

Replacement of wooden palisade fencing with metal bow top railings – Rolvenden Primary School, Rolvenden – AS/07/1712.

A report by the Head of Planning Applications Group to the Planning Applications Committee on 11 December 2007.

Application by the Governors of Rolvenden Primary School and KCC Children, Families and Education for the replacement of wooden palisade fencing with metal bow top railings, at Rolvenden Primary School, Hastings Road, Rolvenden.

Recommendation: Planning permission be permitted subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mr. M. Hill OBE

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Rolvenden Primary School is situated on a small site to the south of the village centre of Rolvenden. The school is located on the edge of a predominantly residential area and on one side adjoins agricultural land. Vehicular access is via an access road to the north east of the site. The main school building is pitched roof Victorian style in construction, typical of many other village schools in the County. The school is situated on Hastings Road which is the main route through Rolvenden, north to Ashford and south towards East Sussex. The school is also situated in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a Special Landscape Area and the Rolvenden Village Conservation Area. A site location plan is attached.

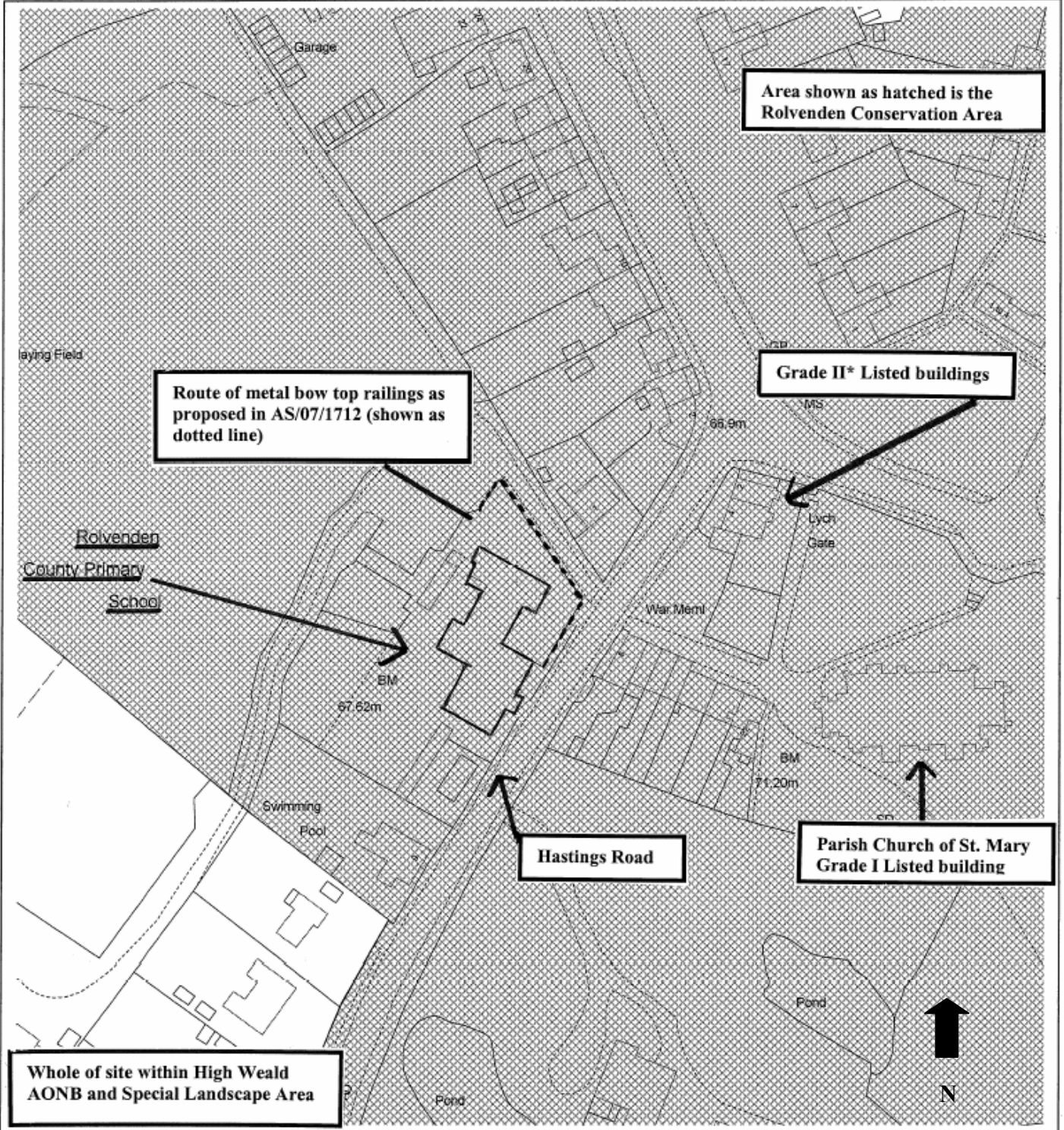
Proposal

2. The proposal seeks to replace the existing 900mm timber palisade fence with 1800mm metal bow top railings finished with a black paint treatment. The application when it was originally submitted proposed the replacement fence to be in the same style as the existing fence but measure 2m in height. That proposal was not acceptable in visual and design terms as it was considered by the KCC Conservation Architect that it would have had an overbearing and visually obtrusive impact on the setting of the Conservation Area. Following consultation with the KCC Conservation Architect, the applicant resubmitted the proposal in the form that it takes currently.
3. The proposal seeks to provide a stretch of approximately 60m of railings to replace the existing fence, extending from the original main school hall (as shown on drawing AL2 on page D3.3) adjacent to Hastings Road, along the north-east access road and would finish at the existing 1100mm gates which provide pedestrian access to the school's reception area. The overriding principle behind this proposal is to provide a safe and secure outdoor area for pupils to enjoy. Currently the area cannot be used to its full potential as the existing 900mm fence does not provide a sufficient level of security from intruders to the site, and it is also of a height which makes it possible for pupils to climb over the fence.

Item D3

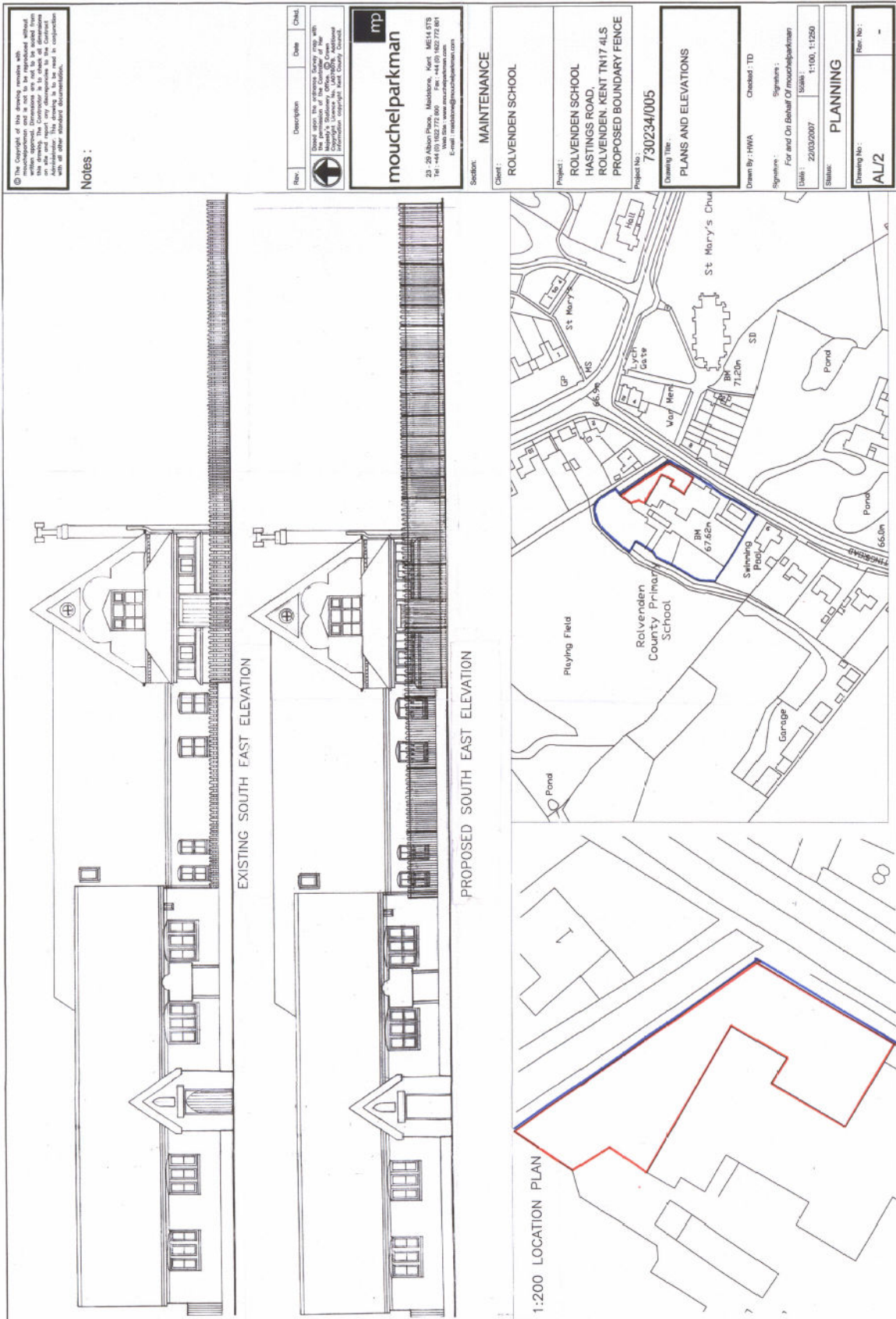
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Site Location Plan



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Scale 1:1250

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Notes:

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Rev.	Description	Date	Check
1	Issue for tender	11/01/2007	TD

Based upon the site survey of the site with Mouchel Parkman, Kent ME14 8TS. Tel: +44 (0) 1822 772 800 Fax: +44 (0) 1822 772 801 E-mail: r.mason@mouchelparkman.com

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Section: MAINTENANCE

Client: ROLVENDEN SCHOOL

Project: ROLVENDEN SCHOOL
HASTINGS ROAD,
ROLVENDEN, KENT TN17 4LS
PROPOSED BOUNDARY FENCE

Project No.: 730234/005

Drawing Title: PLANS AND ELEVATIONS

Drawn By: HWA **Checked:** TD

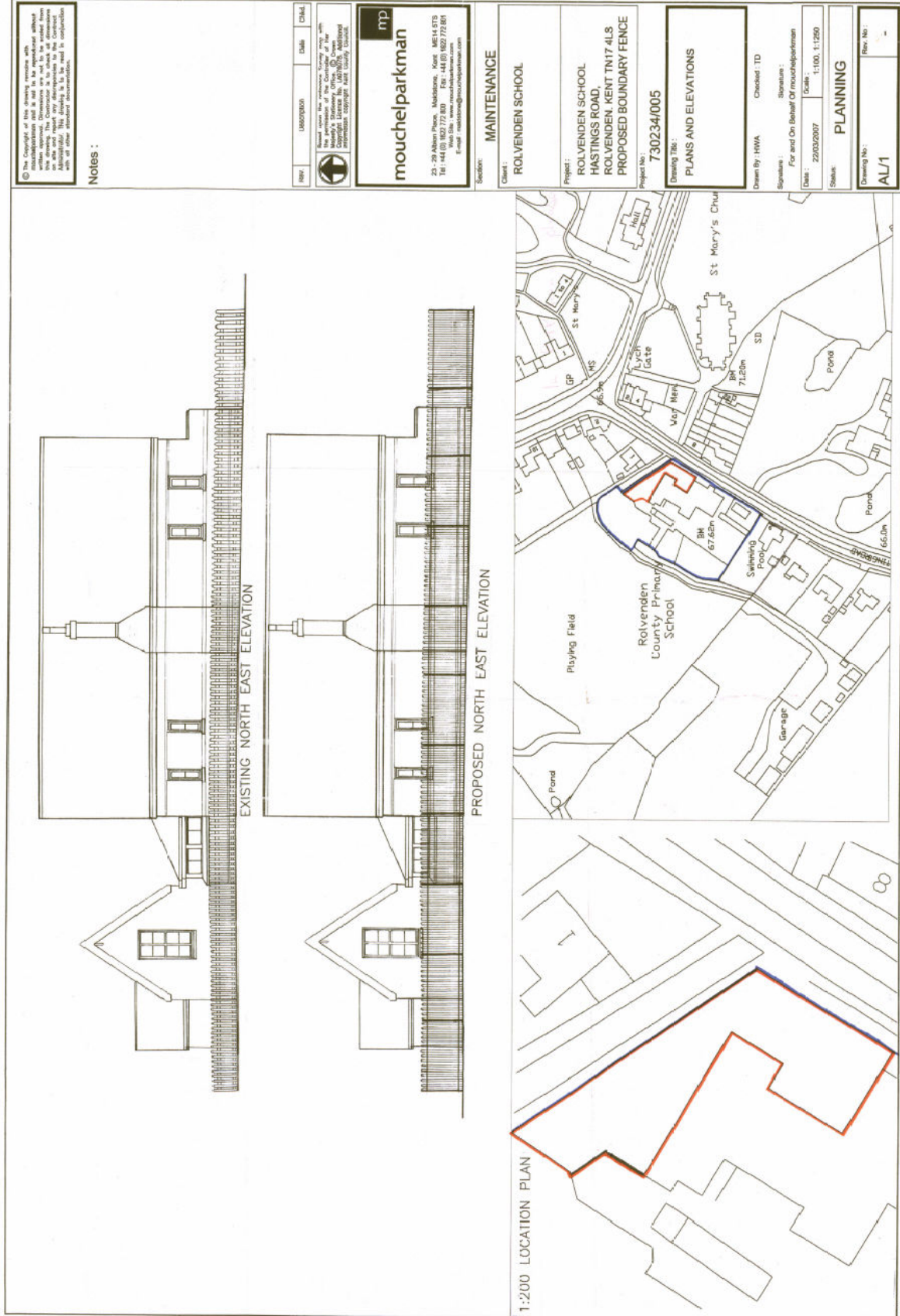
Signature: For and On Behalf Of mouchelparkman
Date: 22/03/2007 **Scale:** 1:100, 1:1250

Status: PLANNING

Drawing No.: AL/2 **Rev. No.:** -

Item D3

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PROPOSED NORTH WEST ELEVATION

EXISTING NORTH WEST ELEVATION

Notes :

1. All dimensions are in meters unless otherwise stated.

2. The client is responsible for obtaining all necessary permissions and consents from the relevant authorities.

3. The client is responsible for obtaining all necessary permissions and consents from the relevant authorities.

4. The client is responsible for obtaining all necessary permissions and consents from the relevant authorities.

5. The client is responsible for obtaining all necessary permissions and consents from the relevant authorities.

Scale: 1:100

Client: HMA

Project: Rolvenden Primary School

Date: 06/11/2007

Scale: 1:100, 1:1500

Project: PLANNING

Sheet No: AL/2.1

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MAINTENANCE

ROLVENDEN SCHOOL

ROLVENDEN SCHOOL

HASTINGS ROAD,

ROLVENDEN, KENT TN17 4LS

PROPOSED BOUNDARY FENCE

730234/005

REAR ELEVATION

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Planning Policy

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

(i) **Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006**

Policy QL1 Quality of development and design – Developments, individually or taken together should respond positively to the scale, layout, pattern and character of their local surroundings.

Policy QL6 Development within Conservation Areas should preserve or enhance their character or appearance. Development, which would harm the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, will not be permitted

Policy QL11 Existing community services and recreation facilities will be protected as long as there is a demonstrable need for them

Policy SP1 Seeks to conserve and enhance Kent's environment ensuring a sustainable pattern of development and encourage high quality development and innovative design that reflects Kent's identity and local distinctiveness and promoting healthy, safe and secure living and working environments.

Policy EN4 Protection will be given to the nationally important landscape of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; the primary objective in this area will be to protect, conserve and enhance landscape character and natural beauty. Development, which would be detrimental to the natural beauty, quality and character of the landscape and quiet enjoyment of the area, will not be permitted. Development that is essential to meet local social or economic needs should be permitted provided that it is consistent with the purpose of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Policy EN5 The primary objective of designating Special Landscape Areas is the protection, conservation and enhancement of the quality of their landscapes, whilst having regard to the need to facilitate the social and economic well being of the communities situated within them.

(ii) **Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000**

Policy GP2 To protect and improve the quality of the Borough's urban, village and rural environments by safeguarding the setting and the character of settlements and buildings, and protecting the countryside for its landscape, heritage, nature conservation and recreational value.

Policy DP1 Planning permission will not be granted for development proposals, which are poorly designed in terms of their scale, density, height, layout, massing, landscaping, access or detailing.

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Policy DP2 New development proposals must be designed in a way, which respects the character and appearance of the area around it, particularly in the countryside, in Conservation Areas and close to Listed Buildings.

Policy EN16 Development within Conservation Areas will be permitted, providing proposals preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.

Policy EN27 Long-term protection will be given to Special Landscape Areas. Priority will be given over other planning considerations to the conservation or enhancement of natural beauty

(iii) **Ashford Borough Local Development Core Strategy (Submission Document) 2006. Examination in Public (EiP) stage - awaiting Inspectors Report February 2008.**

Policy CS1 Sustainable development and high quality design are at the centre of the Council's approach to plan making and deciding planning applications. Development must respect the environmental limits that protect the high quality built and natural environment of the Borough, the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and built heritage, protection for the countryside, landscape and villages from adverse impacts of growth and the promotion of strong rural communities.

Policy CS7 In considering development proposals in the countryside, priority will be given to the need to protect the quality and character of the area. All development proposals must respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape. In designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the conservation and enhancement of their natural beauty will be given priority.

Policy CS9 Development proposals must be of high quality design and demonstrate a positive response to each of the following design criteria: Character; Distinctiveness and Sense of Place; Permeability and Ease of Movement; Legibility; Mixed use and Diversity; Continuity and Enclosure; Quality of Public Spaces; Flexibility, Adaptability and Liveability; Richness in Detail.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

5. The County Council has a legal obligation under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which directs that the Council must have community safety embedded into its planning, policy and operational day to day activity. It requires authorities to assess crime and disorder considerations in their decision making.

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Consultations

6. **Ashford Borough Council** – Raises objection on the grounds that the development by virtue of its scale and form and that it would be in a prominent position which would result in an incongruous, overbearing and unsympathetic feature in the Rolvenden Conservation Area. The development would also be detrimental to the setting of nearby Listed Buildings and the AONB and SLA.

Rolvenden Parish Council – No comments received to date.

English Heritage – Raises no objection.

KCC Conversation Architect - Raises no objection and confirms that the use of a hooped metal railing is an improvement on the original proposal to use a timber picket fence. The use of the metal hooped railing is far more appropriate for the frontage of a school in this location as it does not visually impact on the frontage as much as a timber fence.

Divisional Transportation Manager – Raises no objection.

Local Member

7. The local County Member Mr. M. Hill OBE was notified on 18 September 2007.

Publicity

8. The application was advertised by the posting of a site notice, notification of 16 neighbouring properties and by press advert in the Kent and Sussex Courier published on Friday 28 September 2007.

Representations

9. No letters of representation have been received.

Discussion

- 10 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 in considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (4), Government Guidance paragraph (5) and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.

- 11 The planning application seeks to replace an existing 900mm wooden palisade fence with 1800mm metal bow top railings. The purpose of the increase in height is to provide improved security to the infants play ground and garden area and allow these spaces to be used more than is practically possible at the current time. The main issues to consider when determining the application are the impact the proposal has in terms of its

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design and overall appearance on the Rolvenden Conservation Area, surrounding Listed Buildings, the AONB and SLA and the necessity for the development.

Design and Appearance

12. The school is bounded by agricultural land and residential properties, some of which are Listed Buildings, including two Grade II* properties and the Grade I Parish Church of St Mary's also in relatively close proximity. The school is sited directly on the busy thoroughfare of Hastings Road, it is therefore in a prominent position in the general landscape. There is in total an approximate length of 74 metres of new railings proposed, 30m of this is to be sited along the boundary with Hastings Road with the remaining length extending along the side access road to the rear of the school. That section of the railings would be adjacent to the school's garden area, which contains some well-established vegetation and trees. This area of vegetation would also help to reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding locality.
13. The replacement railings would measure 1800mm in height with each railing measuring 19mm in diameter with 100mm between each railing. The distance between each railing post would measure 3000mm and they would have domed post caps. The narrow widths of each individual railing would result in the overall scheme not appearing bulky and obtrusive in appearance. I would also suggest that visually the proposed scheme would be an improvement on that which is evident currently. Even though the proposed development is double the height of the existing fence, due to the narrow railing widths and gaps between railings and posts, I would consider it to be less visually obtrusive than the existing wooden fence. The existing wooden palisade sections measure around 100mm in width and appear as a dominant and obtrusive feature on the landscape especially when viewing the school from the Hastings Road aspect. Furthermore, it also provides a minimal level of security contrary to the requirements of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
14. In the opinion of the KCC Conservation Architect (paragraph 6) and myself, the latest choice of new railing design is not considered visually obtrusive or detrimental to the setting of the Conservation Area. I therefore regard it as being in accordance with Structure Plan Policies SP1 and QL1 relating to quality of design. Furthermore, I consider the proposed development to be in accordance with Structure Plan Policy QL6 as it would preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and surrounding Listed Buildings. Moreover, it is worth considering that in other Conservation Areas around Kent secure boundary treatment has been provided in a similar style to the railings proposed in this planning application. Fig. 1 on page D3.10 below provides a good example of a similar scheme at another village School in a Kent Conservation Area.
- 15 Structure Plan Policies EN4 & EN5, Ashford Borough Local Plan Policies EN27 and Core Strategy Policy CS7 presumes against inappropriate development within the AONB and SLAs and afford long-term protection to the landscape over all other considerations. However, this particular application is for a minor development, and whilst it is situated in the AONB and a SLA, the nature of the proposed development is small scale, coupled with the design and materials to be used, I would consider there to be minimal impact on the landscape of the locality or the wider AONB and SLA. I do not consider, therefore, that the requirements of Structure Plan Policies EN4 & EN5 and Ashford Local Plan

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Policy EN27 and Core Strategy Policy CS7 to be contravened as a result of this proposal. I accept that there would be some limited localised impact but do not consider there to be sufficient justification to warrant refusal, given that the impact would only be within the built confines of the settlement and not discernible within the wider AONB or SLA.

Fig.1Need for the development

16. Whilst the need for the development is not strictly a determining factor in considering planning applications, the County Planning Authority has a legal obligation under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which directs that community safety be embedded into planning decisions, policy and our day to day living. Therefore when reaching a decision on this case, consideration should be given to the need by the applicant for improved secure boundary treatment. The existing fence is below 1m in height and clearly provides no realistic, secure deterrent to potential criminal activity, furthermore, fencing of this height provides no practical means to prevent pupils from climbing over the fence and potentially gaining access onto the busy Hastings Road.
17. A recent Ofsted inspection highlighted that the school's pupils needed to have increased access to the infant playground and garden area which was described in their report as uninviting and difficult to access, recommending that the area be made more accessible and stimulating. Issues regarding internal access and making the area more stimulating have been addressed which leaves the question of making the space a safe and secure working environment. The Inspector went on to explain the importance for children to work outside independently as part of their entitlement to learning. The proposed development would provide a visually attractive yet secure area that would allow the area behind the railings to be brought fully back into use after many years of only being able to be used at times when a considerable number of staff are on duty.

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Conclusion

18. Whilst I am mindful that the proposed railings would be double the height of the existing wooden palisade fence, I am of the opinion that due to the materials and the design of the railings proposed the impact on the surrounding locality would be minimal. I consider that there is a strong rationale that metal railings of this style and size should not be considered as detrimental and I am of the opinion that they do indeed preserve and enhance the setting of the Conservation Area and surrounding Listed Buildings and are therefore in accordance with Structure Plan Policies SP1, QL1 and QL6, Ashford Local Plan Policies GP2, DP1, DP2, EN16 and Core Strategy Policy CS1. Furthermore, due to the small scale nature of the proposal and the minimal localised impact of the proposal, I do not consider the application to be contrary to Structure Plan Policies EN4 and EN5, Ashford Local Plan Policy EN27 and Core Strategy Policy CS7 to warrant refusal of the application. I therefore recommend that permission be granted subject to the conditions.

Recommendation

19. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE PERMITTED subject to conditions, including conditions covering:

- The standard time condition;
- The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted plans.

Case officer – Adam Tomaszewski	01622 696923
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Background documents - See section heading
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