

Proposed Floodlit Synthetic Turf Pitch at Tonbridge Grammar School –TM/10/345

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 12 October 2010.

Application by Tonbridge Grammar School and Kent County Council Children, Families, Health & Education for construction of a floodlit synthetic turf pitch, including fencing, on School playing fields at Tonbridge Grammar School, Deakin Leas, Tonbridge - TW/10/345

Recommendation: that permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr G. Horne & Mr C. Smith

Classification: Unrestricted

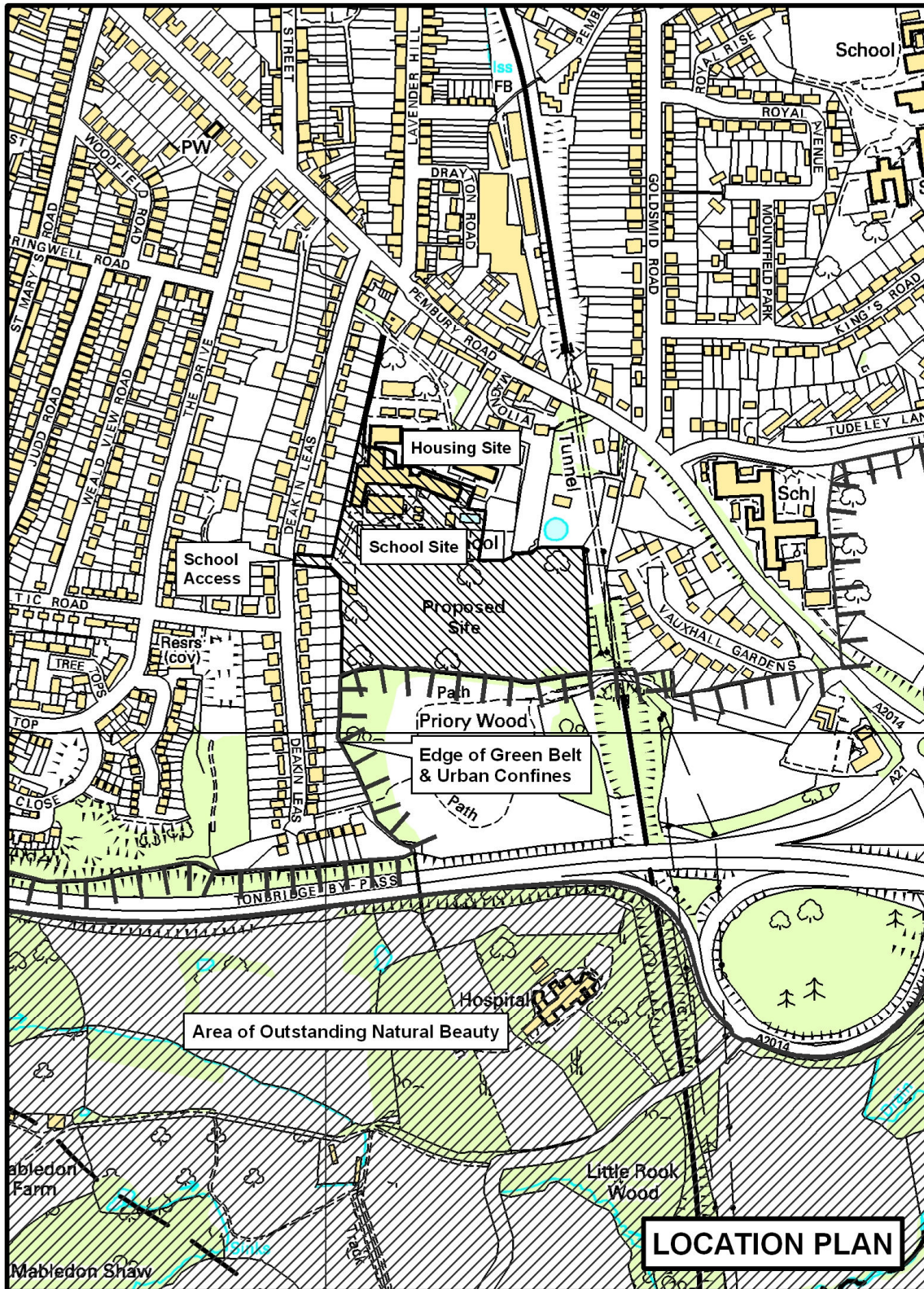
Site

1. Tonbridge Grammar School is a selective state school with 1069 pupils, of which 315 are in the sixth form, including 41 boys. The school is located to the south of Tonbridge town centre, to the south of Pembury Road, to the west of Vauxhall Gardens, and to the east of Deakin Leas, within a predominantly residential area. The site is accessed via Deakin Leas, and the school has recently been re-developed with a newly completed two and three-storey teaching and administration block providing 39 classrooms, staff offices, reception, administration and medical rooms, and a sixth form common room with ancillary facilities. The eastern end of the new building also houses a new sports hall, dance and drama rooms together with changing and other ancillary facilities. As a part of this redevelopment, the northern part of the school site was sold off for housing development, moving built development at the site further south. The southern half of the site, as now laid out, remains as playing field, which is identified in the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan as an area of Important Green Space (the whole school site is, however, within the urban area confines). The housing in Deakin Leas is identified in the Local Plan as being within a Low Density Residential Area. To the south of the site lies a former Area of Local Landscape Importance (Local Plan Policy not saved). The Green Belt boundary also lies to the south of the site, and land beyond the Tonbridge Bypass is also designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The application site lies at the centre of the playing field to the south of the new school buildings. *A site location plan is attached.*

Proposal

2. This application has been submitted by Kent County Council Children, Families, Health and Education, and Tonbridge Grammar School and proposes the construction of a floodlit synthetic turf pitch, including fencing, on the school playing fields. The pitch area, enclosed by fencing, would be 101.4 metres by 63 metres, which includes safe run off distances. There would also be a short run-off extension for sprinting events on the north side of the pitch. The playing surface would be green artificial grass with an additional run off area inside the fence line. The pitch fencing would be 3 metres high in the main, although the height would increase to 4.5m at each end for 20 metres behind the goal positions. The fencing is proposed to be deep green powder coated mesh.

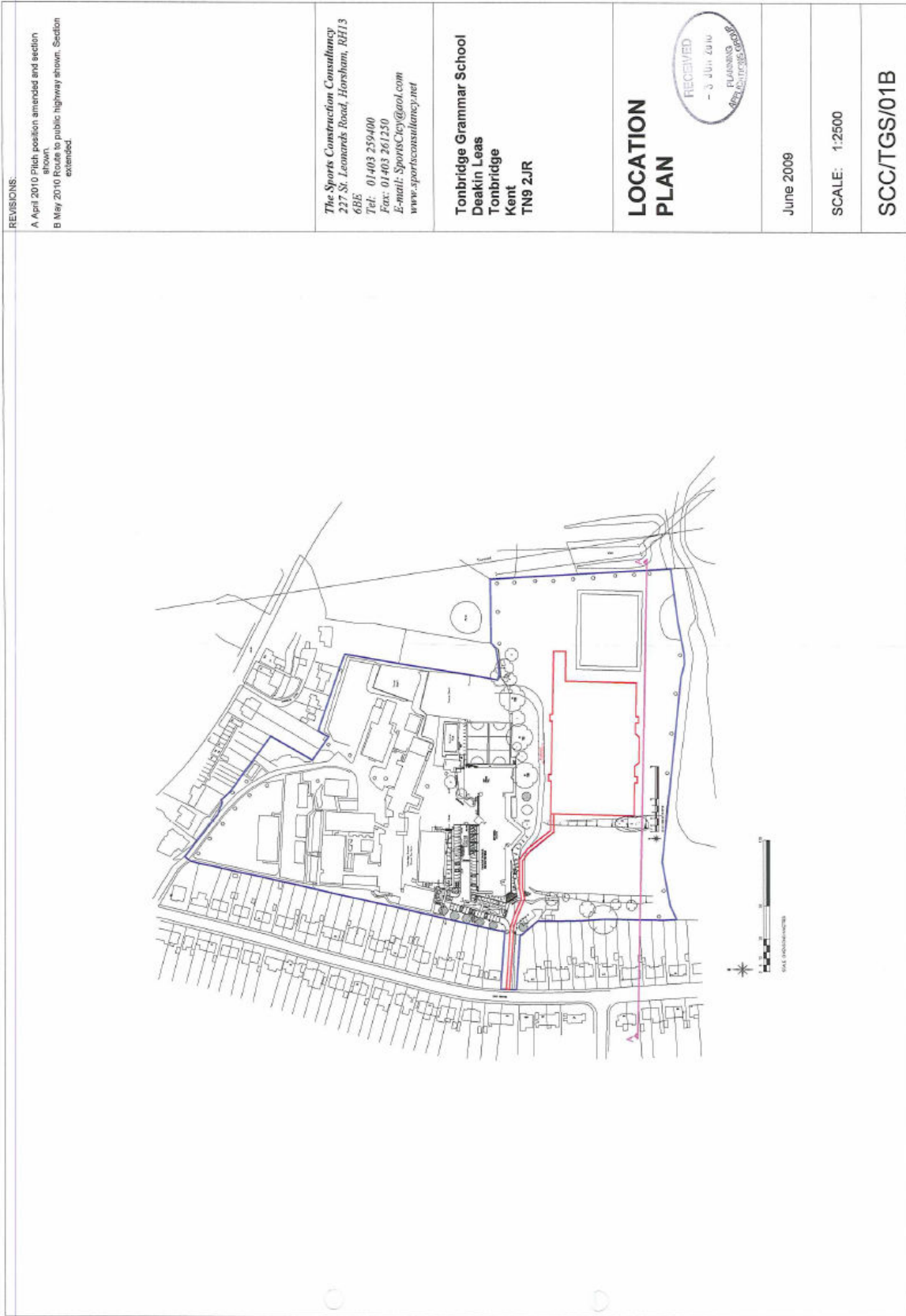
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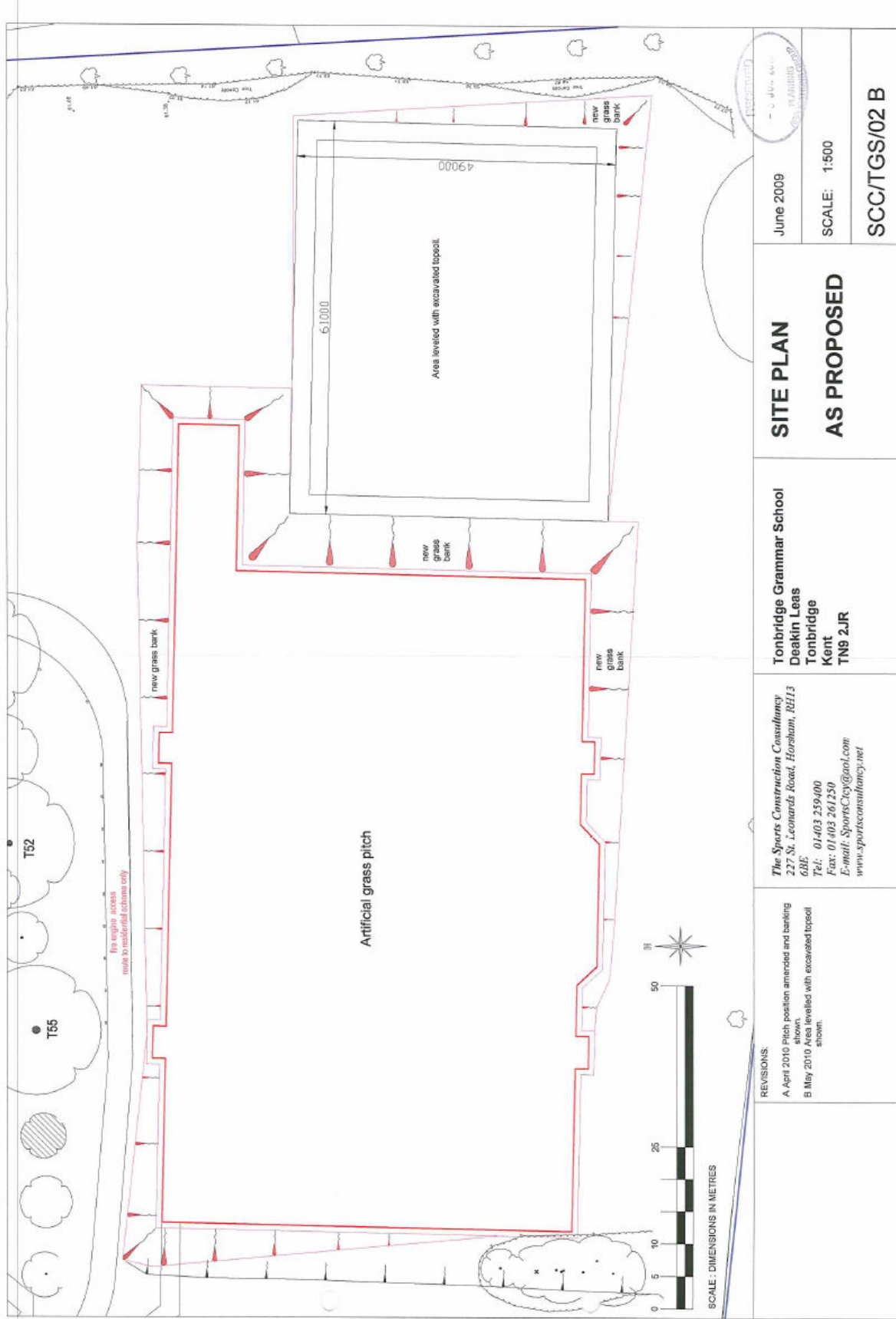
LOCATION PLAN

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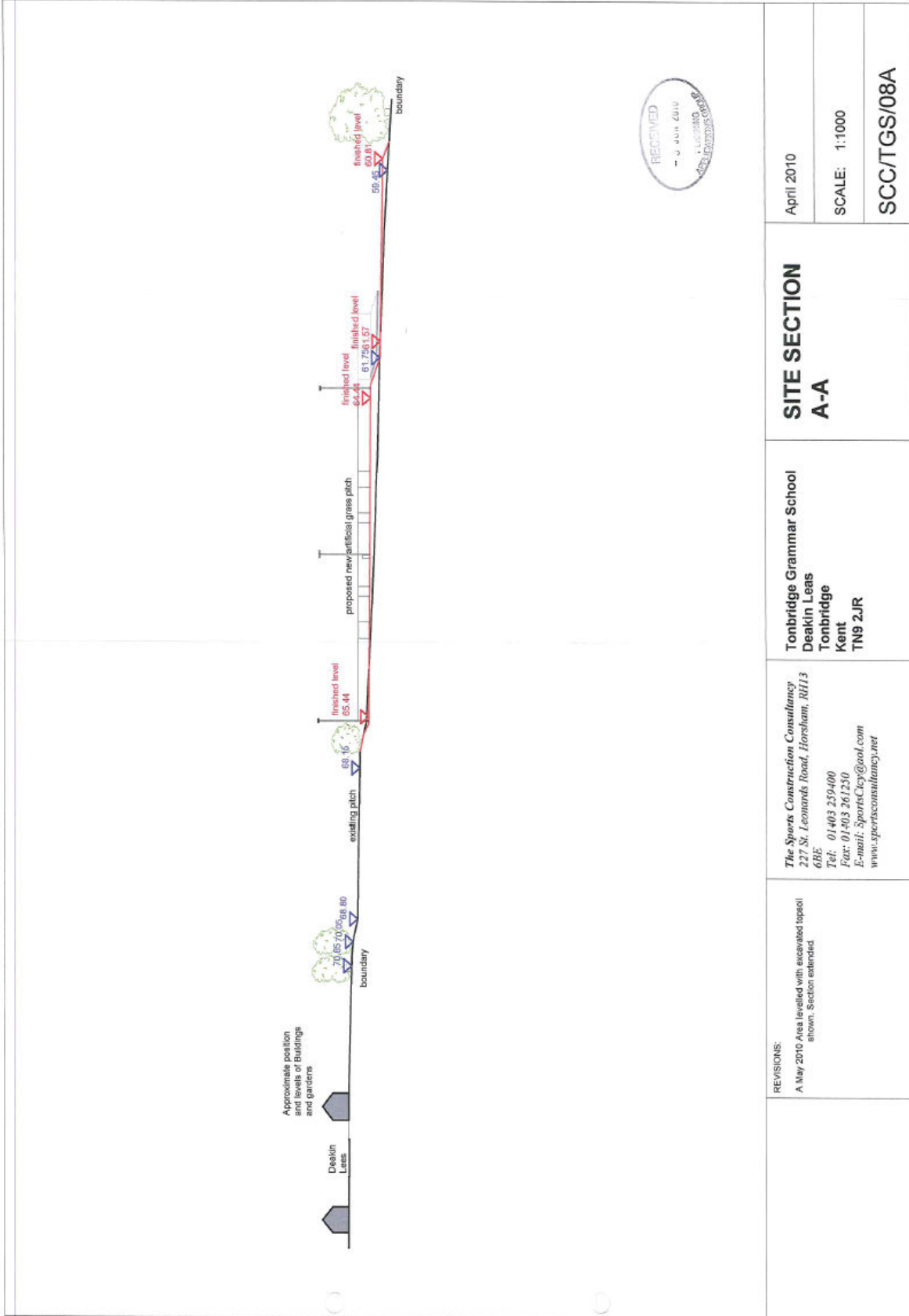
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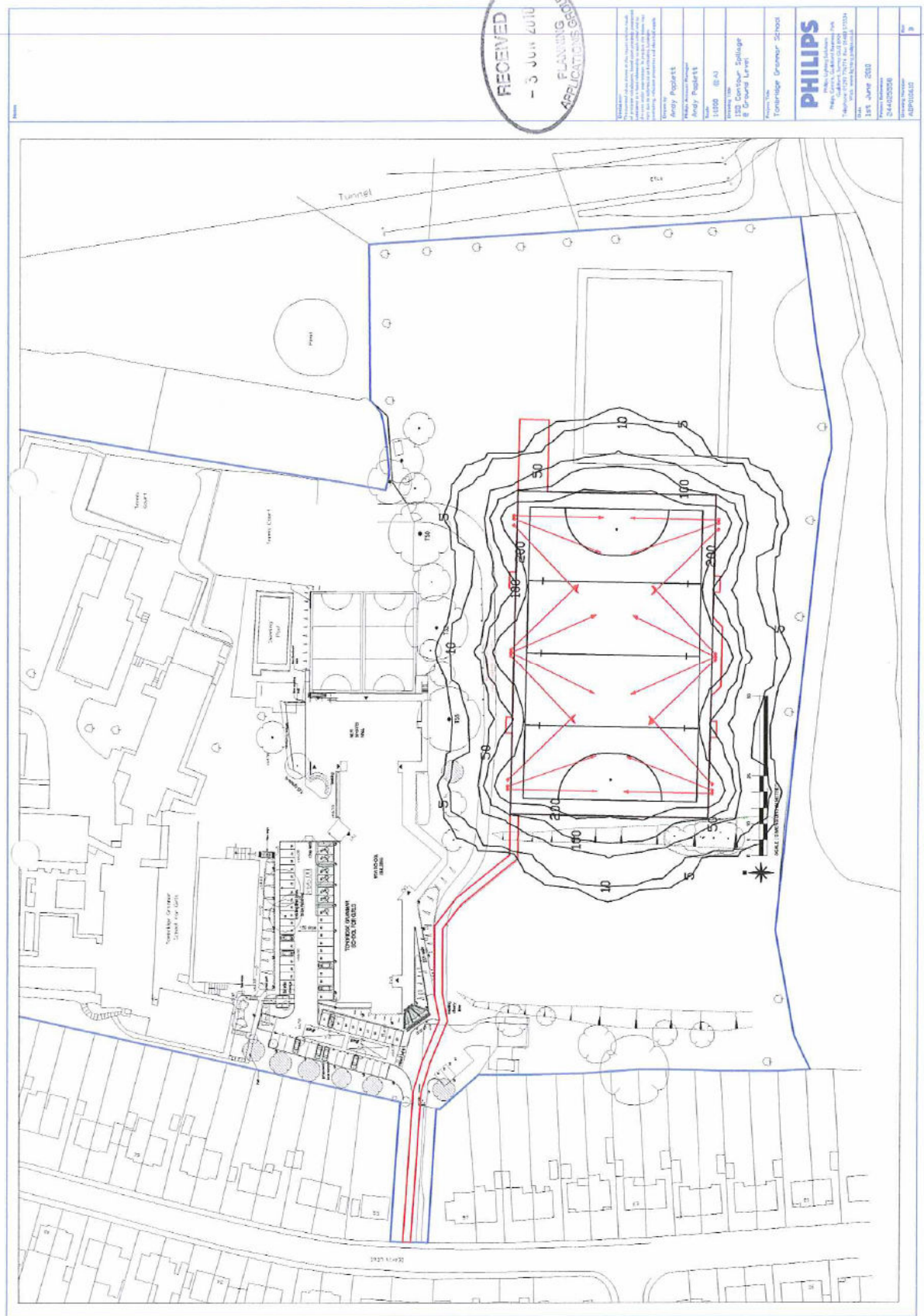


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<p>REVISIONS: A May 2010 Area levelled with excavated topsoil shown. Section extended.</p>	<p><i>The Sports Construction Consultancy</i> 227 St. Leonards Road, Horsham, RH12 3 6BE Tel: 01403 259400 Fax: 01403 261250 E-mail: SportsCcy@aol.com www.sportsconsultancy.net</p>	<p>Tonbridge Grammar School Deakin Leas Tonbridge Kent TN9 2JR</p>	<p>SITE SECTION A-A</p>	<p>April 2010 SCALE: 1:1000 SCC/TGS/08A</p>
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<p>Project Name: Tonbridge Grammar School</p>	<p>Date: 24/02/2010</p>
<p>Client: Tonbridge Grammar School</p>	<p>Project No: 24/02/2010</p>
<p>Site: 132 Canton - Spillage @ Ground Level</p>	<p>Scale: 1:200</p>
<p>Author: Henry Apperett</p>	<p>Check: Henry Apperett</p>
<p>Drawn: Henry Apperett</p>	<p>Scale: 1:200</p>

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3. The pitch would be located within the centre of the playing fields where they are most level and the amount of ground re-shaping required would be minimal. The pitch would be graded to fit as closely as possible with existing ground levels but meeting England Hockey recommendations for sport. To minimise the transportation of spoil from the site, it is proposed to retain topsoil on site and use it to improve the levels of the existing pitch in the south east corner of the playing fields. The natural ground levels mean that, when the final gradients are produced, the pitch would be lower at the western end when compared to properties in Deakin Leas. The proposed pitch location is also furthest from all site boundaries, and close to the new sports hall and changing facilities.
4. The pitch would be used primarily in the winter for school hockey and also some football. In summer months the pitch could be used as twelve tennis courts, as well as incorporating an athletics sprint strip. Selective and limited community use would also be encouraged, accommodated and managed by the School. The heavy underlying clay means that the existing turf pitches get waterlogged in winter months, resulting in them being out of use for extended periods of time. The applicant advises that the proposed synthetic pitch would improve the School's curriculum provision. In addition, the applicant advises that inter-school hockey matches are always played on artificial surfaces at other locations, meaning that the School currently has to travel for all matches. The provision of a synthetic pitch on site would remove this current requirement to travel.
5. The pitch is proposed to be lit with 20 luminaires, mounted on six 15 metre columns, one in each corner of the pitch and one on each side of the centre line. The pitch would be lit to a recognised standard for hockey, 350 lux. Switching would also allow a reduced level of 200 lux for large ball sports, minimising power consumption as well as the necessary level of luminance. The 15 metre high columns would be self coloured alloy and the use of modern asymmetric flat glass lighting units would direct lighting downwards, and limit light spread.
6. There are some mature Oak trees adjacent to the school buildings to the north of the pitch location. The applicant advises that these are to remain in place and that the positioning of the pitch is planned in such a way that construction would not extend into the root protection areas of these trees. To the south east of the proposed pitch lies an area of woodland which, the applicant advises, is recorded in the National Inventory of Woodland and Trees, but the closest trees are approximately 40 metres away from the proposed pitch. All trees in close proximity of the proposed development would be protected in accordance with BS5837:2005 – Trees in Relation to Construction. Planting around the pitch is not proposed as the applicant considers that this would alter the general character of the playing fields and would also create difficulties with root growth under the pitch.
7. When the application was submitted the applicant proposed that the pitch would be available for use between the hours of 06.30 to 22.00 Monday to Friday and 09.00 to 18.00 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. However, during the determination of this application the applicant has reduced these hours to 08.30 to 20.00 Monday to Friday and 09.00 to 18.00 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.
8. The applicant advises that the site is accessible via public transport links running along Pembury Road. The school also has a new car park containing 70 parking spaces, which would be available for use in association with this development. 35 secure cycle parking spaces are also available at the site.

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The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement, Supporting Statement, Waste Management Statement, Site Waste Management Plan, Tree Survey, Noise Assessment and Lighting Specification.

Reduced drawings showing the site layout and sections are attached.

Planning Policy

9. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of the application:

(i) **Planning Policy Guidance and Statements:**

PPS1	Delivering Sustainable Development
PPG2	Greenbelt
PPS7	Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPG13	Transport
PPG17	Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation
PPS23	Planning and Pollution Control
PPG24	Planning and Noise

(ii) The adopted 1998 **Tonbridge and Malling Borough Local Plan:**

Policy P4/9	Seeks to protect the character and amenity of established Low Density Residential Areas.
Policy P4/10	States that permission will not be given for any development within or adjoining Important Green Spaces, unless the need for the development is overriding and the proposals would not adversely affect the contribution which the spaces make to the character and quality of townscape. Where development may exceptionally be justified which results in the loss of part of an Important Green Space, the Borough will, where practicable, require enhancements to the retained area to compensate for the loss.

(iii) **Tonbridge & Malling Core Strategy:** Adopted 2007:

Policy CP1 –	Sustainable Development
Policy CP2 –	Sustainable Transport
Policy CP3 –	Metropolitan Green Belt
Policy CP7 –	Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy CP11 –	Urban Areas
Policy CP24 –	Achieving a High Quality Environment
Policy CP25 –	Mitigation of Development Impacts
Policy CP26 –	Safeguarding of Community Services and Transport

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Members should note that the South East Plan has been revoked and no longer forms part of the Development Plan.

Consultations

10. **Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council** raises strong objection to the application, unless the following issues are addressed:

- KCC be satisfied that proposed parking and access arrangements are technically acceptable and that the school parking facilities are made available to accommodate the community use of the pitch, particularly in light of the local circumstances;
- The floodlights shall be angled to ensure the sports pitch only is illuminated and to avoid light spill outside the site;
- At no time shall the lighting levels exceed those shown on the submitted lighting assessment;
- TMBC considers it essential that any illumination is linked to a mechanism to limit illumination only during hours of actual use and to be timed to cut off automatically at 20.00 hours Monday to Friday, 18.00 hours on Saturdays and Sundays.
- The site should be vacated by 20.30 hours Monday to Friday and 18.30 hours on Saturdays and Sundays at the latest.
- The type and extent of the community use shall be clarified and that appropriate agreements are in place to manage the use outside of school hours;
- Screening should be provided to the residential boundaries;
- Possible site contamination condition to include:
 - a) If during development work, site significant deposits of made ground or indicators of potential contamination are discovered, the work shall cease immediately, and an investigation/remediation strategy shall be agreed with the Local Planning Authority and implemented by the developer;
 - b) Any soils and other materials taken for disposal should be in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Management Duty of Care Regulations. Any soil brought onsite should be clean and a soil chemical analysis shall be provided to verify imported soils are suitable for the proposed end use;
 - c) A closure report shall be submitted by the developer delineating (a) and (b) above and other relevant issues and responses such as any pollution incident during the development.
- Assurance that the facility is not available for community use when there is a function of activity at the school;
- The pitch shall not be illuminated when not in use.

Area Transportation Manager has no objection to the proposal in respect of highway matters. Informatives are suggested with regard to construction works.

Environment Agency has no objection to the proposal but advises that, according to their records, the site is adjacent to an historic landfill site.

The County Council's Landscape Advisor comments as follows:

"Whilst lighting would be used intermittently and would not spill directly onto adjacent residents along Deakin Leas, which would help to reduce lighting impacts, I do not consider that the slight amendment to the positioning of the pitch would lessen my initial concerns. I summarise my ongoing concerns as follows:

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- I am concerned that the necessary topographical changes, along with the synthetic surface and tall fencing and flood lighting columns, would not be entirely appropriate to the existing landscape character of the site and within the foreground of the nationally designated High Weald AONB. The proposals indicate relatively major earthworks, which would change the character of the existing landform quite significantly.
- The proposals would be particularly detrimental in elevated views from housing along Deakin Leas which are currently largely rural and uninterrupted.

In addition to these concerns, it is not clear how the proposals relate to existing trees and their root protection zones. I suggest that the applicant provides a drawing which illustrates the proposals in relation to the location of existing trees, their root protection zone and the proposed location of tree protective fencing. I also query whether any additional planting is proposed at all. Whilst I appreciate the potential difficulties with root growth under the pitch, and that planting would do little to screen the proposals from elevated views along Deakin Leas, I suggest that planting is proposed where possible if the proposals would incur any existing vegetation removal.”

The County Council’s Noise Advisor comments as follows:

“The Noise Assessment compares predicted noise levels from a typical sports game against existing noise levels established at nearby sensitive receptors. Predicted noise levels have been provided from an adult hockey match which is largely dominated by the players’ voices. This source is considered to be representative of the likely worst case noise levels emanating from the proposed sports pitch. In fact given the likely use of the proposed sports pitch – mainly for the use of school children – it is likely that the source term noise levels will be lower than those provided.

When compared against existing noise levels at nearby residential premises it is noted that an increase in ambient noise less than 3 dB(A) is predicted at ground floor level for all proposed hours of use for the sports pitch. The exception is at the closest of the Deakin Leas properties on weekdays between 19:00 – 20:30 hours where an increase in ambient noise of 3 dB is predicted.

It shall be noted that we would normally recommend the provision of mitigation measures where the introduction of a noise source results in an increase in ambient noise level of 3 dB or greater. However, considering that an increase of 3 dB is predicted only for a discrete period and, given that the source term noise levels are likely to be lower than those provided, I would consider the use of the sports pitch is unlikely to result in adverse effect.

In considering the above and on the basis that the pitches are restricted to the hours set out in the Noise Assessment (08:30 – 20:30 hours Monday to Friday and 09:00 – 18:00 hours on weekends) I have no objections to the proposed sports pitch on noise grounds.”

The County Council’s Lighting Advisor confirms that the lighting scheme submitted is acceptable in terms of its minimal visual impact on surrounding residencies. Whilst this would be reduced further with a reduction in the lighting level to the British and European Standard, the original submission still complies with the requirements of the

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Institute of Lighting Engineers' Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light. However, as the British Standard specifies a minimum average level of 200 lux, the Lighting Advisor does not see why it is necessary to design to twice that figure with the increased energy and carbon use, not to mention the financial costs.

Sport England raises no objection to the application, subject to the imposition of conditions. Whilst Sport England would prefer for the floodlights to be available later in the evening (until 10pm), it is understood that this is not always possible in some instances. Conditions of consent are required to cover the following matters:

1. playing pitch construction and layout;
2. hours of use (until 8pm weekdays and until 7pm on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays); and
3. a Community Use Agreement;

Local Member

11. The local County Members, Mr G. Horne and Mr C. Smith, were notified of the application on the 10 February 2010.

Publicity

12. The application was publicised by an advertisement in a local newspaper, the posting of site notices and the individual notification of 42 neighbouring properties. In addition, 13 neighbouring properties, all of those who made representations following the initial consultation, were notified of further/amended details in respect of amended positioning of the pitch (5m to the east), reduced hours of use, a noise assessment and possible mitigation, a response to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's consultation response, level information and site sections.

Representations

13. Initially I received 13 letters of representation objecting to the proposals from local residents. To date, I have not received any letters of representation following the second round of consultation, carried out on the 21 June 2010. A summary of the main issues raised/points made is set out below:

Light/Noise Pollution and amenity concerns

- The south east of England is already particularly badly affected by light pollution;
- The school is at one of the highest points in Tonbridge and lighting would be visible from miles around;
- The brightness of the lighting required for a hockey pitch could contravene that allowed in what is presumed to be an E3 medium brightness area;
- The lighting must not intrude into neighbouring properties and must be angled downwards;
- The lighting should be removed from the proposal and the pitch only used in daylight;
- The pitch would generate significant noise pollution, especially use in the evening and at weekends;
- The proposed development would add to the noise and light pollution residents already experience as a result of the recently completed development at the site;
- A floodlit pitch was originally included in the recent refurbishment of the school but removed due to residents' complaints; It is disappointing that this idea has been raised again;

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- Evening and weekend use should not be permitted;
- Should competitive matches be held at the site with spectators, additional noise would be created which would not be acceptable;
- The opening of the site for community use may increase crime and allow access in adjoining gardens;
- The development would have an adverse impact on the privacy of local residents;

Access and Parking

- Local residents already experience significant parking disruption during peak school hours and evenings (when the School holds events). Sporting events would only add to this disruption;
- The recently completed construction work has already significantly damaged the road surface of Deakin Leas; any more building work would only make this worse;
- Recent developments at the site now means that the school has only one entrance instead of the previous two, which already creates unacceptable concentrations of traffic. Increased use of this one entrance would not be acceptable;
- The school has limited parking, which was reduced dramatically by recent developments at the site, and poor access to accommodate community use;
- Overflow parking would result in parking on Deakin Leas which would not be acceptable;

Landscape

- The proposed location adjoins Green Belt land and would change the character of the school site and views from the AONB considerably;
- The floodlighting in particular represents an inappropriate form of development abutting Green Belt land and would have a harmful impact on open/rural land;
- The proposed development is on land designated 'Important Green Space', and is contrary to Development Plan Policy;
- Deakin Leas is part of a Low Density Residential Area and this development would damage both the character and the amenity of the area in terms of its density, mass, scale, form and design;
- Fencing would be obtrusive and out of keeping with the site and would destroy views of the wider landscape;
- The development would lead to a loss of wildlife habitat;

Drainage

- Development on the site, including recently built housing, has increased rain run off increasing the risk of local flooding;
- The pitch surface must be fully permeable;
- The existing pitches should be drained rather than providing a synthetic surface;

General Matters

- The school has insufficient playing field and green space, especially after recent developments. This proposal would remove that last piece of open grass;
- The School already has to share sports facilities with Schools at Somerhill due to a lack of facilities;
- Community use should not be permitted;
- The need for such a pitch is not justified and it is unnecessary;
- The School should reconsider the scale of the pitch; a hockey pitch is the costliest, largest and brightest option;
- The proposal would result in an unacceptable increase in the intensity of use of the site;

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- Hours of use should be lower than those proposed, with limited evening and weekend use;
- In the event that permission is granted, a number of conditions of consent are suggested.

Discussion

14. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 9 above. Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. Issues of particular relevance include impact upon the wider landscape (including AONB and Green Belt), noise and light pollution, highway implications and access, hours of use and community use, and local residential amenity.

Landscape

15. The school playing field is identified in the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan as an area of Important Green Space, but the school site is otherwise within the Urban Area Confines. The Green Belt boundary lies to the south of the site, and beyond the A21 the land within the Green Belt is further designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Although the development site is not within the Green Belt or the AONB, views from local properties into these areas, and views of the school site from the wider landscape could be affected. Objections have been raised to the impact of the development on the remaining open space within the school site, and the impact on views into and out of the wider landscape. In respect of the Important Green Space designation, this seeks to protect such spaces and adjoining land from development, unless the need for it is overriding and the proposals would not adversely affect the contribution that the space makes to the character and quality of townscape.
16. I acknowledge that the development would intrude into the private views of the wider landscape from some residential properties and alter views across the playing field. In addition, due to the elevated position of the school, the development site could be visible from the wider landscape, including land designated within the Green Belt and the AONB. However, during daylight hours, when the proposed floodlighting would not be in use, the green synthetic turf surfacing and deep green weld mesh fencing would not be a significantly intrusive feature in the landscape. The galvanised lighting columns would blend with the sky and, although could be seen, would not be a dominant feature within the landscape. Although loss of views from a private property is not a material consideration in the determination of a planning application, I am satisfied that, as the development is over 100 metres from the rear elevations of the closest residential properties, the development would not be overbearing in nature and would not unreasonably intrude into the outlook of these properties. The introduction of lighting could, however, impact upon the wider landscape.
17. When the floodlighting would be in use, the development's visual prominence would increase, not only in terms of its impact on the outlook from local properties, but its visibility from the wider landscape. The impact of the lighting in terms of landscape impacts therefore needs to be considered and addressed. The applicant has reduced the proposed hours of use of the pitch during the determination of this application (to be

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discussed later in the report) to 08.30 to 20.00 Mondays to Fridays and 09.00 to 18.00 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. The reality of this is that the floodlighting would only be in operation for a very limited period of time, only in winter months, and only for a few hours a day at the most. The lighting specification has also been carefully designed to ensure that light is carefully and accurately controlled, with the use of horizontally mounted flat glass luminaires, which eliminate light above the horizontal and minimise the view of the floodlights from a distance, limiting visual impact. In addition, when viewed from the Green Belt and/or AONB the floodlit pitch would be set against an urban backdrop of residential properties, school buildings and street lighting, and not a dark rural landscape. In addition, the site is screened by existing woodland to the south, and planting to the site's perimeter, all of which would assist in mitigating the impact of the development on the wider landscape.

18. Given the relatively low amount of time the floodlighting would actually be in use, and the setting of the site, I do not consider that the proposed development would cause any significant harm to the general landscape character of the site, or the functioning and character of the adjacent Green Belt and AONB. I therefore see no reason to refuse the application on those particular grounds.
19. It is important to remember, however, that the floodlit pitch is proposed on land designated as Important Green Space. Given that the proposed development would still be used for outdoor sports as part of the school playing field, and would maintain the openness of the site, I do not consider that the development would be contrary to the underlying principles of the Local Plan designation. However, the Local Plan Policy also states that where development may exceptionally be justified which results in the loss of part of an Important Green Space, the Borough will, where practicable, require enhancements to the retained area to compensate for the loss and to improve and enhance the character and amenity value of the area. Given that the development would not necessarily lead to an overall loss of usable open space, I am not convinced that such compensation is necessary in terms of the retained space per se. However, the applicant is proposing to retain any soil excavated in the cut and fill required to level the pitch, to level and improve the existing playing field to the east of the proposed synthetic pitch. This would enhance the retained area of Important Green Space and, in part, compensate for any loss that may be considered to have occurred, improving and enhancing the character and amenity value of the remaining area.
20. Under the circumstances, I do not consider that the proposed development would have an unacceptable impact upon the wider landscape, or both views into and out of the Green Belt and AONB. I am of the opinion that the development accords with the general principles of relevant Development Plan Policies and Government Guidance, and advise, therefore, that the development should not be refused on these grounds. However, this is subject to the imposition of conditions with regard to the colour and specification of the fencing and surfacing of the pitch, the height, design and specification of the lighting columns and luminaires, control of hours of use and extinguishing of lighting when not in use, and the levelling of the existing playing field.

Trees and Ecology

21. The Tree Survey submitted with this application confirms that no trees would be affected by the proposed development. Should permission be granted, conditions of consent would ensure that all retained trees in close proximity to the development be protected in accordance with BS5837 – Trees in Relation of Construction. It has been suggested by the County Council's Landscape Advisor that additional tree planting

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should be undertaken to mitigate the impact of the proposed development. In addition, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council raises strong objection to the application unless a number of matters are addressed by planning condition, one of which is screening of the development at residential boundaries. Whilst I would normally agree with this recommendation, in this instance I am of the opinion that additional tree planting is not required. Local residents have not requested that tree planting be undertaken and, on the contrary, appear to value the open nature of their boundaries and the site beyond. To plant trees and/or climbing plants around the perimeter fencing of the pitch would only draw attention and prominence to the fencing, and would, to my mind, do little in the way of mitigation. In addition, the applicant advises that tree roots could damage the surfacing of the pitch. Therefore, I am satisfied that additional planting is not required but, in the event that permission is granted, conditions of consent would ensure that existing trees on site are protected from construction activities.

22. The proposed floodlit pitch would be located upon the existing school playing field which is heavily used and mown on a regular basis. The potential for the site to be home to any protected species is therefore very low, and I am satisfied that the development would not directly impact upon protected species or their habitat.

Residential Amenity Concerns

23. Local residents have expressed concern over potential light spill/pollution, noise pollution, hours of use and security risks associated with the proposed pitch. It should be noted that hours of use of the floodlit pitch have been reduced by the applicant as a result of these concerns, from 06.30 to 22.00 Monday to Friday and 9.00 to 18.00 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays to 08.30 to 20.00 Monday to Friday and 09.00 to 18.00 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. The appropriateness of these hours will be discussed and considered in the context of residential amenity in the following paragraphs.

Light Pollution

24. Objection is raised to the proposed pitch on the grounds of the impact the lighting would have on the wider landscape and on local residential amenity. The landscape context has been discussed above, and I am satisfied that the proposed lighting would not have an unacceptable impact on the wider landscape. However, the localised impact of the proposed lighting scheme on neighbouring residential amenity must be considered.
25. First, however, I consider that the reasoning behind the lighting level proposed should be explained. The County Council's Lighting Advisor states that the British Standard specifies a minimum average level of 200 lux for a pitch of this nature, and suggests that the proposed lux level be reduced from the 350 lux proposed to 200 lux. However, the applicant has given substantial justification for the lux levels proposed and has advised that the FIH (International Hockey Federation) guide to floodlighting hockey pitches is issued by the FIH Equipment Committee who acknowledge Philips; "expertise and detailed knowledge of sports lighting" in its development. It is apparent that similar sports experience was not as well represented in formulating the British Standard. The FIH guide is not a manufacturers' document but is the policy document and standard adopted by the FIH, Sport England and England Hockey.

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The applicant further states that:

“For information, the British Standard is a modification of a European (CEN) standard that was commenced in 2001. Things move very slowly with such standards and if the BS were revised today, I believe the figures would be amended upwards, especially if a serious injury or fatality occurs because of the figures it currently quotes and the interpretations of a very small number of individuals. There are very different circumstances when a player is hit by a football and when hit by a hard hockey ball travelling at 90mph. So, ‘fit for purpose’ is not what is fit for football but what is specifically fit for hockey.

The practical problems I have are that:

1) A hockey umpire has the responsibility to form an opinion as to the adequacy of floodlighting for a match. An umpire’s point of reference is what is produced by the governing body and I know from surface variant situations that an umpire will, very soon, refuse to umpire a match on a pitch with low illuminance and this will quickly lead to permanent condemnation of it.

2) One of the stated aims of the FIH guidelines, which are also used by England Hockey and Sport England, is to “ensure the safety of players involved in the game”. This should not be compromised. “

26. From a practical point of view, should the pitch be lit at 350 lux or 200 lux, the difference in terms of impact on residential amenity would arguably be negligible. The difference to those using the pitch, however, would be very significant. It should also be noted that the County Council’s Lighting Advisor is satisfied that the lighting scheme submitted complies with the requirements of the Institute of Lighting Engineers Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light, and is not objecting to the scheme. In addition, the lighting specification as proposed can be switched from 350 lux for hockey to 200 lux for large ball sports. In light of this information, I am satisfied that the lighting specification proposed is acceptable and fit for purpose. It must now be considered in terms of its impact upon residential amenity.
27. As detailed in paragraph 5 of this report, the pitch is proposed to be lit with 20 luminaires, mounted on six 15 metre columns, one in each corner of the pitch and one on each side of the centre line. The pitch would be lit to 350 lux, with switching to enable the pitch to be lit to 200 lux should large ball sports be played. The applicant has provided a detailed lighting specification, and a lux level diagram which clearly shows that lux levels would fall away to zero within 45 metres of the pitch (see page D3.6). The closest properties to the site are those within Deakin Leas and Vauxhall Gardens. The rear gardens of these properties are some 70 metres from the pitch, and the rear elevation of the houses themselves are approximately 100 metres away. The light spill diagrams submitted with this application show that the proposed light level would drop rapidly outside of the pitch boundary to 1 lux at about 30 metres from the pitch. There is, therefore, no measurable light impacting on local residential properties. In addition, due to the existing levels of the site, the pitch would be at a lower level than properties in Deakin Leas, further mitigating the impact of the proposed lighting. The County Council’s Lighting Advisor confirms that the scheme as submitted is acceptable in terms of its minimal visual impact on surrounding properties.

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28. Whilst the light spill would be satisfactorily contained well within the school grounds, there would still be a view of the illuminated area from some neighbouring properties but I am satisfied that the technical specifications for the luminaires are such that there would be no glare impacting outside the pitch itself. Moreover, the nearest houses are over 100 metres from the lighting columns and the floodlighting would not, therefore, be unduly intrusive for neighbouring occupiers. Members will be aware that the protection of private views across neighbouring land is not a material planning consideration anyway.
29. As detailed above, the proposed hours of use as now proposed are 08.30 to 20.00 Monday to Friday and 09.00 to 18.00 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. This is a reduction on the 22.00 Monday to Friday finish originally proposed. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council raises strong objection to this application unless a number of matters are addressed by conditions of consent. The hours of use as now proposed are in accordance with the Borough Council's requirements for weekday use, and are proposed to finish half an hour earlier than the Borough Council requests for weekend use. I therefore consider that the hours of use proposed are acceptable and, should permission be granted, this would be controlled by a condition of consent. Further conditions of consent would ensure the pitch was vacated within half an hour of last use, that lighting was extinguished when not in use and that the lighting was set up in accordance with the submitted details, and thereafter maintained. Subject to the imposition of these conditions, I see no reason to refuse the application on the grounds of light pollution.

Noise Pollution

30. Local residents have also expressed concern over the noise implications of the proposed pitch, particularly with regard to evening and weekend use. It is important to note that the existing pitches can be used at any time by the School without any restrictions. However, the provision of a synthetic floodlit pitch would increase the intensity of use, enable use in inclement weather and extend the hours of use beyond those afforded by natural daylight. The applicant has undertaken a Noise Assessment which has been submitted in support of this application.
31. The submitted Noise Assessment compares predicted noise levels from a typical sports game against existing noise levels established at nearby sensitive receptors. Predicted noise levels have been provided from an adult hockey match, which is considered to be representative of the likely worst case noise levels emanating from the proposed sports pitch. In fact, given the likely use of the proposed sports pitch – mainly for the use of school children – it is likely that the actual noise levels would be lower than those provided. The County Council's Noise Advisor advises that, when compared against existing noise levels at nearby residential premises, it is noted that an increase in ambient noise less than 3 dB(A) is predicted at ground floor level for all proposed hours of use for the sports pitch. The exception is at the closest of the Deakin Leas properties on weekdays between 19:00 – 20:30 hours where an increase in ambient noise of 3 dB is predicted. The Noise Advisor goes on to say that they would normally recommend the provision of mitigation measures where the introduction of a noise source results in an increase in ambient noise level of 3dB or greater. However, considering that an increase of 3dB is predicted only for a discrete period and, given that the source term noise levels are likely to be lower than those provided, in this instance it is considered that the use of the sports pitch is unlikely to result in an adverse effect. I must also point out that the pitch would only be used until 20.00. In addition, the applicant advises that weekend use is likely to be very limited and evening use mostly on winter evenings

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when curtains and windows are closed. No early morning use is envisaged outside of the school day which is the same circumstance as existing.

32. In light of the above, I do not consider that the use of the pitch within the hours specified by the applicant would have a detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents with regard to noise. The level of community use and the proposed hours of use are deemed to be acceptable in this respect, subject to the imposition of conditions to control this. This will be discussed in more detail below.

Other amenity concerns

33. Apart from highway and access issues, which will be discussed below, matters of privacy and security have been raised by local residents. However, the existing school site is open out of school hours for various activities, and the provision of the floodlit pitch some 100m from local properties would not, in my opinion, have a detrimental impact on security or privacy. In fact, with regard to security, the use of the playing field in the evening could be argued to improve security due to increased natural surveillance from more regular supervised activity.

Access and Highway Implications

34. There are a number of issues arising in relation to transport and access as a result of the proposed development and these are reflected in the letters of objection and include concerns about traffic congestion, additional traffic and indiscriminate parking. However, it should be pointed out that during the school day only existing pupils would be using the facility and, therefore, the development would not have any impact on the local highway network.
35. Out of school hours use of the facility would be by the school as well as limited and selected groups, managed and agreed by the School. The applicant advises that the car parking spaces available at the school, and vacated out of school hours, would accommodate the relatively small number of community users envisaged. There would be 70 car parking spaces available. Kent Highway Services are satisfied that this is an acceptable approach and, subsequently, raise no objection to the development. Should permission be granted, I consider it appropriate to condition that the School makes on site parking available when the pitch is in use out of school hours. Subject to this condition, I see no reason to refuse the application on this ground.
36. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council raises strong objection to the application unless a number of issues are addressed (see paragraph 10). The first of these is that KCC must be satisfied that parking and access arrangements are technically acceptable, and that the school parking facilities are made available to accommodate community use of the pitch. I am satisfied that that matter has been adequately addressed. However, the Borough Council also requires assurance that the proposed pitch would not be available for community use when there is a function or activity at the school. The applicant considers that a condition which would restrict use of the pitch if a function or activity was being held would seriously affect the efficient functioning of the school, and would prohibit such events as parents evenings, staff meetings, or even a small group using the dance studio or sports hall. I consider that the School should be able to manage the operation of their site in such a way that parking could be accommodated on site for community use. I agree that a condition restricting the use of the pitch if a function or activity was being held would be too restrictive and would not be appropriate in this instance.

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Hours of Use/Community Use

37. As discussed throughout this report, hours of use are proposed to be between 08.30 and 20.00 Monday to Friday, and between 09.00 and 18.00 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. As previously stated, I consider these proposed hours of use to be acceptable and, should permission be granted, conditions of consent would restrict use of the floodlit pitch to between these hours.
38. As outlined in paragraph 4 of this report, it is proposed that there would be community use of the floodlit pitch, a principle which is supported by Development Plan Policy and wider Government aspirations for extended school use and community activities. The school advises that community use would, however, be by limited selected and trusted groups only. This is intended to be a compromise between the needs of the School, the community shortfall and the requirements of Sport England. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council raises strong objection to the application unless a number of issues are addressed. One of the matters specified is that the type and extent of community use should be clarified and that appropriate agreements are put in place to manage the use outside of school hours. Sport England raises no objection to the application subject to the imposition of conditions, one of which is the submission and approval of a Community Use Agreement. Sport England has accepted that extended hours of use at this site would not be appropriate or acceptable, and neither would extensive community use. However, due to the requirements of Sport England and the Borough Council, and the concerns expressed by local residents with regard to community use, I consider it appropriate to condition that further details be submitted for approval, should permission be granted. The amenity of neighbouring residents must, in my view, be protected and community use controlled to ensure minimal disturbance to neighbours. In this instance, a Community Use Agreement would be required, to be submitted and approved prior to first use of the proposed facility.

Drainage and land contamination

39. Local residents have expressed concern that the proposed pitch would increase surface run off, increasing the risk of local flooding. However, the applicant advises that the proposed pitch would be fully porous and would have a high storage capacity for rainfall within its construction. In the applicant's view drainage would, if anything, be improved. In light of this information, and the fact that the Environment Agency has not requested any conditions with regard to drainage, or provided any guidance, I am satisfied that the development would not have a detrimental impact on drainage on site.
40. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council requests that a condition of consent should be imposed with regard to site contamination. The applicant is of the opinion that land contamination is not a significant issue at the site and is more than happy to agree to the suggested condition detailed in paragraph 10. Therefore, should permission be granted, a condition with regard to land contamination would be imposed upon the consent.

Need

41. Local residents have expressed the view that the proposed facility is not required and is, therefore, unnecessary. However, at present, the school's hockey teams are transported off site to various local schools for team practices. This has to be out of school hours due to the loss of time incurred by travelling, which precludes practice or play in curriculum time. Other sports, such as rounders or football, could also be played

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on the proposed pitch in all weathers, as opposed to the poor availability of the grass pitches. Tonbridge & Malling Playing Pitch Strategy states that there is a significant lack of floodlit training areas in the Borough, and that hockey (at club level) is under provided and without more synthetic turf pitches the game could not develop in the Borough. The School's need also stems from the prevalent poor ground conditions of the existing turf pitch, the necessity to travel to play hockey and the desire to meet curriculum requirements more efficiently and effectively. I am, therefore, satisfied that a case of need has been provided.

Construction

42. Given that there are neighbouring residential properties, if planning permission is granted it would, in my view, be appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of construction in order to protect residential amenity. I would suggest that works should be undertaken only between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays. It is also good practice on school sites for contractors to be required under the terms of their contract to manage construction traffic/deliveries to minimise conflict with traffic and pedestrians at the beginning and end of the school day.
43. In addition, I consider it appropriate that details of a Construction Management Strategy be submitted for approval prior to the commencement of development. That should include details of construction methods, location of site compounds and operative/visitors parking, details of site security and safety measures and details of any construction accesses. Should permission be granted, a Construction Management Strategy would be required pursuant to condition and the development would thereafter have to be undertaken in accordance with the approved strategy.
44. In addition to the above, should permission be granted, a condition of consent would ensure that mud on the local highway network would be mitigated as far as reasonably possible so as to minimise disruption to local residents.

Conclusion

45. In summary, I consider that, subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, this proposal would not have a significantly detrimental effect on residential or local amenity, the street scene and character of the area, or the local highway network. In my view, the development would not give rise to any significant material harm, including to the wider protected landscape and functioning of the Green Belt, and is in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies. There are no material planning considerations that indicate that the conclusion should be made otherwise. However, I recommend that various conditions be placed on any planning permission, including those outlined below.

Recommendation

46. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO conditions, including conditions covering:
 - A 3 year time limit for implementation;
 - the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
 - colour and specification of fencing and surfacing;
 - precise details of levels, existing and proposed;
 - protection of trees to be retained;

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- hours of use to be restricted to be between 08.30 and 20.00 Monday to Friday, and between 09.00 and 18.00 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays;
- all lighting on site, except security lighting, to be extinguished by 20.00, or 15 minutes after last use of the facility if earlier;
- extinguishing of lighting when pitch not in use;
- level of use of the facilities to accord with submitted details;
- lighting to be installed in accordance with approved details, and checked on site;
- lighting levels not to exceed those specified within the application;
- no further lighting to be installed without planning permission;
- land contamination;
- a Community Use Agreement being submitted and adhered to;
- parking to be available out of school hours for community use;
- hours of working during construction to be restricted to 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays;
- measures to prevent mud and debris on the highway;
- construction code of practice;

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