

Installation of 2 Classrooms in a Prefabricated Unit at Challock Primary School, Church Lane, Challock-AS/11/594

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 26 July 2011.

Application by Kent County Council, Capital and Premises Development Unit, for the installation of 2 classrooms and toilets in a prefabricated building, and associated ground works, including an extension to the playground, at Challock Primary School, Church Lane, Challock – AS/11/594 (KCC/AS/0228/2011)

Recommendation: permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr Richard King

Classification: Unrestricted

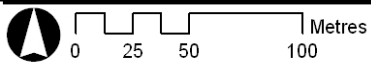
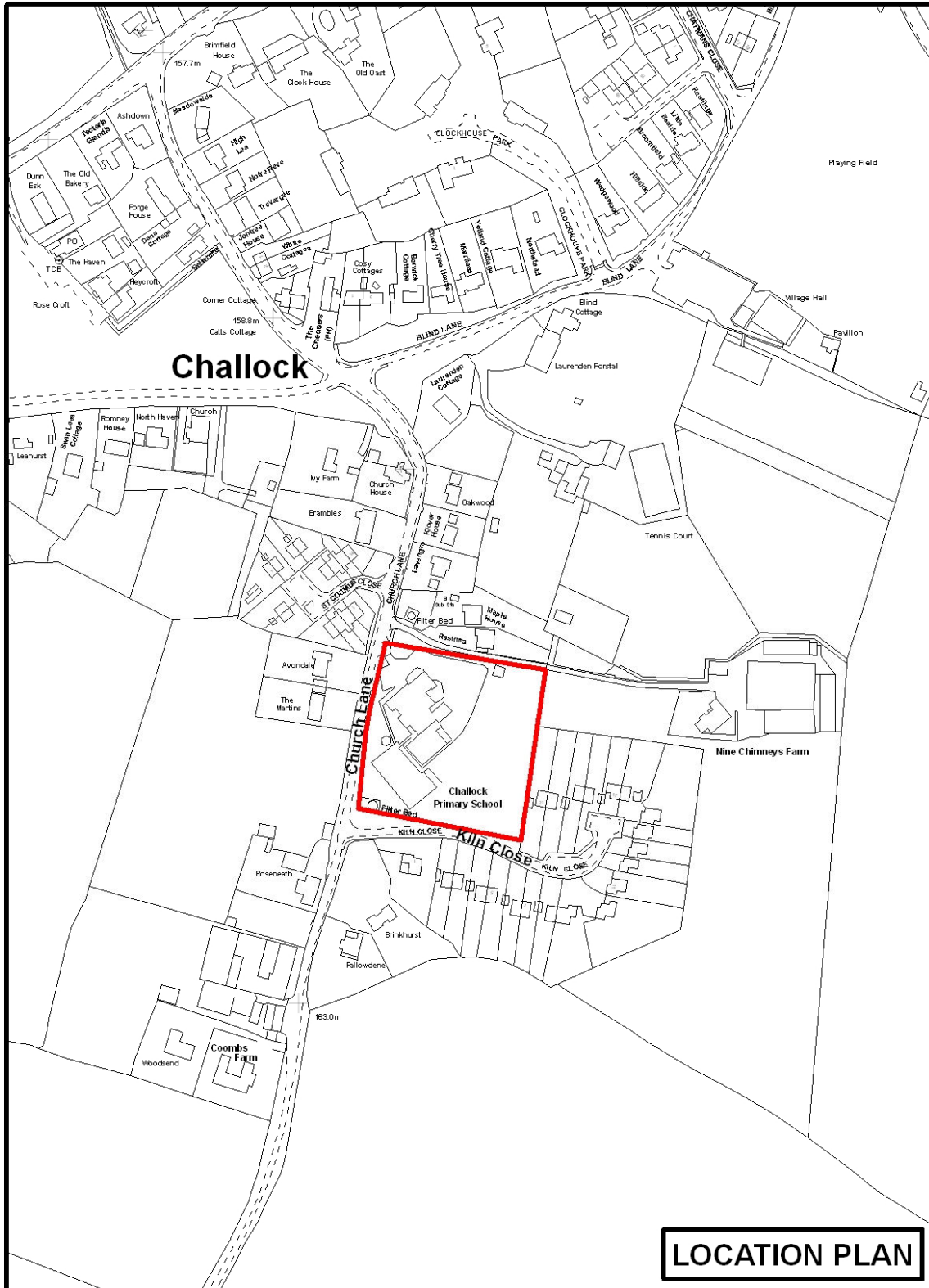
Site

1. Challock is a small village to the north of Ashford, situated on a cross roads between the A251 and the A252. Challock Primary School is situated to the south of the village, to the east of Church Lane. Although the school is bound by residential properties to the south and west in Kiln Close, and properties in Church Lane to the north and part of the west, the site is rural in character, with open agricultural fields to the west of Church Lane, and to the south of Kiln Close. The boundary of the school site is heavily vegetated with a substantial hedgerow, some mature trees, and a grass verge to Kiln Close and Church Lane. The school buildings, car parking and playgrounds are located to the western half of the site, with playing fields extending to the east. The proposed development is located to the south of the site, on existing grass playing field, adjacent to the existing playground. The whole of the school site is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. *A site location plan is attached.*

Proposal

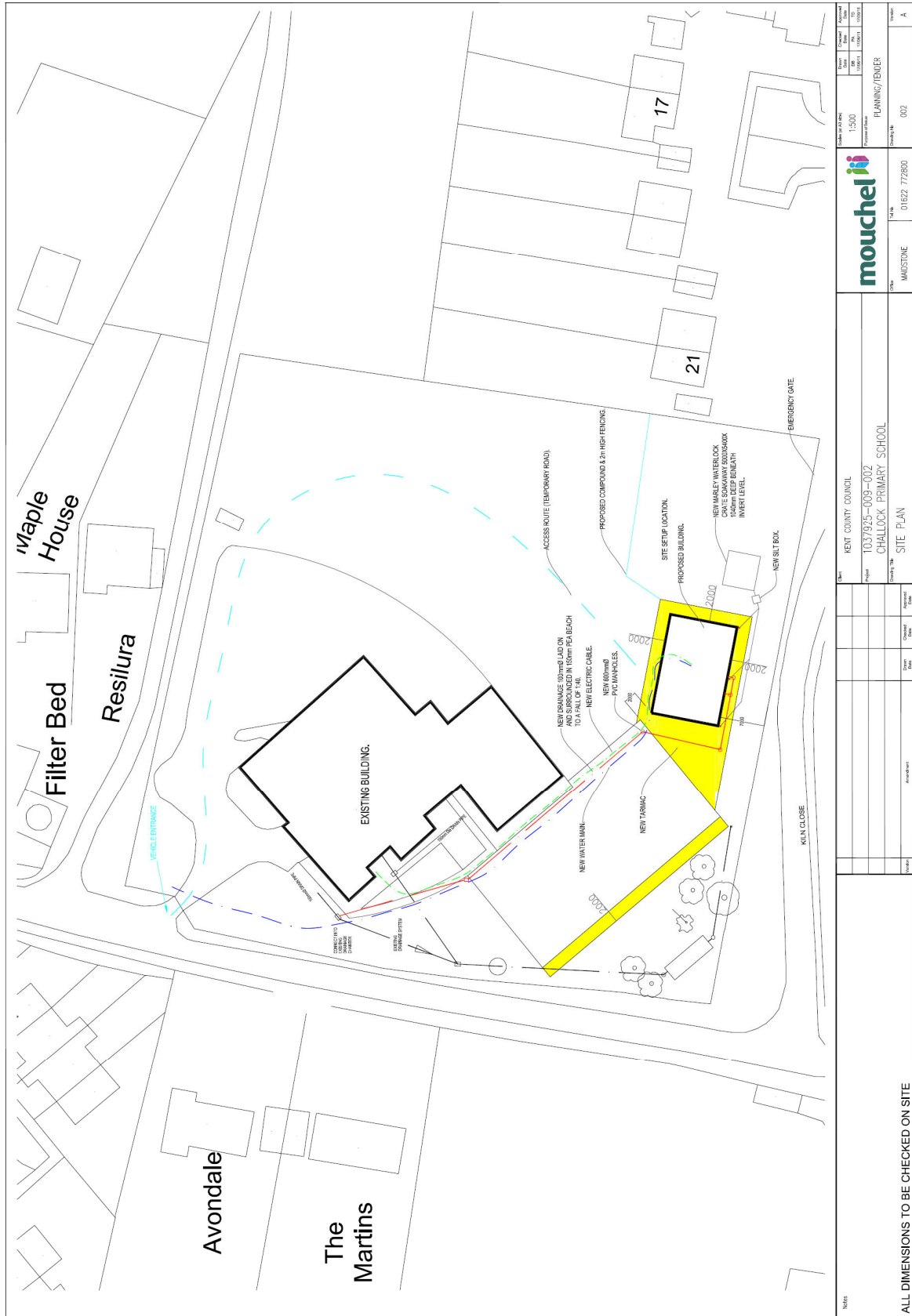
2. This application has been submitted by Kent County Council Capital and Premises Development Unit, and proposes the installation of 2 classrooms and toilets in a 5-bay prefabricated building, and associated ground works, including an extension to the playground and the provision of hard standing around the proposed building. Full planning permission is sought, not a temporary consent. The proposed development would provide teaching space for 60 pupils, in addition to cloakroom/storage areas and two toilets. The School is expecting an increase in school roll numbers in September 2011, and the applicant advises that the proposed building is needed to help provide the required teaching areas. It is anticipated that 10 additional pupils would join the school roll in September 2011, and a further 50 would be added over and up to the next 7 years. One additional member of staff would be employed as a result of this increase.
3. The proposed single storey building would be 150 m² in size, 15 metres in length, and just over 10 metres in width. The building is proposed to be sited to the southern end of the playing fields, parallel to the boundary of the site with Kiln Close. The building would be approximately 7 metres from this boundary. The building would face onto the playing fields, and new hardstanding would link the building to the existing playground to the west. The building would have level access to the main entrance, facing the playing field, and to the side fire exits. The applicant advises that the provision of sports pitches would not be affected by the development.

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Author: [Blank] Designer: [Blank] Checker: [Blank] Approver: [Blank]	Date: [Blank] Date: [Blank] Date: [Blank] Date: [Blank]	Project: [Blank] Project: [Blank] Project: [Blank] Project: [Blank]
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4. The proposed building would be clad in plastic coated steel, in a light green finish, considered by the applicant to be tie in with the surrounding environment. The roof would be felt, with a shallow pitch to enable drainage but to give the impression of an almost 'flat roof', reducing the height and massing of the building. The building has been designed with no windows to the southern elevation, so that facing properties in Kiln Close would not be overlooked in any way. Windows on the other three elevations would provide ventilation and natural daylight.
5. In addition to an area of hard standing proposed around/under the building, linking with the existing playground, it is also proposed to extend the playground. A two metre wide strip, running the length of the playground would be added to the south, running diagonally between the southern and western boundaries of the school site. The existing car park at the school, accessed via Church Lane, would not be affected by the proposal and there is no intention to increase car parking on site.

The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement.

Planning Policy

6. The following Guidance/Statements Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of the application:

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

PPS1	Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS4	Planning and Sustainable Economic Growth
PPS7	Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPG13	Transport

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

Policy CC1	Seeks to achieve and maintain sustainable development in the region.
Policy CC4	The design and construction of all new development will be expected to adopt and incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques.
Policy CC6	Promotes the creation of sustainable and distinctive communities that respect the character of settlements and landscapes, and achieve a high quality built environment.
Policy CC7	States that the scale and pace of development will depend on sufficient capacity being available in existing infrastructure to meet the needs of new development. Where this cannot be demonstrated the scale and the pace of the development will be dependent on additional capacity being released or the provision of new infrastructure.

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- Policy C3** High priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in regions of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and planning decisions should have regard to their setting.
- Policy T4** Sets out the approach to parking standards to be taken in Local Development Documents including restraint-based maximum levels of parking provision for non-residential development in line with PPG 13 and provision of adequate secure cycle parking.
- Policy BE1** Local Authorities and their partners will use opportunities associated with new development to help provide significant improvements to the built 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.

Important note regarding the South East Plan:

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.

(iii) The Ashford Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008:

- Policy CS1** Sustainable developments and high quality design are at the centre of the approach to deciding planning applications, the key objectives of which include a wider choice of easy to use forms of sustainable transport to serve developments.
- Policy CS9** Development proposals must be of high quality design and address issues such as character, distinctiveness, sense of place, permeability, ease of movement, legibility, mixed use and diversity, continuity and enclosure, quality of public spaces, flexibility, adaptability and liveability, richness in detail and efficient use of natural resources.
- Policy CS15** Promotes public transport and other non-car based modes of travel including measures to encourage cycling.
- Policy CS18** Public open space, recreation, sports, children's play, leisure, cultural, school and adult education, youth, health, public service and community facilities to be provided to meet the needs generated by new development.

(iv) The adopted Ashford Borough Local Plan:

No relevant saved Policies.

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Consultations

7. **Ashford Borough Council** has no objection to the application, subject to conditions requiring the development to commence within 3 years, the development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted details, and the submission of details of the colour finish of the building for approval.

Challock Parish Council raises no objection, with 'consent' given 4-1, with one abstention due to insufficient information on parking issues.

The Divisional Transportation Manager has no objection to the proposal in respect of highway matters. The proposal would not alter the existing car parking or access arrangements for the site.

following the representations received from local residents (as summarised in paragraph 10 below), Kent Highway Services (KHS) have stated the following:

"The reason why KHS are satisfied that the proposals are acceptable is as follows:

1) Church Lane is of an acceptable width up to the entrance of the school site for two vehicles to safely pass one another. There is plenty of on-street parking to the north of the site also. There are also no on-street parking controls to prevent parking along Church Lane. Church Lane is also subject to a 30mph limit.

2) There have been no crashes along School Lane in the past 3 years and KHS have not been made aware of any highway safety issues on Church Lane.

3) Challock Primary School has an up to date School Travel Plan which encourages both pupils and parents to travel to the school in a more sustainable manner. The School actively encourages children to travel to school in a more sustainable manner.

4) There are zig-zags at the school entrance to prevent unlawful parking and which allows pupils to cross Church Lane safely.

5) There is adequate parking on the site for staff which prevents the need for any staff to park on Church Lane."

Environment Agency no comments received to date.

Sport England has no objection to the application, as the playing pitches would not be affected.

Local Member

8. The local County Member, Mr Richard King, was notified of the application on the 20 May 2011.

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Publicity

9. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice and the individual notification of 32 neighbouring residential properties.

Representations

10. To date, I have received 4 individual letters of representation from local residents. A summary of the main issues raised/points made is set out below:
- No objection is raised to the extension of the school and the building itself;
 - Security lighting in the school is already a problem. Any security lighting on the proposed building would be a further intrusion;
 - Additional traffic generated by the increase in pupil numbers has not been considered;
 - Additional parking should be provided;
 - Church Lane, Kiln Close and other local roads are blocked by existing traffic associated with the school, causing chaos at the beginning and end of the school day. This proposal would make that situation worse;
 - Access for emergency vehicles could be blocked;
 - The school used to be a small village school, but now takes on pupils from a wide area. For the size of the school now, it is in the wrong place;
 - Parents are already asked to park at the village hall, but refuse to do so;
 - Local residents' drives are blocked and used as turning areas by parents.

In addition, I have received an anonymous letter, with three letters enclosed sent from Challock Primary School to parents of pupils. The three letters all refer to existing problems with inconsiderate parking and blocking of access to local properties.

Discussion

Introduction

11. This application seeks full planning permission for the installation of 2 classrooms and toilets in a 5 bay prefabricated building, and associated ground works, including an extension to the existing playground. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies referred to in paragraph (6) above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires applications to 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 the siting and design of the building, given its location within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, access and highway concerns, and general amenity matters.

Siting and Design

12. Although the proposed siting and design of the building has not met with objection, these matters must be considered in the determination of this application. The school site is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which is afforded protection by Planning Policy. Policy C3 of the South East Plan states that high

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priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of AONBs, and that planning decisions should have regard to their setting.

13. The proposed building is to be sited to the south of the school site, but in close proximity to existing buildings on site. I do not consider that the development would significantly extend built development on the site into the open playing fields and open fields beyond. The development would be single storey and low key in nature, located adjacent to a heavily vegetated boundary with a mature hedgerow and trees. Although the design of the building could be improved by the provision of a permanent extension to the school, funding is not available for such major works at this time. Therefore, a prefabricated building is the only option available to the school. However, the building would be finished in green, single storey with a flat roof, and all windows and doors would face into the school site. Bearing in mind the heavily vegetated boundary of the site, I do not consider that the siting and design of the development would significantly affect the character of the AONB, or the immediate locality. Residential properties in Kiln Close surround this area of the school site, and amenity considerations will be discussed later in this report. However, in this instance, in terms of siting and design, I consider this to be appropriate for the location, and acceptable in terms of landscape and visual impacts. However, I consider that, should permission be granted, details of the colour finish of the building should be submitted for approval to ensure that the shade of green is appropriate for the location.
14. In addition, with regard to siting, although the development would be upon school playing fields, Sport England is satisfied that playing pitches would not be affected. The provision of hard standing would also not impact upon the playing pitches or the boundary hedging and trees on site. I therefore see no reason to refuse this application on the grounds of siting and design.

Amenity Concerns

15. Throughout the consultation process, local residents have raised one primary concern, and that is the existing problems experienced with traffic generated by the school, and the concern that additional pupils would exacerbate that situation. This matter will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs. However, one further issue was raised with regard to external lighting, and the concern that any lighting on the building would add to the nuisance already caused by security lighting on the school buildings. The applicant has not indicated that lighting would be installed on the building but, for the avoidance of doubt, I consider that a condition of consent should require that no security lighting be installed on the southern elevation of the building, facing Kiln Close. Subject to the imposition of this condition, I do not consider that the proposed development would affect the amenity of facing residential properties with regard to lighting.

Access and Highway Matters

16. Local residents have objected to this application on the grounds of highway and access implications. As the development would generate additional pupils, concern is expressed that this would in turn generate additional traffic, exacerbating existing problems with regard to parents blocking accesses, parking inconsiderately and congesting local roads. Kent Highway Services have been consulted on this application, and have commented in detail on the points of objection raised by local residents (see paragraph 7). This application cannot be expected to address existing problems, but the County Planning Authority must be satisfied that the provision of space for additional pupils would not significantly exacerbate these matters.

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17. The School do acknowledge that there are existing problems with parents parking inconsiderately, blocking driveways and causing congestion around the school. Parents are sent letters to ask that they park in a considerate manner. In addition, the applicant advises that car users have all been encouraged to park at the village hall and make use of one of the walking buses, or car share. The School has an up to date Travel Plan, and I am advised that the School works hard to encourage parents to use the walking buses, which run daily, use the village hall car park and park considerately. I am satisfied that the School is doing all that it can to address the existing problems, and is proactively seeking ways to ease the congestion around the school. However, the impact of additional pupils needs to be discussed and considered in detail.
18. The applicant advises that the school at present has 147 pupils on roll. There would be an additional 10 pupils in September, and a further 50 over the next 7 years. I am advised by the applicant that an additional 60 pupils would be unlikely to mean 60 additional families travelling to the school as this number would invariably include siblings. The school has 27 places accepted officially in reception year to start in September 2011, 13 of whom are siblings. This suggests that some of the parents of the additional 10 pupils this year, and those over the coming years, would be travelling to the school anyway to drop off existing pupils. In addition, as outlined above, parents are encouraged by the School to use alternative methods of transport to the car, to park at the village hall, and to park considerately. The School have investigated the option of providing additional car parking on site, but there is no surplus space to accommodate this. In addition, Kent Highway Services consider that sufficient car parking is provided on site. Kent Highway Services 'only accept 1 space per member of staff plus 10%' as their maximum standards. The existing car park on site is in accordance with these standards, and Kent Highway Services would not wish to see the amount of car parking increased. In light of this, I am satisfied that additional car parking is not required.
19. Residents have also suggested that parking restrictions should be introduced. However, Kent Highway Services have confirmed that there is no need for yellow lines as the Borough Council would only install them if there was a safety issue. It is the opinion of Kent Highway Services that there is not a safety issues at this site as there are no personal injury crashes on record. In addition, there have been no crashes along School Lane in the past 3 years, and Kent Highway Services have not been made aware of any highway safety issues on Church Lane. Church Lane is of an acceptable width up to the entrance of the school site for two vehicles to pass one another and, in the opinion of Kent Highway Services, there is plenty of on-street parking to the north of the site. For information, Church Lane is subject to a 30mph speed limit, and there are zig zags at the school entrance to enable pupils to cross Church Lane safely. Kent Highway Services are satisfied that any additional traffic can be accommodated, and that the existing parking issues would not be exacerbated should planning permission be granted. In light of this, no objection is raised to the application.
20. It is acknowledged that inconsiderate parking is a nuisance to local residents. However, I consider that the School has taken all reasonable steps to rectify this problem, and that the approval of this application would not significantly exacerbate this matter. Kent Highway Services have no objection to the application, and are satisfied that any additional traffic could be safely accommodated. I therefore see no reason to refuse the application on these grounds.

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Conclusion

21. In my view, the development would not give rise to any significant material harm and is in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies, including those that seek to protect important countryside and landscape. 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 character of the area, the local or wider landscape, or the local highway network. 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

22. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT to conditions, including conditions covering:

- the standard time limit;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- the submission of details of the colour finish of the building;
- no lighting, including security lighting, to be installed on the southern elevation of the building, facing properties in Kiln Close;
- hours of working during construction to be restricted to between 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays;
- measures to prevent mud and debris being taken onto the public highway.

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