

## **Two storey extension to St Peter's Lodge, St. Peters C Of E Primary School, Mount Pleasant, Aylesford.**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

Application by KCC Children, Families And Education for a two storey extension to St Peter's Lodge to provide additional learning space on both floors at St. Peters C of E Primary School, Mount Pleasant, Aylesford (Ref:TM/08/211)

Recommendation: permission be granted subject to conditions

**Local Member(s):** Mr. Geoff Rowe

**Classification:** Unrestricted

### **Site**

1. St Peter's Church of England (VC) Primary School is a small school located in the centre of Aylesford, north of the High Street. The school is on a hill, which descends towards the High Street. The site is within the Aylesford Conservation Area. Access is arranged from two narrow lanes Mount Pleasant and Church Walk. Further along Church Walk there is an access road to properties in Vicarage Close. To the east there is St. Peter's Church, which is a Grade I Listed Building. To the north-west there is the Vicarage. To the south-east there is a near vertical drop with Coronation Gardens at the bottom. A site plan is attached (see page D5.2).

### **Proposal**

2. The proposal is to construct a two-storey extension to St. Peter's Lodge. This comprises an infant classroom on the ground floor and a multipurpose room on the first floor to be used primarily for adult education and includes a small computer suite. The overall footprint is approximately 60 square metres although some part of it would be allocated for an internal lift shaft to provide wheelchair access to the first floor. The extension would require construction of only two walls and would be linked with the existing corridor within the St Peter's Lodge (see the proposed elevation drawings D5.4). key design driver is to match the extension with the existing building and the newly completed single storey pre-school building.

### **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 to ensure a sustainable pattern of development.
Policy SS6	Seeks to improve the built and natural environment, functioning and appearance of the suburbs, including the provision of services and facilities that serve local needs.
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 D5

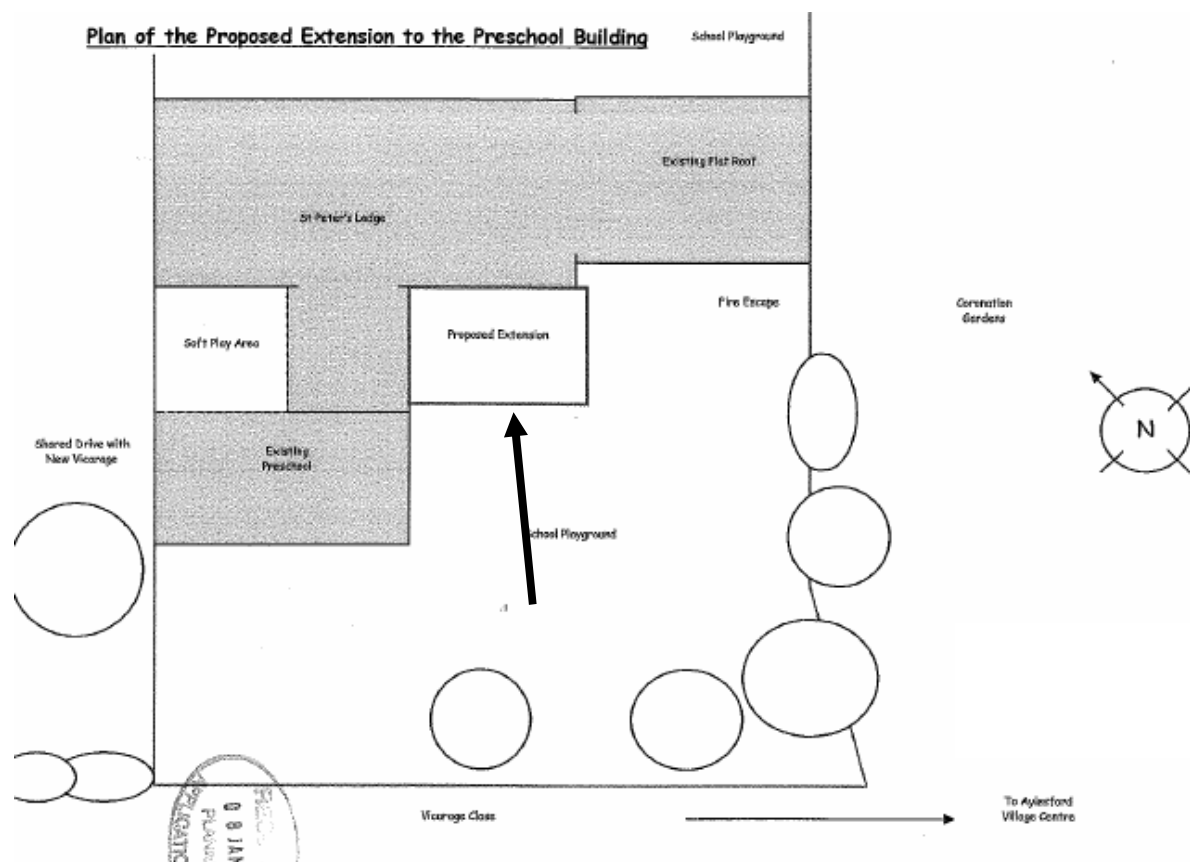
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### Site plan



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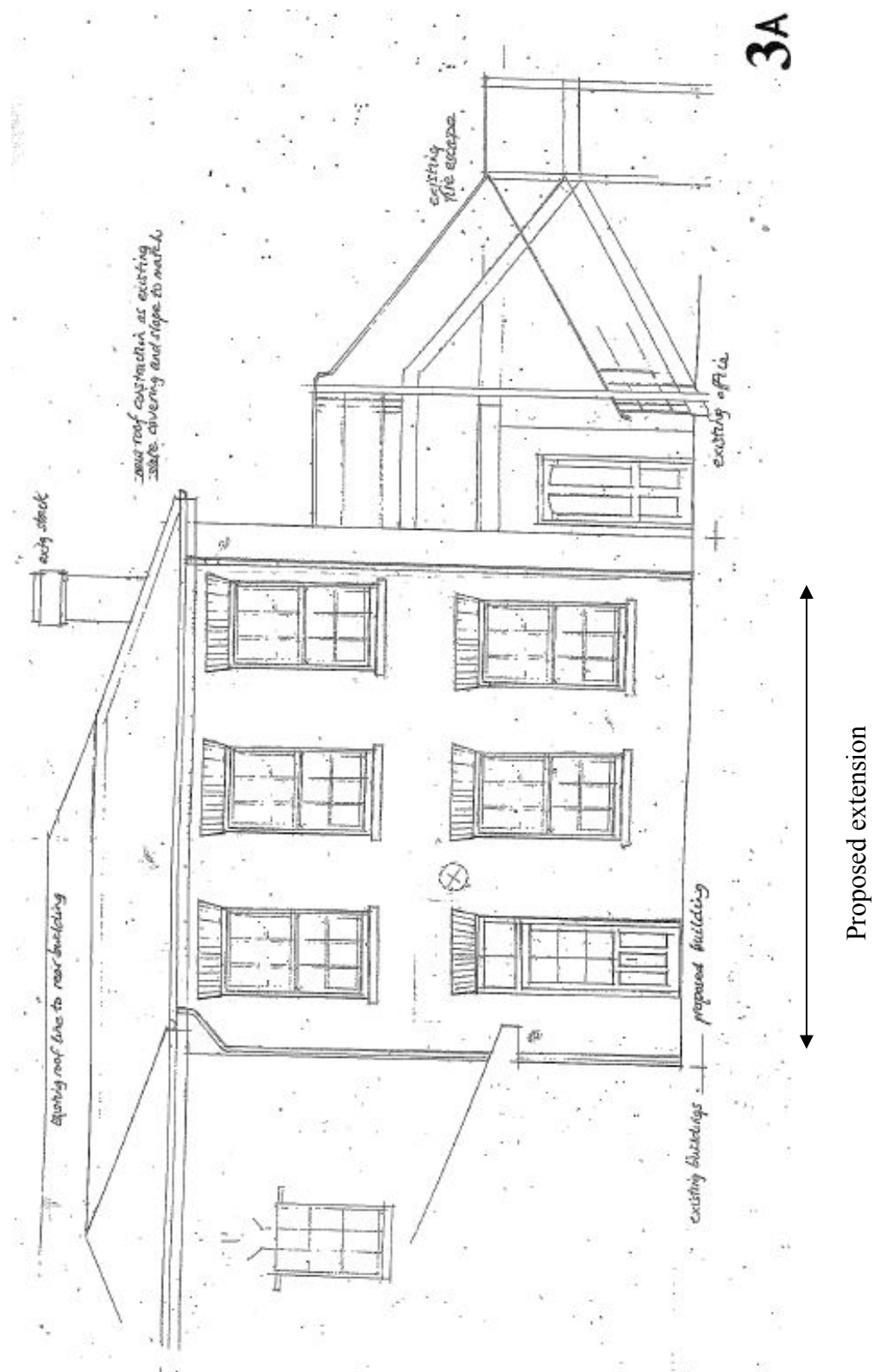


Photographs of Site of Proposed Extension to St Peter's Lodge



## Item D5

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| 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 QL7  | Where the development affects an archaeological site, the developer will be required to secure appropriate provision for preservation by record.  |
| 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.  |
| Policy TP3  | States that the local planning authority should ensure that development sites are well served by public transport, walking and cycling.   |
| Policy TP19 | States that development proposals should comply with vehicle parking policies and maximum standards adopted by the County Council.  |

**(ii) Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council LDF Core Strategy 2007:**

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| Policy CP1  | Sustainable development, conserving and enhancing the historic environment, making the most efficient use of land and infrastructure   |
| Policy CP2  | New development that is likely to generate a significant number of trips should be well located relative to public transport, cycle and pedestrian routes and with good access to local services centres; should minimise the need to travel through implementation of a Travel Plan, be compatible with the capacity of the highway network and ensure accessibility for all. |
| Policy CP24 | All development must be well designed and of high quality to include use of appropriate materials, its scale, siting or character.   |

**Consultations**

**4. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council:** raises no objection to the proposal.

**Divisional Transportation Manager:** raises no objection to the proposal. He notes that the additional accommodation would be of compact size and close to the Aylesford centre, where free public car parking is available.

**The Environment Agency:** raises no objection. However, the applicant is advised that appropriate precautions should be taken to avoid discharge and spillage to the ground both during construction and in subsequent operation. The applicant should ensure that the existing drainage systems are well maintained and of sufficient capacity to cope with the additional flow or loading that may occur as a result of this proposal. Care should also be taken in the design of any new soakways, and first contact should be made with the Agency's Groundwater and Contaminated Land Department.

**English Heritage:** advises that the application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of county specialist conservation advice.

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**County Conservation Architect:** raises no objection, subject to receiving details of the design for the windows and the external materials including tiles, gutters and downpipes, bricks, window joinery and eaves detail. All should match the original.

**County Archaeologist:** raises no objection to the development but recommends to secure an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken so that the excavation is observed and items of interest and find are recorded.

**Aylesford Parish Council:** no comments received

**Local Members**

5. The local Member, Geoff Rowe was notified of the application on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2008. No comments received.

**Publicity**

6. The application was publicised by posting an advert in a local newspaper, posting a site notice on the site boundary and six individual notification letters to private properties.

**Representations**

7. 1 letter and a petition objecting to the proposal were received. The main reasons for the neighbours objection can be summarised as follows:
- The development will cause an increase in traffic during the morning and afternoon school rush. As a consequence of traffic on High Street, which regularly comes to a stand-still for a considerable amount of time, no traffic is able to enter or leave Mount Pleasant/Vicarage Close, which for most of its length is only single lane.
  - The school has totally inadequate parking facilities in the Vicarage vicinity to allow for off road parking.
  - Parents park in non through road ignoring double yellow lines on both sides of the road often blocking access to Vicarage Close during the drop-off and pick up hours.
  - Parents use residents' private driveways for turning and also damage the verge of the church yard and leave earth scattered on the road
  - It is extremely dangerous to drive down the hill from the school towards High Street, particularly in the winter months during the morning rush as the sun lies very low in the sky and shines directly into driver's eyes. This is especially dangerous for parents, children and other pedestrians walking up the hill.
  - Another concern is that access for emergency services is jeopardised, preventing speedy progress to the emergency.

Since receiving the petition with objection to the proposal, the Headteacher has been in dialogue with these residents. As a consequence, the person who organised the petition has withdrawn his objection. However, the other people who signed the petition have maintained their objection.

**Discussion***Introduction*

8. The reason for reporting this planning application to the Committee is an objection letter and a petition signed by neighbours on Vicarage Close as set out in paragraph 7 above. The objections can be summerised as issues relating to the existing traffic problems in

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Church Walk and Vicarage Close during drop-off and pick-up times. Further concern has been raised that following the extension to the school, the problem might become greater.

9. The application is required to be determined in accordance with the relevant Development Plan Policies, unless other material considerations are of overriding importance. In particular, I consider the key determining considerations to be heritage, amenity and access balanced against the need for improvements in community facilities.

#### *Heritage issues*

10. Development Plan Policies presume against development within the Conservation Area unless it preserves and enhances the Area's special character or appearance. Development, which would harm the character or appearance, should not be permitted. Similarly, Development Plan Policies protect the character and setting of Listed Buildings. In this particular case, consideration has been given to the design of the proposal specifically in the light of the Conservation Area and setting of Listed Building Policies. The scale, detailing and materials have been selected to reflect the existing building. Earlier concerns raised by the County Conservation Architect regarding window detailing have been addressed and he is now satisfied with the proposal. I consider that the revised proposal would preserve the special character and appearance of the Aylesford Conservation Area and would not have any negative impact on the setting of St Peters Church. Finally, the County Archaeologist recommendation to require an archaeological watching brief, can be secured by a condition which would ensure that the excavation is observed and items of interest and finds are recorded, thereby meeting development plan policy. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with the Policies QL6, QL7 and QL8.

#### *Amenity*

11. Policy QL1 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan (KMSP) requires that development should not be detrimental to the amenity and functioning of settlements. Residents however raised concerns about parents who use private driveways and the verge of the church for turning and therefore damaging the landscaping and leaving the earth scattered on the road. The Headteacher confirmed that he has been working hard to discourage parents from parking and turning in these areas. This has included Headteacher's patrols, frequent articles in the weekly newsletter and even closing the school's access during drop-off and pick-up hours from Church Walk, which forces parents to use the Mount Pleasant entrance. In addition, the School liaises with the community warden based at the school and the Police. The roads are already fully double yellow lined but parents ignore the signs. Many parents refuse to listen and the problem has persisted but the School cannot be responsible for action of parents outside school.

#### *Access*

12. Further, Policy CP2 of the Tonbridge and Malling Core Strategy states that if a development is likely to generate a significant number of trips, it should be favourably located relative to public transport, cycle, pedestrian routes, with good access to local services. Policies TP3 and TP19 of the KMSP also require the new development to be well served by public transport, walking and cycling and to comply with vehicle parking policies and maximum standards adopted in The Kent Vehicle Parking Standards. The applicant states that the extension would not provide additional capacity but would provide space for "Opal Class", which is currently taught in the library. There would not be any additional staff or pupils as a consequence of this extension. It is noted that the funding for this project comes from the Department for Children, Schools and Families

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and is available subject to a condition that this is not for an extension that would lead to an increase in pupil capacity.

13. On the other hand, it is noted that the first floor would be a multi-purpose room used by parents through the day. That potentially could generate some limited additional car trips to the site. The applicant advised that visitors would be invited to the school during the day to avoid conflict with the school rush hours. Though, since the school is located in the centre of Aylesford, it is considered that the school is easily accessible by foot, public transport or cycle and with good access to local services. Therefore, visitors would be expected to walk or if necessary to park their cars legally. The Divisional Transport Manager confirmed that there are free car parking spaces in the centre close to the school. It is also planned that any visitors after 3.00pm would use the junior playground to park their cars, the same way as it is already organised with parents whose children attend after-school clubs. It is recognised that the School received a Platinum Travel Plan Award for work on reducing vehicular traffic to school. It is stated that nearly half of the children are now walking to school.
14. Finally, the proposal would be in accordance with Policy QL11, which supports any improvement of local services in existing residential areas and the flexibility in the use of buildings for mixed community uses. Overall, it is considered that the School is well located within the community that it aims to serve.

**Conclusion**

15. This proposal has given rise to concerns, principally heritage, amenity and congestion. I am satisfied that the proposed design of the extension is of high quality and meets the conservation policy requirements. Although it is recognised that there is a current problem with parents who park their cars in inappropriate places, the School is very active in implementation of the School Travel Plan. The development would not cause any increase in staff or student numbers and so would not add to any existing traffic congestion problem. Moreover, the Divisional Transportation Manager is satisfied that the development would not result in any unacceptable impact on the surrounding highways. Finally, it has also been noted that the school is located very close to the centre of the Aylesford village and close to the community that serves.
16. It is considered that the school would benefit from the proposed extension whilst not causing any greater detriment to local residents. Overall, I consider that the proposed development would be in accordance with the aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies.

**Recommendation**

17. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT to conditions, including conditions covering:
  - Standard time condition for it to be implemented
  - The external materials including brick type, roof slate, windows and eaves shall be matching the adjacent building
  - Archaeological watching brief to be secured
  - The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details

Case Officer –Anna Michalska-Dober	01622 696979
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Background documents –See section heading
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