

Temporary storage container – The Harvey Grammar School Sports Field, Folkestone SH/07/746

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 9 October 2007.

Application by The Governors of The Harvey Grammar School and KCC Children, Families and Education for the temporary positioning of a steel storage container at The Harvey Grammar School Sports Field, Cherry Garden Avenue, Folkestone.

Recommendation: Planning permission be permitted.

Local Member(s): Mr R Bliss and Mr R Pascoe

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

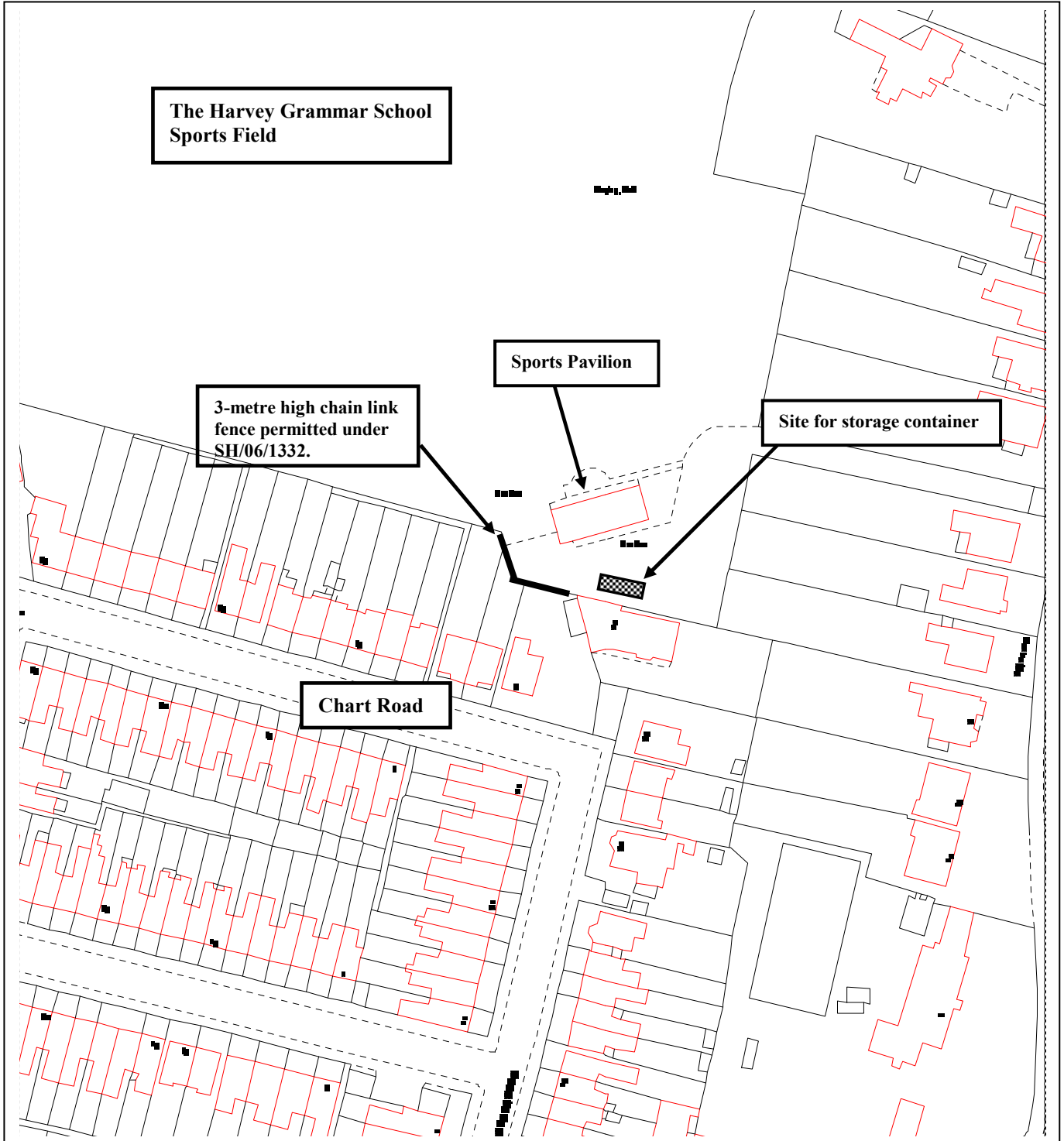
1. The Harvey Grammar School Sports Field is sited to the west of Folkestone town centre, spatially separated from the main Harvey Grammar School site, which is some 250 metres to the east. The sports field is surrounded on three sides by residential properties and on the western edge by Morehall Primary School. The proposed storage container would be sited behind the existing sports pavilion and adjacent to a 3-metre high brick wall that forms the boundary with a neighbouring residential property. A site location plan is attached.

Proposal

2. The proposal aims to site a steel storage container that measures 12m in length, 2.5m wide and 2.6m in height parallel to an existing 17m long, 3m high brick wall at a distance of 3 metres from the brick wall. The storage container would be painted dark green and surrounded by trellis on three sides with fast growing climbing plants, the roof of the container would be covered by cedar wood cladding or similar. The container is due to be sited as centrally as possible between the length of the brick wall with around 2.5 m of wall visible either side of the container so as to reduce the visibility of the container from the nearest residential properties in Chart Road. This is further enhanced by the fact the adjacent wall is 400mm taller than the height of the container.
3. The proposal seeks the provision of a steel storage container for a temporary period of 2 years after which time it is the School's aim to be able to provide permanent accommodation for storage. The site for development is not within a Conservation Area or any other constraint areas and no listed buildings would be affected by the development.

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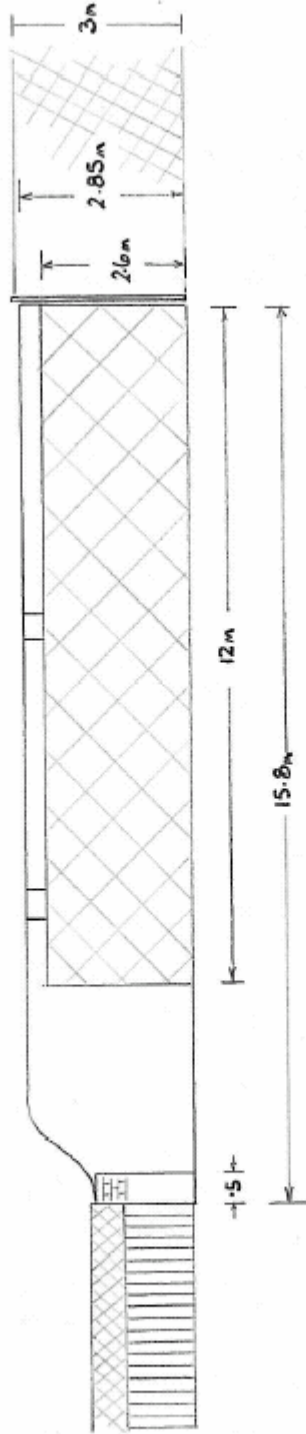
Site Location Plan



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Fig.1

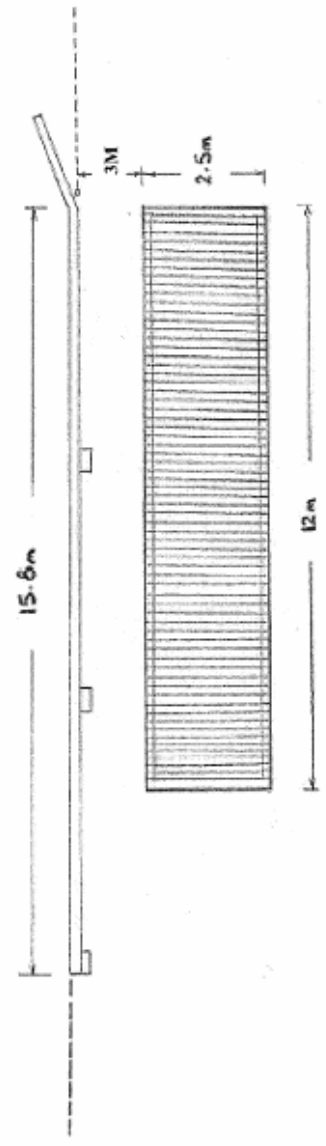


THE HARVEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL
PROPOSED TEMPORARY CONTAINER LOCATION - ELEVATION

THE SIDE OF THE CONTAINER WILL BE
COVERED IN TRELIS AND POTTED PLANTS
POSITIONED AT REGULAR INTERVALS
THE CONTAINER WILL BE PAINTED GREEN

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Fig. 2



THE HARVEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL
PROPOSED TEMPORARY CONTAINER LOCATION – PLAN

THE ROOF OF THE CONTAINER
WILL BE COVERED IN GREEN
FENCE SECTIONS AFTER
BEING PAINTED GREEN
NOT TO SCALE

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Planning Policy

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

(i) Kent & Medway Structure Plan: 2006

Policy SP1 Seeks to conserve and enhance Kent's environment and ensuring a sustainable pattern of development. Encouraging 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 QL1 Provides that development should be well designed and respect its setting. Development that would be detrimental to the amenity of settlements will not be permitted.

Policy QL11 Seeks to protect and enhance existing community services.

(ii) Shepway District Local Plan 2006

Policy SD1 All development proposals should take account of the broad aim of sustainable development – ensuring that development contributes towards ensuring a better quality of life for everyone.

Policy BE1 A high standard of layout, design and choice of materials will be expected for all new development

Consultations

5. **Shepway District Council** – Raises no objection subject to the permission being granted for two years and that the container is situated close to the boundary wall.

Folkestone Town Council – No comments received to date - consulted on 30 May 2007.

Divisional Transportation Manager - Raises no objection.

Local Members

6. The local County Member, Mr R. Bliss and adjoining local County Member Mr R. Pascoe, were notified on the 25 June 2007 and 30 May 2007 respectively.

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Publicity

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

Representations

8. I have received four letters of representation from local residents. The main comments/points of concern include the following.
 - Size of container is too large and more suitable for an industrial site.
 - A smaller storage facility would be more suitable.
 - Temporary planning permission could be up to five years, which does not seem to be very temporary.
 - The positioning of a large storage container would ruin the outlook from gardens.
 - A distance of 1 metre between brick boundary wall and storage container would allow youths to easily jump and gain quick access to Chart Road.

Discussion

9. 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 and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
10. The site for development does not lie within any environmentally designated areas, therefore the main issues to consider when reaching a decision on this application are the impact the development would have on the visual amenity of neighbouring residential properties and the potential security problems that may be exacerbated by the development in this particular location.
11. The development proposes the siting of a steel storage container on a parcel of land that is currently used for the storage of materials required for the maintenance of the playing field. The proposed development would provide a storage facility for the playing field maintenance equipment that is currently housed in part of the sports pavilion. The existing space is no longer sufficient, thus the requirement for extra storage capacity. The provision of permanent storage accommodation is desired but currently is not possible due to financial constraints. Therefore the proposed storage container is only expected to be required for a period of two years, by which time permanent accommodation provision should be possible.
12. The proposal when initially submitted sited the storage container at a distance of 3 metres from the brick boundary wall shown on Fig. 2 on page D3.4, painted in a dark green colour treatment and included some landscaping to surround the container in order to reduce the visual obtrusiveness of it. This proposal met with objection from three neighbouring properties and their comments are summarised in paragraph 8 above. As a result of these comments, further improvements were made to the proposal

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by the Harvey Grammar School for which this report is now based, however objections were again received from one neighbouring resident.

13. The decision was initially taken to relocate the container closer to the brick boundary wall at a distance of 1 metre (as opposed to 3m) to further reduce the visual impact of the proposal for neighbouring properties, but upon further consultation the decision was reversed to the original distance of three metres. That was primarily to alleviate the risk of anti-social behaviour occurring between the brick wall and the storage container and in order to reduce the ability for youths to traverse between the roof of the container and the brick wall in order to gain access to Chart Road. Such trespass was a frequent problem prior to the erection of the existing 3-metre chain link fence, permitted under reference SH/06/1332 and shown on the site plan on page D3.2.
14. I consider that the Harvey Grammar School has made sufficient alterations to the original scheme to make the proposal acceptable for a temporary period of two years. The decision to include a cedar cladding or similar roof covering to the container would significantly reduce the visual obtrusiveness of the proposal. The closest neighbouring properties to the proposal would only see the roof of the container from upstairs windows as the container would largely be blocked from vision by the existing 3 metre brick wall. Visibility from neighbouring gardens would also be largely minimal due to the distance the container would be from the closest end of the brick wall to these properties. There is also some good screening along the fence line at the bottom of the gardens of the closest properties.
15. The storage container would also be surrounded by trellis with fast growing climbing plants introduced; this would enable the visual obtrusiveness of three sides and the roof of the container to be significantly reduced. It is also planned to add landscaping around the container to further soften the impact of the container on the locality. Through the incorporation of these mitigating factors, I do not consider the application to be contrary to Structure Plan Policies SP1, QL1, QL11 and Shepway District Local Plan Policies SD1 and BE1. The container would be accessed by doors on the eastern end of the container. This end of the container would not be covered by trellis but would be painted in dark green and the container would be oriented in this direction so as to minimise the impact of the development on the neighbouring properties.
16. In my view, the proposed development would not unduly impact upon the residential amenity of the neighbouring properties. The container would be at its most visible from nearby properties at first floor windows, with the roof of the container the most prominent. Since the roof of the container would be clad in cedar wood and treated in the same manner as the adjoining pavilion, I consider the visual impact to be minimal. Furthermore, the roof of the container would look largely the same as a flat roofed wooden shed structure. The trellis and planting that would surround the container would also significantly reduce the visual impact of the development, coupled and augmented by the further landscaping proposed to surround the container.

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Conclusion

17. In conclusion, I would therefore agree that a permanent solution would be more appropriate. However, given that the application requests permission only for a period of two years and in light of the changes to the scheme to mitigate the visual impacts, I do not consider that the application is contrary to Structure Plan Policies SP1, QL1, QL11 and Shepway District Local Plan Policies SD1, BE1. I therefore recommend permission be granted subject to conditions.

Recommendation

18. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE PERMITTED subject to conditions, Including conditions covering:

- The standard time condition
- The storage container to be permitted for a time period of two years only
- The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted plans
- A scheme of landscaping to be submitted

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