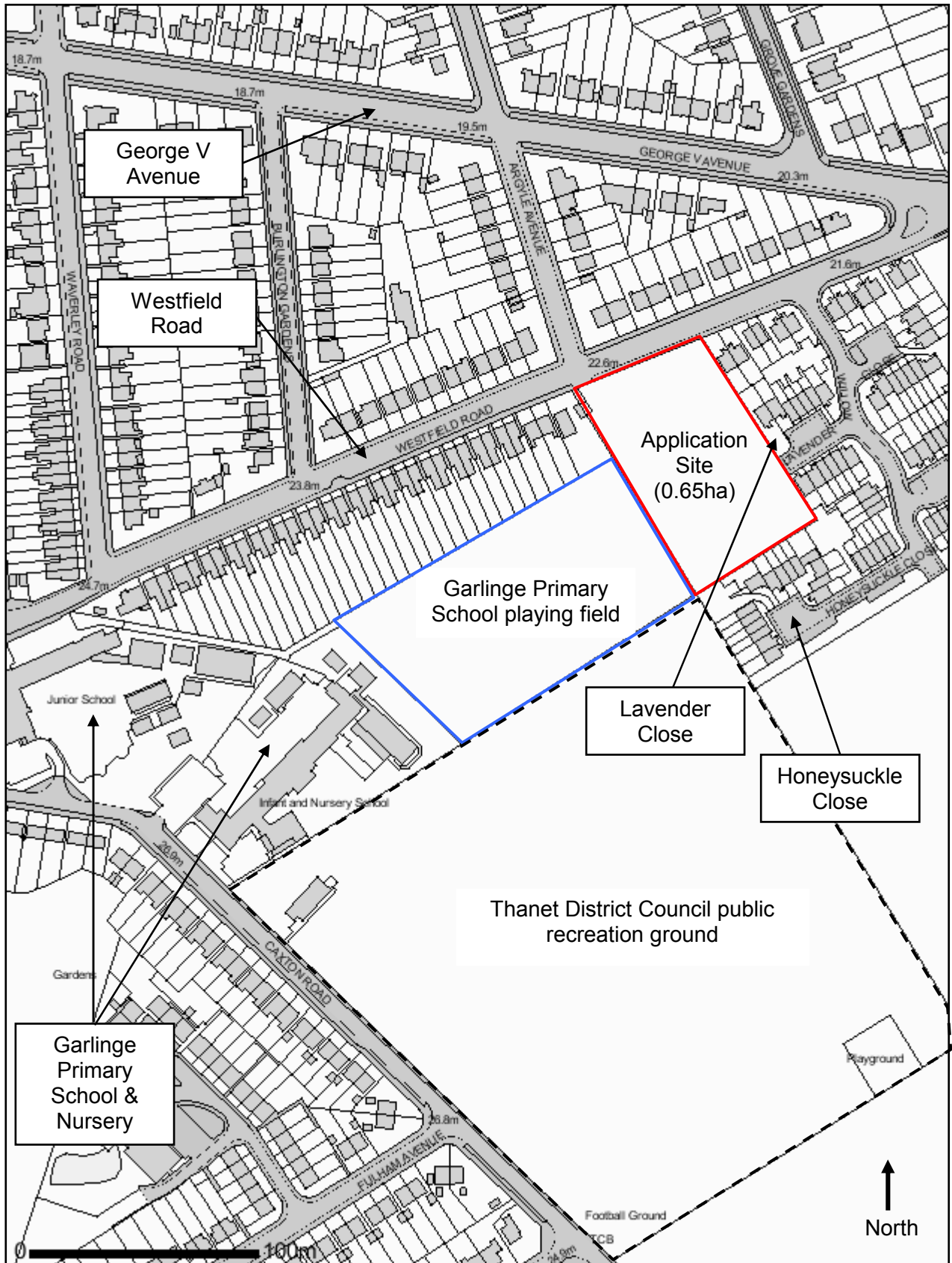


General Location Plan
Scale 1:40000

Item D4

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Site Location Plan



Construction of a Multi Agency Specialist Hub and associated access roads and car parking, Westfield Road, Margate – TH/10/227

Proposed Block Plan



Construction of a Multi Agency Specialist Hub and associated access roads and car parking, Westfield Road, Margate – TH/10/227

Proposed Ground Floor

Notes

- Drawn to scale from this drawing.
- Verify all dimensions on site before commencing work or construction.
- All errors or omissions must be reported to the designer or contract administrator immediately on written instruction.
- This drawing remains the sole copyright of GPM Design.
- All work shall be done in accordance with the current editions of the relevant British Standards, codes of practice and any manufacturer's instructions.

Contractors should make the necessary issue of accredited details to suit an appropriate to ensure compliance of fire factor and air handling. Any change to the details must be reported to the contract administrator immediately on written instruction.

Note: (not all performance marked) all fire performance should be Accredited Details.

• Check with Contract Administrator, designer or surveyor if in doubt.


Rev.	Date	Details
		Drawing No: 08603-03
		Issue: Planning Approval
		Scale: 1:200@A1
		Title: Proposed Ground Floor Plan
		Project: Multi Agency Specialist Hub - Thanet
		Client: GPM PARTNERSHIP



Multi-Agency Specialist Hub - Thanet
Ground Floor Plan - (Scale 1:200@A1)

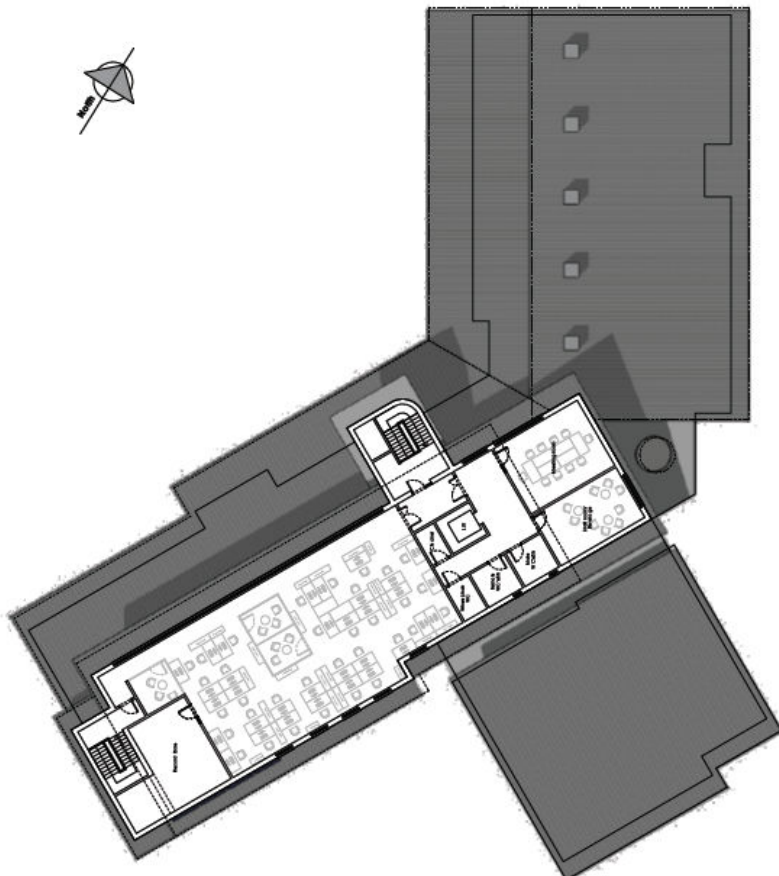
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Proposed First Floor

<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drawn scale from this drawing• Verify all dimensions on site before commencing work or any other activity• All errors or omissions must be reported to the designer or contract administrator immediately• The drawing retains the copyright of GPM/CDM signatory• It is the responsibility of the contractor to check that all materials, workmanship and components meet compliance with the relevant British Standards, Codes of Practice and any instructions or contracts• Contractors should make the relevant sources of accredited details available appropriate to ensure suitability of installation and fitment. Any change to the original details should be notified immediately to the contractor. Problems of Accredited details shown on signs, make it clear.• Note that all performance and fitment problems should be reported to the Designer/Contract Administrator /Designer or manager in writing.	Rev.	Date	Details
	Drawing No:	08603-04	
	Issue:	Planning Approval	
	Scale:	1:200 @ A1	
	Title:	Proposed First Floor Plan	
	Project:	Multi Agency Specialist Hub - Thanet	
	Client:	 NHS	

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Multi-Agency Specialist Hub - Thanet
First Floor Plan - (Scale 1:200 @ A1)

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Proposed North West (Front) Elevation

Notes

- On all sites from this drawing.
- Verify all dimensions on site. Before commencing any work, the contractor shall refer to the drawings and specifications and shall be responsible for the design or correct interpretation immediately on receipt of the drawings and specifications.
- The drawings assume the site occupies the building plot shown on the site plan.
- All work shall be carried out in accordance with the current Building Regulations, Code of Practice and any relevant standards, codes of practice and any manufacturer's instructions.

Contractor shall make themselves aware of the current Building Regulations and any amendments thereto. Any work shall be carried out in accordance with the Building Regulations and any relevant standards, codes of practice and any manufacturer's instructions. Approved details shown on site.

Note: (Drawn as a condition of the contract) The Architect's Administration, design or survey for it is shown.

North West Elevation, Thurst M.A.S.H.

Client: Kent County Council

Drawing No: 08/03-06

Issue: Planning Application

Scale: 1:200@A3

Rev: * **Date:** * **Desk:** *

Title: North West Elevation

Project: Multi Agency Specialist Hub - Thurst

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Proposed South East (Rear) Elevation

Notes

- Do not scale from this drawing.
- Work to be carried out in accordance with the relevant parts of the Building Regulations and any other applicable legislation.
- Where necessary, the contractor shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary permissions, consents, approvals and licences from the relevant authorities.
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- All materials, workmanship and components must conform to the relevant British Standards and any other applicable specifications.
- Contractors should make the most of areas of access to be used as a reference to the design. Any changes to the design should be agreed in writing with the architect prior to construction.

Note that all positions are based on the ground level shown on the site plan. The contractor shall be responsible for any necessary adjustments to the design to accommodate any changes to the ground level.

South East Elevation, Thame, MA-S1

Client: Kent County Council

Drawing No: 08-003-08

Issue: Planning Application

Scale: 1:200@A3

Rev: *

Date: *

Drawn: *

Project: Multi Agency Specialist Hub - Thanet

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A general location plan is attached on page D4.2 and a site location plan on page D4.3.

Background

4. 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.
5. 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 year's 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.
6. A number of multi-agency specialist hubs (MASH) are being developed around the County, including at Ashford, Sittingbourne and this application in Thanet. 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.

Planning History

7. The application site itself has not been the subject of any known previous planning application proposals. Garlinge Primary School has had several minor applications for extended buildings and the development of a Children's Centre in recent years, the details of which are summarised below:
 - TH/08/1378 - Installation of a six-bay mobile classroom to provide additional staff room accommodation. Granted temporary planning permission February 2009;
 - TH/07/1315 – Refurbishment and extension works to create a Children's Centre. Granted planning permission November 2007;
 - TH/07/679 – Pathway linking Garlinge Infant and Junior Schools. Granted planning permission August 2007;
 - TH/05/496 – New 3 classroom extension, 1 multi-purpose teaching room, office and toilet extensions. Granted planning permission June 2005;

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Proposal

8. The application is made by Kent County Council Property Group and seeks planning permission for the construction of a Multi Agency Specialist Hub (MASH) for disabled children together with associated access roads and car parking on land currently forming part of Garlinge Primary School and Nursery grounds. Permission is sought for the construction of a new purpose-build community building together with external facilities, including boundary fencing, children's play area, amenity space, landscaping and vehicle drop-off and parking facilities. The centre 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.
9. The proposal involves the construction of a part single and part two storey building with three "spokes" off a central hub with a combined gross internal floorspace of some 1750 sq. metres. Most of accommodation would be provided on 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 application sets out that design considerations, such as the increased height space allocated to the entrance and reception/common areas would, provide both visual interest to the external elevations of the building, but also perform an important function in providing a light, airy internal space and allowing views across and through the building to external play areas.
10. The application sets out that the south western arm of the building has been positioned so that the first floor window separation to adjacent residential buildings in Honeysuckle Close would achieve a minimum distance of 21 metres. The layout design has also allowed the building to be set back from the Westfield Road frontage to maintain the open aspect nature to the road frontage and maintain the separation between dwellings and the proposed drop off and vehicle parking areas. The extent of proposed 'built' development footprint on the site equates to 21 percent (1397 sq. metres) of the total site area (0.65 ha), with a further 29 percent (1905 sq. metres) allocated to internal service roads, vehicle parking and drop off areas.
11. The application details that the design of the building has taken account of the proximity to adjacent residential dwellings through the orientation of the building and the location of single and two-storey elements. At the closest point, the MASH building would sit approximately 7.3 metres at an oblique angle to the corner of No. 12 Lavender Close, and approximately 10 metres to a blank end elevation of No. 11 Lavender Close. The nearest residential properties with direct rear-facing views onto the application site (i.e. properties located in Honeysuckle Close) would be located some 16 metres from the corner of the proposed MASH building, and a minimum of 21 metres between first floor windows. In addition, generally the roofs rise up from the rear of the proposed MASH building to increase the perception of scale and mass of the building at its frontage whilst minimising the buildings bulk towards the east and south nearest residential dwellings.
12. The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement setting out anticipated travel details arising from the proposed development. Firstly it details that the specialist children services which the centre would provide are currently being provided in a number of different centres around the Thanet District and east Kent area generally. This means that children and their parents currently have to travel to different locations for example to undertake hearing tests, see a dentist, undertake education assessment,

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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. However, the bespoke nature of this development means 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.

13. The total number of staff visits per week is expected to be 330. 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 200 visits 5 days per week, equating to 40 per day. Therefore the total daily visits are expected to number 60, 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 281 appointments would be made every week. Most of these would comprise more than one assessment, thus reducing the need to travel for multiple assessments at different centres. The applicant has therefore calculated that the co-location of assessment services would reduce external trips by 40 percent, a factor which is applied to visitors to the MASH only, and reduces daily trips from 55 to 33. The applicant notes that most of these external trips would take place outside the morning and evening peaks with appointments being spread across the whole working day.
14. The applicant has then assumed that 75 percent of all the 60 daily staff trips coincide with the morning and evening peaks (i.e. 08:00-09:00 and 17:00-18:00). This has been derived by looking at the number of staff who would be permanently based on the site (60) and by the full and part time employment, giving a total peak hours staff trip generation of 44 people. That number was then factored from statistics taken from the Garlinge 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 indicate that 64 percent of employees travel to work by single cars. When the peak staff generation figure (44) has been factored by the modal share percentage (64%) the total peak hours trip forecast shows 28 cars per hour. A further 16 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 (28 permanent staff + 16 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 lower than 44.
15. Of the 33 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 anticipated that most would drive. In summary, the potential daily car trip generation for the MASH could be up to 77 vehicles per day (44 staff + 33 patients). Traffic analysis undertaken by the applicant identified that should the development be implemented, the proposals are unlikely to result in any significant additional delay on the transport network on the basis that the local traffic network would remain to operate within its capacity.
16. 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.

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17. 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 site. Access would be obtained via a construction access located at the proposed site access, with appropriate signage showing where construction traffic is to route. 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, George V Avenue and Westfield Road. The use of residential streets in the vicinity (e.g. Argyle Avenue, Burlington Gardens and Waverley Road) would not be permitted.
18. The application proposes the formation off a new access of Westfield Road. It is noted that an existing access already exists but the current alignment and dimensions are not suitable for the needs of this development. Instead, the existing access would be stopped up and a new vehicular entrance created in the centre of the site's road frontage with Westfield Road. A new internal access and car parking layout would be provided, including a drop-off and collection area, 14 disabled parking spaces and 31 additional vehicle parking spaces. Internal turning areas would allow vehicles to enter and leave the site in a forward gear, whilst appropriate visibility splays appropriate to the 30 mph speed limit of Westfield Road have been achieved. A dedicated refuse area has also been provided, allowing refuse vehicles to enter and turn in the site without affecting the main entrance of the building or Westfield Road. Motorcycle and cycle parking would be provided as part of the proposals.
19. 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 the welfare of visitors, parents and carers of the MASH users. To this effect it is proposed that a well landscaped external environment would be created, together with a series of 'break-out' spaces. 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. It is proposed to install new 1.8 metre high green weld mesh fencing to the front boundary of the site adjoining Westfield Road.
20. The adjacent residential buildings are of a traditional domestic scale in terms of building materials, thus resulting in little architectural detailing to match with in terms of the new MASH building. It is proposed that external wall surfaces would comprise a mix of panels of locally matched red stock brickwork, through colour render and hardwood timber cladding. It is intended that the choice of varying materials would help accentuate differences in the plane of the building, alternative sections of the building such as the main entrance, or changes in its use. Roofs would be constructed of a standing seam steel sheet system in grey with overhangs to the eaves providing shading and an emphasis to the roof form.
21. The application is accompanied by an Ecological Scoping Report. The Report concluded that the site has very low to negligible potential to support protected species. This view is established on the basis that the site comprises entirely amenity managed grassland. There is no further survey work recommended by the Report, yet it suggests that measures such as the installation of bat boxes, the creation of log piles and native tree, shrub and hedgerow planting present biodiversity enhancement opportunities for the locality as part of the proposed development.
22. As a result of on going discussions with Sport England during the consultation process a number of playing field mitigation measures were borne out of discussions between the applicant and Officers from the County Planning Authority. A package of mitigation

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measures has been offered by the applicant, which would be brought into use / operation prior to the first occupation of the MASH development proposed. These measures include the following:

- Pitch improvements to be carried out by the applicant, including ground levelling, removal of concrete foundations and improvements to surface water drainage on part of Thanet District Council's sports ground (adjacent to the school site) to provide a junior football pitch (U14). The area of new playing pitch is shown on page D4.9 and is currently unusable for the playing of sport due to its current undulating nature;
- Upgrade and refurbishment of the Garlinge Primary School swimming pool to provide changing facilities, toilets, heating, lighting and alterations to make the building more accessible. The intention is then to make the swimming pool available for community use;
- Allow community access to Garlinge Primary School's existing junior football pitch (U14); and
- Provide of a new pedestrian link within the existing fence between Garlinge Primary School's playing field and the Local Authority's playing fields to the south of the school.

23. It is noted that the community use of both Garlinge Primary School's swimming pool and junior football pitch would be subject to a Community Use Agreement which would need to be agreed between the applicant, Sport England and the County Planning Authority.

Planning Policy

24. 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 Historic Environment), PPS9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation), PPG13 (Transport), PPG17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation) and PPS23 (Planning and Pollution Control).

(ii) The adopted 2006 **Thanet District Local Plan:**

Policy TR12 Substantial development generating travel demand will be required to provide convenient and secure cycle parking and changing facilities.

Policy TR15 Development proposals likely to generate significant travel demand and/or traffic movement will be required to demonstrate, through Green Travel Plans, specific measures to encourage and facilitate the use of walking, cycling and public transport in preference to private car travel.

Policy TR16 Proposals for development will be required to make satisfactory provision for the parking of vehicles (including, where appropriate, service vehicles).

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- Policy D1** All new development is required to provide high quality and inclusive design, sustainability, layout and materials.
- Policy D2** Development proposals will be well landscaped and maximise the nature conservation opportunities wherever possible.
- Policy HE12** Archaeology sites will be preserved and protected.
- Policy SR12** Built development will not be permitted on playing fields if it would be detrimental to the character of the area. Moreover, no development will be permitted on land last used as playing field unless there are exceptional circumstances, including, amongst others: the replacement of playing field of a similar or better standard in a suitable location and equivalent to or better management regimes; or if the proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to sport and recreation as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field. [Note that the five exception criteria in Policy SR12 reflect those set out in PPG17 as discussed in paragraph (37) below].
- Policy CC1** Within the countryside, new development will not be permitted unless there is a need for the development that overrides the need to protect the countryside.
- Policy CC2** On the Central Chalk Plateau care should be taken to avoid skyline intrusion and the loss or interruption of long views of the coast and the sea.
- Policy CF1** Planning permission will be granted for new community facilities if the proposals are not contrary to other Local Plan policies and the community use and location are demonstrated as acceptable.

Consultations

25. **Thanet District Council:** object to the application on the following grounds:

“The site lies outside of the identified urban confines, where Thanet Local Plan Policy CC1 applies. There is a presumption against development in the countryside, unless there is a need for the development that overrides the need to protect the countryside. The design and access statement includes little information about the need for the development and does not justify why the development needs to be in the proposed location. The site is also within the Central Chalk Plateau Landscape Character Area, where Thanet Local Plan Policy CC2 applies.

The site is a playing field for Garlinge Primary School and as such Thanet Local Plan Policy SR12 applies. There is a presumption against the development of playing fields. Whilst there are a set of five exceptions to Policy SR12, there is concern that the applicant has not adequately demonstrated that the development would meet any of these criteria.

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For the above reasons, the Council is concerned that the applicant has not submitted sufficient information to overcome principle policy considerations. Additionally, the Council has some concern over the potential noise and disturbance impacts on neighbouring residents”.

It should be noted that additional information was provided to Thanet District Council relating to the loss of playing field land (including details of the package of mitigation measures put forward by the applicant, as set out in paragraph 22, which has resulted in Sport England raising no objection to the proposed development) and justification for the development in terms of Local Plan Policies CC1 and CC2. The Council has not commented on the further information provided to date. Any additional views received prior to the Committee Meeting will be reported verbally to Members.

26. **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; the closure of the existing access, removal of the existing vehicle crossing and reinstatement of the footway; completion and maintenance of the new vehicular site entrance; and the provision, implementation and on-going review of a site Travel Plan.
27. **Sport England:** raises no objections to the application on the basis of the following measures being implemented prior to the first occupation of the MASH building, to mitigate the impact on the existing Garlinge Primary School playing field:
- Pitch improvements, including ground levelling, removal of concrete foundations and improvements to drainage on part of Thanet District Council’s sports ground (adjacent to the school site) to provide a junior football pitch (U14);
 - Upgrade and refurbishment of the Garlinge Primary School swimming pool to provide changing facilities and toilets, heating and lighting and alterations to make the building accessible. The pool to then be made available for community use;
 - Community access to Garlinge Primary School’s junior football pitch (U14); and
 - Provision of a new link within the existing fence between Garlinge Primary School’s playing field and the Local Authority’s playing fields to the south of the school.
- Furthermore, Sport England request that a condition requiring a Community Use Scheme be imposed on any forthcoming planning consent. Such Scheme should cover community use arrangements for the Primary School playing field and the refurbished swimming pool facility.
28. **Environment Agency:** raises no objections to the application subject to the imposition of conditions to cover contamination and surface water drainage.
29. **County Council’s Archaeological Advisor:** notes that the site lies in an area of very high archaeological potential. In view of this it is advised that a programme of archaeological evaluation, together with any appropriate safeguarding, be added to any forthcoming consent.
30. **County Council’s Biodiversity Officer:** is satisfied that the Ecological Scoping Report has adequately assess the ecological value of the site and agree that there appears minimal potential for the development proposals to impact protected species. Given the current low ecological value of the site, there are plenty of opportunities that could be sought to achieve a net biodiversity gain on the site, thereby meeting the enhancement principles of PPS9 and gaining credit towards BREEAM certification.

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31. **Kent Police Architectural Liaison Officer:** no comments received to date. Any comments received prior to the Committee Meeting will be shared with Members verbally.
32. **EDF Energy:** has raised no objections to the proposals.

Local Member

33. The local County Member, Mr. R. Burgess, was notified of the application on the 8 March 2010.

Publicity

34. The application was publicised by the posting of two sites notices at the site boundary with Westfield Road, a newspaper advertisement in the KM Thanet Extra, and the individual notification of 23 residential properties.

Representations

35. 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: -
 - Currently there is a lot of traffic along Westfield Road due to the existence of Garlinge Primary School at one end and Hartsdown Technology College at the other. The traffic regularly causes parking problems and traffic hold-ups, and with the addition of this establishment this will only be exacerbated. There is in addition to this the concern for safety of the many children who walk and cycle to and from both schools, who would be placed further at risk by the lack of proper provision and the increase in parked cars and traffic;
 - Cannot see the majority of people using the bus to access this site especially if it is for disabled children – cars will be the transport used;
 - Concerns over the extra noise caused by drop off and picking up throughout the day;
 - The garden to our property backs onto the school field and whilst this proposal would not actually mean building behind our property we are concerned that this will pave the way for further expansion into the school field in the future. The development would lead to an increase in people walking between the MASH site and the main school buildings, leading to increased noise at our boundary;
 - It was our understanding that the multi agency hub was to be incorporated into the new Hartsdown Technology College buildings – why then is it necessary to build one attached to Garlinge School as well?
 - Concerned about overall security on the existing school field. Many residents who back onto the field have suffered acts of vandalism due to children accessing the field and using it as a playground. The addition of this application raises further concerns in this area – if the application site has access to the field then it would become a free for all and anyone who is bored will continue to vandalise property nearby with little concern to being called account for it;
 - This is supposed to be a residential area. It is extremely busy already and will be so built up that there will be no green space in this road at all;
 - Rubbish along Westfield Road is an existing problem, with a lack of rubbish bins provided;
 - Construction operations would be long, very noisy and disruptive to the area.

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DiscussionIntroduction

36. The application seeks planning permission for the construction of a Multi Agency Specialist Hub (MASH) for disabled children together with associated access roads and car parking at land annexed from Garlinge Primary School and Nursery, Westfield Road, Margate. The application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of the two residential objections received (as outlined in paragraph 35). In considering this proposal, regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies and National Planning Policy Guidance as outlined in paragraph (24). 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 general conformity of the proposals against Local Plan policies relating to landscape character and urban confines;
 - the impact of the proposals on local sporting provision;
 - the impact of the proposals on nearby residential amenity;
 - the impact of the proposals on the local highway network;
 - the impact of the proposals on ecological and archaeological interests; and
 - any other issues arising from consultation and publicity.

Landscape Character and Urban Confines issues

37. Members will note that as outlined in the site description section of this report, the application site is defined by Local Plan Policy CC1 as being within land outside of the identified urban confines. Furthermore the land is also identified as falling within an area designated as a Chalk Plateau Landscape Character Area (Local Plan Policy CC2), characterised by a generally flat or gently undulating landscape with extensive, unenclosed fields under intensive arable cultivation.
38. Local Plan Policy CC1 states that *'development within the countryside will not be permitted unless there is a need for the development that overrides the need to protect the countryside'*. Whilst I recognise the importance of protecting the countryside from inappropriate development, and particularly as the case is here, protecting important green spaces within urban environments from such development, I have to weigh up the community benefit and need for the development in this particular locality. The site in question is no longer a wholly contiguous part of the wider undeveloped landscape, since it is surrounded by housing development on three sides (see plan on page D4.3), and it therefore makes very little contribution to the open area beyond. Whilst I accept that the retention of green space within developed areas is important, the amenity value here is very localised given the narrow public road frontage and its physical relationship with the open countryside beyond which has already been lost through its separation. Since there is a demonstratable need for wider and improved community services, I consider that there is a good case for setting aside the policy presumption (as set out by the District Council in paragraph 25) against development in this particular case on the grounds of an overriding need.

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39. Having inspected the site on several occasions and considered the impact of the proposals in terms of Local Plan Policy CC2, which highlights the care which should be taken in terms of avoiding skyline intrusion and the loss or interruption of long distance views to the coast and the sea within the Chalk Plateau Landscape Character Area, I consider that the proposed development does not conflict with the general thrust of this policy. In particular, the application site itself does not currently benefit from any long-distance views towards the coast and the proposed building would be a part single and part two-storey construction, which in my opinion would be in keeping with the heights of the two storey residential dwellings which surround the application site on virtually all sides. For information, please see Photograph 1 (below). For these reasons I do not consider the proposed development to conflict with the general thrust of Local Plan Policy CC2. It should also be noted that Landscape Character Areas are not in themselves zones for special protection, but rather are distinctive components within the wider mosaic of the landscape / townscape of the County, irrespective of their comparative quality.

Photograph 1: View of MASH development site road frontage with Westfield Road



(Photograph taken March 2010)

40. On balance, I consider that there is sufficient justification for the provision of the new wider and improved community facilities within the locality to outweigh any presumption against the development of this site in policy terms, notably against Local Plan Policies CC1 and CC2.

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Impact on local sporting provision

41. It is noted that the proposed development is located on land covering an area of some 0.65ha which is capable of forming, and has been used in the past as, a playing field. In this instance national planning policy, as set out in PPG 17, recognises the importance of the retention of playing field stock in terms of its social, health and cultural importance and makes clear that such land should not be built upon unless one of the following exception criteria are met. The exceptions detailed in National planning policy are as follows: *“(i) the proposed development is ancillary to the use of the site as a playing field and does not adversely affect the quantity or quality of pitches and their use; (ii) the proposed development only affects land which is incapable of forming a playing pitch; (iii) the playing field that would be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced by a playing field or fields of equivalent or better quantity and quality and in a suitable location; or (iv) the proposed development is for an outdoor or indoor sports facility of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the loss of the playing field”.*
42. National planning policy governing the protection of playing fields is also reflected within the Adopted Thanet District Local Plan through Policy SR12. This policy states that built development will not be permitted on land last used as playing field unless one of the exception criteria, as set out in national planning policy, is met. Furthermore, Policy SR12 states that built development will not be permitted on playing fields if it would be detrimental to the character of the area. As can be seen from paragraphs (22) and (23) above the application has been extensively discussed during the consultation period with Sport England regarding potential concerns over the loss of land capable of forming, and land previously used as, a playing field. Members will note that the package of mitigation measures put forward by the applicant, as detailed in paragraph (22) to compensate for the loss of playing field, has in this instance been sufficient to outweigh a statutory objection to the proposed development by Sport England. Instead, Sport England consider that the proposed development, subject to the mitigation measures being secured as detailed in paragraph (22), meets with two of its policy exceptions, namely: that *“the playing field which would be lost as a result of the proposed development, would be replaced by a playing field of an equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements”* and that *“the proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field”*. Therefore, as detailed in paragraph (27) above it is noted that Sport England does not raise an objection to this application. They do however seek to ensure that a Community Use Agreement be a pre-requisite requirement on any planning permission to control details of community access to, and the use of, the existing School’s junior playing field and swimming pool.
43. I note that Local Plan Policy SR12 reflects the same five exception criteria as reflected by both National planning policy (in PPG17) and Sport England’s Adopted Playing Fields Policy. On the basis of the mitigation measures proposed by the applicant, and the lack of objection from Sport England, I am satisfied that the proposed development conforms to National sporting policy. In respect of Local Plan Policy SR12 I note that one further requirement is placed within this policy to the effect that *‘built development will not be permitted on playing fields if it would be detrimental to the character of the area’*. Arguably any form of built development on the application site would affect the character of the local area, particularly that along Westfield Road. At present the application site, although not publically accessible, forms a pleasant green space along Westfield Road and breaks up existing residential development blocks. However, the application site itself forms a sensible ‘infill’ development plot of land which arguably

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may otherwise be used for housing development in the future. It is noted that as part of the emerging Thanet District Local Development Framework the Council has been requesting that sites to be put forward for future development, for which the application site has been mooted as potential residential infill development. In my opinion it may be more beneficial, and have wider benefits to the local area, to have a community facility being developed on this piece of land, as opposed to further infill residential development. Overall however I accept that the development would have an impact on the character of the local area, but do not consider that the impact would be so detrimental such as to warrant refusal of this application in this instance. I therefore conclude that the proposals conform to the general thrust of both national and local sporting planning policy and that the initial policy objection from the District Council can be set aside in this instance.

Amenity considerations

44. There are a number of amenity considerations to take into account when determining this proposal. These include potential overlooking of nearby residential dwellings, consideration of the buildings massing and security concerns as raised by a local resident. Firstly, with regards to the potential for overlooking of surrounding residential dwellings I note that the building has been oriented so as to minimise any direct overlooking. I also note that the overall bulk of the building has been designed such as to appear taller at the front entrance, with the roof sloping away towards residential dwellings to the east and south. As outlined in paragraph (10) above, the south-western arm of the MASH building has been positioned so that the first floor window separation distance to adjacent residential dwellings in Honeysuckle Close would achieve a minimum distance of 21 metres. At the buildings closest point, it would sit approximately 7.3 metres at an oblique angle to the corner of No. 12 Lavender Close and approximately 10 metres to a blank end elevation of No. 11 Lavender Close. There would therefore be no significant overlooking issues with these two properties in Lavender Close. The nearest residential properties with direct rear-facing views onto the application site (No's 9-15 Honeysuckle Close) would be located some 16 metres from the corner of the proposed building and as previously stated a minimum of 21 metres between first floor windows. Whilst I note that the building is quite tight at part of some of its extremities to adjacent residential dwellings, given its orientation and use of varying roof slopes and massing techniques, I am satisfied that the proposal would not give rise to an unacceptable level of overlooking or have a detrimental overbearing impact upon adjacent residential dwellings. In particular, windows have been carefully arranged to avoid any unacceptable lines of sight to neighbouring property windows. Furthermore, the building itself is well set back from the main road frontage which would maintain a relatively open street-scene appearance.
45. Concerns have been raised by a resident relating to security issues generally with the application site and moreover the use of the existing school playing field. It is noted that the application proposes the sub-division of the current school grounds into two separate entities – that of Garlinge Primary School and Nursery (and its associated playing field) and the new MASH building. The proposed MASH development would be secured by new 1.8m high green weld mesh fencing along its boundary with Westfield Road and a 1.8m high timber close-boarded fence along its boundary with the school playing field. Therefore anyone wishing to access either of the two sites would need to do so via their respective entrances, with the exception of a maintenance access being provided from the MASH site onto the school field. Since the site would effectively be in more regular authorised use, security is likely to be less of an issue. Therefore, I am satisfied that the current proposal would not have any detrimental harm to residential

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properties in terms of their boundary security with either the school grounds or the proposed MASH site.

Highway issues

46. Members will note that highway concerns have been raised by several local objectors (as set out in paragraph 35 above) particularly in respect of the cumulative impact of the proposed development together with the existing primary and secondary schools in the locality. As outlined in paragraphs (12) to (16) of this report, the applicant has been able to provide indicative transportation details for the proposed development, although as a concept the new idea of bringing KCC and PCT services together under one roof is to a certain extent an unknown entity. The application relies on the basis that at present all the specialist services which would operate from the proposed centre (such as hearing tests, dentistry, education assessment, etc.) are being provided across the Thanet District and east Kent area, and that the co-location of these services would coordinate various functions and reduce the number of separate child and parent visits required every year.
47. The application details that the potential daily car trip generation for the proposed development could be up to 77 vehicles per day (44 staff and 33 patients), however these movements would be spread across the whole working day with a relatively small number of movements occurring during peak rush hours. That is largely due to the nature of the proposed centre in terms of many of the staff being 'mobile travelling' staff members, working from a number of different centres within the Thanet and east Kent area generally. When these trip generation figures were factored into network capacity statistics on the existing local highway network, it was demonstrated by the applicant that the road network and its junctions could remain to operate within its capacity as a result of the MASH proposal.
48. In terms of on-site parking provision, the application proposes the construction of 14 disabled spaces, 31 car parking spaces, and adequate provision for cycle and motorcycle parking. Similar to the traffic movements during peak hours, it is not intended that all staff and visitors would be on site at any one time, given the nature of the operations being proposed as part of the MASH project. Instead, the applicant is satisfied that on-site parking provision would be adequate to accommodate the proposed centre's needs, thus reducing any potential impact caused by staff and/or visitor parking on the local highway network, particularly along Westfield Road. I consider that this approach is consistent with local planning policies, notably Policies TR12, TR15 and TR16.
49. It is recognised within the application that the vast majority of patients to the centre would be transported to and from the centre by either private car or mini-bus. This is due to the specific needs to the patients using the centre in terms of their physical or mental disabilities. Whilst there is little scope to change patterns of patient travel to/from the centre, the implementation of a site Travel Plan to encourage sustainable means of staff travel to and from the centre has been put forward by the applicant. This approach is supported and such a Travel Plan in my opinion should form a conditional requirement in the event of planning permission being granted.
50. The application details that construction operations are 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. Construction HGV routing has been proposed by the applicant to avoid the use of small residential streets (notably Argyle Avenue, Birlington Gardens and Waverley Road) and

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instead insist upon site access being achieved via the A28 and George V Avenue. I am satisfied that the measures proposed by the applicant in respect of construction activities are appropriate and proportionate to the level of the proposed development in this instance and would seek to reduce, as far as practicable, impact on residential amenity. Furthermore, in order to ensure that construction activities are carried out during appropriate time periods and therefore to safeguard residential amenity, I 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, with no operations taking place on Sundays, Bank and Public Holidays. This is standard practice for similar development proposals.

51. In coming to a view in respect of the impact of the proposed MASH development on the local highway network, I have sought the professional advice of the Divisional Transportation Manager. He considered that subject to the imposition of planning conditions to secure a number of matters (as set out in paragraph 26 above) 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.
52. Based on the professional advice received from the Divisional Transportation Manager in this instance, I am satisfied that the proposed development could be accommodated within this locality without a significant adverse impact on either highway safety or to the detriment of nearby residential dwellings or the existing two schools in close proximity to the site. 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.

Impact on ecological and archaeological interests

53. The application is accompanied by an Ecological Scoping Report which identifies that the site has very low to negligible potential to support protected species on the basis that it comprises entirety of amenity managed grassland. It is noted that the County Council's Biodiversity Officer is satisfied with the conclusions of the Report, but seeks to achieve a net biodiversity gain on the site through the implementation of measures such as the installation of bat boxes, the creation of log piles and native tree, shrub and hedgerow planting. Achieving a net biodiversity gain as part of development proposals is consistent with the objectives of National Planning Policy Statement 9 and would help the applicant gain credits towards final BREEAM building certification. I am therefore satisfied that subject to the inclusion of appropriate biodiversity enhancement measures that the proposed development is consistent with development plan policy.
54. Members will note that the County Council's Archaeological Advisor has highlighted that the development site is located in an area of very high archaeological potential. In view of this he advises that a programme of prior archaeological evaluation takes place, together with any appropriate safeguarding measures being put in place as appropriate. I am satisfied that this approach is consistent with the objectives of PPS5 and Local Plan Policy HE12 and therefore recommends that such condition be placed on any planning consent.

Other issues arising from consultation and publicity

55. Concerns have been expressed by a local resident regarding the setting of a principle in terms of allowing built development on a school playing field. In particular, the concern lies with the principle of further development, over and above the MASH proposal, being

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built on the existing Garlinge Primary School playing field. The arguments regarding the principle of allowing buildings on land capable of forming, or land currently being used or having previously been used as playing field are well expressed throughout this report. The current position of planning policy is such as to prevent such development except in exceptional circumstances which only include those set out in paragraph (41) above. In the case of the concerns which have been raised here, although total reassurance cannot be offered regarding the possibility of building on the existing school playing field, it would be extremely unlikely that such proposal would either be allowed or would occur unless the building was intended to provide either indoor or outdoor sports provision. By allowing this development on the basis of exceptional circumstances does not, in my view, set any precedent for building on school playing fields in other localities. As members will be aware precedent is not a material planning consideration and instead each individual application would be treated on its own merits in light of current development plan policy applicable at that time.

56. An issue was raised regarding the incorporation of the MASH proposals within the planned rebuilding of Hartsdown Technology College under the Government's Building Schools for the Future Programme. Whilst this concept was initially investigated, it became apparent that adequate land was not available within the Technology College site to house a re-built school as well as the MASH proposals. Therefore, the idea of pursuing this development on the Technology College site was not pursued, but instead the concept of developing on the current site was pursued to the planning application stage. Members will also be aware that the planned re-development of many secondary schools under the former Government's BSF Programme, such as Hartsdown Technology College, has been put on hold as a result of the recent change in Government and their associated Spending Review, so that alternative approaches are unlikely to be an option anyway.
57. I note that Local Plan Policy D2 requires all new developments to be well landscaped and to maximise the nature conservation interests wherever possible. To this effect I consider that the proposed new MASH development should be accompanied by an appropriate native landscape planting scheme to help soften the development into the local environment. At the application stage indicative details have been provided, and therefore I suggest that a condition be placed on any future planning consent to ensure the submission and agreement of an appropriate native landscaping scheme with the County Planning Authority which would then be implemented within the first planting season following the completion of construction activities.
58. I note that Local Plan Policy D1 requires all new development to provide high quality and inclusive design with a suitable palette of external materials. As detailed in paragraph (20) above, the application sets out an indicative palette of external materials incorporating red stock brick, through colour render panels and hardwood timber cladding. I consider that these materials are acceptable for this locality, however I recommend that the exact details of external materials be secured for later agreement through planning condition in the event of permission being granted.

Conclusion

59. The proposal seeks to provide a new purpose built single and part two-storey community building for use as Multi Agency Specialist Hub (MASH) for disabled children together with associated access roads and car parking at land annexed from Garlinge Primary School and Nursery. The centre would be operated by KCC and the local PCT and would incorporate a number of health, education and social service roles all within one single building. Having fully considered the potential environmental, highway,

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amenity and sporting impacts of the proposals, together with the Policy concerns raised by the District Council in this instance, I am satisfied that there are no overriding grounds for objection to the proposed development. I consider that subject to the provision of the mitigation measures put forward by the applicant to compensate for the loss of playing field land, that the development proposals comply with both national and local sporting planning policy. Furthermore, I consider that amenity and highway concerns, as expressed by local residents, have been fully considered throughout the report and note that the Divisional Transportation Manager raised no objections to the proposals in terms of local capacity, highway safety or parking provision issues. For the reasons set out and discussed throughout this report, I therefore recommend accordingly.

Recommendation

60. 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;
- Sport England compensatory measures including: (i) *provision of replacement U14 junior football pitch within Garlinge Recreation Ground to an agreed specification;* (ii) *upgrade and refurbishment of Garlinge Primary School swimming pool and make available for community use;* (iii) *provision of community access to Garlinge Primary School's existing U14 junior football pitch;* and (iv) *provision of a new pedestrian link between Garlinge Primary School and Garlinge Recreation Ground, prior to the first occupation of the building;*
- Community Use Agreement to cover the usage of the refurbished swimming pool and Garlinge Primary School junior football pitch;
- scheme to ensure that new playing fields are provided to an acceptable quality (including appropriate drainage where necessary);
- external materials to be agreed;
- submission of 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;
- completion of new vehicular access prior to first occupation of the building and full removal of existing vehicle crossing and re-instatement of pedestrian footway;
- submission of a Travel Plan (including an implementation programme) prior to the first occupation of the building and on-going monitoring and review thereafter;
- implementation of biodiversity enhancement measures;
- external lighting to be agreed;
- hours of construction limited;
- programme of archaeological evaluation prior to commencement of development and the implementation of any appropriate safeguarding measures (if required);
- land contamination study to be undertaken and verification report; and
- surface water drainage measures to be agreed.

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