

New Maths, English and Languages building at Mascalls School, Maidstone Road, Paddock Wood – TW/10/3477

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 15 March 2011.

Application by Mascalls School for a new maths, English and languages building providing 24 new classrooms, 2 media suites, hall and dining area, kitchen, servery, staff areas and toilet provision. Existing A block to be demolished at phase 2 of the development. Mascalls School, Maidstone Road, Paddock Wood, Tonbridge (TW/10/3477)

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Members: Mr. A. King

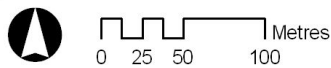
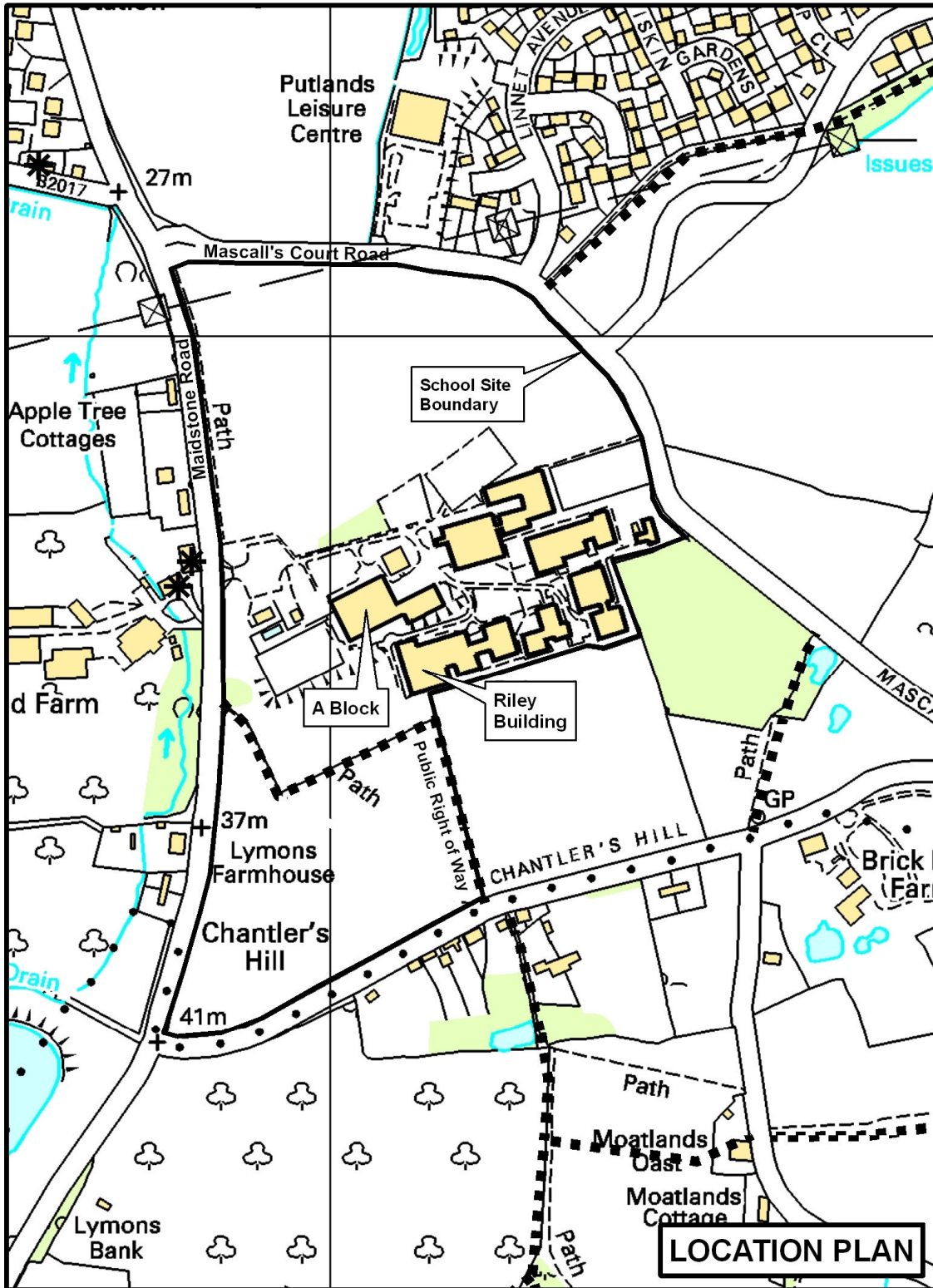
Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Mascalls School is located just off Maidstone Road, immediately to the south of the built limits of Paddock Wood. The application site is situated in the centre of the school grounds, on part of the footprint of an existing classroom block (referred to as the 'A' block), on part of an area of existing hard play surface and adjoining a caretaker's house and workshop. The new maths, English and languages building would be located adjacent to the latest building addition to the site (referred to as the 'Riley' building) which was constructed in 2005 and comprises a modern brick and glass three storey teaching block. The current school building stock is of a varied character and largely consists of buildings completed over the last fifty years and varies between one, two and three storeys in height. A variety of building constructions are apparent including system-built framed blocks with curtain glazing and spandrel panels through to load-bearing masonry buildings.
2. Vehicular access to the Mascalls School site is obtained via a dedicated route from Maidstone Road, from which several car parking areas are located. The nearest two residential properties are located approximately 90 metres to the north west of the application site on the opposite side of Maidstone Road. These two properties are both Grade II Listed Buildings (*Oast House* and *Mascalls Pound*) and lie directly opposite the existing school vehicular entrance. To the south of the application site a number of residential properties overlook the school site from Chantlers Hill. Chantlers Hill lies on sloping topography and enjoys far reaching views down across the school site, further to the distance of the main urban confines of Paddock Wood. The nearest residential properties to the south of the school site fronting Chantlers Hill are located some 220 metres from the application site. The land immediately to the south of the school grounds forms part of an agricultural holding and is relatively open, allowing uninterrupted views of the site from the south. As noted, the school grounds including the application site are located on the flanks of Chantlers Hill, where the land slopes in a gentle gradient from the south to the north. As a general indication of the sloping landform, the height at Chantlers hill is approximately 45m AOD, at the school entrance with Maidstone Road is 30m AOD and further north within Paddock Wood it is 20m AOD. *A site location plan is attached on page D4.2.*
3. An existing Public Right of Way (WT269) follows the school site boundary leading from Chantlers Hill down to Maidstone Road. This route currently allows publically accessible views of both the Riley Building and to a lesser extent the two storey existing 'A' block building which would be demolished at the end of the proposed buildings construction phase. The school site sits outside of the Local Plan's Limits of

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Site Location Plan

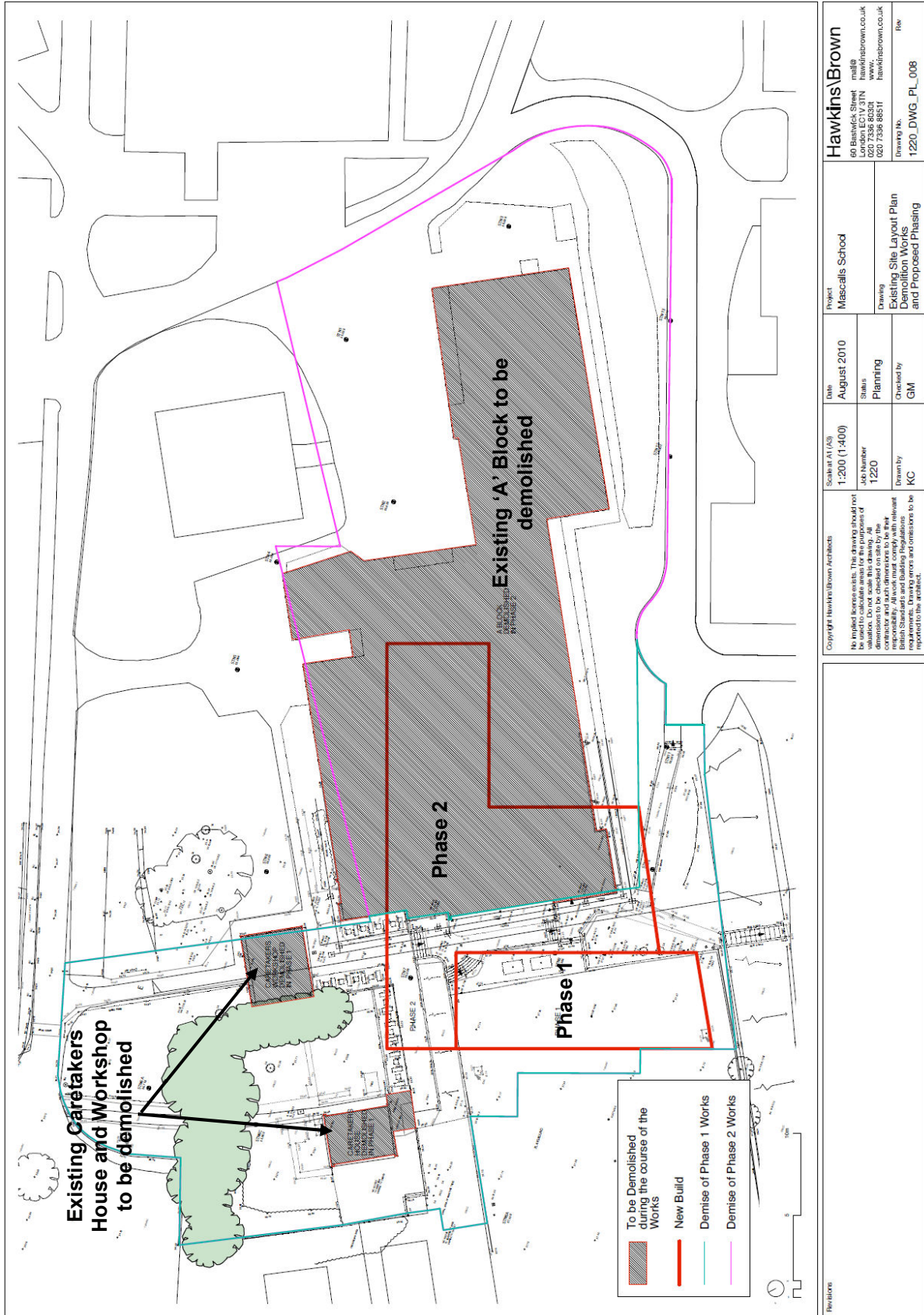


* Listed Buildings

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Proposed Phasing and Demolition Works

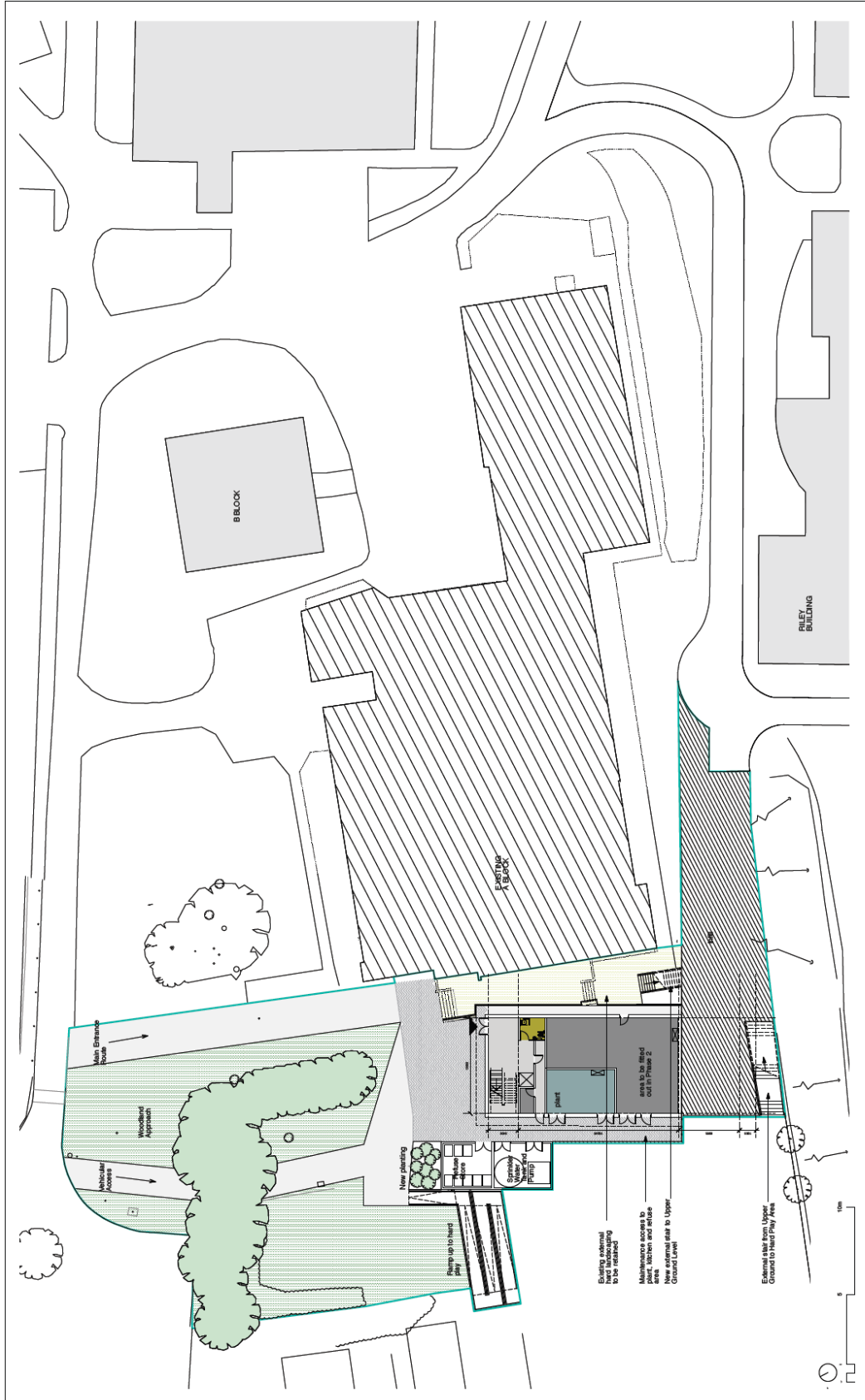


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| Arch No. 1220 | Status Planning | Drawn by KC | Checked by GM | Drawing Existing Site Layout Plan Demolition Works and Proposed Phasing | Drawing No. 1220_DWG_PL_008 |

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| Revisions |
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Maidstone Road, Paddock Wood – TW/10/3477**

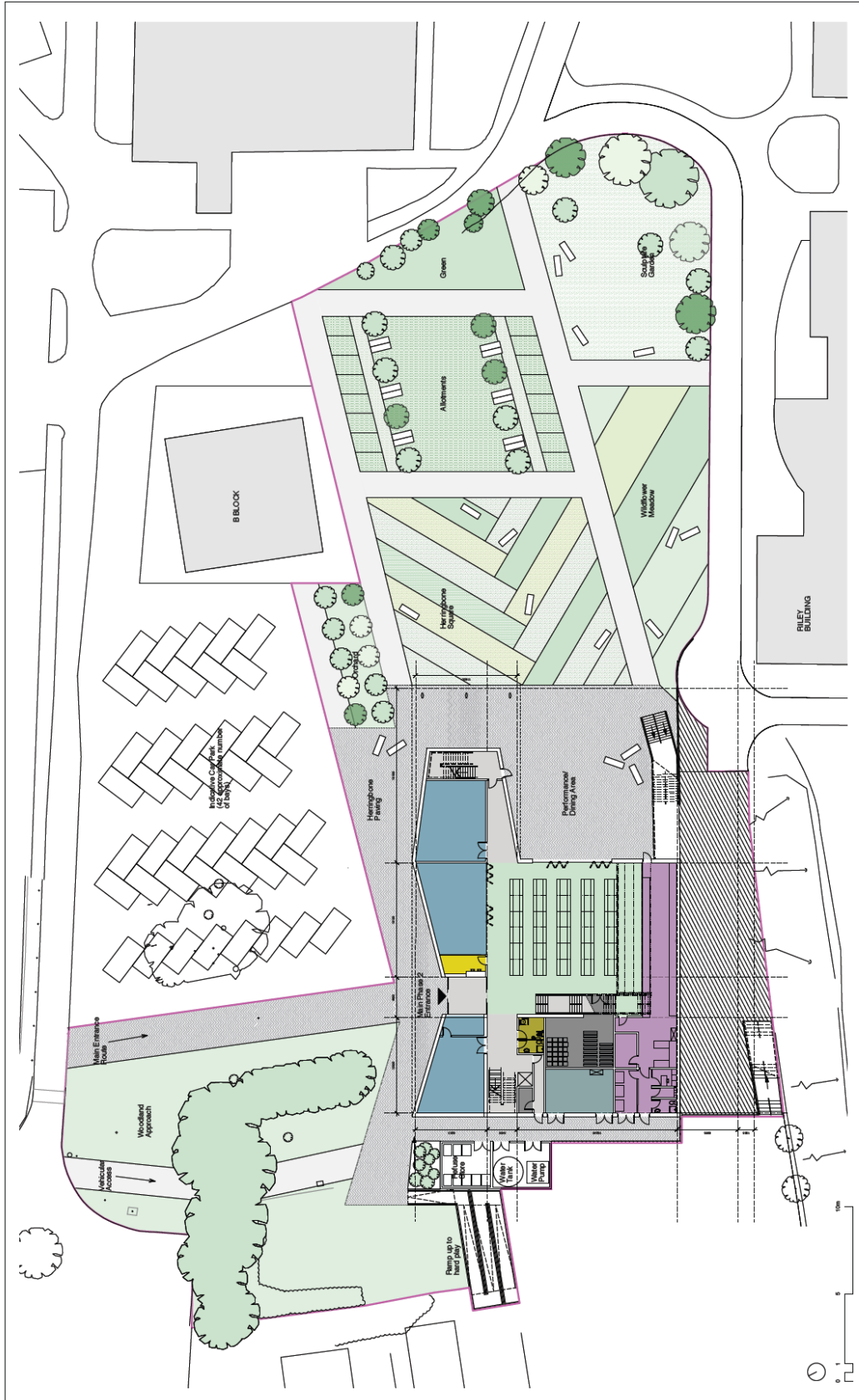
Proposed Lower Ground Floor Phase 1 Site Plan



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| | Job Number 1220 Drawn by KC | Status Planning Checked by GMI | Drawing Proposed Lower Ground Floor Phase 1 Site Plan | Drawing No. 1220_DWG_PL_110 Rev |

**New maths, English and languages building at Mascalls School,
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Proposed Lower Ground Floor Phase 2 Site Plan



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| | Drawn by KC | Checked by GM | Status Planning | Drawing Proposed Lower Ground Floor Phase 2 Site Plan |
| Revisions | | Drawing No. 1220_DWG_PL_113 | | Rev |

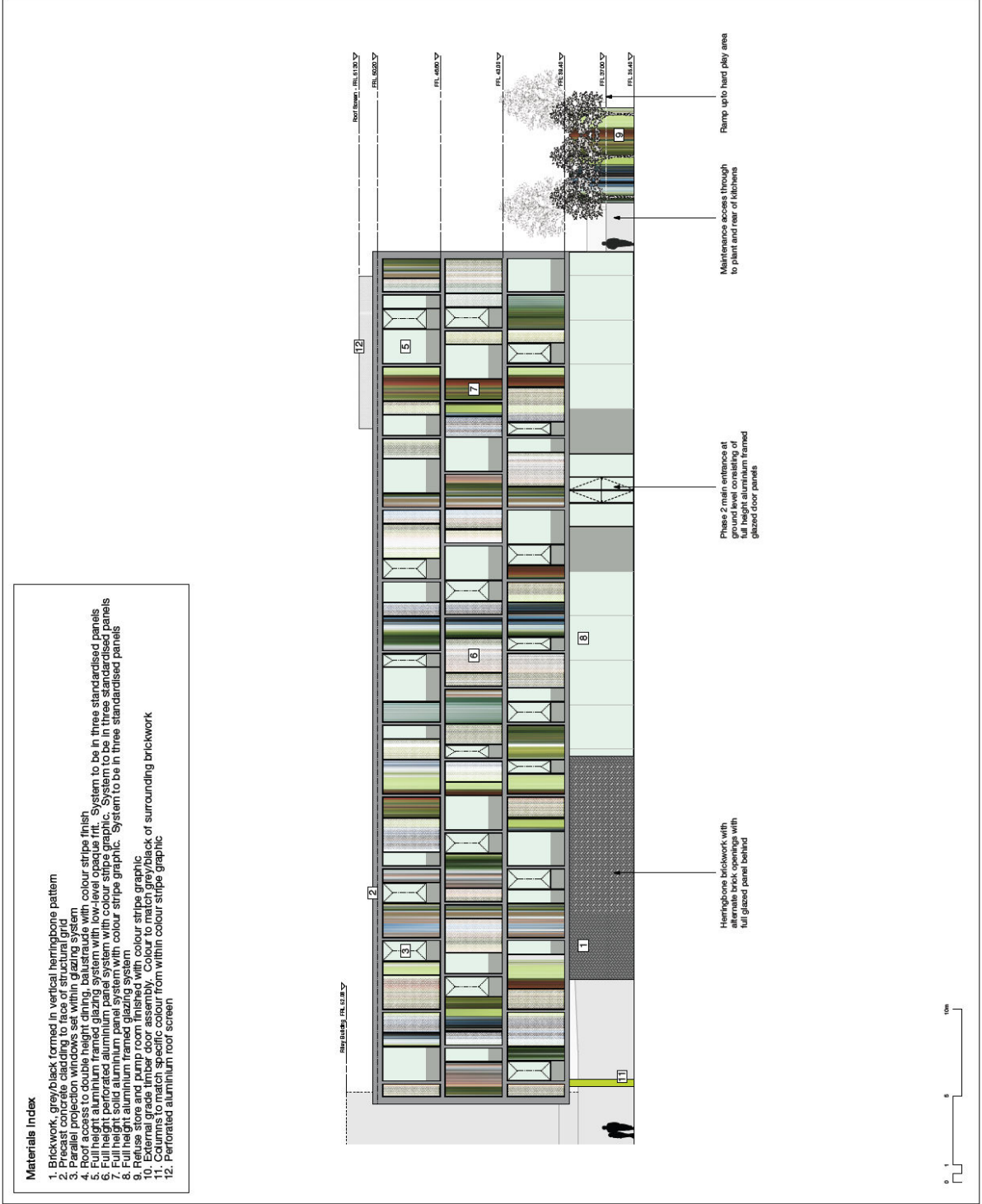
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Proposed North Elevation (Phase 2)

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| Project Mascalls School | |
| Scale (A1) (A3) | Date |
| 1:100 (1:200) | Aug 2010 |
| Drawn by | Checked by |
| TNH | GM |
| Job Number | Status |
| 1220 | Planning |
| Drawing No. | Rev |
| 1220_DWG_PL_131 | |



New maths, English and languages building at Mascalls School, Maidstone Road, Paddock Wood – TW/10/3477

Proposed South Elevation (Phase 2)

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Phase 1 Elevation

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Project: Mascalls School

Drawing: South Elevation

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| Scale: A1 (A3) | Date: Aug 2010 |
| 1:100 (1:200) | Checked by: GM |
| Drawn by: TNH | Status: Planning |
| Job Number: 1220 | Planning No.: 1220_DWG_PL_132 |
| Drawn by: TNH | Rev: |

Materials Index

1. Brickwork, grey/black formed in vertical herringbone pattern
2. Precast concrete cladding to face of structural grid
3. Parallel projection windows set within glazing system
4. Full height aluminium framed glazing system with low level opaque infill. System to be in three standardised panels
5. Full height aluminium framed glazing system with low level opaque infill. System to be in three standardised panels
6. Full height perforated aluminium panel system with colour stripe graphic. System to be in three standardised panels
7. Full height solid aluminium panel system with colour stripe graphic. System to be in three standardised panels
8. Full height aluminium framed glazing system
9. Full height aluminium framed glazing system
10. External glass timber floor assembly. Colour to match grey/black of surrounding brickwork
11. Columns to match specific colour from within colour stripe graphic
12. Perforated aluminium roof screen

Shallow sashes recessed openings within structural grid

Full height aluminium framed glazed doors to access roof terrace above double height dining space

Photovoltaic panels to all on roof of double height dining space

New balcony to run along mated level

Line denotes stair from level 1 to ground level

Phase 2 main entrance at ground level consisting of full height aluminium framed glazing door panels

Stair to run along angled edge of new building to hard play area below

Balustrade to line edge from ground level

0 5 10m

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Proposed West Elevation (Phase 2)

Materials Index

1. Brickwork, grey/black, formed in vertical herringbone pattern
2. Precast concrete cladding to face of structural grid
3. Parallel projection windows set within glazing system
4. Roof access to double height dining, balustrade with colour stripe finish system to be in three standardised panels
5. Full height perforated aluminium panel system with colour stripe graphic. System to be in three standardised panels
6. Full height solid aluminium panel system with colour stripe graphic. System to be in three standardised panels
7. Full height aluminium framed glazing system with colour stripe graphic. System to be in three standardised panels
8. Refuse store and pump room finished with colour stripe graphic
9. Columns to match specific colour to match grey/black of surrounding brickwork
10. Columns to match specific colour to match grey/black of surrounding brickwork
11. Perforated aluminium roof screen
12. Perforated aluminium roof screen

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Revisions

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Project: Mascalls School

Drawing: West Elevation

| Scale sheet (A3) | Date |
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| 1:100 (1:200) | Aug 2010 |
| Drawn by | Checked by |
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| Job Number | Status |
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Proposed East Elevation (Phase 2)

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Proposed Tree Planting



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Built Development of Paddock Wood. Local Plan Policies LBD1 and EN25 therefore apply to the school site as a whole, and seek to set specific criteria on any development outside of the urban areas.

Background and Site History

4. Mascalls School is an 11-18 age fully comprehensive day school in the heart of rural Kent with a large Sixth Form. It has a minimum annual intake of 240 boys and girls and is over-subscribed. It is normally the nearest appropriate school for pupils of all abilities living in Brenchley, Matfield, Capel, Five Oak Green, East Peckham, Horsmonden, Lamberhurst, Yalding and Paddock Wood.
5. There have been a number of planning permissions granted for new development at the site, the key applications include the following:
 - 2.5kW wind turbine in September 2008 (under application reference TW/08/2323);
 - Demolition of 'E' block and the construction of a multi-purpose hall with associated changing accommodation and first floor classrooms; alterations to existing car park and creation of a bus turning area (under application reference TW/06/365);
 - New gallery space and associated reception at the site for Mascalls Gallery (under application reference TW/05/2617);
 - New synthetic floodlit football pitch with associated fencing (under application reference TW/04/2926); and
 - New music, drama and dance facilities, offices, library extension, art & textiles classrooms, graphics & multi material classrooms [The Riley Building] (under application reference TW/04/1935);
6. The School has agreed funding to proceed on a project to construct a new Maths, English and Languages building. This project forms part of an ongoing vision within the school to develop modern and exemplary school buildings throughout the site. Since developing this vision an amount of funds have been earmarked which would allow an initial phase of these works to proceed. This initial phase (now referred to as Phase 1) would be limited to potentially 9 of the 24 total classrooms intended to be constructed, together with associated building facilities. The remainder of the classrooms, the hall and kitchen would be constructed as a subsequent phase (now referred to as Phase 2) following completion of Phase 1 and subject to funding being secured for Phase 2.
7. The key objectives of this building project at the school are to address the following key issues. At present the school has 'no front' and 'no identity' and therefore a new entrance to the front of the site is a good idea. The proposed building would also help to secure the long term viability of the school, to promote the School's sustainability agenda through the construction and use of the building, to provide flexible teaching spaces that can enhance cross curricular teaching and to integrate indoor and outdoor spaces to enhance the curriculum.

Proposal

8. The application is made by Mascalls School and seeks planning permission for the construction of a new maths, English and languages building providing 24 new classrooms, 2 media suites, hall and dining area, kitchen, servery, staff areas and toilet provision. As detailed in paragraph (6) above, the proposal would be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 would involve the construction of 9 out of the 24 classrooms

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together with associated building facilities, whilst Phase 2 would involve the construction of the remainder of the proposed development. A phased development has been chosen on the basis of a proportion of funds being available to the School at present, and their longer term ambition to develop further once additional funding can be secured. The application proposes the demolition of existing 'A' block and the Caretaker's House and Workshop at the end of Phase 2.

9. The proposed development is situated such that it would allow the creation of a more meaningful 'entrance' to the school that would offer a 'front of house' experience for visitors and promote cohesion and enhanced day to day operation of the school. The application details that the new building has been designed: to minimise intrusion on existing hard play surface; to ensure that the new development would not block views out from other school buildings (such as the Riley building); to ensure that the new building would not overshadow other school buildings, whilst allowing good sunlight and daylight aspects for its own orientation; to allow a coherent landscaped area to be created at the centre of the school site through the demolition of 'A' block; and to promote connections and potential proximities with other school buildings (such as the existing 'B' block which may be reclad in the future).
10. The new classroom block is intended to stand out visually from the main access road as a natural 'entrance building'. A dedicated pedestrian route from lower ground floor level adjacent to the existing school's vehicular and pedestrian entrance route would allow users to access the new reception and holding area before proceeding through the main hall space, and up a gently rising staircase to the upper level southern courtyard of the building and up to the level access pathway of the Riley building. It should be noted that as a result of the sloping nature of the site the new classroom block consists of a three storey building plus a lower ground floor cut into the sloping nature of the site. A network of new landscaped pathways to the east of the proposed building would allow pedestrian connections with the rest of the school buildings through an enhanced green landscape. Through the use of sliding folding glazed units, the hall/dining room has the ability to be opened up along its eastern elevation leading to a new adjacent hard landscaped courtyard. This area of courtyard is intended to form an outdoor performance space and could also be used for external teaching, dining and informal play. The proposed building (at Phase 2) consists of two arms at 90 degrees to each other. The flexible hall space would be situated within the corner of the two arms. The hall roof would be covered with a green sedum roof, interspersed by rectangular rooflights providing natural daylight into the hall below together with rectangular photovoltaic panels arranged using a herringbone pattern.
11. At the lower ground floor level a brickwork plinth is proposed as a means of reconciling the changing levels at the base of the building. The main façade of the building would then sit cleanly above this brickwork base and consist of a continuous façade system, set within an expressed frame clad in precast concrete. This system would consist of: full height glazed panels with parallel push windows set within; a series of perforated aluminium panels with a herringbone pattern perforations with a varied colour stripe finish; and solid insulated aluminium panels featuring the same colour stripe panelling as the perforated panels. All three of the principal façade components would be distributed in three standard sizes, arranged across the façade as required by the space planning of the internal spaces. Exact colour finishes would be reserved for later consideration, although the application drawings detail the aluminium panel system in pastel shades of blue, red, yellow and green, with brickwork at the lower ground level in grey/black in a herringbone pattern.

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12. As an indication of scale heights of the proposed classroom block against existing built development at the site, it is noted that the existing two storey 'A' block (proposed to be demolished at the end of Phase 2 works) has a maximum roof height of 45.08 metres AOD. In contrast the existing three storey Riley building has a maximum roof height of 52.08 metres AOD. The proposed new classroom block, at three storeys plus a lower ground floor level cut into the existing sloping topography, would have a maximum finished roof height of 50.20 metres AOD. A further roof screen to hide necessary building plant and equipment would extend to 51.30 metres AOD on the roof of the western arm of the proposed new building.
13. The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) Report which recognises that the site does not fall within any designated landscape areas, although until recently the boundary of the former High and Low Weald Special Landscape Area was located to south and west of the site (along the southern boundary of Chantlers Hill and the western boundary of Maidstone Road). The LVIA concluded that the completed scheme (Phase 1 & 2) would result in an '*insignificant*' impact on the landscape character, both at regional and local level. It recognised that nearby Grade II Listed Buildings are set within mature woodland which combines with vegetation in the western part of the school to protect their setting and corresponding views to/from these buildings. The assessment identified potential '*minor-adverse*' impacts on views gained from Chantlers Hill, it recognised that there was scope for additional landscape planting along the southern school boundary to assist with the screening of the proposed new building (Note that the LVIA report was prepared prior to additional landscape planting being proposed as outlined in paragraph 15 below).
14. At the end of Phase 1 of the proposed development, the application proposes that intermediate landscape proposals would support the use of the building in its initial configuration, including the provision of new external works to create improved pedestrian and service vehicle access to the building and including new sections of both hard and soft landscaping works. A new 1 in 20 ramp would be constructed at Phase 1 to allow level access to the hard play area to the west of the proposed building. As a result of the consultation and neighbour notification process undertaken by the County Planning Authority in connection with this application, a number of concerns have been raised regarding a shortcoming in the overall landscaping of the site, notably in affording an element of landscape screening of the proposed building from the south (i.e. views from Chantlers Hill and Maidstone Road). These concerns have been raised by both the Borough Council and neighbouring residents (as identified in paragraphs 21 and 33 respectively below). Further concerns have been highlighted by local residents that the landscaping scheme approved pursuant to the Riley building planning permission (TW/04/1935) was not fully implemented by the School.
15. To address the concerns received during the planning application process, the applicant subsequently submitted a landscaping scheme including new tree planting consisting of 18 semi-mature and extra heavy standard native trees (planted heights ranging between 4 – 5.5 metres). These trees are proposed to be planted in three groups: along the southern boundary of the existing grass sports pitch adjacent to the site boundary; close to the southern boundary of the new classroom building; and to the front of the new classroom building to its northern edge. The tree planting would consist of a mix of oak, ash, hornbeam and alder and is proposed to be implemented within the first planting season following the completion of Phase 1 of the proposed development. The applicants have also confirmed their intention to revisit landscaping proposals agreed pursuant to the Riley building planning permission and implement

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any shortcomings at the same timescales as that proposed for the new tree planting at the site (i.e. during the first planting season following completion of Phase 1 development).

16. At the completion of Phase 2 of the proposed development, the applicant proposes further internal site landscaping, consisting of school allotments, an orchard, a sculpture garden and a wildflower meadow. New hard landscape measures proposed at the completion of Phase 2 include a replacement area of car parking and a further external performance area. These hard and soft landscape areas would be located broadly on the footprint of the 'A' block building to be demolished at the end of Phase 2, and would form an interesting route for users of the school from the new building to other facilities/buildings on site. Full details of the hard and soft landscaping measures proposed at the end of Phase 2 works would be secured by condition for later consideration.
17. An existing tree survey report submitted in support of the application details that 18 trees and two groups to be removed under or within the extent of the development footprint. The majority of these trees intended to be removed have been classified as grade C trees (low quality and value), with the exception of one grade B (moderate quality and value) group of ash and three grade R (trees which otherwise are likely to be lost within 10 years and should be removed for sound arboricultural management reasons). Other trees in proximity, but not considered to be adversely affected by the development proposals, would be protected during construction activities by secure protection fencing, in accordance with the relevant British Standard (BS5837:2005 Trees in Relation to Construction).
18. An ecological scoping survey submitted in support of the application details the following mitigation measures be carried out:
 - all works to trees and shrubs on site times to avoid the bird breeding season (late March – early August), or inspected by a suitable qualified ecologist prior to commencement and supervision during tree/shrub works thereafter;
 - potential for bats to roost within the existing buildings to be demolished at Phase 2 of the works (existing 'A' block, Caretaker's House and Workshop). Two evening surveys must be carried out prior to demolition works and may lead to the requirement for a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence if a bat roost is found;
 - security lighting should illuminate the ground floor areas only and should not leak upwards, in order to maintain dark and secure flight corridors for bats;
 - measures to prevent badgers being trapped overnight in construction excavations;
 - works to scrub and trees be undertaken with care and any hedgehogs discovered are relocated to safe area; and
 - biodiversity enhancement measures, including new bird and bat boxes, new meadow area and additional tree and shrub planting.The applicant proposes that that these mitigation measures would be implemented as part of the proposed development.
19. The application does not propose any increase in the current school roll as a result of these proposals and the applicant has confirmed that the Published Admission Number would remain at 240. Instead the proposals seek to address existing building quality and space issues which the school currently experiences. Similarly, there would not be any additional staff employed at the site as a result of the proposed development. The application does not propose any additional car or cycle parking

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provision on-site as a result of the maintained status-quo in terms of pupil and staff numbers.

Planning Policy

20. The most relevant Government Guidance and adopted and proposed 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) and its Supplement (Planning and Climate Change), PPS5 (Planning for the Historic Environment), PPS7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas), PPS9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation), PPG13 (Transport), PPS22 (Renewable Energy), PPS23 (Planning and Pollution Control) and PPG24 (Planning and Noise) and PPS25 (Development and Flood Risk).

(ii) The adopted 2009 **South East Plan**:

Policy CC1 The principal objective of the Plan is to achieve and to maintain sustainable development in the region. Sustainable development priorities for the South East are identified as (amongst others) reducing greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring sustainable levels of resource use.

Policy CC2 Climate change mitigation measures will be supported, including encouraging the use of renewable energy and reducing the amount of biodegradable waste landfilled.

Policy CC3 Supports the adaptation of existing development to reduce its use of energy

Policy CC4 Supports proposals which include a proportion of the energy supply of new development from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon sources.

Policy C4 Outside nationally designated landscapes local planning authorities should recognise and aim to protect and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of the region's landscape.

Policy BE1 Seeks new development to help improve the built environment with design solutions relevant to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place.

Policy BE6 Seeks to protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment.

Policy S3 States that, local planning authorities, taking into account demographic projections, should work with partners to ensure the adequate provision of pre-school, school and community learning facilities.

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Policy S6 The mixed use of community facilities should be encouraged by local authorities.

Policy NRM1 Water supply and ground water will be maintained and enhanced through avoiding adverse effects of development on the water environment.

Policy NRM4 Refers to sustainable flood risk management.

Policy NRM5 Local planning authorities shall avoid a net loss of biodiversity, and actively pursue opportunities to achieve a net gain across the region.

Policy NRM11 Supports greater use of decentralised and renewable energy in new development

Policy W2 Refers to sustainable design and construction.

Important note regarding the South East Plan:

As a result of the judgement in the case brought by Cala Homes in the High Court, which held that the powers set out in section 79 [6] of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 could not be used to revoke all Regional Strategies in their entirety, Regional Strategies (the South East Plan in the case of Kent) were re-established as part of the Development Plan on 10 November 2010. Notwithstanding this, DCLG's Chief Planner Steve Quartermain advised Local Planning Authorities on 10 November 2010 that they should still have regard to the Secretary of State's letter to Local Planning Authorities and to the Planning Inspectorate dated 27 May 2010. In that letter he had informed them of the Government's intention to abolish Regional Strategies in the Localism Bill and that he expected them to have regard to this as a material consideration in any planning decisions. The 10th November 2010 Quartermain Letter is now being challenged in the High Court and must in my view carry little weight until such time as the Court decision is known. This is currently awaited. Department of Communities and Local Government advice on this matter reads:

'Local planning authorities and planning inspectors should be aware that the Secretary of State has received a judicial review challenge to his statement of 10 November 2010, the letter of the Chief Planner of the same date and to the Secretary of State's letter of 27 May 2010 on the ground that the Government's intended revocation of Regional Strategies by the promotion of legislation for that purpose in the forthcoming Localism Bill is legally immaterial to the determination of planning applications and appeals prior to the revocation of Regional Strategies.

The Secretary of State is defending the challenge and believes and is advised that it is ill founded. Nevertheless, pending determination of the challenge, decision makers in local planning authorities and at the Planning Inspectorate will in their determination of planning applications and appeals need to consider whether the existence of the challenge and the basis of it, affects the significance and weight which they judge may be given to the Secretary of State's statements and to the letter of the Chief Planner'.

(iii) **The adopted 2006 Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (Saved Policies):**

Policy LBD1 Outside Limits to Built Development, development will only be permitted where it would be in accordance with all policies contained in the Local Plan.

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Policy EN1 General development control policy requiring proposals to take account of and be compatible with neighbouring uses, not cause significant harm to residential amenities, that the building respects the context of the site (in terms of scale, height, orientation, materials and landscaping), preserve and enhance nature conservation interests and avoid the loss of important landscape features.

Policy EN25 Outside the Limited of Built Development the following criteria must be satisfied:

- minimal impact on the landscape character of the locality;
- no detrimental impact on the landscape setting of settlements;
- not result in an unsympathetic change to the character of a rural lane which is of landscape, amenity, nature conservation or historic importance;
- no existing buildings on site which could be utilised for conversion as opposed to new build; and
- respect local building styles and materials.

(iv) The adopted 2010 **Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document:**

Core Policy 4 The Borough's built and natural environments will be conserved and enhanced, through (amongst other matters) avoiding a net loss of biodiversity and providing opportunities for its enhancement and the conservation and enhancement of the setting of Listed Buildings.

Core Policy 5 Seeks to encourage sustainable design and construction principles in order to combat avoidable causes of climate change.

Core Policy 8 New community facilities will be supported where they are deficient, particularly where this will provide a range of facilities on a single site.

Consultations

21. **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council:** Raises no objection to the proposed development, but makes the following comments:

“Due to the existence of the Riley Building and the relationship the proposed building would have with it, and the rest of the school complex, the Borough Council raises ‘no objection’ to the proposal. However, the absence of any landscaping on the southern side of the school is a serious concern. It is felt that a comprehensive and effective landscaping scheme (including semi-mature trees) is required to mitigate the impact of the proposed building in long-distance views from the south and south-west (from Chantlers Hill, Maidstone Road/Gedges Hill and the nearby footpath WT269). In assessing the relevant detailed aspects of this scheme, it is felt that the implications of the building’s encroachment onto an existing hard-surfaced play are should be given particular consideration”

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Further views of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council are awaited regarding the proposed tree planting scheme for the south of the site and any views will be reported verbally to Members at the Committee Meeting.

22. **Paddock Wood Town Council:** No objection to the proposed development.
23. **Divisional Transportation Manager:** No objection to the proposed development subject to the imposition of conditions to cover the control of mud and debris on the public highway during construction activities and the submission and approval of details of construction traffic and contractor's parking arrangements prior to commencement of works.
24. **Environment Agency:** No objection to the proposed development.
25. **County Fire Officer:** No objection as the means of access considered to be satisfactory.
26. **Southern Gas Networks:** No objection to the proposed development but advises the applicant of Low/Medium/Intermediate Pressure gas main in the proximity of the development site.
27. **County Council's Landscape Consultant:** Notes that whilst the proposed building footprint would be smaller than that of the existing 'A' block (due to be demolished at the end of Phase 2 works), the proposed building would be 4 storeys high (including a lower ground floor), as opposed to the existing block which is only 2 storeys high. Notes that the finished roof level of the proposed building would sit at 50.2m AOD which is slightly lower than the finished roof level of the existing Riley building at 52.08m AOD. Notes that the Riley building would, in part, provide some screening to the proposed new classroom block in views from Chantlers Hill.

Notes that the proposed block would be built to a contemporary design specification with a combination of grey/black brickwork, grey precast concrete, glass and aluminium coloured panels. Notes that photovoltaic panels are proposed to form part of the roof terrace above the proposed dining hall, in combination with a sedum roof. Since this roof is only proposed for the lower part of the building, considers that the solar panels would not have a significant effect upon views within the surrounding landscape.

Pleased to note there are extensive landscape proposals for internal areas within the site (largely on the footprint of the 'A' block building due to be demolished at the end of Phase 2 works), including orchard, wildflower meadow, allotments and a sculpture garden, with the majority of species being native and indigenous to the Paddock Wood area. Recommend that a detailed planting plan for these areas be secured by condition for later consideration.

Considers that the proposed tree planting specification is in accordance with best practice, that the proposed number of trees would sufficiently mitigate tree loss and that the new tree planting would partially screen and soften views from the south (i.e. from Chantlers Hill and Maidstone Road). Recommend that all excavation and construction works are carried out in accordance with the relevant British Standard covering the protection of trees.

28. **County Council's Public Rights of Way Officer:** No comments expressed to date.

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29. **County Council's Biodiversity Officer:** No objections to the proposed development subject to the ecological mitigation proposed as part of the application (as outlined in paragraph 18 above).
30. **County Council's Archaeological Advisor:** No objections to the proposed development and on the basis of the likely previous disturbance at the site advises that no archaeological fieldwork measures will be necessary in this case.

Local Members

31. The local County Member, Mr. A. King was notified of the application on the 21 October 2010.

Publicity

32. The application was publicised by the posting of several site notices around the school site, a newspaper advertisement in the Kent Messenger Malling Edition and the individual notification of 26 nearby residential properties. The site notice and press advert indicated that the proposed development may affect the setting of two nearby Grade II Listed Buildings, together with a nearby Public Right of Way.

Representations

33. To date I have received 8 letters of objection to the planning application. The main points of objection are summarised below:
 - No apparent attempt to deal with the road safety aspect of pupils, cars and coaches entering and exiting the school premises. There is an issue with traffic approaching Paddock Wood from Matfield at speeds substantially in excess of 30mph. There appears to have been no consideration given to using a second entrance to the school in Mascalls Court Road. There is an on-going problem of Sixth Form pupils continuing to park their cars on the verges of Geddes Hill, thus narrowing the road, reducing the vision splay and frequently opening car doors into the flow of traffic. Full consideration of these conflicts must be given, together with clear and enforceable undertaken that these problems will be satisfactorily address prior to any approval of this planning application;
 - Concerns regarding a lack of parking for staff and students on-site currently, and this would be worsened during construction activities;
 - Concerns regarding disruption from construction for local residents;
 - Lack of regard to the former Special Landscape Area [now replaced by Core Strategy Policy 4] within the planning application;
 - Considers that the required additional landscaping proposals associated with the Riley building (planning permission TW/04/1935) were never fully implemented. This application cannot be considered whilst there is still outstanding issues in respect of the previous application;
 - Witnessed the school expand (from Chantlers Hill) with the majority of all new buildings being in-keeping and of a reasonable height. Unfortunately the last addition to the school (the Riley building) was a towering monstrosity extending several metres above the building line of the existing school. Fears that the Riley building has set a new height precedent at the site, and that the proposed building which is much taller than the 'A' block which is seeks to replace, would make an even larger blot on the landscape;

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- Consider the proposed building design to be totally out of keeping for a semi-rural area on the outskirts of Paddock Wood. The design is more akin to contemporary office blocks found in cities today;
 - Proposed development necessitates the removal of existing mature trees on site. Even though replacements are being proposed, they will not be 'mature' for many years;
 - Request that substantial trees be planted along the proposed building's southern boundary to assist with the screening and softening of the new block;
 - Increase in litter in the local area.
34. The above representations were received by the County Planning Authority prior to the applicant proposing a new tree planting scheme of semi-mature trees (as outlined in paragraph 15 above). Residents who previously wrote in connection with this application have been recently sent notification of the changes made by the applicant in respect of additional landscape planting. Any further views received prior to the Committee Meeting will be reported to Members verbally

Discussion

Introduction

35. The application seeks planning permission for the construction of a new maths, English and languages building providing 24 new classrooms, 2 media suites, hall and dining area, kitchen, servery, staff areas and toilet provision. The proposal would be constructed in two phases and involves the demolition of existing 'A' block and the Caretakers House and Workshop at the end of Phase 2 of the development. The application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of the objections received from local residents (as detailed in paragraph 33) relating primarily to visual impact of the proposed new building and local traffic concerns. In considering this proposal, regard must be had to the most relevant Government Guidance, adopted Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (20) and any other key material planning considerations relevant to take into consideration in the decision making process. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
36. The key planning considerations in this particular case can be categorised under the following headings:
- the visual impact of the proposed development on the wider landscape and from key public viewpoints;
 - the impact of the proposed development on the setting of nearby Grade II Listed Buildings;
 - the impact of the proposed development on the local highway network; and
 - any other issues.

Impact on wider landscape and from key public viewpoints

37. Members will note from the site description that the school sits within the slopes of Chantlers Hill, where the land drops in a gentle gradient from south to north, falling from approximately 45m AOD at Chantlers Hill to around 30m AOD at the school entrance and down to around 20m AOD at the start of the built confines of Paddock Wood. It is noted that views of the existing Riley building and to a lesser extent the 'A'

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block are prominent from public viewpoints along Chantlers Hill and from Public Right of Way (WT269) which leads from Chantlers Hill down to Maidstone Road. Views of the roof of the existing Riley building are also prominent along a section of the Maidstone Road to the south west of the school site when driving from the Matfield direction towards Paddock Wood.

38. It is worth noting that the majority of the residential objections received to the proposed development relate to the wider visual impact of the proposed new building upon the landscape and have been received from those properties facing the school site located along Chantlers Hill. It is also worth noting that the classroom block proposed has been designed by the applicant's architect to 'stand out' visually from the existing buildings on site, to create a unique entrance building for the school. It has been designed around a contemporary theme, using limited brickwork, grey/black precast concrete, glass and a variety of aluminium panels in three key sizes which would be finished in varying colours. The exact details of the external materials specification would be agreed by condition with the Planning Authority at a later date. The intention by the School and therefore their architects' design brief has not been to follow a traditional building design form, but to create a unique building fit for the School's modern educational needs.
39. The submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) Report undertaken by the applicant has concluded that the completed scheme (Phase 2) would result in a '*insignificant*' impact on the wider landscape character both at regional and local level, together with a '*minor-adverse*' impact on views gained from Chantlers Hill. The LVIA Report recognises the potential for additional landscape planting along the southern edge of the proposed new classroom building. Subsequent to the publication of this report and in light of the concerns received during the application consultation period the applicant has now offered a new tree planting scheme. The proposed tree planting put forward by the applicant would, in my opinion, assist in screening the proposed building from views to the south and would help to soften it within the wider landscape more generally. I note that the County Council's Landscape Consultant considers that the proposed tree planting specification (which includes the planting of 18 semi-mature trees ranging between 4-5.5 metres in height and consisting of a native mix of oak, ash, hornbeam and alder) is in accordance with best practice guidelines and that the number of trees and locations proposed is satisfactory in this instance. I propose that this planting scheme be secured by condition and the applicant be required to implement the scheme fully within the first planting season following completion of Phase 1 of the development.
40. As part of the works to facilitate the proposed development, the application includes the removal of 18 trees and two groups of trees under or close to the development footprint. These trees have generally been classified as having low-moderate quality and value, with several requiring removal in any case for sound arboricultural reasons. I consider that the overall benefit of new landscape planting, predominantly along the southern boundary of the new building and the site, would far outweigh the loss of existing vegetation from around the existing 'A' block. Subject to tree removal works being timed to avoid the bird breeding season, as indicated in the application and outlined in paragraph (18) above, I would accept their loss as part of the proposed development. Furthermore, I do not consider the trees proposed to be removed to facilitate the development have a significant wider landscape/visual benefit when viewing the site from public viewpoints. In order to safeguard those trees in relative close proximity to the new building which are due to be retained as part of the development, I propose that a condition be placed on any decision requiring the applicant to erect and maintain suitable tree protection fencing around all trees/groups

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of trees to be retained in accordance with British Standard 5837:2005 'Trees in Relation to Construction' for the duration of construction activities.

41. The proposed classroom building, intended to extend to a maximum roof height of 50.2m AOD (plus a further limited roof screen intended to cover necessary roof plant and equipment which would extend to a maximum height of 51.3m AOD) would sit just over 5 metres above that of the existing roof height of the 'A' block (currently 45.08m AOD). It should be noted however that the proposed building would have a lower finished roof height than the adjacent Riley building (52.08m AOD) and would appear visually less prominent in views from the south when compared to the Riley building as it would sit approximately 40 metres further north within the site confines than the southern most elevation of the Riley building. It would also be located on a lower ground level to that of the adjacent Riley building, hence the ability of the proposed new building to make use of a three storey building above a 'cut-in' lower ground floor entrance area.
42. Members will note that concern has been expressed from local residents regarding the potential establishment of the principle of tall buildings on the site, and the subsequent justification of new buildings on the basis of existing buildings already having been allowed on site (i.e. the existing Riley building). Whilst I acknowledge the concern expressed in this instance, I would stress that each application has to be determined on its own merits against key Development Plan Policy and other material planning considerations. Taking account of the proposed tree mitigation planting put forward by the applicant which would be implemented in full at the end of Phase 1 of the development, I do not consider the scale or location of the proposed building to be unacceptable in wider landscape and visual terms. Whilst I note that there would inevitably be a change to wider views across the site, particularly those from the south from Chantlers Hill and to the south west from a section of Maidstone Road, I do not consider this change in view to be of overriding detriment sufficient to warrant refusal of planning permission for this development. In particular, general views across the site would be altered only marginally and not completely interrupted. Members will also be aware that the importance of privately obtainable views is not a material planning consideration. On balance I therefore consider these proposals to be in general conformity to South East Plan Policy C4 which seeks to protect the region's landscape outside nationally designated landscapes and Local Plan Policy EN1 which seeks to ensure that proposals take account of the context of the existing site in terms of scale, height, orientation, materials and landscaping.
43. In assessing the proposed development against Local Plan Policy EN25 which covers development proposals outside of the limits of built development, I accept the applicant's argument that the existing building stock on site (notably the 'A' block) is not suitable to facilitate modern educational requirements and consider that the expense required to extensively refurbish this building to modern standards would not be justifiable over and above its demolition and replacement by a new purpose built building. Whilst I accept that the proposed new building would not respect local building styles and materials, which typically consist of brick and render finishes in the locality, I consider the proposals to be acceptable when assessed against the applicant's intention to create a unique and inviting building to act as a focal reception point for the school. I have already considered that the proposed building would not have an unacceptable visual change on the wider landscape for the reasons stated in paragraph (42 above) and therefore I consider the proposals to be in general conformity to Local Plan Policy EN25 which seeks to control development proposals outside the Limits of Built Development.

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44. For the same landscape and visual impact reasons as discussed above, I do not consider the proposed development to have an unacceptable impact on the overall landscape such that users' enjoyment of the existing Public Right of Way would be significantly harmed through the proposed development.

Impact of proposed development on the setting of nearby Listed Buildings

45. Members will note that two Grade II Listed Buildings (Oast House and Mascalls Pound) are located approximately 90 metres to the North West of the application site on the opposite side of Maidstone Road to the main school vehicular and pedestrian entrance. These two properties currently enjoy considerable boundary screening from Maidstone Road through a mixture of trees, shrubs and hedgerow which arguably forms an important part of their setting around the curtilage of the Listed Buildings. Within the school site existing trees provide further visual screening to the existing 'A' block and location of the new building. Whilst a number of groups of trees are due to be removed from the north west corner of the proposed new building, the applicant has proposed the planting of a new group of 5 hornbeam trees (extra heavy standard) and 1 ash tree (extra heavy standard) to act as compensatory planting in this location. These trees would supplement existing planting and form part of a green lung into the new building and into the wider school site more generally. Given the considerable separation distance (approximately 90 metres) between the two Listed Buildings and the proposed development, the existing landscape screening around each Listed Building's boundary and within the school site, and the separation by Maidstone Road, I do not consider the proposed development to adversely affect the setting of either Listed Building. Whilst it is important to protect the immediate setting of Listed Buildings the proposed development is too distant to be regarded as within the immediate setting. On this basis I consider the proposal to accord to South East Plan Policy BE6 and Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy Policy 4.

Local highway network considerations

46. As outlined in paragraph (19) above, this application does not propose to increase the current school roll as part of these proposals, but instead seeks to address building quality and space standard issues which the School currently experiences. Similarly, the application does not seek to increase the number of teaching and support staff at the school as a result of the proposed development. On the basis of no increase in either staff or pupil numbers at the site, the application does not propose any additional car parking or cycle parking spaces at the site.
47. Members will note that resident concerns have been expressed regarding the current lack of parking within the site, resulting in Sixth Form students parking vehicles outside of the school premises during school hours. Concerns have also been expressed regarding the safety aspects of speeding cars travelling along Maidstone Road in excess of 30mph. It has been suggested within the objections received (the key points of which are summarised in paragraph 33 above) that full considerations of these existing highway problems must be addressed before any decision can be made in respect of this planning application. Whilst I can sympathise with the views received, on the basis that the school roll and number of staff employed at the site would not change as a result of these proposals, I am unable to insist that the applicant provides additional parking facilities on their site. In any case, I note that it is not standard policy for secondary schools within Kent to provide adequate parking spaces on site for all Sixth Form students who choose to drive to/from school. I consider that this problem is an ongoing school management issue and one which cannot justifiably be solved through the current planning application given that no increase in staff or pupil

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numbers is being proposed in this instance. Similarly, the issue of cars speeding along Maidstone Road is not a function which the County Planning Authority has jurisdiction over, but instead would be a matter for the Highway Authority to consider separately outside of the current planning application process. Again I do not consider there to be a direct correlation between potential speeding cars using Maidstone Road and the current planning proposals at the school, particularly given that there would be no additional movements of traffic to/from the site on the local highway network as a result of these proposals.

48. Concerns have been expressed regarding the potential for adverse impacts of construction related traffic associated with the proposed development on the local community, both in terms of deliveries to/from the site during construction activities and in terms of conflicts between contractors and existing staff being able to park adequately on the site simultaneously. In order to address construction related impacts I propose that the applicant be required to submit a Construction Management Plan for approval prior to the commencement of any construction activities on site. This Plan will be required to cover all aspects of construction, including the phasing of works, details of construction routes to/from the site and details of the contractors working compound and parking areas.
49. Consistent with the views of the Divisional Transportation Manager, I would also seek to impose a condition on any decision to ensure that mud and debris is not tracked onto the public highway during construction activities, through the use of satisfactory wheel cleaning equipment being installed on site for the duration of construction works. Subject to the prior submission and approval of a Construction Management Plan and that appropriate measures be used on site to control mud and debris during construction activities, notwithstanding the views received from local residents, I would not seek to raise objection to the proposed development in this instance in respect of local highway matters.

Other Issues

50. The applicant proposes ecological mitigation measures, as detailed in paragraph (18) above, which include the timing of tree and shrub clearance works to avoid the bird breeding season, measures to avoid harm to badgers during construction activities, biodiversity enhancement measures at the site and the full survey of all existing buildings to be demolished for the presence of bats prior to the commencement of demolition works. Subject to these measures being carried out, I note that the County Council's Biodiversity Officer does not raise objections to the proposals. I would therefore not seek to raise an objection to the proposed development in relation to ecological matters.
51. Members will note that the Borough Council has expressed some concerns regarding the loss of an area of existing hard play surface under the footprint of the proposed development. Whilst these concerns regarding the proposed building's encroachment onto an existing hard-surfaced play space are noted, the loss of existing space would be compensated for as part of the Phase 2 landscape strategy which is located broadly on the footprint of the existing 'A' block to be demolished. Therefore, the School has considered that the proposals would not result in a detrimental impact on sporting or informal play areas at their site. I therefore would not seek to raise concern in respect of this matter.

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52. It is noted that concerns have also been expressed from residents that the original landscape planting scheme, as required pursuant to the Riley building planning permission (reference TW/04/1935), were never fully implemented by the applicant. Having examined this matter on site against the approved landscaping scheme details, I note that parts of the proposed tree, scrub and hedgerow planting were not fully carried out as approved and that a number of species have subsequently died and not been replaced. I have been in discussion with the School regarding this matter, and they have undertaken to fully implement the original landscaping planting (as approved under permission TW/04/1935) at the earliest opportunity. I will therefore continue to work with the School to ensure the successful resolution of this matter which, for the reasons discussed above, I consider to be important to the overall softening of the visual appearance of the Riley building into the wider landscape. As this matter is not directly related to the current planning proposals being considered, but is relevant to the aesthetics of the site more generally and falls within the applicant's control, I propose to secure by condition that the applicant fully review and plant the required trees/shrubs/hedgerow required under permission TW/04/1935, at the earliest possible opportunity. At the latest, I propose that the applicant must fully implement the required Riley building landscape planting during the first planting season following completion of Phase 1 of this proposed development, which would then tie in with the new tree planting proposed to visually soften the proposed new building from views to the south.
53. Members will note that concerns have also been raised regarding the potential for litter to increase around the site as a result of the current proposal. Whilst I acknowledge the concerns expressed here, I note that this is actually a school management issue and not a matter which can be controlled by the Planning Authority. In any case, given that the school roll is not intended to be increased as part of these proposals, I consider it would be hard to argue that litter nuisance would increase as a direct result of this application.

Conclusion

54. The proposal seeks planning permission for new accommodation at an existing school site. The application has met with objections from local residents, as outlined in paragraph (33), mainly relating to the visual impact of the proposed building on the wider landscape and a perceived detrimental impact on the local highway network. Having considered the wider visual impact of the proposed new classroom block upon key public viewpoints from outside of the application site, notably those views from Chantlers Hill to the south, I accept that there would be an inevitable visual change to long-distance landscape views of the school. That change however, when considered against the proposed planting of semi mature native trees to the south of the proposed building, is not considered to be unacceptable in wider landscape and visual terms. For the reasons as set out above I would not seek to raise objection to the proposed building on wider landscape and visual impact grounds and consider that the proposals broadly accord with adopted Development Plan Policy.
55. Whilst I acknowledge that concerns have been expressed from residents regarding a perceived unacceptable impact on the local highway network as a result of the proposed development, given that the school pupil roll and staff numbers at the site are not proposed to be increased as part of this planning application, I cannot substantiate a planning objection to these proposals in respect of highway matters. Subject to appropriate controls to mitigate the impacts of construction related mud and debris from entering onto the public highway and the submission and agreement of a

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Construction Management Plan, I would not raise objection to the proposed development on such grounds. Furthermore, I note that this view is shared by the Divisional Transportation Manager. For the reasons set out above within this report I therefore recommend accordingly.

Recommendation

56. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO conditions to cover (amongst other matters) the following:

- 5 year implementation period;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- full implementation of the tree planting scheme (associated with the proposed development) as proposed within the application within the first planting season following the completion of Phase 1;
- implementation of original Riley building landscaping measures (as originally agreed pursuant to permission TW/04/1935) within first planting season following completion of Phase 1;
- submission for approval the details of internal site landscaping measures, including proposed allotments, orchard, sculpture garden and wildflower meadow and subsequent implementation within first planting season following completion of Phase 2;
- erection and subsequent maintenance of tree protection fencing (in accordance with British Standard) around all trees/groups of trees to be retained during construction activities;
- approval of details of all external materials to be used (Phase 1 and 2) prior to construction;
- appropriate measures installed on site to prevent mud and debris being tracked out of the site to the public highway;
- submission and approval of a Construction Management Plan prior to commencement of construction activities;
- existing Caretaker's House and Caretaker's Workshop to be demolished upon completion of Phase 1;
- existing 'A' Block to be demolished upon completion of Phase 2;
- ecological mitigation measures be undertaken in full as detailed in paragraph (18) above; and
- submission and approval of foul and surface water drainage schemes prior to commencement.

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