

**Out of hours community building at Sandwich Technology School – DO/06/507**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 7 November 2006.

Application by the Governors of Sandwich Technology School and Kent County Council Children, Families & Education for the construction of out of school hours community building at Sandwich Technology School, Deal Road, Sandwich.

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mr. L Ridings

Classification: Unrestricted

**Members' Site Meeting**

1. A group of Planning Application Committee Members visited the application site on the 10 October 2006 to acquaint themselves with proposals for an out of school hour's community building at Sandwich Technology School.  
The Committee Secretary's notes of the site meeting are attached as an Appendix.

**Site**

2. Sandwich Technology School is located between Deal Road, to which the main vehicle access to the school leads, and Dover Road to the front of the school. The site is well screened with a tree-lined boundary along Deal Road, and is bordered by residential properties to the north-east on Dover Road. The entire site is within an Open Space designation [Policy OS1 from Dover District Council Local Plan], which presumes against the loss of open space, with the exception of development in a School site for educational purposes.  
*A site plan is attached and shows the School site and the proposed community building.*

**Proposal**

3. The application has been submitted by the Governors of Sandwich Technology School and Kent County Council Children, Families & Education and proposes the construction of an out of hours community usage building to contain various equipment and products, as well as providing a workspace for the community to build carnival structures.
4. As a technology school, Sandwich Technology School is required to deal with not just education, but with a variety of issues concerning the community. The School has done that in the past from a variety of short-term locations, such as huts and mobile classrooms, and this is the first time that a viable alternative solution has been proposed.
5. The School is proposing to build a light industrial unit, measuring 14 x 21 metres, to contain the equipment and products required to construct carnival structures. The new building is proposed to replace existing structures, such as mobile classrooms, which have recently been removed from the site. These mobile classrooms have previously housed the School's community facilities, and it is proposed for the new building to sit exactly in the footprint of the old huts, thus using the existing services. *A plan is attached showing the proposed community building.*

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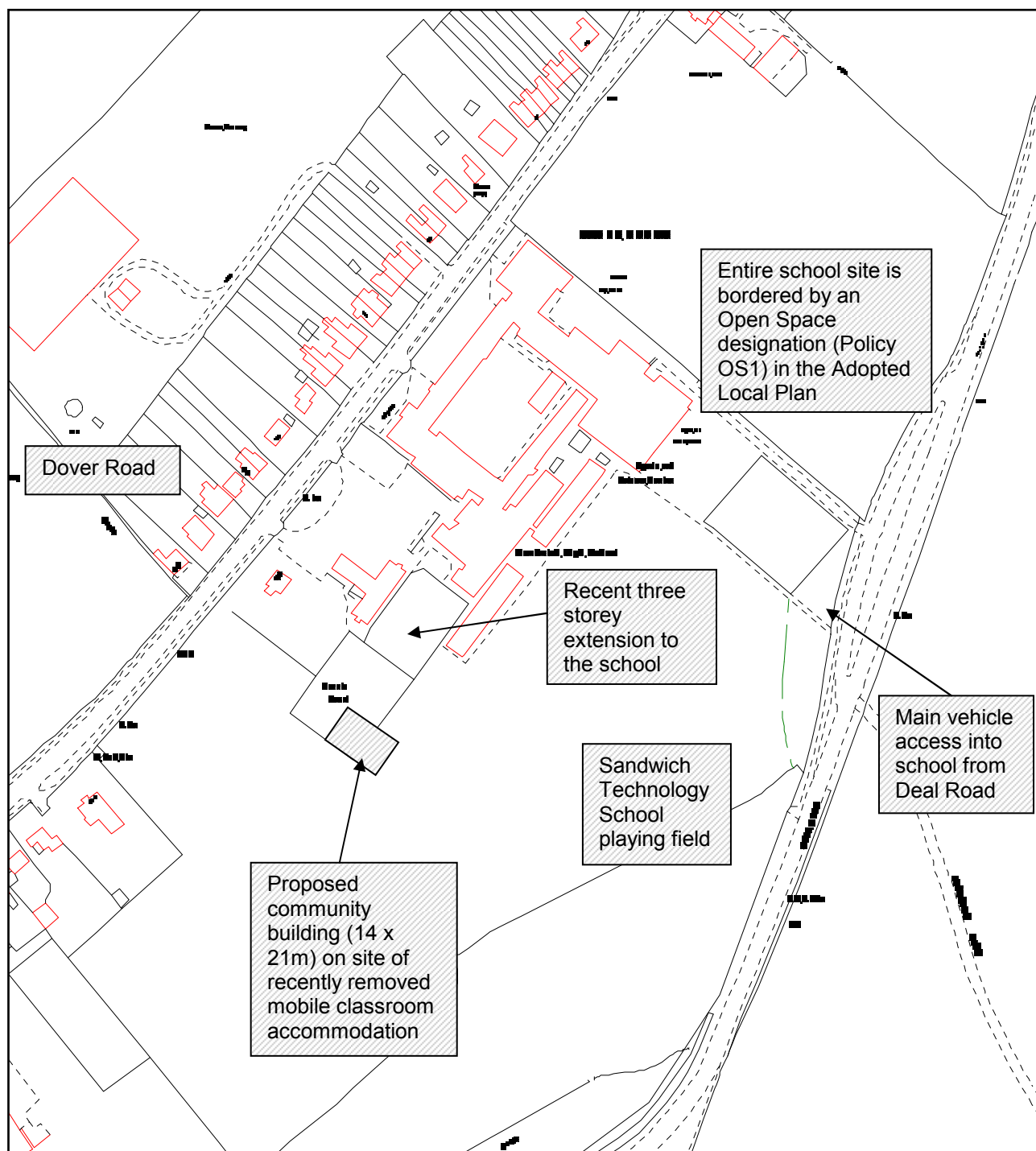
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6. It is proposed that the building would be used from 3.30pm to 5.30pm on 3 schooldays per week and at weekends on approximately one weekend per month from 10am until 4pm
7. The School's aims for the proposed development is to hold a few community workshops in the areas of puppet theatre crafts, carnival costume building and giant creations (some over 4 metres in height such as giant carnival Kings and Queens used in recent local events) and also to store the carnival or processional costumes each time. The applicants have stated that at no times would the building be used as a performance space for holding events such as discos, youth clubs, motorcycle maintenance club or model aeroplane clubs.
8. The School has stated that the issue of car parking would be resolved by the opening up of the playground from 3.35pm, thereby causing no nuisance to the residents of Dover Road. It is noted that this is already the case on three after school sessions per week, and the applicants state that this causes no complaints from local residents.
9. The applicants have stated that there is a limited budget to build the community building, and this has been the main influence when deciding on the style of building to erect. The applicants have selected a warehouse style building, as it can be self-erected and would not require a vast amount of footings. The building is proposed to be finished in a buttermilk colour, with a plasticized coating and not simply a galvanised effect as the applicants have stated that this would soften the look of the whole structure. In addition to the plasticized coating, the applicants would like to install windows in the building, in an attempt to match in as far as possible with existing structures on the school site. *A plan is attached which shows the elevations of the proposed building.*
10. In summary, the applicants have stated that the application has come forward to provide facilities for extending the use of the school buildings, to develop sustainable links to community groups and to provide a platform for a community group and a school to work in harmony.

## Item D2

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#### Site Plan



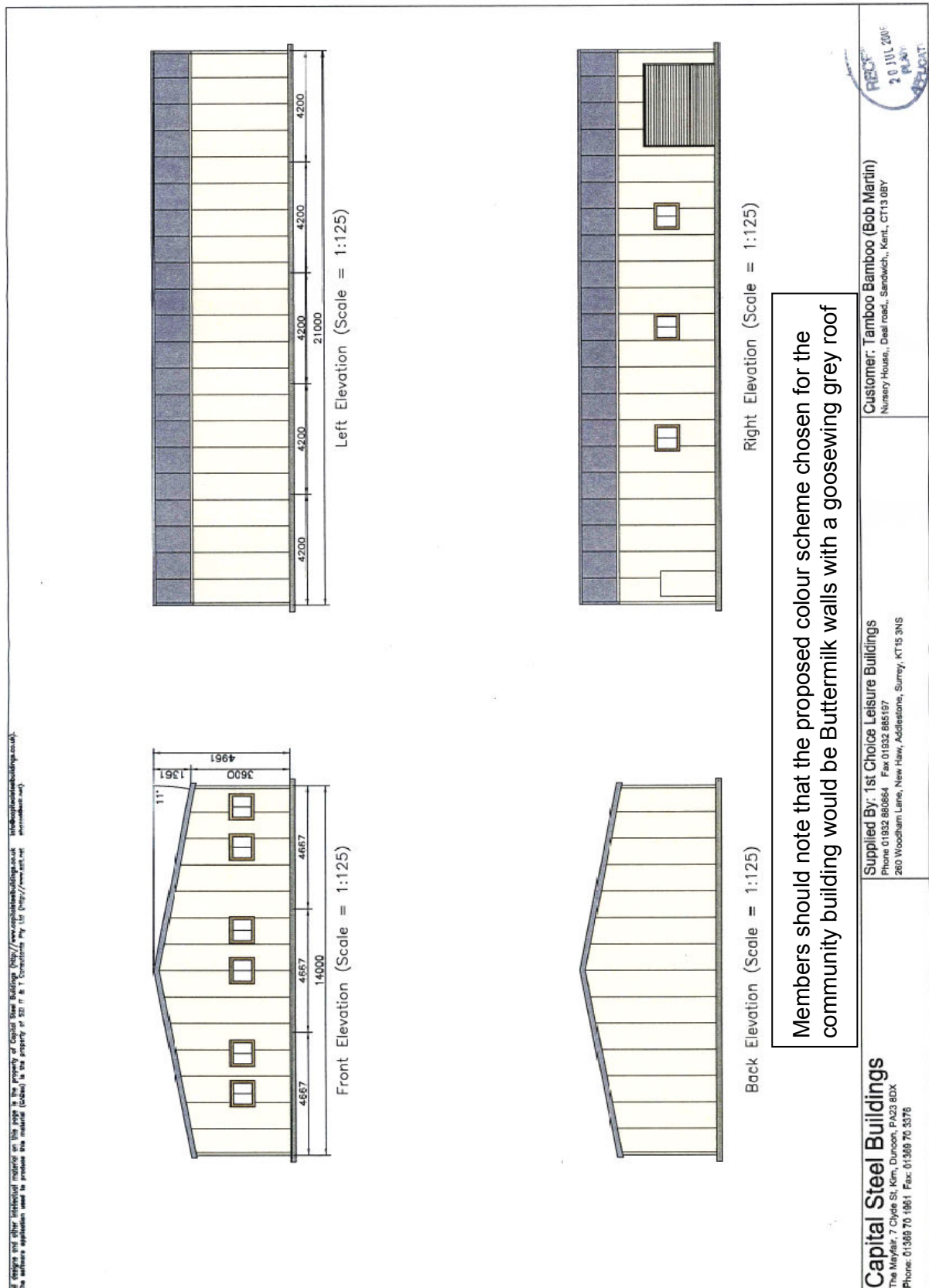
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## Item D2

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#### Proposed Elevation



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**Planning Policy**

11. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the 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:

- responding to the implications of long term climate change by:
  - advancing the conservation and prudent use of energy, water and other natural resources;
  - minimising pollution and assisting the control of greenhouse gas emissions;

**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 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 EN1** – Kent's countryside will be protected, conserved and enhanced for its own sake. Development in the countryside should seek to maintain or enhance it.

**Policy EN2** – Kent's undeveloped coast and estuaries will be protected, conserved and enhanced. Development in such areas and in adjoining countryside will not be permitted if it materially detracts from the scenic, heritage, wildlife or scientific value of these areas. Development so permitted should include appropriate mitigation and/or compensation.

(ii) **Dover District Council Local Plan:**

**Policy DD1** – Proposals for development will not be permitted unless they are acceptable in terms of:

- Layout and functional needs of the development;
- Siting, massing and scale of new buildings;
- Architectural style and materials;
- Spatial and visual character of the surrounding area;
- Landform and landscaping;
- Privacy and amenity, including the avoidance of pollution;
- Energy efficiency.

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**Policy DD3** – Proposals for development, which involve public use, will only be permitted if adequate arrangements are made to allow access by all people

**Policy CF1** – Proposals for the establishment or expansion of community facilities will be permitted provided that they are well related to the community that they serve

**Policy OS1** – Proposals for development which would result in the loss of open space, will not be permitted unless:

- in the case of a school site, the development is for educational purposes; or
- in the case of small scale development, it is ancillary to the enjoyment of the open space, and
- the site has no overriding visual amenity interest, environmental role, cultural importance or nature conservation value

**Consultations**

12. **Dover District Council** has stated: “The above proposal has been considered and I have to inform you that whilst it is considered that the community building could be accommodated in the position indicated, the industrial nature of the proposed design is not regarded as appropriate for this location. For this reason, an objection is raised in respect of this application”.

Further to an amendment regarding the appearance of the building, I have received the following officer level views:

“I would confirm that the District Council still have concerns with regard to the size and form of the proposed building. As discussed, it would seem more reasonable to look to echo the design of the building to the north of the new three storey building in a rendered block form with a low metal roof. In this respect it may be that the size could be better justified to accord with the overall design and form of the school”

**Environment Agency:** has no objection to the proposal, but offers the following advice:

“The proposed site area is located just outside of an in an area which is known to be at risk from flooding, due to the nature and scale of the proposal, the Agency has no objection on flood grounds.

The previous use of this land may have left contamination which could impact on the proposed development. An assessment into the past usage of these buildings and any potential risks arising from the buildings/grounds for the proposed end use, should be carried out prior to the change of use. Any identified risks should be appropriately addressed.

Care should be taken during and after construction to ensure that all fuels, oils and any other potentially contaminating materials should be stored so as to prevent accidental discharge to the ground. The areas for storage should not drain to any surface water system”.

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**Sandwich Town Council:** Members of Sandwich Town Council have considered the application and no objections have been raised.

**Divisional Transport Manager:** Notes that the community building is replacing existing mobile classrooms that would be used for the same use. Therefore, he has no highway objection to the proposal.

**Local Member**

13. The local County Member, Mr. L. Ridings was notified of the application on the 21 April 2006.

**Publicity**

14. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice on the school boundary with Deal Road and the individual notification of 31 nearby residential properties.

**Representations**

15. I have received 7 letters of representation from nearby residents to date. Following a meeting organised by the School Management Team with the nearby residents who expressed concerns to this application, 3 of the 7 letters of objections were since withdrawn. A summary of the remaining objection letters are set out below:

- The continued extensions at the school have impacted on our home with an increase in noise, litter and disruption from their no smoking policy, whereby students congregate outside our properties at lunch break and after school;
- The Tamboo Bamboo Ltd have a band called "*Streetband Brew Ha Ha*" that practice at the School and the noise extends into our homes with a continued thud;
- The increase of students and attendees has overtaken the possibilities of the residents parking in their own road;
- We hope that parents and children will be advised to use the front entrance and not the back as this is a residential cul-de-sac (Dover Road);
- Should the proposal go ahead then access to the School should be from the main entrance only, with users encouraged to park at the front of the school, not in Dover Road which already carries enough traffic;
- It is unfair to expect residents to have to put up with extra noise disturbance after school and at weekends;
- We are appalled at not receiving a notification letter regarding the out of hour's community building. Because the development proposed will adversely affect us due to a possible increase in noise and a worsening of the parking problems already at the school;
- We have lived here for 32 years and the behaviour of the children and thoughtless parking of the teachers has gone from bad to worse – we very much hope that the school will not expand any further;
- Object to the proposal on environmental grounds due to an increased amount of litter for Dover Road residents;
- I welcome the fact that the site is to be used for community projects but would ask that the School and its users give more consideration to their neighbours than at present.

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**Discussion**

16. In considering this proposal, regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (11) 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 upon residential and local amenity, the design of the building in terms of its industrial nature and any relevant Development Plan Policies.

Need for development

17. The applicants have, in this case indicated a clear need for this building to provide a work space and storage space for the community to build large carnival structures, as outlined in paragraphs (3-10) above. The activities that would be supported by this building would be community based activities and would allow the opportunity for the continuation of craft work that has currently had to cease operations due to a lack of a permanent facility. In my opinion, the building proposed here is a functional building, chosen specifically for the purpose in which it is proposed to serve.

Design

18. In my opinion, the most important considerations for determination of this application are: the design of the building; the Development Plan Policies; and, the effect on residential amenity.
19. Design is an important consideration in this case, given that the building which is proposed is large in its size and massing (14m x 21m), is of an industrial nature, and is somewhat of an unusual proposal for a school site. The design of the building needs to be considered in the wider context, having regard for the local landscape, the existing built environment and the impact upon residential amenity.
20. One of the most important factors for the School when choosing the design of the proposed building to erect, was the budget in which the applicants are working with. The applicants have selected a warehouse type building, as it could be self-erected and would not require a vast amount of footings, thus keeping the overall build costs down. Although monetary considerations should not be directly related to the planning process, the School has stated that it is important to note as this is the only type of building in which their limited budget allows for. Therefore, *'it is this or nothing at all'*.
21. The District Council expressed concerns relating to the design of the building at an early stage. Therefore, negotiations between the applicants and the County Planning Authority took place and, in my opinion, a more appropriate colour scheme was agreed. The proposed building would, if Members were minded to grant planning permission, be finished in a buttermilk colour with a goosewing grey roof to reflect the colour scheme used in the adjacent new building. In addition to the colour scheme, the applicant has chosen to install windows in the proposed community building in an attempt to match in with the existing built environment as well as providing natural light and ventilation in the building.
22. In my opinion, the applicants have attempted to amend the design to accommodate the existing built environment within the school site. I note that following this amendment the District Council still has concerns with regard to the scale and form of the proposal, and feel that any proposal should reflect the design of the new three-storey building to the



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north. I do however, accept that the applicant is unable to produce a similar structure which reflects the new major development which has occurred at the school during the last two years.

Development Plan Policy

23. Policy QL1 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan states that *'all development should be well designed and be of high quality. Development should respond positively to the scale, layout, pattern and character of their local surroundings'*. Similarly, Policy DD1 of the Dover District Council Local Plan states that *'proposals for development will not be permitted unless they are acceptable in terms of their layout and functional needs, siting, massing and scale of new buildings and architectural style and materials [...]'*
24. In connection to the above policies, I consider that the building chosen does not meet all of the criteria. However, it is my opinion that the proposal is located on a Technology School site where the School are trying to promote and strengthen community relationships. I consider that with the correct colour scheme, the building would not be unduly prominent in visual terms, to the detriment of nearby residential properties or the road frontage. Notwithstanding Policies QL1 and DD1, I consider that in this case there is an exceptional need for such a large-scale building of utilitarian nature. Whilst design should always be given the highest regard during the determination of an application, I accept that there is an overriding need for the development of this nature in this particular case.
25. In my view the overriding need for the community building is strengthened by Policy CF1 of the Adopted Local Plan which states that *'proposals for the establishment of expansion of community facilities will be permitted, provided they are well related to the community that they serve'*. I am of the opinion that the community building is well related to the community in which it is proposed to serve, both within the School and the wider community of Sandwich and East Kent.
26. Policy OS1 of the Adopted Dover District Council Local Plan states that *"proposals for development which would result in the loss of open space will not be permitted unless: - in the case of a school site, the development is for educational purposes [...]"*. Given that the development proposes the use of a school site for a community and school led venture, I consider that the development proposed would not be contrary to this Development Plan Policy.

Residential and local amenity

27. Sandwich Technology School is located within open countryside on the outskirts of Sandwich. The site is screened by mature trees along the Deal Road to the east and at other points. The nearest residential properties are located along Dover Road, as can be seen on the attached plan. The proposed location for the community building is relatively well screened from local residents, largely due to the distance and separation provided by Dover Road, the school playground and the existing built structures within the site. Therefore, I am of the opinion that such a building would not cause an adversely detrimental effect to the nearby residents of Dover Road.

Noise

28. As stated in paragraph (15) above, local residents have raised concerns relating to noise disturbance brought about by the proposed development. In the past, residents have raised issues with the School relating to noise generation from a student band that practises after school on weekdays. In response to the concerns raised, the applicants have stated that this building would by no means be used as a performance space for band practice or for discos.

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Litter

29. Residents have expressed concerns relating to students dropping litter at the start and end of the school day. Claims have been made that this situation would worsen if the community building were granted planning permission. This is a School management issue and I have advised both the School and the neighbour(s) to take this issue up outside of the realms of this application.

Car Parking

30. As stated in paragraph (15) above, concerns have been raised relating to the on-street parking situation being worsened by this application. In response to this point, the applicants have confirmed that if Members were minded to grant permission for this development, sufficient parking would be made available for users of the community building in the school playground. It should be noted that the Divisional Transport Manager has raised no objection to the proposal, given that the proposed community building replaces existing mobile classrooms at the site.

**Conclusion**

31. In conclusion, whilst I acknowledge the Policy backing which supports high quality design, I consider that in this particular case there is a justification for permission to be granted. I am of the opinion that the site is relatively well screened from neighbouring properties and the roadway, and therefore I believe it would not constitute inappropriate development. Whilst I note that the building proposed here is of a large scale and is of an utilitarian design by its nature, I consider that the proposed use of the building justifies such a structure. Accordingly, I would recommend that permission be granted subject to the conditions outlined in paragraph (31) below.

**Recommendation**

34. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted documents and plans;
  - the materials used to construct the fabric of the building shall be those stated in the application documents and there shall be no deviation from these unless otherwise agreed in writing with the County Planning Authority; and
  - sufficient parking should be made available to the users of the out of hours community building within the school grounds at all times;

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