

New vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and extension of playground at Barton Court Grammar School, Canterbury– CA/07/469

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 17 July 2007.

Application by The Governors of Barton Court Grammar Schools and Kent County Council Children Families and Education for the construction of a new vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and the extension of school playground at Barton Court Grammar School, Longport, Canterbury – CA/07/469.

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mr. M. Northey

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

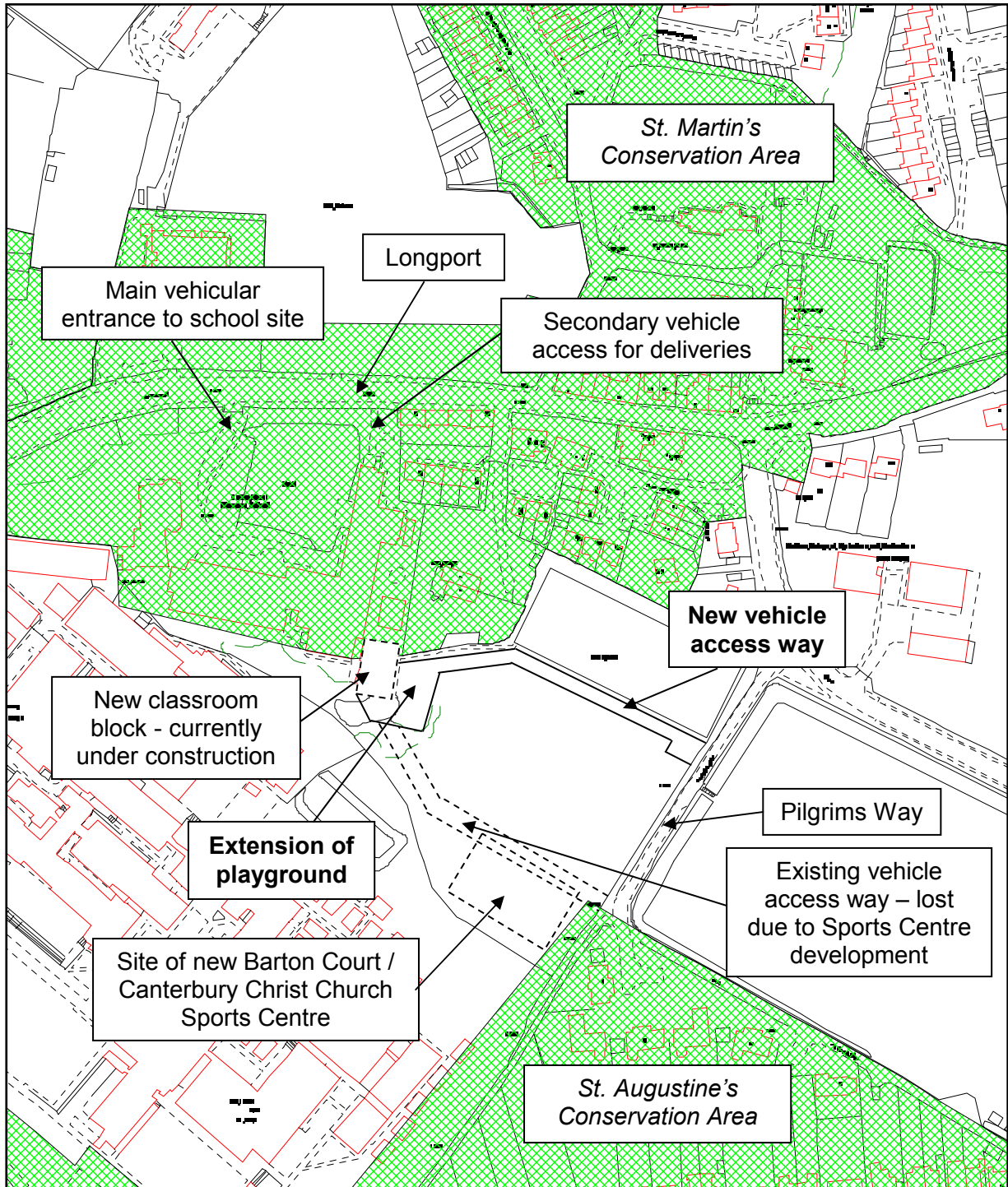
1. Barton Court Grammar School is located in Longport, opposite Canterbury Prison and Canterbury Christ Church University. The school has three existing vehicular entrances, the main access being from Longport adjacent to the Grade II Listed School House, the second being from Longport adjacent to the school kitchen to the north-east of the site, and the third being from Pilgrims Way into the rear of the site across the school playing field. The latter access way from Pilgrims Way is occasionally used for service and maintenance vehicles, and more recently with construction traffic for a new classroom block to the rear of the school.
2. The application site is adjacent to the St. Martin's, Canterbury Conservation Area and is within a Protected Existing Open Space Policy, as defined in the Adopted Canterbury City Council Local Plan. *A site location plan is attached and shows the Barton Court Grammar School site.*

Background and Proposal

3. The application proposes two key elements: those being (a) the construction of a new vehicular entrance way to the rear of the school from Pilgrims Way and, (b) the extension to the existing school playground surface adjacent to a new classroom block which is currently under construction.
4. First, the construction of the new vehicular access way from Pilgrims Way into the rear of the school has arisen due to the loss of the existing vehicle access way in association with a recently approved Sports Centre at the school site. The Sports Centre has recently been granted planning permission by Canterbury City Council, and is a joint venture between Barton Court Grammar School and Canterbury Christ Church University. As indicated by the site plan on page (2), the Centre would sit directly on the line of the existing vehicle access way to the rear of the school. Given the need to provide a rear access to the school, not only for maintenance and construction vehicles, but also for emergency service vehicles, the applicants are proposing re-routing the access way to the north side of the existing playing field, adjacent to existing tennis courts. As a result, the proposal includes a new vehicular access leading directly from Pilgrims Way that will be closed from the public by new palisade vehicle gates.

Construction of new vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and extension of playground – CA/07/469

Site Location Plan

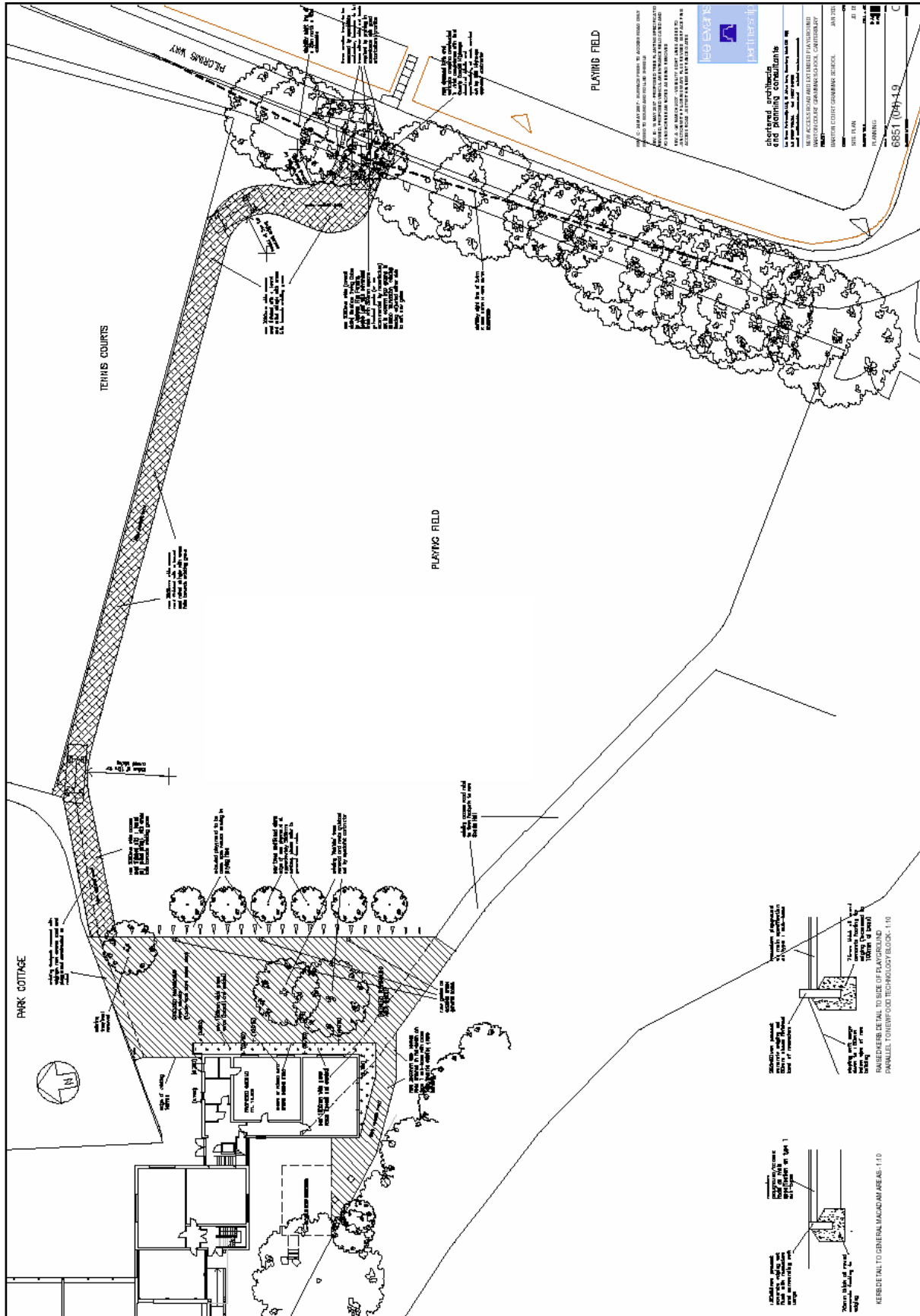


This material has been reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital map data with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright.

Scale 1:1250

Construction of new vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and extension of playground – CA/07/469

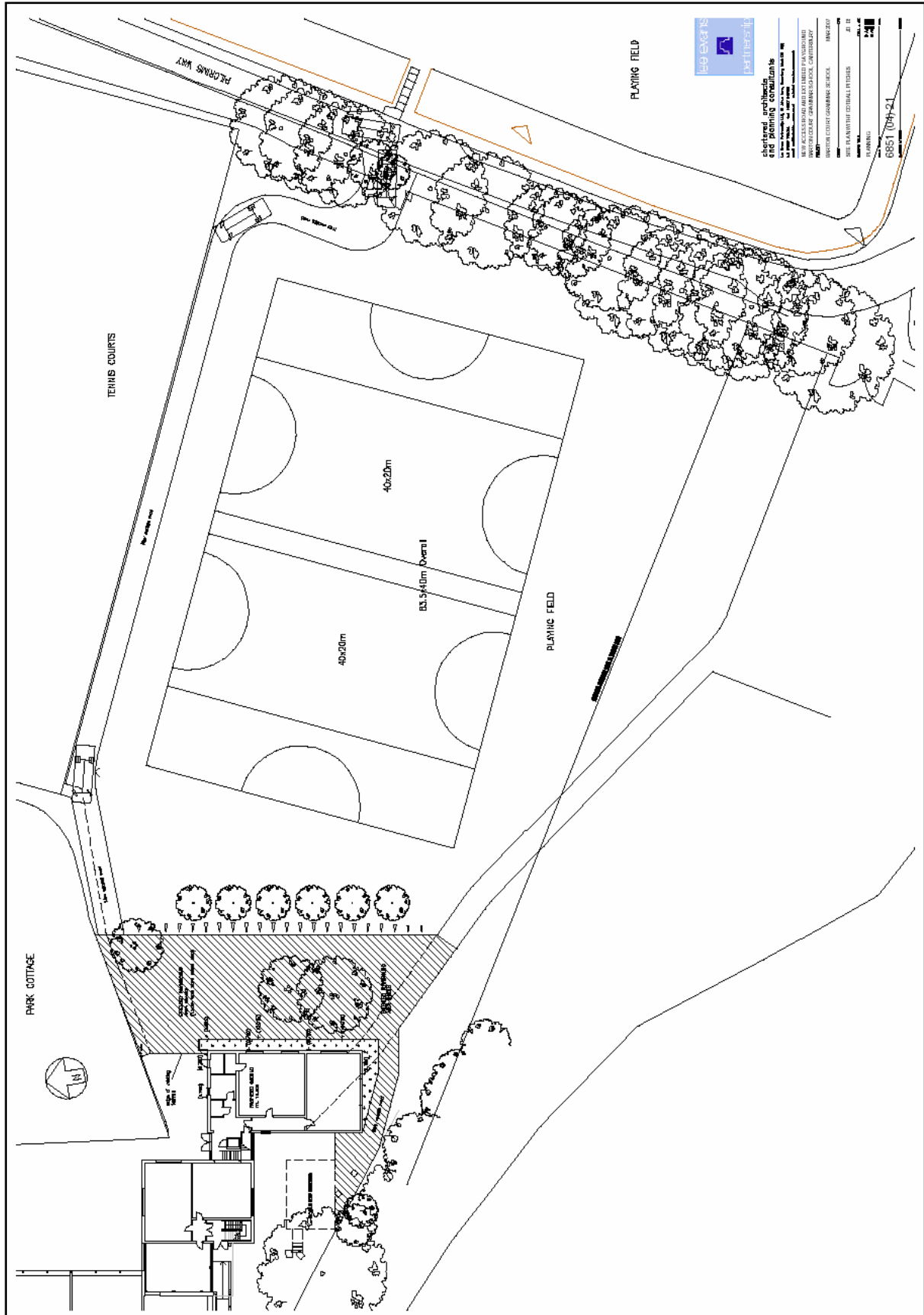
Site Plan of New Vehicular Access Way & Playground Extension



Item D1

Construction of new vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and extension of playground – CA/07/469

Site Plan Showing Existing Playing Field Provision within the School



Construction of new vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and extension of playground – CA/07/469

5. The second element of the proposal is for an extension to the existing playground at the rear of the school, adjacent to a recently approved, and now under-construction classroom block extension. The applicants propose to tarmac an existing grass surface and remove several trees in order to carry out their playground extension proposal. As part of the landscaping works proposed, there would be six new trees planted to compensate for the loss of two existing mature Robinia trees within the playground extension site. Detailed plans of both the new access way and the extension to the playground can be found on pages (3) and (4).
6. As a result of the views expressed by statutory consultees (as set out in paragraph 9 below), notably Canterbury City Council and Jacobs (Landscaping) the application was amended to include the following aspects:
 - A bound and rolled shingle vehicular access way;
 - A re-aligned entrance into the site from Pilgrims Way to minimise any potential impacts on existing mature trees; and
 - Six new trees adjacent to the new playground extension being amended to a 50/50 mix of Hornbeam and Field Maple species.

As a result of these amendments, consultations have been carried out on the new documents with the appropriate consultees and the views are reported below.

Planning History

7. As previously mentioned, a number of applications have recently been granted planning permission at Barton Court Grammar School. These are notably permission for:
 - A new two-storey classroom block and re-cladding of existing gymnasium in association with conversion to a library under application number CA/06/1101;
 - Permission for a free-standing canopy and creation of an external access door under application number CA/07/550;
 - Permission was granted at the 20 March 2007 Planning Applications Committee for retrospective palisade and railing fence around the shared school playing field with Chaucer Technology School under application number CA/06/1187;
 - In addition, Canterbury City Council's Development Control Committee resolved to grant planning permission for a new Sport's Centre on the Barton Court Grammar School site in March 2007 under application number CA/06/1684.

Planning Policy

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

- (i) **The Adopted 2006 Kent & Medway Structure Plan:**

Policy SP1 – The primary purpose of Kent's development and environmental strategy will be to protect and enhance the environment and achieve a sustainable pattern and form of development. This will be done principally by, amongst other matters:

- protecting the Kent countryside and its wildlife for future generations;
- protecting and enhancing features of importance in the natural and built environment;
- 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;

Construction of new vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and extension of playground – CA/07/469

Policy QL1 – All development should be well designed and be of high quality. Developments, individually or taken together, should respond positively to the scale, layout, pattern and character of their local surroundings. Development which would be detrimental to the built environment, amenity, functioning and character of settlements or the countryside will not be permitted.

Policy QL6 - The primary planning policy towards conservation areas is to 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 QL11 – Provision will be made for the development and improvement of local services in existing residential areas and in town and district centres, particularly where services are deficient. Flexibility in the use of buildings for mixed community uses, and the concentration of sports facilities at schools, will be encouraged.

Policy EN9 - Tree cover and the hedgerow network should be maintained. Additionally, they should be enhanced where this would improve the landscape, biodiversity, or link existing woodland habitats.

Policy CA1 - At Canterbury the location of new development will be governed by the need to conserve the built environment and setting of the historic city.

(ii) **The Adopted Canterbury City Council Local Plan 2006**

Policy BE1 – The City Council will expect proposals of high quality design which respond to the objectives of sustainable development. When considering any application for development the Council will have regard to the following consideration:

- The need for the development;
- The landscape character of the locality and the way the development is integrated into the landscape;
- The conservation and integration of natural features including trees and hedgerows to strengthen local distinctiveness, character and biodiversity;
- The visual impact and impact on local townscape character;
- The form of the development: the efficient use of land, layout, landscape, density and mix, scale, massing, materials, finish and architectural details;

Policy BE7 - Development within, affecting the setting, or views into and out of conservation areas, should preserve or enhance all features that contribute positively to the area's character or appearance. Particular consideration will be given to the following:

- The impact of the proposal on the townscape, roofscape, skyline and the relative scale and importance of buildings in the area;
- The need to protect trees and landscape;
- The removal of unsightly and negative features; and
- The need for the development.

Policy C17 – The City Council will work with the Education Authority and school Governors to ensure that the needs of primary and secondary schools

Construction of new vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and extension of playground – CA/07/469

are taken into account in the assessment of their development needs and proposals. Planning permission will be granted for proposals that are needed by the schools subject to design and highway safety considerations.

Policy C24 – Proposals which would result in the loss of protected existing open space as shown will only be permitted if:

- There would be no material harm to the contribution the protected open space makes to the visual or recreational amenity of the area where there would be material harm, this would be balanced against demonstrable need for the development.

Policy NE5 – Development should be designed to retain trees and hedgerows that make an important contribution to the amenity of the site and the surrounding area and which are important to wild flora and fauna. The City Council will refuse planning permission for proposals that would threaten the future retention of trees and hedgerows or other landscape features of importance to the site's character, an area's amenity or the movement of wildlife.

Consultations

9. **Canterbury City Council** – previously raised concerns to the chosen surface material of the proposed access way, however following the amendment to the application make the following comments:

'I can advise that the City Council is pleased to see the use of a gravel rolled tarmac and has no further observations to make'.

Sport England: As the site of the proposed development forms part of, or constitutes a playing field as defined in the 1996 Statutory Instrument No. 1817, Sport England has therefore assessed the application in light of our adopted Playing Fields Policy.

The new access road will slightly develop an area of the playing field. The playing pitches will still be accommodated with a slight re-alignment and Sport England is satisfied that the proposed development meets with exception of the above policy. Consequently, Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to the proposed development.

Divisional Transportation Manager: has raised no objections to the proposal that could also be utilised to serve the proposed sports hall.

Environment Agency: has no objection to the proposal but offer advice regarding the site lying within a Source Protection Zone.

Jacobs (Landscaping): has made the following comments in relation to the proposal.

"In general we do not have any objection to the proposed vehicular entrance, access road and playground extension. They would cause little impact on the surrounding area due to the current amount of existing and proposed development on site, the screening of surrounding existing vegetation and the anticipated low usage of the road.

Construction of new vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and extension of playground – CA/07/469

The proposed tree planting, in front of the playground extension would have a beneficial impact screening the new development due to the removal of existing trees.

Following the amendment to the alignment of the vehicular access way, Jacobs (Landscaping) has no further comments with regard to the proposed development.

County Archaeologist: has noted that recent archaeological investigations at the school revealed a number of medieval features. As a result, he has recommended that should permission be granted, a condition requiring a formal programme of archaeological works be placed on the decision.

Local Members

10. The local County Member, Mr M. Northey, was notified of the application on the 2 April 2007. Mr M. Northey was notified on the amended details on the 30 May 2007.

Publicity

11 The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice to the rear of the school along Pilgrims Way, an advertisement in the KM Extra and the individual notification of 15 neighbouring residential properties. The site notice and advertisement indicated that the application is adjacent to St. Martin's, Canterbury Conservation Area and is likely to affect its character and/or appearance.

Representations

12. To date, 3 letters of objection have been received in relation to the proposed development. The main points are summarised below:

- Concerned about the loss of more trees from the Barton Court grounds. These trees are survivors from the rural past of this land and make a greater contribution to the landscape than replacement saplings will do;
- Wish to see more extensive tree planting and landscaping carried out around these developments to compensate for the loss of ancient hedgerow along Pilgrims Way (resulting from the new vehicular entrance) and the loss of mature trees over recent years by the adjacent Canterbury College rebuilding and imminent University Sport's Centre development, as well as other developments by the School;
- Concerned that the hardstanding for the playground would in the future be used as a venue for live entertainment or other activities such as boot fairs;
- During recent applications with the Sports Centre, the existing playing field is being 'eaten into' and this application will remove another 3.5m swath from the north of the field.
- Concerns that the constant string of applications at the school, each being legitimate and sensible improvements and hard to resist, is causing rampant uncontrolled development leading to environmental impacts on the school grounds;

Discussion

13. In considering this proposal, regard must be had to the Development Plan policies outlined in paragraph (8) above. Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory

Construction of new vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and extension of playground – CA/07/469

Purchase Act states that applications must 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 in this case include the impact upon residential and local amenity, the impact of the development on the adjoining St. Martin's Conservation Area and the impact of the development on the Protected Open Space Designation as set out in the Adopted Canterbury City Council Local Plan.

Impact on adjacent Conservation Areas

14. As outlined above, the new vehicular access way and playground extension sit adjacent to the St. Martin's Conservation Area as can be identified on the site location plan on page (2).
15. Development Plan policies state that proposals within or adjacent to Conservation Areas should '*preserve or enhance their special character or appearance*' and '*development which would harm the character or appearance of a Conservation Area will not be permitted*' [Policy QL6 from the Adopted Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006]. Similarly, the Adopted Canterbury City Council Local Plan states that, under Policy BE7, '*development within, affecting the setting, or views into and out of conservation areas, should preserve or enhance all features that contribute positively to the area's character or appearance*'.
16. In my opinion the new access way, extended playground area and the removal of two trees adjacent to the Conservation Area does little to reflect its special characteristics. However, when considering the proposal in the wider context, the extension to the existing hardstanding space would not, in my opinion, seriously undermine the character of the adjoining St. Martin's Conservation Area given the existing built form within the school site. It is worth noting that the new vehicular access way lies directly adjacent to a large area of existing hardstanding, currently occupied by tennis courts. I consider that the new vehicular access way would sit in visual terms relatively comfortably adjacent to this existing hardstanding without encroaching too far into the protected open space designation of the school playing field.
17. It should be noted the amendment of the surface dressing material of the proposed vehicular access way upon the advice from Canterbury City Council as outlined in paragraph (6) above. Members should note that the applicants have confirmed that the extent of the new vehicular access way would be finished in a bound and rolled shingle surface as opposed to the originally proposed tarmac surface. In my opinion, I consider that this amendment would be a significant improvement in visual terms with regard to the adjoining Conservation Area setting.

Landscaping

18. Members should note that Policy EN9 of the Adopted Kent and Medway Structure Plan states that '*tree cover and the hedgerow network should be maintained and enhanced where this would improve the landscape [...]*'. Similarly, Policy NE5 of the Adopted Local Plan states that '*development should be designed to retain trees and hedgerows that make an important contribution to the amenity of the site and the surrounding area [...]*'. It is therefore important to consider the proposal against the development plan policies relating to trees and landscaping.
19. With regard to the loss of several mature trees which currently lie adjacent to the currently under-construction food technology room, it is worth noting that these trees were controlled by planning condition to be retained under the approval for the new food

Construction of new vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and extension of playground – CA/07/469

technology block. However, following construction works in close proximity to these trees several branches have had to be cut back. In my opinion, trees in this part of the site play an important role in screening the School's built development from the Protected Open Space of the school field, and as such it is important to ensure that appropriate species and sizes of tree are selected as replacements.

20. Following the advice from the Council's landscaping specialist, the applicants have amended the specification for new tree planting to be a split mix of three Hornbeam and three Field Maple trees to between 3-4m high. I note the further advice from Jacobs landscaping on this point, in which they have no further comments to make regarding this amendment. As such, I am satisfied that the loss of several mature trees can be compensated for through the planting of six new native species.
21. Another important consideration in this case is the potential impact on an existing avenue of mature trees along Pilgrims Way. It should be noted that these trees to the rear of the school provide high townscape value to both adjoining Conservation Areas and as such every effort should be made to protect these as part of the proposed development. In light of the advice contained in paragraph (9) from Jacobs Landscaping, the applicants have slightly re-aligned the entrance of the vehicular access way between two mature trees in order to reduce the potential impact on tree roots. In light of this amendment, I am satisfied that given a condition is placed on any decision to provide and maintain tree protection zones around these trees during the construction works, the development should have no wider implications given the protection of this existing avenue of trees.
22. Whilst I recognise the concerns raised by local residents in relation to the removal of trees within the site, when considering the proposal in light of the relevant Development Plan Policies and the advice sought from our landscaping specialist, I am satisfied that the proposal is acceptable, and as such would not raise an objection in terms of landscaping.

Residential and local amenity

23. I am aware of the residential concerns relating to a constant string of applications at this site which have been described by a local resident as *"each being legitimate and sensible improvements which are hard to resist, however are causing rampant uncontrolled development leading to environmental impacts on the school grounds"*. Whilst I appreciate the concerns raised, in my opinion the development proposed is in connection with the recently approved Sports Centre development. Given that this proposal would remove an existing access into the rear of the site, I can acknowledge the applicant's concerns to re-establish a new point of access. In considering the application, I have to look at the current development in context of its wider surroundings. As such, whilst I appreciate that the current proposal would lead to a further area of development to one side of the school playing field, I am of the opinion that the extent of the proposal would not prejudice either the Protected Open Space Policy designation of the playing field or the adjoining St. Martins Conservation Area. Accordingly, I would not raise objection to the proposal on these grounds.
23. In addition, I note the concerns regarding the use of the extended playground as an area for live entertainment and Boot Fairs at weekends. I have sought advice from the applicants on this point and they have confirmed that there is no intention for this space to be used for this kind of activity.

Construction of new vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and extension of playground – CA/07/469

Use of the vehicle access way

24. The applicants have stated that the School wishes to use the new vehicular access way for construction and maintenance vehicles as well as emergency access to the rear of the school. It has been confirmed that this roadway would be used on an irregular basis. Whilst I recognised the concerns of local residents regarding the potential for noise disturbance from vehicular traffic along the new access road, given the irregular use of the roadway, and the distance to the nearest residential property being in excess of 40 metres, an objection on these grounds in my view cannot be sustained.
25. In order to retain control over the usage of the vehicular access way, I am minded to suggest that the use of the access way be controlled by a planning condition to restrict access for construction and maintenance vehicles as well as emergency access to the rear of the school.

Protected Open Space Policy designation

26. Members will note that as outlined above, part of the site falls within a Protected Open Space Policy designation as set out in the Adopted Canterbury City Council Local Plan. Policy C24 of the Adopted Local Plan states that “*proposals which would result in the loss of protected existing open space as shown will only be permitted if there would be no material harm to the contribution that the protected open space makes to the visual or recreational amenity of the area*” and “*where there would be material harm this would be balanced against demonstrable need for the development*”.
27. As such, it is important to consider the potential impact that the development may have on the Protected Open Space of the school field. Members should note the proposed plans shown on pages (2), (3) & (4) which show the extent of the new vehicular access way across the side of the field. In my opinion, given that the area of hardstanding would cover a 3-metre strip to the east of an area of existing hardstanding currently occupied by school tennis courts, I consider that the further encroachment into the open space to be minimal. In terms of the overall contribution that the Open Space makes to the recreational amenity of the area, I note the plan shown on page (4) which sets out the current school playing field as a recreational space with marked out sports pitches.
28. In addition to this, I would note that Sport England has not raised any objection to the proposal in terms of any potential loss in recreational space that is capable of forming part of, or constitutes a playing field. In the absence of an objection from this statutory consultee, I am satisfied that the new access way would not impede the existing outdoor sports provision at the school. As such, I do not consider the proposal to cause any demonstrable harm to the recreational amenity of the playing field site.
29. In terms of the need for the access way, I acknowledge the applicant’s case to provide a means of access for service vehicles and emergency access as well as to increase the amount of hardstanding play area space within the school. In this case, I believe that the applicants have demonstrated that any harm caused by the proposal could be successfully mitigated against.

Conclusion

30. In conclusion, whilst I recognise the concerns of local residents to the proposed new access way and extension to the existing school playground, I consider that the applicant’s need for the development, together with the requirements for new tree planting, tree protection measures, and amended surface material for the access way. I therefore am satisfied that the development is in accordance with the relevant

Item D1

Construction of new vehicular entrance from Pilgrims Way and extension of playground – CA/07/469

Development Plan Policies as addressed above. In addition, whilst I recognise the issues relating to the proposed use of the vehicular access way, I recommend that a condition limiting this use is imposed on the applicants in this case. Accordingly, I recommend that planning permission be granted, subject to the conditions outlined in paragraph (31) below.

Recommendation

31 I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO conditions, including conditions to cover the following aspects

- The use of the vehicle access way being limited to emergency access, construction and maintenance vehicles only;
- Details of a landscaping scheme being submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any operations on site and thereafter implemented within the next available planting season following completion of the works;
- Tree protection measures to be adhered to at all times;
- Vehicular access way surface material being a bound and rolled shingle surface;
- A programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification shall be submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any operations on site.

Case officer – Julian Moat	01622 696978
----------------------------	--------------

Background documents - See section heading
--