

**First floor extension to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School for Girls – GR/11/330**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 14 June 2011.

Application by the Governing Body of Northfleet School for Girls for first floor extension above existing Food Technology rooms to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School For Girls, Hall Road, Northfleet, Gravesend – GR/11/330

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr L. Christie & Mr H. Craske

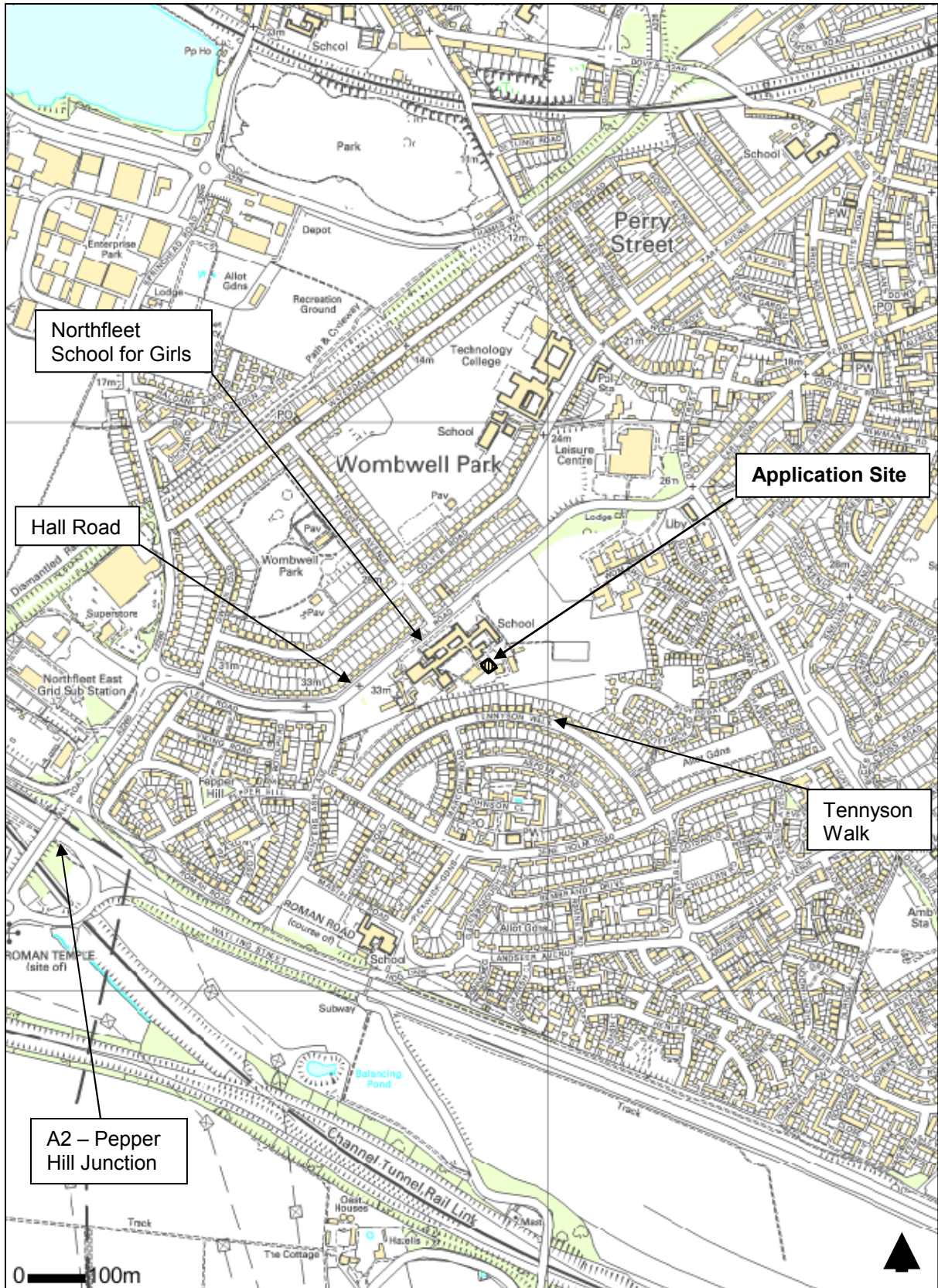
Classification: Unrestricted

**Site**

1. The application site falls within the grounds of Northfleet School for Girls. The school is located approximately 2 km south-west of Gravesend town centre, and 0.5 km to the north-east of the Pepper Hill junction on the A2 – see attached location plan. The school grounds extend to approximately 7.9 hectares, consisting of playing fields, a variety of modern single and two storey school buildings, associated car parks, courtyards and hard play areas. The pedestrian and vehicular accesses are located along the southern side of Hall Road. Residential properties adjoin the school grounds on all sides, the closest of which to the application site are approximately 30m to the south on Tennyson Walk.
2. The proposed site forms a flat roofed area above a single storey food technology building that abuts an adjoining two storey building at first floor level. The proposed location is to the rear of the school grounds and is not visible within the Hall Road street scene. The flat roof lies between two-storey buildings to the east and west; to the north are the bulk of the main school buildings, including internal court yard areas, with an area of hard standing, a mature landscaped boundary and properties in Tennyson Walk positioned to the south.
3. The application site falls within a designated built-up area, as defined in the Gravesham Borough Local Plan (1994) Proposals Map. The site is also identified within the Local Plan Second Review (deposit version) as part of an existing Green Grid (Policy LT2). The Local Plan Second Review did not proceed to adoption and the green grid is not referred to within the saved policies within the First Review (1994). There are no other site-specific Development Plan Policies identified in connection with the application site, although general policies are set out in paragraph (9).

## Item D2

### First floor extension to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School – GR/11/330

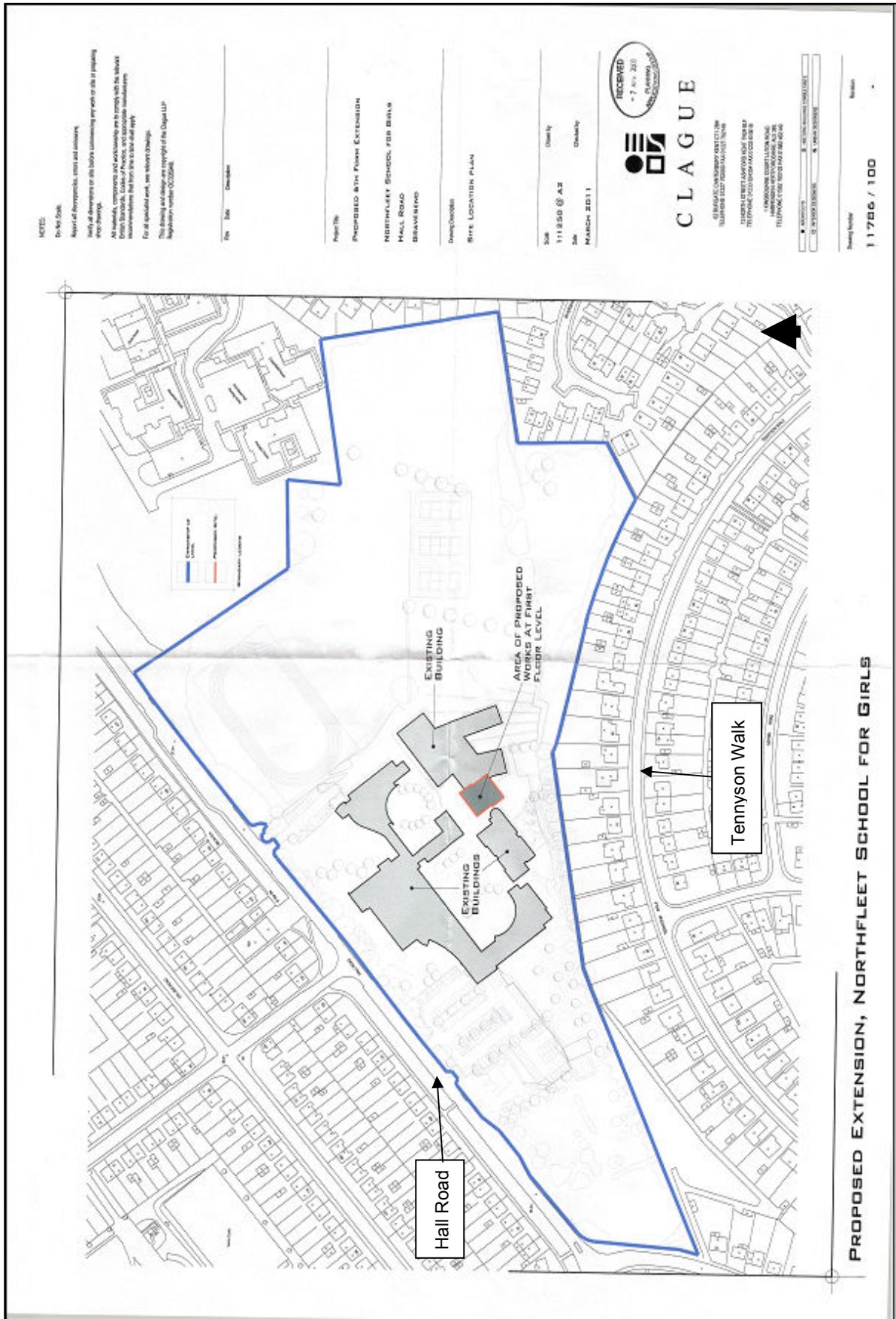


**Site Location Plan**



**Item D2**

**First floor extension to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School – GR/11/330**



**NOTES:**

Do Not Scale.  
 Report all discrepancies, errors and omissions.  
 Verify all dimensions on site before commencing any work or site preparation.  
 All materials, components and accessories are to comply with the relevant British Standards, Codes of Practice, and applicable Regulations. Recommendations that form part of this report apply.  
 For all specialist work, see relevant drawings.  
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Rev. Date Description

**Project Title**

PROPOSED 8TH FLOOR EXTENSION  
 NORTHFLEET SCHOOL, 7TH DRIVE  
 HALL ROAD  
 BRAYLEVERHOPE

**Drawn/Checked**

Site Location Plan

**Scale**

1:11850 @ A2

**Date**

MARCH 2011



**CLAGUE**

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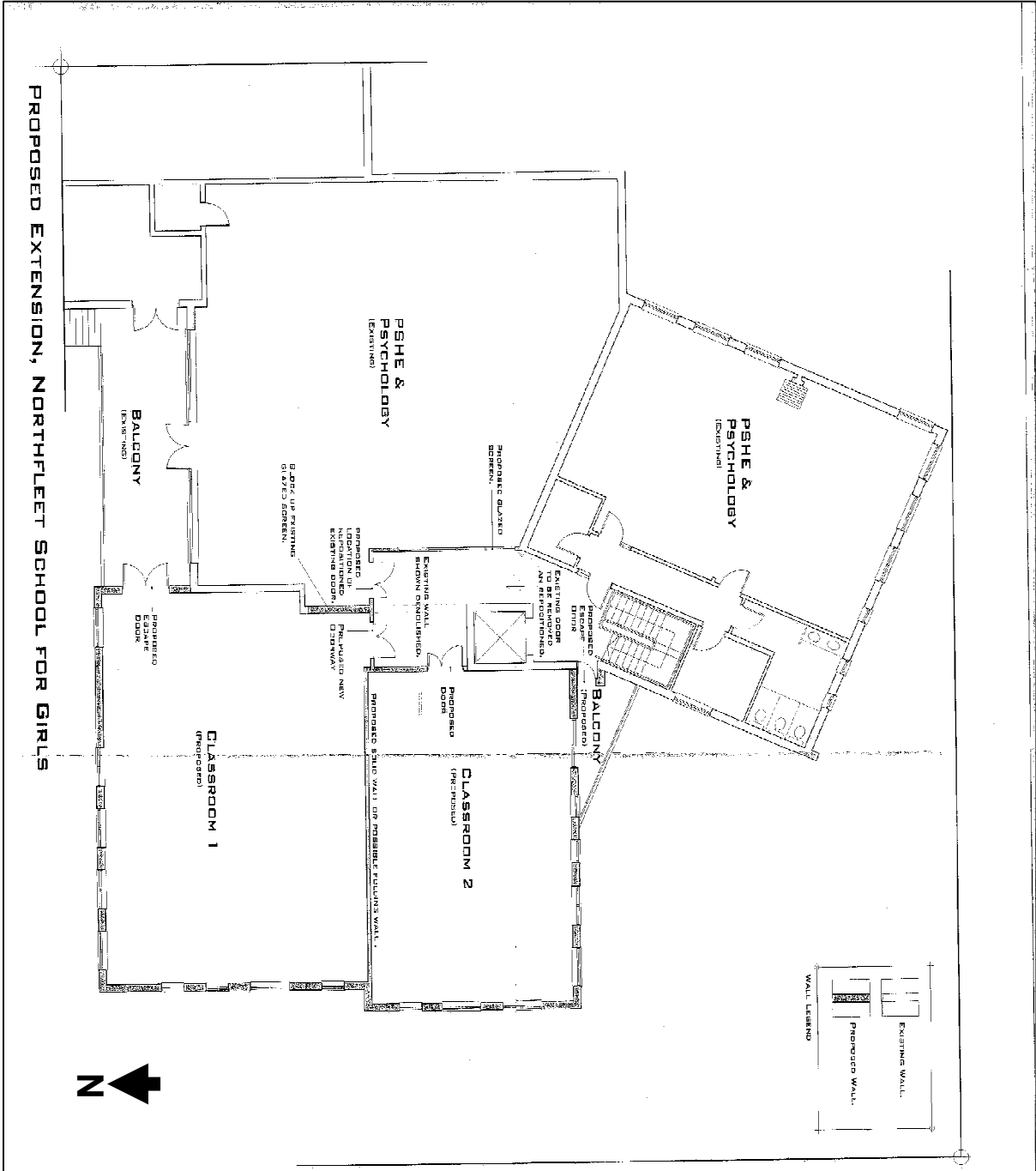
**Drawing Number**

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PROPOSED EXTENSION, NORTHFLEET SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

# Item D2

## First floor extension to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School – GR/11/330



NOTES

D2: Not scale

Report all discrepancies, errors and omissions.

Verify all dimensions on site before commencing the day work on site or proceeding with drawings.

All materials, components and workmanship to comply with relevant British Standards. Codes of Practice and appropriate instructions from manufacturers for their use of use shall apply.

For all specialist work see relevant drawings.

The drawings and design are copyright of Clague LLP and are not to be used for other purposes.

DATE: 11.08.2010  
 DRAWN BY: [Signature]  
 CHECKED BY: [Signature]  
 PROJECT NO: GR/11/330

PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN

**CLAUDE**

11.08.2010 @ A2

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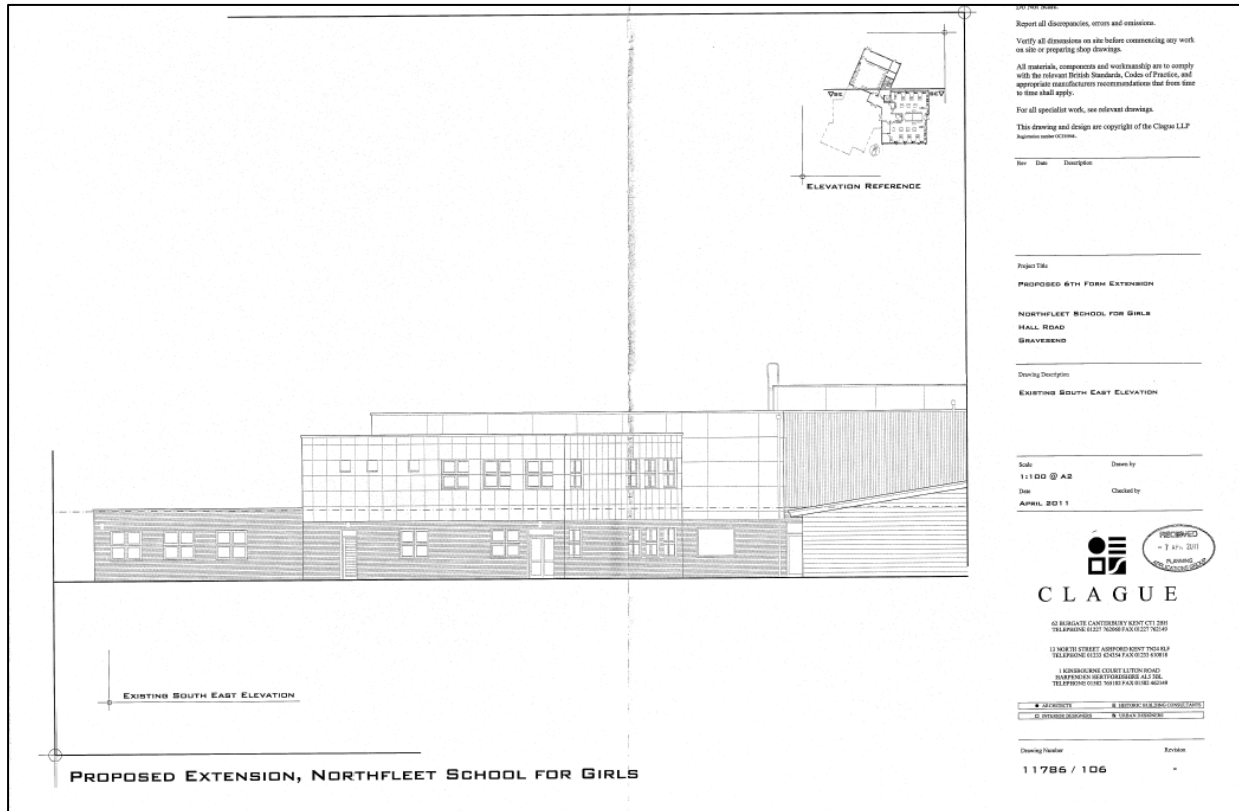
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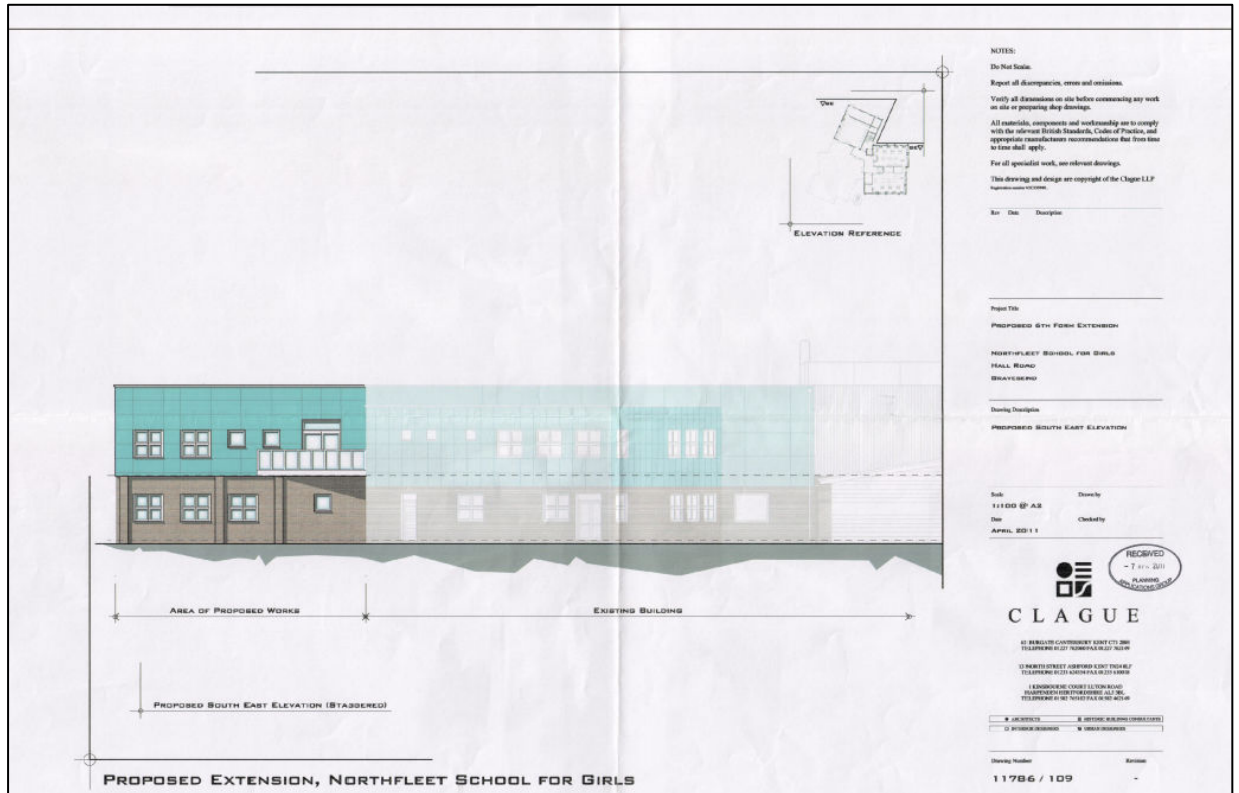


# Item D2

## First floor extension to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School – GR/11/330



**Existing South East Elevation**



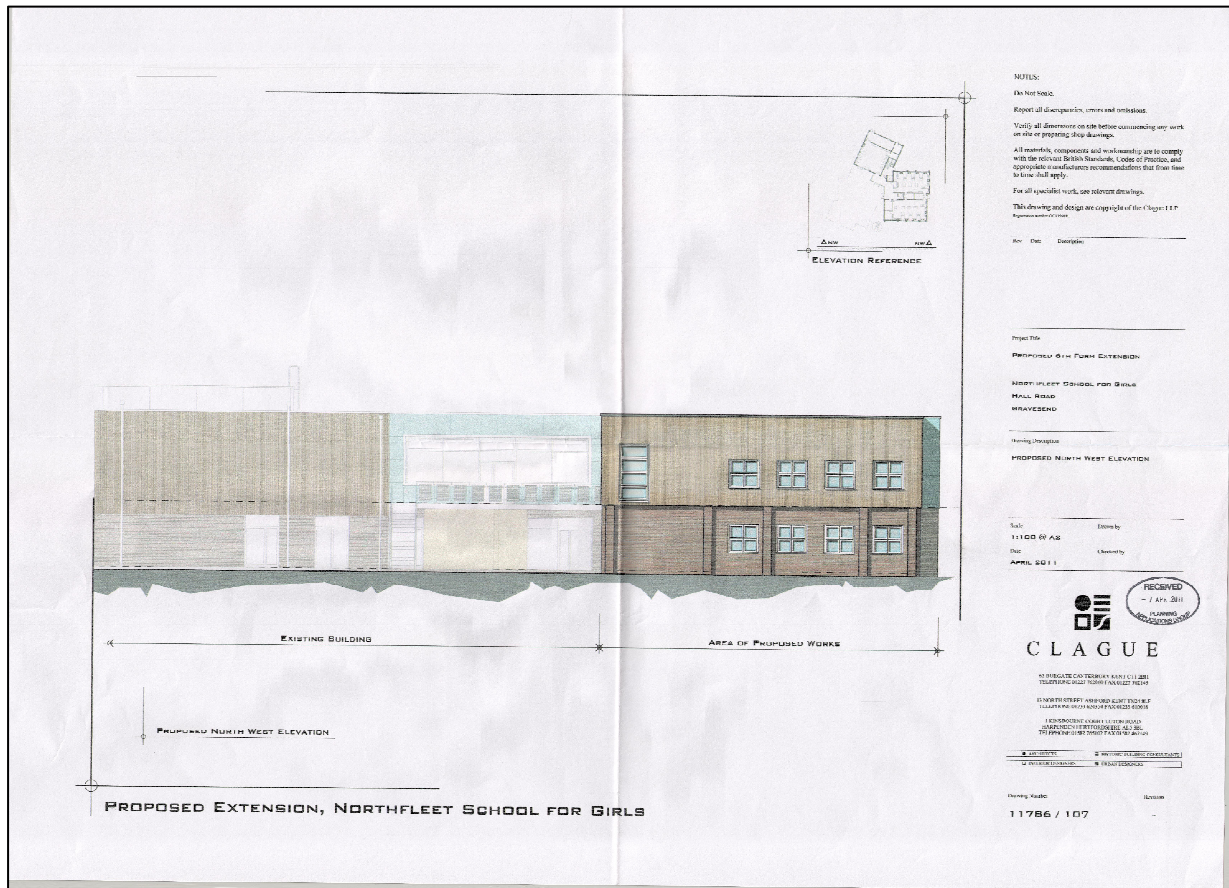
**Proposed South East Elevation**

# Item D2

## First floor extension to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School – GR/11/330



**Proposed South West Elevation**



**Proposed North West Elevation**

### First floor extension to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School – GR/11/330

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#### Background

4. Northfleet School for Girls is currently undergoing significant redevelopment as part of the County Council's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, under planning permission GR/08/229. This programme included the retention, refurbishment and extension of part of the building stock, as well as major demolition and new build. The above site location plan details the approved final site layout on completion of the BSF programme. This programme is currently in its final phases with the major construction largely complete, demolition phases and general landscape works ongoing.
5. Other recent planning history for the site includes retention of a mobile classroom unit (planning reference GR/11/54), and construction of a general teaching block, technology block, extended access road and new car park (GR/04/678).

#### Proposal

6. The application has been submitted on behalf of the Governors of Northfleet School proposing the construction of a first floor extension to an existing school building to provide two additional classrooms. The two new classrooms would be accommodated over an existing flat roof building, providing approximately 285m<sup>2</sup> of floor space. The proposal is designed in a similar fashion to the existing school buildings, continuing the vernacular through use of vertically mounted timber weatherboarding and cyan colour cladding panels to match the surrounding development.
7. The application indicates that it has always been the School's intention to provide first floor accommodation in the proposed location. The existing building was originally designed with the extension in mind; the staircase and lift are located accordingly and the foundations and roof structure constructed to easily allow for a first floor extension. The School had wished to include this development within the BSF programme, however there was insufficient budget as part of that project to complete the extension.
8. The applicant confirms that the classroom space is needed by the School to support the educational needs of its 6<sup>th</sup> form (post-16) pupils. The applicant notes that the design of the new school buildings delivered through the BSF programme reflects the need for more practical spaces for vocational subjects. However, this has resulted in large open plan teaching areas that are not conducive to the study of more academic subjects by 6<sup>th</sup> form pupils. The application also indicates that in the current climate the School is finding that more pupils are remaining on into the 6<sup>th</sup> form, which has expanded the school roll from the 1062 pupils intended under the BSF programme to over 1200 pupils as of September 2010. The two classrooms would help to improve the space available to support the educational needs of the current number of 6<sup>th</sup> form pupils, who have restricted study and social space within the BSF buildings.

#### Planning Policy

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

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

**Policy SP3** Seeks to focus development within urban areas to foster access to services and avoid unnecessary travel.



**First floor extension to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School – GR/11/330**

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- Policy CC1** Seeks to achieve and maintain sustainable development in the region.
- Policy CC4** Seeks new development to adopt sustainable construction standards and techniques.
- Policy CC6** Seeks sustainable and distinctive communities that respect the character of settlements and landscapes, and achieve a high quality built environment.
- Policy KTG1** Amongst other matters, seeks to set high standards of design and sustainability, and to raise standards of education.
- Policy S3** Seeks to ensure the adequate provision of pre-school, school, and community learning facilities.

*Members will already be aware of the relevant South East Plan policy considerations in relation to the proposed development, in that The Plan was revoked and later reinstated pending the enactment of the Localism Bill. Members will also be aware that they have to have regard to the policies in the SEP and the Government's intention to abolish the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) as material considerations. However the weight to be accorded is a matter for the decision makers.*

**(ii) The adopted Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) (saved policies):**

- Policy TC0** Seeks to conserve and enhance the built environment; particular importance will be attached to the design of new development and environmental improvements.
- Policy TC1** Presumes against new development which would cause harm to interests of acknowledged importance. Seeks new development that respects: the scale and massing of its surroundings; the principles of the Kent Design Guide; the character and appearance of the existing built development; the privacy and amenity of adjoining residents; and uses good quality materials that are sympathetic to the area concerned.

**(iii) The deposit version Gravesham Borough Local Plan Second Review (2000):**

*The policies contained in the deposit Local Plan 2nd Review are a material consideration for the purposes of Development Control but it is acknowledged that they have limited weight except where they are consistent with current government guidance and the saved policies in the Local Plan 1st Review.*

- Policy BE1** Seeks to conserve and enhance the built environment; particular importance will be attached to the design of new development and environmental improvements.
- Policy BE12** Seeks all new development to be of a high standard of design that: respects the character and appearance of the surrounding environment, including in terms of the scale, massing and height; and incorporates good quality materials and sustainable design principles.

### **First floor extension to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School – GR/11/330**

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**Policy LT2** Seeks to preserve and protect the existing Green Grid network.

**Policy SC3** Seeks to support schools as important community resources.

#### **Consultations**

10. **Gravesham Borough Council** – no comments have been received at the time of writing this report; any received prior to the Committee Meeting will be reported verbally.

#### **Local Members**

11. The local County Members for Gravesend West, Mr Christie and Mr Craske, were notified of the application on 12 April 2011.

#### **Publicity**

12. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice, and the notification of 9 individual neighbouring properties.

#### **Representations**

13. In response to the publicity, 1 letter of representation has been received from a neighbouring property on Tennyson Walk. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:

- Objects to the noise that would be generated during the construction period;
- Notes that many of the neighbouring residents are retired and are therefore at home during the day; as such they are more heavily affected by the nuisance and noise generated within the site;
- Notes that the school grounds adjacent to Tennyson Walk have been subject to intermittent building works for 9 years, with the current BSF programme due to finish in the near future. Raises concern that the BSF project has overrun the construction period originally indicated;
- Considers it would be unfair and unjust to permit a further building programme.

#### **Discussion**

14. The application seeks planning permission for the construction of a first floor extension to an existing school building to provide two classrooms. The proposal is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of one letter of objection received from a nearby resident; this letter raises concerns about noise and disruption that would be generated during construction (please see paragraph (13)).

15. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (9) above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore the proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.

**First floor extension to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School – GR/11/330**

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16. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this case can be summarised by the following:

- the development plan policy context
- siting and design; and
- other material considerations.

Policy context, siting and design

17. The application site is located within the built confines of Northfleet as defined in the Gravesham Borough Local Plan Proposals Map. The site is identified within the Local Plan Second Review as part of a green-grid within the built up area. However, the application proposes a first floor extension to an existing building and as such would not impact on open space within the school grounds. The key Development Plan policies seek to ensure any new development conserves and enhances the existing built environment through a high standard of design, encouraging sustainable development that respects the character and appearance of the existing built development, including the privacy and amenity of neighbouring property.

18. The design solution proposed draws on the surrounding school buildings seeking to match and enhance the character of the built development to the east and west, including through the use of the external materials detailed. The proposal would not extend the footprint of the existing building, which is approximately 30 metres from the school's boundary with residential property in Tennyson Walk. The distance to the boundary and the existing mature planting on this boundary would serve to ensure that there would be no material impact on the privacy within the rear gardens of property in Tennyson Walk as a result of this proposal. It is noted that a number of the existing two storey buildings along this boundary extend closer to adjacent properties than the proposed scheme. I am satisfied that the development as proposed would accord with the Development Plan in terms of its siting and design.

Other material considerations

19. One letter of objection has been received from a nearby resident, objecting to the potential for disruption and noise that would be caused during any construction period. Gravesham Local Plan (1994) Policy TC1 presumes against new development that would harm the amenity of adjoining residents.

20. Members will note that there have been a number of recent construction projects permitted at this school, including the ongoing redevelopment under the BSF programme. The BSF programme has continued on site for well over a year involving the major redevelopment of almost all buildings on site. The construction project has inevitably resulted in a level of noise and disruption; however I am aware that the lead contractor has attempted to minimise this impact as far as practicable.

21. As previously indicated, the application site falls within a line of buildings that run almost parallel to southern boundary of the school with residential properties on Tennyson Walk. The site is approximately 30 metres from the boundary, with mature planting running along the perimeter of the grounds. This landscaped area, which has been enhanced over the years, provides a mitigating screen between the school grounds and residential property.



**First floor extension to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School – GR/11/330**

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22. The applicant has indicated that if planning permission were to be granted the proposed construction would be programmed to overlap the current BSF construction activity. The BSF project is expected to be completed in August, six weeks after the proposed scheme would start on site if planning permission were to be granted. The proposed extension would then be programmed to be completed by mid December 2011.
23. The applicant has confirmed that the type of construction work proposed is different to that which has preceded it under the BSF project. Firstly, there is no demolition and little excavation work required, which is often the most disruptive from a noise point of view. Furthermore, the vast majority of external building activity is expected to be complete by mid October, after which all the work would be confined within the building, thus minimising the noise significantly. The applicant has also advised that after September 2011 the construction work would be taking place directly above teaching spaces that will be occupied by the school. Consequently, the level of noise would need to be kept to a minimum for both students and residents.
24. The construction method would incorporate the use of a timber frame for the external envelope, removing the need for cement mixers and other noisy plant after the columns at ground floor have been encased in brickwork. This should also serve to minimise any dust resulting from construction on site. In addition, the applicant advises that power would be taken from the existing school supply removing the need for compressors or generators on site. Also, because the construction would not incorporate use of any large format construction materials, other than steel columns, there would be minimal movements involving larger vehicles after the initial stages of construction.
25. The contractor's compound would have to be located on the hard standing south of the application site between the school buildings and Tennyson Walk because access to any other position is not practicable. However, the applicant indicates that the contractor would be signed up to the Considerate Contractor's Scheme and would be bound by Gravesham Borough's own Code of Practice for Construction; both of these seek to minimise unnecessary disturbance to nearby residents, ensure best practice and encourage contractors to be considerate neighbours.
26. Whilst the proposal would inevitably result in some disruption to the surrounding residential properties, the project would not be on the scale of the previous BSF programme. Given the considerations set out above, I am satisfied that the temporary construction period would not have an unacceptable impact on residential amenities through noise and disruption. If planning permission were to be granted, works on site would be controlled under the Borough Council's Environmental Health Department's Code of Practice for Construction, and the Considerate Contractors Scheme. I further recommend that any planning permission be subject to the imposition of a condition controlling the hours of construction to 0800 to 1800 hours Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays) and 0900 to 1300 hours on a Saturday only.

**Conclusion**

27. In conclusion, I am satisfied that the proposed development would be acceptable in terms of its siting, design and appearance, and that, subject to appropriate conditions, any impacts upon residential and local amenities could be adequately mitigated and managed during any construction period. Taking into account the provisions of the Development Plan and material considerations raised, I recommend that planning

## Item D2

### First floor extension to provide two additional classrooms at Northfleet School – GR/11/330

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permission be granted subject to the conditions set out within the recommendation below.

#### Recommendation

28. I RECOMMEND THAT PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions, including:

- the standard time limit;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- the development to be constructed using the materials set out in the drawings received; and
- hours of working during construction.

Case officer – James Bickle
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Background documents - See section heading
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