

New Garage at Holy Trinity & St. Johns CE Primary School, Margate – TH/07/251

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

Application by The Governors of Holy Trinity & St. Johns CE Primary School and Kent County Council Children Families and Education for the construction of a new garage for use by the school mini-bus at Holy Trinity & St. John's CE Primary School, St. John's Road, Margate – TH/07/251.

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mr. C. Hart & Mr. C. Wells

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

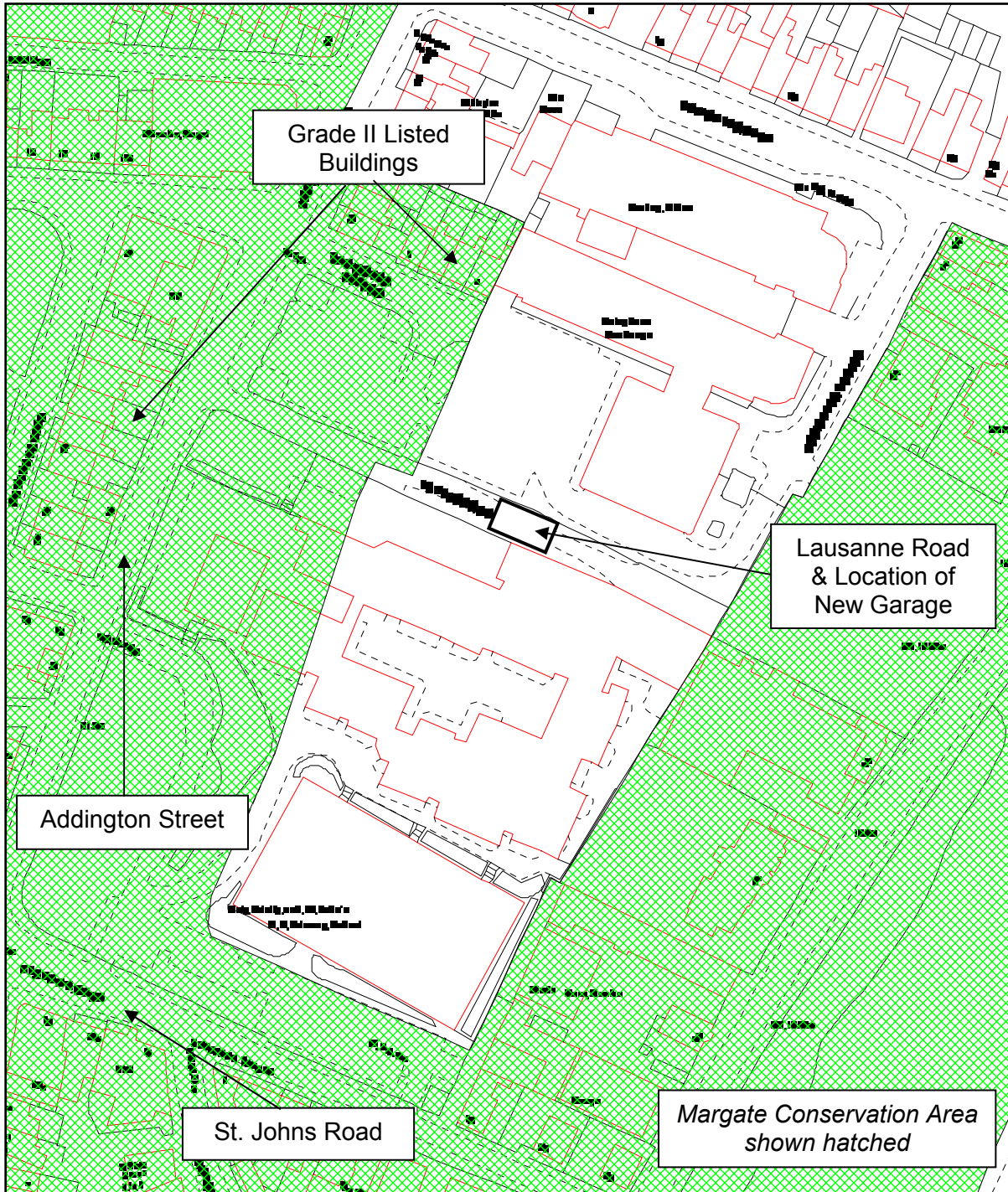
1. Holy Trinity & St. John's CE Primary School is located just off St. John's Road and is surrounded to three sides by the Margate Conservation Area. The main vehicular access to the school lies to the south of the site from St. John's Road, and a secondary access to the rear of the school is obtained to the north of the site from Lausanne Road. Lausanne Road is an un-adopted road that once served as a means of access to a graveyard to the east of the school site, but now only serves as an entrance to the school. The road is currently un-made past the rear entrance to the school and it is here where the new garage to house the school minibus is proposed to be located. The site is also faced by nearby Grade II Listed Buildings in Addington Street, Addington Square and Hawley Square. *A site location plan is attached and shows the Holy Trinity & St. Johns Primary School site and the surrounding context.*

Background and Proposal

2. The application proposes a new garage sited on the former Lausanne Road to house a new school mini-bus which is due to be delivered to the site in September 2007. The proposal has arisen due to a recent spate of serious vandalism over recent months at the school, and the need to protect the vehicle from the levels of vandalism currently experienced at the site.
3. When the application was originally submitted, the proposal entailed a 'Compton' pre-cast concrete panel garage, consisting of colour coated galvanised steel sheeting and a galvanised steel roller shutter door. However, following an initial consultation period with Thanet District Council and KCC's Conservation Architect, amongst others, it became apparent that this design of garage would not be suitable for the chosen location adjacent to Grade II Listed Buildings and surrounded by the Margate Conservation Area.
4. Accordingly, the applicants re-submitted a second style of garage, which forms the current proposal as discussed in the subsequent report. The new style of garage comprises a brick-built structure, using bricks to match an adjacent wall and school buildings, and an artificial pitched slate roof. It should be noted that the size of the garage has been determined by the size of the new school mini-bus and therefore the building proposed is larger than that of a standard garage as designed for a car. Members will note from the plans on page (3) that the proposed garage would be 9 metres long by 4.5 metres wide, and would have a ridge height of approximately 8.5 metres.

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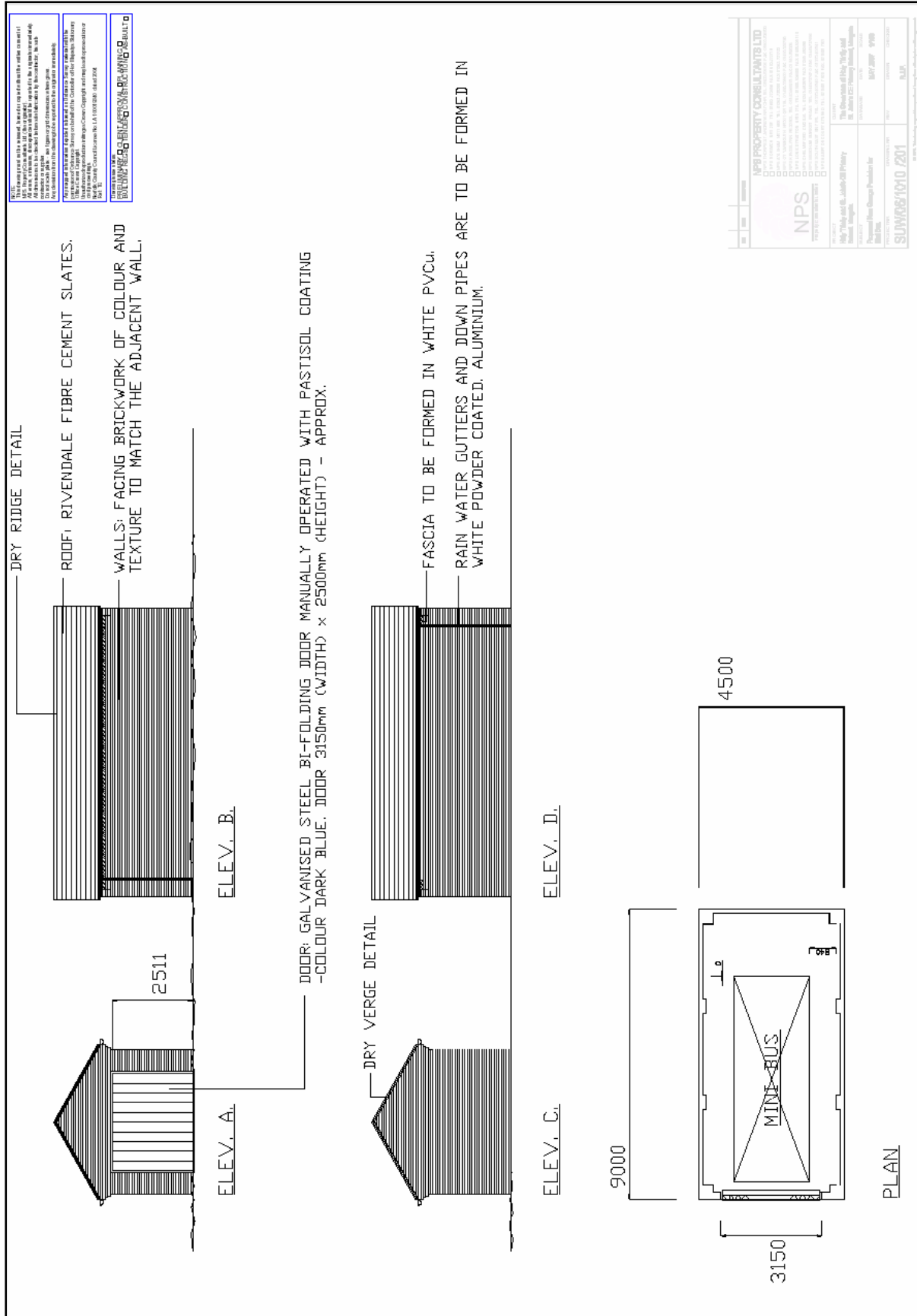
Site Location Plan



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Scale 1:1250

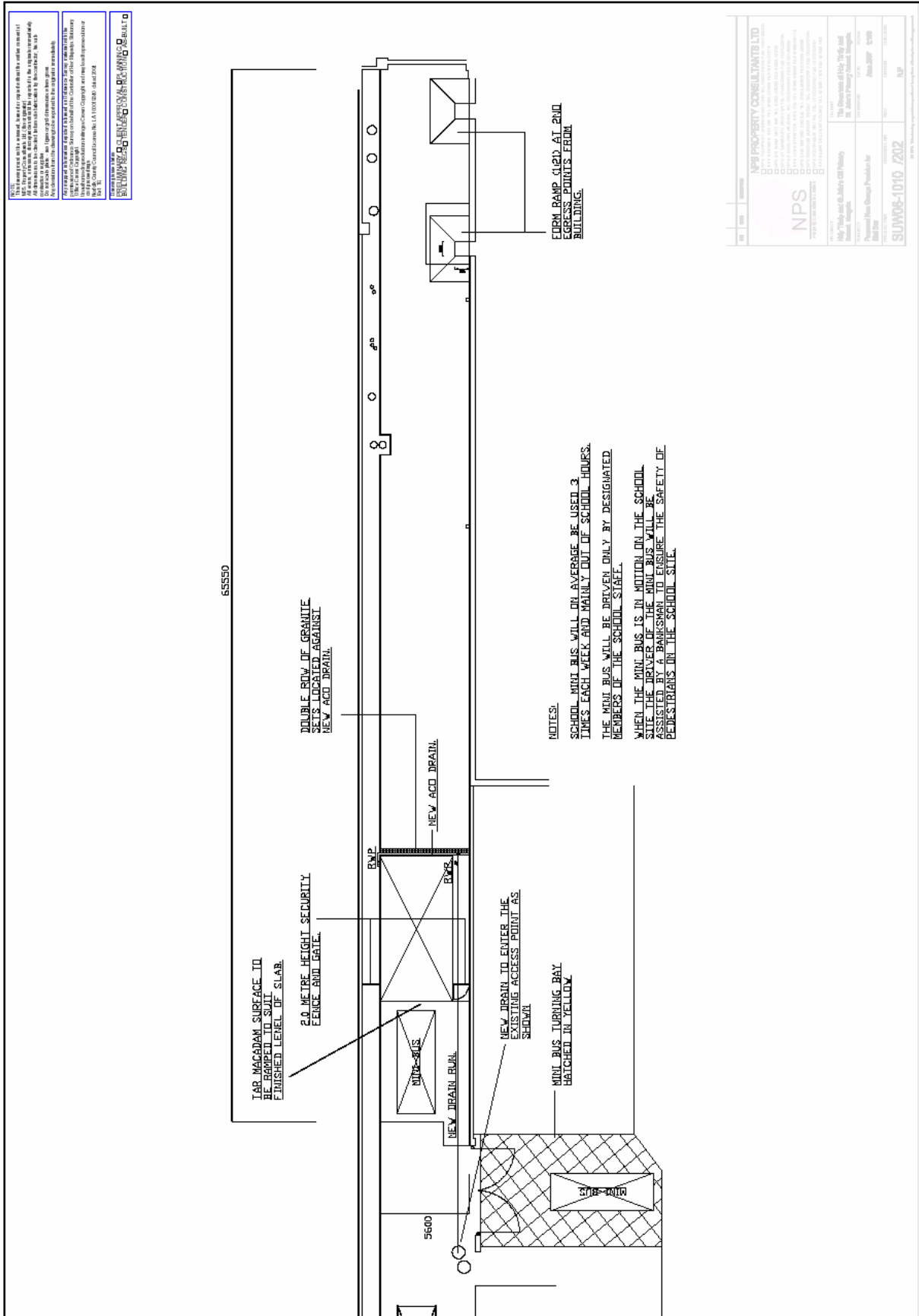
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Proposed Elevations of New School Garage



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Proposed Vehicle Turning Area



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Planning History

6. A number of previous applications have been granted planning permission at Holy Trinity & St. John's Primary School in recent years. These are notably permission for:
- A new single storey pre-school nursery building on the corner of Lausanne Road and Addington Street, under application number TH/03/823; and
 - A new entrance foyer and extension to an existing Nurture room is currently under consideration by the County Planning Authority, under application number TH/07/TEMP/0044.

Planning Policy

5. 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;

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 QL8 – Listed Buildings will be preserved and their architectural and historic integrity and the character of their settings will be protected and enhanced. Development that would adversely affect them 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.

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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.

(ii) **The Adopted Thanet District Council Local Plan 2006**

Policy D1 – All new development is required to provide high quality and inclusive design, sustainability, layout and materials and development proposals will only be permitted if they, amongst other matters

- respect and enhance the character or appearance of the surrounding area, particularly in scale, massing and use of appropriate materials;
- is compatible with neighbouring buildings and does not lead to unacceptable loss of amenity;
- maintains mature trees and other vegetation and incorporate new landscaping

Policy D1 – Landscaping will be required as part of new development to include:

- the enhancement of the development site in its setting;
- the retention (and protection during site works) of as many trees, hedges and other habitat features as possible;

Policy HE1 – There will be a presumption in favour of preservation of Listed Buildings. When considering applications for development affecting a Listed Building or its setting, the District Council will have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Policy HE4 – In and adjoining Conservation Areas, all planning proposals will be assessed in relation to their effects on the character and appearance of the area as a whole. Development that would harm that special character or appearance would not be permitted.

Policy CF1 – Planning permission will be granted for new community facilities if the proposal are not contrary to other Local Plan Policies and the community use and location are demonstrated as appropriate.

Consultations

6. **Thanet District Council** – has made the following observations on the current proposal:

“Although I appreciate the need for the proposed new garage, I wish to object to the scheme in its current form due to its impacts upon the adjacent Conservation Area. I am of the opinion that the design and location of the proposed garage means that it will be a prominent feature and would harm the character and appearance of the designated Conservation Area. The scheme is therefore considered to be contrary to Thanet Local Plan Policy HE4 which stresses that development in and adjoining Conservation Areas will only be permitted if it preserves or enhances the special character of the area.

The scheme may be more acceptable if it could be accommodated in a less prominent location within the site”.

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Divisional Transportation Manager: has raised no objections to the proposal provided that the area shown on the site plan as a mini-bus turning area is kept clear and solely used for that purpose in order to allow the mini-bus to enter and leave Lausanne Road in a forward gear.

Environment Agency: has no objection to the proposal but offer advice regarding surface water drainage.

County Conservation Architect: has no objections to the proposed garage and advises that the use of natural slate or a good quality artificial slate, such as Rivendale Fibre Cement Slate, is used on the garage roof.

Local Members

7. The local County Members, Mr C. Hart and Mr. C. Wells were notified on the original application on 26 February 2007. Following the amendment to the design of the garage, Mr. C. Hart and Mr. C. Wells were re-notified on 31 May 2007.

Publicity

8. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice to the rear of the school along Addington Road with the entrance to Lausanne Road, an advertisement in the KM Isle of Thanet Extra and the individual notification of 12 neighbouring residential properties. The site notice and advertisement indicate that the proposed development is likely to affect the character and/or appearance of the adjacent Margate Conservation Area. It is also indicated that the proposed development may affect the setting of nearby Listed Buildings.

Representations

9. To date, no letters of objection have been received in relation to the proposed new garage.

Discussion

10. In considering this proposal, regard must be had to the Development Plan policies outlined in paragraph (5) above. Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory 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 of the development on the surrounding Margate Conservation Area and nearby Grade II Listed Buildings.

Impact on adjacent Margate Conservation Area

11. As outlined above, the proposed new school garage site is enveloped on three sides by the Margate Conservation Area as can be identified on the site location plan on page (2).

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12. 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 and/or appearance of a Conservation Area will not be permitted'* [Policy QL6 from the Adopted Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006]. Similarly, the Adopted Thanet District Council Local Plan states that, under Policy HE4, *'in and adjoining Conservation Areas, all planning proposals will be assessed in relation to their effects on the character and appearance of the area as a whole'* and that *'development that would harm that special character or appearance would not be permitted'*.
13. In my opinion, the current proposed garage is of a significant improvement to the original proposal for a pre-cast garage structure consisting of metal sheeting and concrete walls. I am of the opinion that the current proposal goes some way to reflect the character and appearance of the surrounding area, by using materials that sit comfortably against the existing built form. It should be noted that the applicants are keen to use matching facing brickwork to construct the outer skin of the garage, and a high quality artificial slate, such as the one specified by the County Conservation Architect (see paragraph 6). Given that these exact materials can be reserved for consideration by a planning condition, I would propose that a condition be placed on any decision to allow the County Planning Authority to retain control over the final materials for the proposed garage building.
14. Whilst I recognise the concerns of the District Council with regard to their objection based on Policy HE4, I am of the opinion that subject to the correct choice of materials for the garage being chosen, the overall impact of the garage on the adjacent Conservation Area would be minimal. In addition, it should be noted the surrounding context of the site for the new garage; the site is bordered to the north by an existing commercial building (currently occupied by a BT Telephone Exchange) which visually dominates smaller residential properties, notably the listed buildings in Addington Square. When considering the openness of the garage site against the wider Conservation Area, I am of the opinion that the proposed development would be relatively well screened, between the existing brick built boundary wall to the school, the large telephone exchange building and several trees.

Impact on surrounding Listed Buildings

15. Given that several Grade II listed buildings surround the proposed site, Policy QL8 of the Adopted Structure Plan and Policy HE1 of the Adopted Local Plan need to be carefully considered. Policy QL8 states that *'Listed Buildings will be preserved and their architectural and historic integrity and the character of their settings will be protected and enhanced'* and *'development that would adversely affect them will not be permitted'*. Similarly, Policy HE1 of the Adopted Local Plan states that *'when considering applications for development affecting a Listed Building or its setting, the District Council will have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses'*.
16. In this context, it is important to consider the openness and proximity of the proposed development to the nearby listed buildings. When considering the site plan on page (2), it is evident that the proposed garage would sit some 36 metres from the front façade of the nearest Listed Building in Addington Square, and that the distance is separated by virtue of a car park and low level screening, as well as a change in level between the garage and residential properties in Addington Square. Therefore, on balance, I am satisfied that the proposal would not have any significant detrimental impact on the setting of nearby listed buildings.

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17. Whilst I recognise that the garage is relatively large in size, with a pitched roof of 8.5 metres to the maximum ridge height, I am of the opinion that there is little that can be achieved aside from a flat roofed structure when working with sufficient parking space for a school mini-bus. Whilst I acknowledge the size of the structure, I consider that subject to the correct materials being chosen, I would not wish to raise an objection on the grounds of surrounding listed buildings or on a detrimental impact on the character and setting of the adjacent Margate Conservation Area.

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 D1 of the Adopted Local Plan states that *'landscaping will be required as part of new development to enhance the development site in its setting'* as well as *'the retention (and protection) of trees, hedges and other habitat features'* on the site during construction works.

19. In my opinion, the need for a landscaping buffer is not required in this case, and could not easily be achieved given the width of the proposed garage taking up much of the width of the former Lausanne Road. However, I would recommend that given there are existing trees and a low level hedge in situ around the proposed garage I would propose a condition be placed on any decision requiring these landscaping features to be retained as part of the current proposal. Accordingly, I would not wish to raise an objection to the proposal on landscape amenity grounds.

Highway Issues

20. The Divisional Transportation Manager was consulted on the proposed new garage sited in Lausanne Road and has confirmed that he has no objections to the proposal subject to the use of the mini-bus turning area shown on the site plan on page (4). There is a requirement here for the mini-bus to enter and leave Lausanne Road in a forward gear, and as such the mini-bus turning area needs to be kept free for this purpose at all times. As such, I would recommend that a condition be placed on any decision to safeguard this space for use solely as a mini-bus turning area.

Alternative Sites

21. The District Council in paragraph (6) has highlighted the issue of alternative sites for the proposed garage. However, the applicants have stated that within the school site there is no other suitable alternative where this garage could be housed without giving rise to detriment to the education provision and amenity of the school grounds. Similarly, given the proximity of the Conservation Area on three sides of the school site, it is not possible, in my view to locate the garage in any other location on the school site without a similar impact on the Conservation Area. As a result of Thanet District Councils concerns, alternative options have been explored moving the garage further eastwards along Lausanne Road, effectively hiding it further from view of the properties in Addington Street and Addington Square. However, the area behind the site of the proposed garage is currently used by the School's After School Club, and an area that the School hope to develop in the future as an outdoor play area. As such, the applicants do not wish for the garage to be sited any further eastwards than currently proposed as this would lead to an unacceptable loss in useful external school play space. Such a loss would be contrary to Policy QL11 of the Adopted Kent & Medway Structure Plan.

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Conclusion

22. In conclusion, whilst I recognise the concerns of Thanet District Council with regard to the impact upon the Conservation Area, I am of the opinion that, subject to the correct external materials being selected and that the applicants complying with conditions covering tree and shrub retention, and highway safety matters, the development is in general accordance with the Development Plan Policies. Whilst I recommend that the proposed site of the garage would be visible from residential properties, I do not consider that moving the garage eastwards would achieve a significant improvement to compensate for the loss of valuable outdoor play area as indicated in paragraph (21) above. Therefore, I am satisfied with the location of the proposed garage and accordingly recommend that planning permission be granted, subject to the conditions outlined in paragraph (23) below.

Recommendation

- 23.1 RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO conditions, including conditions to cover the following aspects:
- Details of all external material be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any operations on site;
 - Protection measures for existing trees to be submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority and adhered to at all times;
 - The area shown on the site plan for a mini-bus turning area shall be reserved for that purpose at all times and any mini-bus using the garage should enter and leave Lausanne Road in a forward gear.

Case officer – Julian Moat	01622 696978
Background documents - See section heading	