

**Single storey extension and improvements to access,
Leigh Primary School, The Green, Leigh, Tonbridge.**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 18 March 2008.

Application by The Governors Of Leigh Community Primary School & KCC Children, Families & Education for a single storey extension and improvements to access in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act, The Green (Ref:SE/07/3859)

Recommendation: permission be granted

Local Member(s): Mr. P Lake

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The School is located in the centre of the village of Leigh, situated about 3 miles west of Tonbridge. The School is on the western edge of The Green, a traditional village green. To the rear of the School buildings there is Orchard House, a Grade II Listed Building. The whole site is within the Leigh Conservation Area, which was designated in recognition of the survival of many Medieval buildings around The Green and the continuity of the Victorian Gothic cottage development. Typical features which contribute to the character of this conservation area include the use of red facing brick, blue brick decorative patterning, stone, dark-stained timber, clay tiles, diamond shape finish on chimney shafts or open character of The Green (please see the site plan D4.3).

Proposal

2. The proposal is for a 12 square metre extension to the front of the main School building, approximately 4m long and 3m deep. The proposed development would be adjacent to the existing entrance lobby/porch and would be sufficient for a one-person office. Originally, it was proposed to use red facing brick to the flank wall and to the plinth height with pointing in lime mortar to match the existing brickwork. In the light of Sevenoaks District Council and the County Conservation Architect comments, the applicant proposed to enhance the design by introducing stonework to plinth height to match the adjacent building. The proposed roof material is plain tile to allow the shallow roof pitch to fit below the first floor windows. The window frames would be of timber of substantial section. The window frames and the exposed rafter feet would be dark-stained to match the adjacent entrance porch (please see photo D4.5). Rainwater goods would be black painted galvanised steel, in keeping with the original cast iron pipes. Additionally, some minor works to the existing entrance would provide level access to the pupils' area and to the new office.

Planning Policy

3. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of the application:
 - (i) The Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006:

Policy SP1	Seeks to conserve and enhance Kent's environment and ensuring a sustainable pattern of development
Policy QL1	Seeks to ensure that all development is well designed and of high quality that responds positively to the local character. Development, which would be detrimental to the built environment, amenity, function or character of the area, will not be permitted.

Item D4

Single storey extension and improvements to access, Leigh Primary School, The Green, Leigh, Tonbridge – SE/07/3859

- Policy QL6 Development within Conservation Areas should preserve or enhance their special character or appearance. Development, which would harm the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, will not be permitted.
- Policy QL8 Listed buildings will be preserved and the character of their setting will be protected and enhanced.
- Policy QL11 Provision will be made for development and improvement of local services in existing residential areas and in town centres, particularly where services are deficient.

(ii) The Sevenoaks Local Plan 2000 (saved beyond 27th September 2007):

- Policy EN23 Proposals for development within Conservation Area should be of positive architectural benefit by paying special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of its setting. The design of alterations to existing buildings should respect local character.

Consultations

4. **Sevenoaks District Council:** raises objection to the proposal on grounds as following:

“Although the school building is not listed, it is highlighted as ‘contributing to character’ in the Conservation Area Appraisal. It is also in a prominent location adjoining the village green. The extension would project forward of the existing main wall and be in line with the porch. The style of the addition is also different to previous additions, in having a lean-to roof rather than a gabled one. The addition would obscure a major part of the very attractive chimney stack. The Council therefore objects on the grounds of detriment to the character of the Conservation Area”.

Leigh Parish Council: supports to the proposal.

Divisional Transportation Manager: raises no objection to the proposal.

County Conservation Architect: raises no objection subject to conditions covering the detailed design for the windows and the external materials (tiles, gutters, downpipes, bricks, window joinery and eaves detail), all to match the original building.

Local Members

5. The local Member, Mr. P. Lake wrote: “I am very keen to support the proposal for the proposed extension to provide an office at the school entrance. Security is paramount and this extension improves security and access to the school with a very practical design, which in my opinion, is an attractive addition to the school. Without such an addition, or something very similar, we are failing to meet our obligations to the staff and the children in their care”.

Publicity

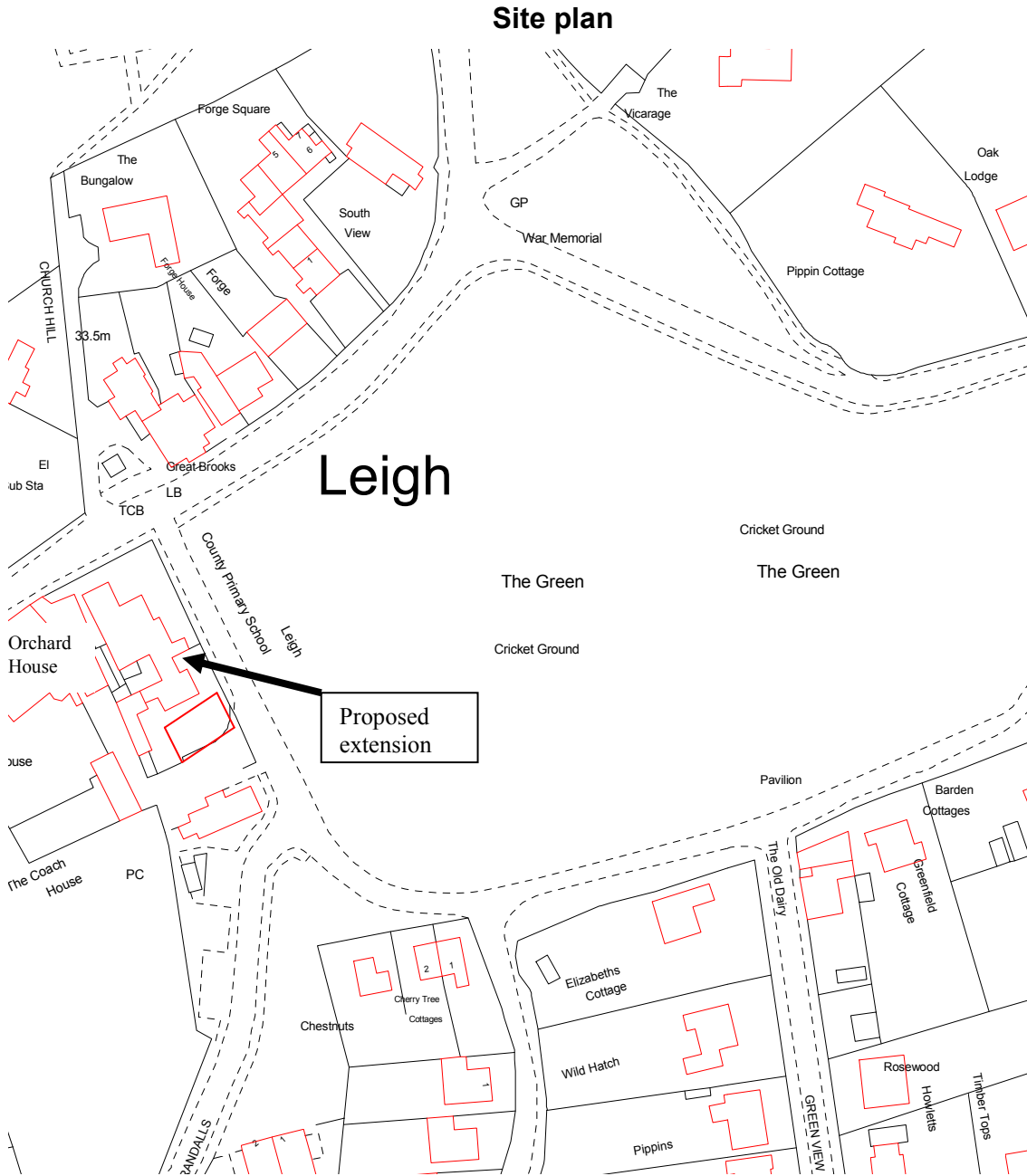
6. The application was publicised by the posting an advert in a local newspaper and posting a site notice on the site boundary.

Representations

7. No letters of representation were received.

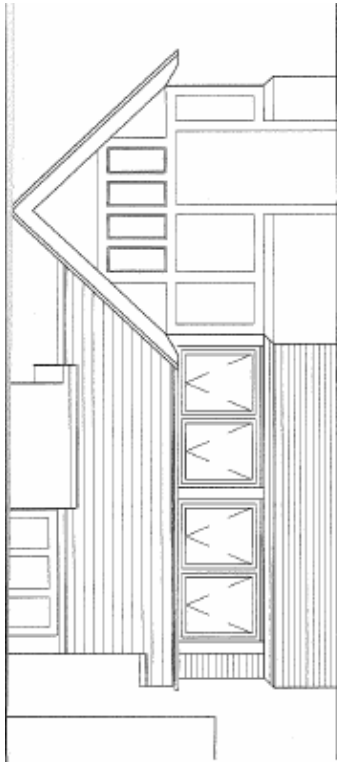
Item D4

Single storey extension and improvements to access, Leigh Primary School, The Green, Leigh, Tonbridge – SE/07/3859

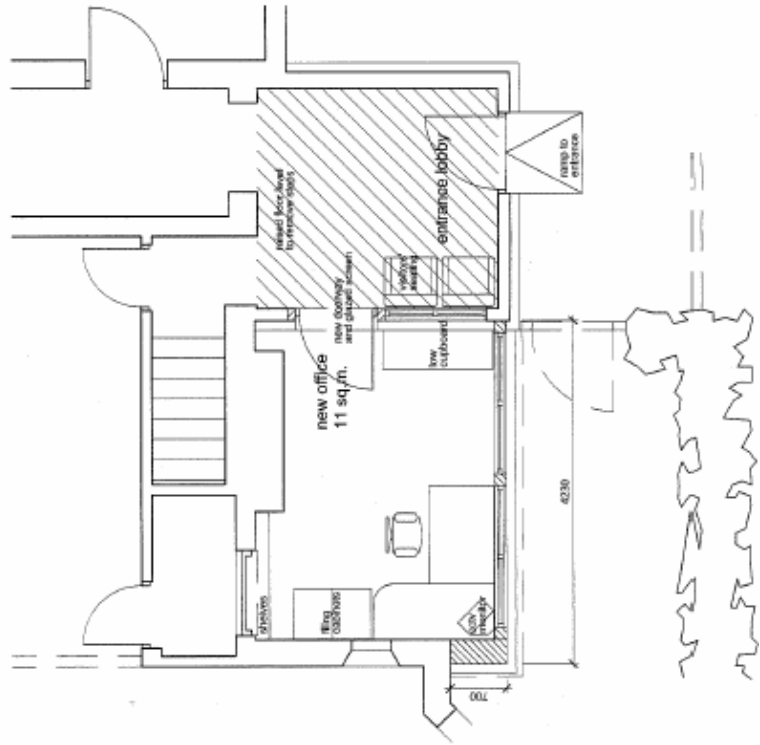
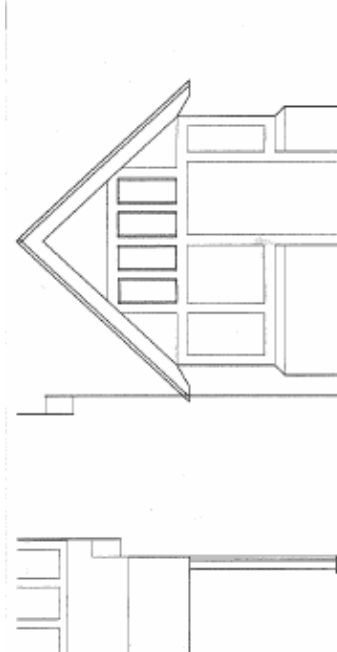


Item D4

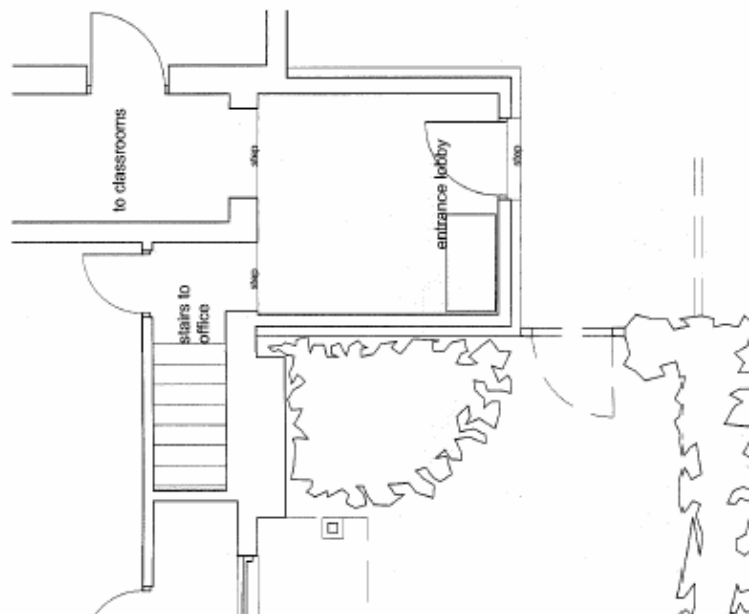
Single storey extension and improvements to access, Leigh Primary School, The Green, Leigh, Tonbridge – SE/07/3859



ELEVATION



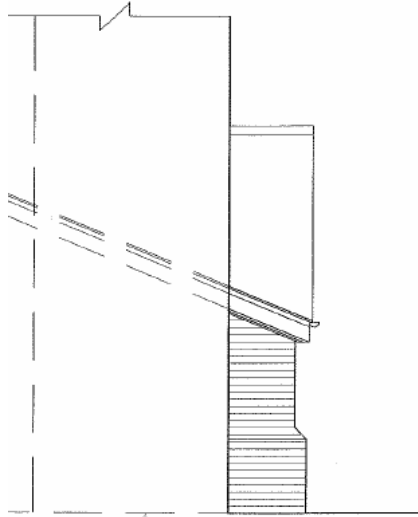
PLAN



Item D4

Single storey extension and improvements to access, Leigh Primary School,
The Green, Leigh, Tonbridge – SE/07/3859

SOUTH ELEVATION OF THE EXTENSION



**Single storey extension and improvements to access, Leigh Primary School,
The Green, Leigh, Tonbridge – SE/07/3859**

Discussion*Introduction*

8. The original school buildings are Victorian, of red brick with blue brick decorative patterning, over a stone plinth. The roof is covered in Kent clay peg tile. Various extensions have been added in the past, generally in keeping with the building's original character. The proposal is for a 12 square metre extension to the front of the school building. The proposal would also help to address Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) requirements for public buildings. The first floor room vacated by the administration staff would be made available as a meeting/resources and Special Education Needs (SEN) room.
9. The application is required to be determined in accordance with the relevant Development Plan Policies, unless other material considerations are of overriding importance. Special attention should be given to the Conservation Area policies within the Kent and Medway Structure Plan and the Sevenoaks Local Plan. These objectives have to be balanced against the need for improvements to the community facility. In conjunction with these and other relevant policies, these issues are considered and discussed below.

Need

10. The current school roll is 121 pupils and is expected to rise to about 130 in September 2008. The current provision of space for resources is cramped and there is no independent area for private meeting (e.g. between staff and parents) or for the separate teaching of children with special education needs. At present, the access to the ground floor classrooms entails two steps, one at the entrance and another into the pupil's area. The existing entrance is cramped and provides no space for visitors to sit while waiting to be seen.
11. The existing school administrative office is on the first floor of the existing school building. The applicant states that this is not satisfactory as it makes the first point of contact office inaccessible to those who cannot negotiate stairs. Consequently, it does not comply with the DDA. Additionally, the main entrance to the school building cannot readily be seen and monitored by the school secretary, which is a flaw in the maintenance of school security.

Conservation Area and Design

12. The Policies QL6 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan and EN23 of the Sevenoaks Local Plan aim to ensure protection of areas of architectural and historic interest against harmful development within the Conservation Area and against development, which would harm the character of Conservation Area. It is also acknowledged that the school on The Green is mentioned in the Conservation Area Appraisal 2001 when discussing the character of the Leigh Conservation Area.
13. The objection raised by Sevenoaks District Council is that the proposed development by being to the front of the building, which is a prominent location adjoining the village green, would project forward of the existing main wall and be in line with the porch. The extension indeed would be forward of the adjacent classroom and would be nearly in line with the porch. The applicant argued that it would still align with the classroom extension further to the south-east. Furthermore, the small size of the proposed extension and the site circumstances would not allow for the proposed line of the extension to be substantially set back from the porch front line. Yet, the applicant offered to increase the

Single storey extension and improvements to access, Leigh Primary School, The Green, Leigh, Tonbridge – SE/07/3859

distance from the front of the porch to 100mm to make the extension more recessed. However, it is noted that this recess would reduce the size of this already small room and is not likely to address the issue of the extension projecting forward of the existing main wall. It is also noted that the reasons for the development are to improve the accessibility of the office and therefore compliance with the DDA requirement as well as to improve monitoring of people entering the building. For this reason it is not part of the proposal before you.

14. Secondly, the Sevenoaks District Council raises objection as to the style of the addition as it would be different to previous additions, in having a lean-to roof rather than a gabled one. The applicant acknowledges that the majority of the roofs along the front elevations have gables. However, the proposed roof with windows below would reflect the detail of the first floor windows under the eaves, which would be immediately above the proposed extension. There is also a lean-to canopy over the door, which would be replaced by the lean-to roof on the proposal.
15. Thirdly, the reason for objection is that the addition would obscure the lower part of the very attractive chimney stack. Although, it is true that some of the chimney stack would be covered by the proposed new extension, the applicant notes that this is already largely hidden by climbing plants (please see photo D4.5). Also, the upper part of the stack with its diapering and angled shafts would still be visible on completion of the extension, which is the part that is mostly visible from wider views across The Green.
16. The School is within the Leigh Conservation Area and any development needs to be of such a quality that it would protect or enhance the special character of this area. It is also acknowledged that there is the need for improvements to the school's entrance so it meets the current standards. Having discussed with the applicant any alternative locations for the office room, I was advised that it could not be located elsewhere. The key purpose of this development is to enable the School Secretary to monitor the school's main entrance, which currently is not adequate.
17. Under these circumstances, it is considered that the external finishes of the extension would be the most important in protecting the integrity of the western elevation of the school building as a whole. As it is proposed to match the external materials with the original school building as closely as possible, the special character of the Leigh Conservation Area would be preserved in accordance with the Local Plan policies. Submission of the window details and samples of all external materials could be secured by a planning condition, should the proposal be permitted. The County Conservation Architect supports this view.

Conclusion

18. Whilst I acknowledge that special care is needed with developments in the Leigh Conservation Area, I am satisfied that the proposed external finish of the extension is of highest quality to meet Development Plan Policies. Due to its style and massing, it is considered that the proposed development would not harm the special character of the Leigh Conservation Area. It is noted that the reason for the development is to improve accessibility of the school's office for less mobile people and to improve the security of the entrance to the School by passive monitoring. Therefore, it cannot be readily located elsewhere.

Recommendation

19. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT to conditions, including conditions covering:
 - Standard time condition for it to be implemented;

Item D4

Single storey extension and improvements to access, Leigh Primary School, The Green, Leigh, Tonbridge – SE/07/3859

- Samples of materials to be used externally should be submitted for prior approval;
- Detailed 1:20 section drawings of the windows would be submitted; and
- The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details.

Case Officer –Anna Michalska-Dober

01622 696979

Background documents –See section heading
