

## **Item D4**

### **New school buildings, playground, access/car park, and extension of existing accommodation. Greenfields Community Primary School, Oxford Road, Maidstone – MA/06/1560.**

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

MA/06/1560 – Application by Greenfields Community Primary School and Kent County Council Children, Families and Education for new school buildings: Junior classrooms, Library, SEN (Special Educational Needs)/small group rooms, FSES (Full Schools Extended Services) building, Staffroom and Nursery; New Junior hard play area; reconfiguration of existing car parking off Rutland Way (including new access point, one way system & additional parking); extension to existing dining room and reconfiguration of existing Infants block. Greenfields Community Primary School, Oxford Road, Maidstone

Recommendation: Permission be granted.

**Local Members:** Mr A. Chell

**Classification:** Unrestricted

#### **Site**

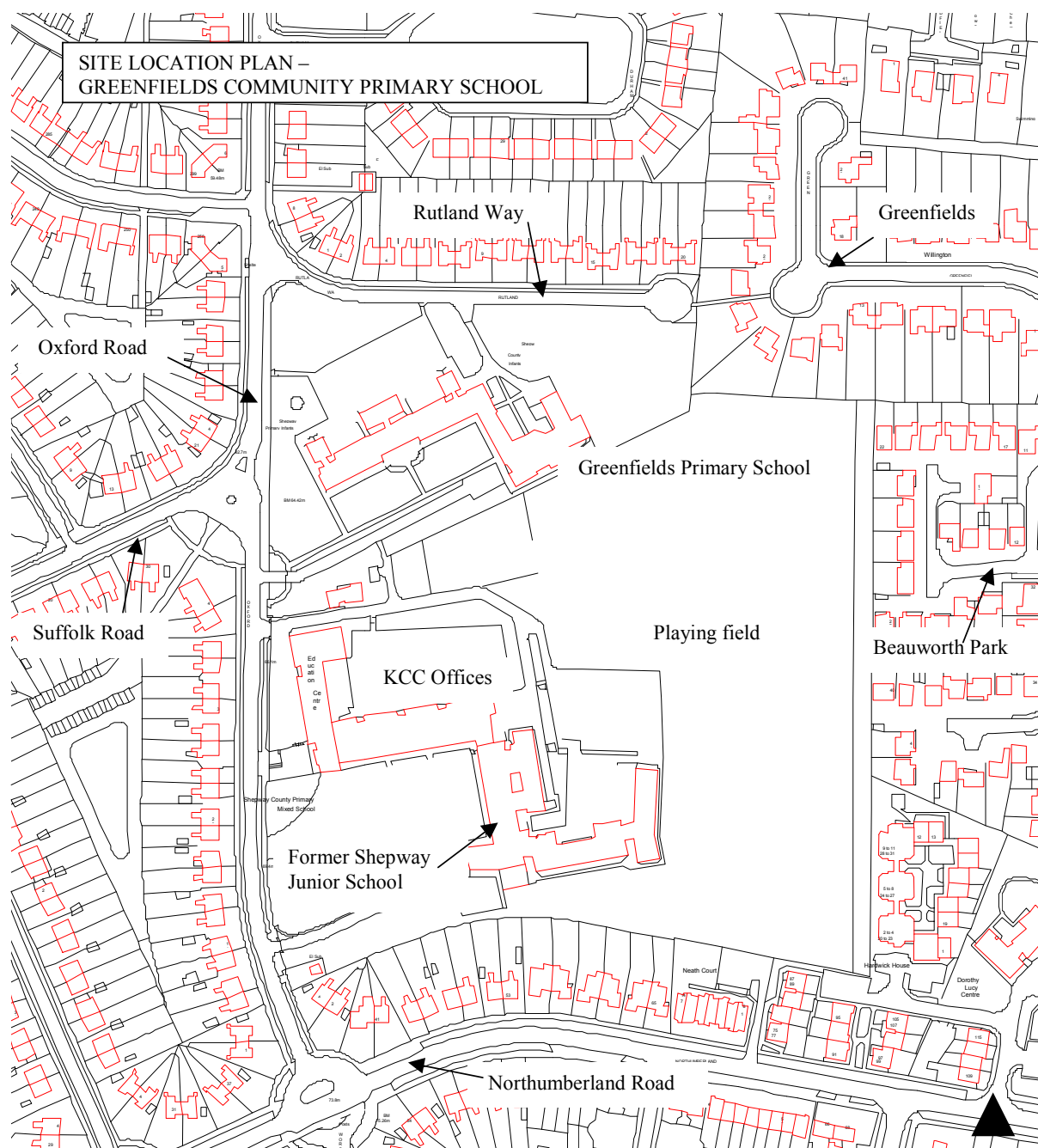
1. Greenfields Community Primary School is situated within the residential area of Shepway, Maidstone. The application site is bounded by Oxford Road to the west, Rutland Way and Greenfield to the north and east, Beauworth Park to the east, and the County Council's offices at Oxford Road along with the former Shepway Junior School site to the south. Residential property surrounds the site to the north, east and west (see attached location plan).
2. The existing main school building consists of a primarily single storey flat roof construction housing the infant school classrooms and a double height administration block that houses office and ancillary accommodation, school hall, kitchen and dining room. Various temporary buildings are located in close proximity to this building, including an existing nursery building and mobile units accommodating the junior school classrooms. The main access to the site is via Oxford Road with a secondary vehicle access point off Rutland Way. Car parking is available for approximately 36 vehicles.
3. There are no specific land designations within the Development Plan in association with the site.

#### **Background**

4. Greenfields Community Primary School was recently formed as a result of the amalgamation of Shepway Infant and Junior Schools, accommodating children from nursery age through to 11 years. In June 2006 planning permission was granted on the Infant School site (under reference MA/06/756) for the provision of temporary classroom accommodation to cater for the junior school classes. Permission was granted for a temporary period allowing a scheme for the extension and refurbishment of the Infant School building to be brought forward. This application comprises the permanent extension and refurbishment proposals.

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### **Proposal**

5. This application for planning permission is being proposed jointly between Greenfields Community Primary School and KCC Children, Families and Education. Planning permission is being sought for built development extending the existing school buildings to provide permanent accommodation for Greenfields Community Primary School and associated educational functions.
6. The development comprises:
  - New school buildings accommodating 4 junior school classrooms, library, Special Educational Needs (SEN) room, small group rooms, community rooms and Full Schools Extended Services (FSES) building;

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- Extensions and reconfiguration of existing school building to improve the existing accommodation and provide a new staff room, nursery, and extension to the existing dining room;
- A new junior hard play area/Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), and amphitheatre;
- Reconfiguration and relocation of an existing car park including creation of new access point off Rutland Way, one way system within the site, and 3 additional parking spaces; and
- Removal of 8 trees and their replacement as part of a landscape scheme (if appropriate, details to be agreed at a later date).

#### New school buildings

7. Three new school buildings are proposed extending the built development to the south and east of the existing administration block. These structures would accommodate the junior classrooms, library, SEN/small group rooms, and FSES office space. The construction method proposed for the buildings incorporates lightweight prefabricated metal modules, completed in materials to contrast with the existing buildings. The structures would be finished in silver painted metal, with dark grey aluminium door and windows frames, translucent polycarbonate cladding and steel framed glazed canopies.

#### Extensions and reconfiguration of existing buildings

8. Internal alterations are proposed to the existing Infants block, reconfiguring the space to extend the classroom accommodation, office space, and provide new WC's. Extensions to the Infants block would accommodate the existing nursery provision currently accommodated within a mobile building on site, and improved staff room and dining room accommodation. As part of the proposals, the temporary nursery building would be converted into new community rooms.
9. The permanent nursery accommodation is proposed to the north west end of the Infant building within an existing block that would be converted and a new build element, triangular in shape with a mono pitched roof and translucent cladding.
10. The staff room extension proposed to the north east end of the Infants' block is shown as a modular unit similar to the new school buildings detailed above.
11. The improvements to the dining room are shown as a flat roof extension matching the existing arrangements. The brick work proposed would match the existing with the dining room windows reused in the new façade.
12. New community rooms are proposed within an existing mobile building, which is currently occupied by the nursery provision. The applicant proposes to retain and upgrade the building to the standard of the other new build elements within the scheme, improving the structure both aesthetically and to comply with the current building regulations. The proposal is to retain this structure on site as a permanent solution. Detailed specifications for this building have not been received to date.
13. The community rooms proposed would create new provision on site allowing the school to provide space for out of hours clubs, for meetings and courses in support of the schools function and as a facility offered to the wider community. The functional use of



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the space would be primarily during the hours 0800 to 1800, with occasional use during evenings and weekends as required.

#### New junior play area and amphitheatre.

14. The proposed development includes a new junior hard play area situated to the south of the built development. This Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) would provide a tarmac court, cut into the slope of the ground, with gabion blocks providing seating adjacent to the court.
15. The application also includes external teaching space located adjacent to the dining room between the buildings proposed on site. This is shown as a sunken amphitheatre that would be finished with gabion seats and timber deck as part of the external landscaping associated with the development.

#### Proposed car park and access.

16. Permission is also sought for a new vehicle crossover to the site at the eastern end of Rutland Way, along with the relocation of the car parking and the creation of a one way circulation route connecting to the existing access point back onto Rutland Way. The proposed car park would reconfigure an existing provision, accommodating 15 parking spaces in place of 12.
17. The drawings received show a future 37 space car park extension to the main vehicular access off Oxford Road. This provision does not form part of the current application, falling outside the application site proposed. The car park extension is shown for information purposes only and represents a future aspiration for the site.

### **Additional Information provided by the Applicant**

18. During the processing of the application, the layout of the proposed hard surfacing has been amended by the applicant to reflect comments received from consultees and local residents. The junior hard play area originally shown to the east of the school site on the playing field to the rear of properties on Greenfields, has been relocated to a site south of the school buildings away from residential property. The revised site location plan is included with this report.
19. A copy of the approved Greenfields Community Primary School Travel Plan adopted in February 2006, has been provided in support of the application. The plan details the School's approach to managing the travel arrangements for staff and pupils and, amongst other matters, sets out objectives to reduce the reliance on private motor vehicles, improve the safety of children travelling to school, encourage walking as a healthy way to get to school, and raise environmental awareness.
20. Survey work in relation to the trees that would be affected by the development has been requested. The applicant has advised that this will be made available in the near future.
21. In justifying the educational need for the development, the applicant states the following motivations:

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- To provide appropriate permanent accommodation for the amalgamated Infants and Junior Schools.
- To refurbish and upgrade the present school buildings, which are undersized and under serviced.
- To provide a fully accessible school for the physically disabled that integrates the requirements of special needs users in a non-stigmatic way.
- To provide a local community centre for the nearby housing estates; a social centre; a strong presence in the locality.
- To provide a meeting place for local schools, providing professional facilities for education, sport, drama, IT and culture.
- To provide community sports areas, including athletics and basketball.
- To provide a facility which focuses on the relationship between parents/carers and the school.
- To provide a state of the art life time learning centre.
- To provide a responsive, bioclimatically aware and sustainable building.
- To provide a Surestart Nursery environment, and meet Wraparound Care.

**Development Plan Policies**

**22. Kent and Medway Structure Plan (2006)** – the most relevant Structure Plan Policies include:

Policy SP1	Seeks to protect and enhance the environment and achieve a sustainable pattern and form of development.
Policy SS6	Seeks to improve the built and natural environment, functioning and appearance of the suburbs of the major urban areas, including the provision of services and facilities that serve local needs.
Policy EN9	Seeks to maintain tree cover and provision of new habitat as part of development proposals.
Policy QL1	Seeks all development be well designed and of high quality that respond positively to the local character. Development, which would be detrimental to the built environment, amenity, function 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.
Policy QL15	Seeks to protect existing formal recreation and sports facilities.
Policy TP3	Local Planning Authorities should ensure that development sites are well served by public transport, walking and cycling.
Policy TP19	Seeks development proposals to comply with the respective vehicle parking policies and maximum standards adopted by Kent County Council and Medway Council.

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Policy NR1      Seeks sustainable construction techniques and development that demonstrates prudent use of energy, water and other natural resources.

**23. The Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan (2000)** – the most relevant Local Plan  
Policies include:

Policy ENV2      Development should be well designed, respect its setting and have due regard to amenities of neighbouring properties.

Policy ENV5      Requires the protection of trees which make a significant contribution to the amenity of a locality, character or quality of the landscape, or biodiversity, unless the need for the development outweighs the contribution(s).

Policy ENV 6      Requires, in appropriate cases, that a landscaping scheme is carried out as part of development proposals.

Policy ENV22      Proposals to develop existing open areas require regard to be had to the visual contribution which the site and the proposed development would make, the need to uphold and improve the appearance of the locality and the need to conserve wildlife habitats.

Policy ENV23      Proposals which would result in the net loss of open space will not be permitted unless there is a proven overriding need for the development and there is no deficiency of open space or recreational facilities in the locality and alternative provision can be provided.

Policy T8          Requires provisions for cycle parking.

Policy T13          Parking standards will normally be adopted for new development to ensure minimum provision.

Policy CF9          Supports dual use of educational facilities where activities are compatible with local residential amenity.

### **Consultations**

**24. Maidstone Borough Council** – No objections, requests conditions covering: the development to be begun within 3 years, details of external materials, a scheme of landscaping, parking/turning area be provided prior commencement of use, confirmation that the development will be constructed in a sustainable and energy efficient form, details of external lighting, details of hard landscaping, no lights to be erected within or adjacent to Junior hard play area, details of a Green Travel Plan.

**25. Divisional Transportation Manger** – No objection on highway grounds. Comments that the vehicle access on to Rutland Way is acceptable and would allow the formation of a one way traffic flow through the site to the existing access. The parking provision would be increased slightly and this coupled with the introduction of a one way traffic flow should assist traffic movements in the area. Highlights improved emergency

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access arrangements would be provided within the school to allow an approach to the new buildings. In conclusion, advises that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the highway and would ease traffic movement in the locality.

Confirms a Kent Highway Services School Travel Plan Officer approved the Travel Plan received in March 2006.

Advises that a pedestrian barrier at the point where the footway between Greenfield and Rutland Way meeting the vehicle turning circle at the end of Rutland Way would be an appropriate solution to residents concerns about pedestrian safety.

26. **Sport England** – No objection. Advising that the proposed development of outdoor sports facilities would be of sufficient benefit to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of playing field.

27. **Fire Safety Officer** – No objection. Advises that the means of access is considered satisfactory.

28. **Jacobs (Landscape)** – Recommends, a tree survey and tree protection plan to BS5837:2005 'Trees in Relation to Construction' should be submitted for further consideration.

Advises no objection to the proposed buildings in terms of design, scale or location. Comments that the proposed access along with the felling of a number of trees would cause a moderate adverse visual impact to adjacent properties. Recommends a full landscape scheme setting out details of location, plant species, sizes and numbers/densities be required as part of the development.

**Representations**

29. The application has been publicised by a site notice and newspaper advertisement. 53 neighbouring properties were notified.

30. 5 letters of representation have been received. The objections raised relate to the following points:

- Concerns about the potential for an increase in traffic congestion on local roads.
- Concerns that Oxford Road, Rutland Way and Greenfields will become car parking areas for traffic associated with the school.
- Considers that the proposed new access would not alleviate congestion as suggested.
- Raises concern over the proposed location of the Junior Hard Play Area shown to the rear of property on Greenfields, by way of the potential impact on residential amenities and on security grounds.
- Objects to the proposed landscaping shown in association with the Hard Play Area. Raises concern that the landscaping proposed has the potential to impact on natural sunlight, overshadow adjoining gardens, and impact on residential amenity.
- Raises the question of relocating the play area to a location to the south of the school buildings.

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- Raises concern about the use of the playing field for community sports activities. Asks if this provision is necessary given the facilities located at Cumberland Green, Cumberland Road.
- Given the proposed vehicle access, questions whether a barrier should be erected at the western end of the footway that links Greenfields and Rutland Way to ensure pedestrian safety.
- Raises concern that the amenities of local residents have not been considered within the proposal.
- Objects to the siting of the amphitheatre, community rooms, and car parking proposed.
- Objects to the potential use of the site in the evenings.

**Discussion**

31. In considering this proposal the Planning Authority has to have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan. In this case the Development Plan comprises the Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006 and the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000. The most relevant policies are outlined in paragraphs (22) and (23) above. 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, 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.
32. Careful consideration should be given as to whether the proposal is acceptable in the location proposed in light of the Development Plan Policies and the material considerations raised during the planning process, including whether the development would result in an unacceptable loss of amenity to neighbouring properties. This report has been prepared to consider points raised by local residents objecting to the application. A summary of the objections being raised is outlined in paragraph (23) above.

**Location**

33. The built development proposed by this application would be sited adjacent to or by extending the existing building, on land that currently forms part of the landscaped areas or playing field within the existing school site. Single storey extensions providing nursery space, staff room and dining accommodation are shown to the existing building, creating approximately 175m<sup>2</sup> of new floor space. Three new modular buildings are shown surrounding the east end of the school building that would accommodate the proposed four junior classrooms, library, groups rooms and office space. A new vehicle crossover and relocated car park would be located along the northern boundary with Rutland Way, with a new hard play area located to the south east of the main school building (see attached plan).
34. The proposed location for the development would appear to have been determined by the location of the existing building and access arrangements, alongside landscaping, and the requirement to preserve the existing hard play space and playing field provision.

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35. There are no specific Development Plan Policies relating to this site. Sport England was consulted as part of the planning assessment due to the potential impact on the playing field. They are raising no objection, advising that the loss of playing field would be off set by the provision of new outdoor sports facilities in the form of the proposed Multi Use Games Area.
36. Objections have been raised by nearby residents regarding the proximity of the proposed development and the potential impact on residential amenities. The closest residential property is located, approximately 15 metres north of the proposed car park, on Rutland Way, and 10 metres to the east of the proposed vehicle access. The distances from any of the proposed buildings to the facades of the closest residential properties would be greater, with the closest façade to façade distance being over 40 metres. Specific concerns were raised in letters received from nearby residents about the proposed location of the car park, community building, amphitheatre and the junior hard play area.
37. As a result of concerns raised about the original location proposed for the junior hard play area, the applicant has relocated this provision on revised drawings received. Moving the facility from a position south of property in Greenfields, to the location shown on the drawings attached to this report, south east of the main school building.
38. The Kent and Medway Structure Plan Policy QL1, and Maidstone Local Plan Policy EN2 require development that responds positively to the local character, respects the existing built environment, amenity and function, and has due regard for the amenities of local residential properties. It is necessary to consider the layout and siting of the proposals in the context of Development Plan Policies.
39. The County Council's Landscape Architects views, set out in paragraph (28) above, should be noted. Specifically, the observations conclude that the proposed access along with the felling of a number of trees would cause a moderate adverse visual impact to adjacent properties. However, they raise no objection to the proposed buildings in terms of design, scale or location.
40. I consider that the layout of the development proposed is a logical response to the need to extend the permanent accommodation provided at the school. The buildings proposed reflect the existing arrangements on site and would not substantially extend the built envelope towards residential property. The form and scale of the buildings proposed would not be overbearing, nor result in an unacceptable loss of privacy for surrounding properties. For the most part the proposed buildings would be shielded from adjoining properties by the existing buildings and landscaping retained on site.
41. The relocation of the junior hard play space to a location approximately 70 metres from the closest resident property would, in my opinion, overcome any concerns about the proximity of this facility to property in Greenfields, and reflects the suggestions received about moving the play area. Whilst the proposed access road and car park off Rutland Way would move activities on site closer to residential property, the retention of the existing hedgerow and majority of trees in that locality would soften the visual impact, and I do not consider that the layout would result in an unacceptable impact on residential property. Therefore, subject to consideration of design of the buildings, transport and access, landscaping and the community use below, I would raise no

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objection to the location of the development and consider that the proposal accords with the appropriate Development Plan policies.

**Design of the building**

42. The issue of design is material to this application in that it involves a proposed expansion of the permanent accommodation on site, creating 884 m<sup>2</sup> of new floor space. The brick built extension to the dining room is fairly straight forwarded in that it proposes to match the existing arrangements. The nursery extension alongside the prefabricated modular units set out in the drawings to accommodate the other built development proposed on site are more contemporary in their approach.
43. Kent and Medway Structure Plan Policies SP1, SS6, QL1 and NR9, and Maidstone Local Plan Policy ENV2 seek, amongst other matters, development that is well designed, respects and enhances its setting, and achieves a sustainable form of development. It is necessary to assess the proposal in the context of these policies.
44. The issue of design has not been raised as a contentious issue by either statutory consultees or third parties. Maidstone Borough Council has not raised objection to the scheme and I acknowledge their comments on potential conditions. Specifically in the context of the design of the buildings, the conditions relating to the need for full details of the materials and external treatments proposed, along with a requirement that details be provided that confirm the new built development would achieve a sustainable and energy efficient form.
45. The design of the buildings and the way they integrate with their surroundings must be of a high standard. In this respect the applicants' architect states that the proposed Junior blocks and staff room extension would use a lightweight prefabricated modular system that allows most of construction work to be carried out off site, where high standards of finish can be assured. In order to distinguish the new buildings, the palette of materials proposed are lighter and more transparent, contrasting between the new and existing. The finish proposed to the exterior of the new buildings would be profiled metal painted silver, which would result in sleek light buildings that act as blank canvas to activities on site. The finish would be supplemented with contrasting dark grey windows and doors and the use of polycarbonate cladding that allows diffuse light into the classrooms. The rooflines proposed are flat reflecting the existing buildings, and would include glazed roof canopies that provide covered play areas and walkways. I see no objections to the design of the new accommodation, which would be modern and innovative, providing a stimulating new environment for pupils learning.
46. The nursery element of the proposed extensions to the main school block would see a triangular shaped development extending the western end of the building. This new build element would be completed in a similar palette of materials to the other proposals, using insulated translucent cladding under a mono pitched profiled metal roof, finished in dark grey.
47. The proposed development also incorporates the retention and extension of an existing mobile building on site, which currently accommodates the nursery provision and would be used as community rooms should planning permission be granted. The applicants' architect has confirmed that this structure would be upgraded both aesthetically and to comply with current building regulations to enable its permanent retention on site.

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Details of the upgrades proposed have not been received prior to writing this report. However, the architect has confirmed that these details will be made available in the near future. Given the modular style of the new build elements proposed within this application, in my opinion, it would not be unacceptable to retain the mobile building on site provided sufficient evidence can be supplied by the architects that the upgrades would bring the building up to the standard of the other elements in the scheme.

48. In respect of the design, the proposals are highly contemporary in their nature and would contrast with the existing built development on site. The proposal represents a modern approach to the extension of a school that would upgrade the facilities on site replacing mobile buildings currently housing the junior classes. The approach proposes to make the most of the landscaping retained on site (this issue is considered further below), providing further soft and hard landscaping to complement the development. In my opinion, the approach has the potential to make a bold statement and, subject to the further details being provided on the upgrades to the proposed community building along with appropriate conditions covering external materials and details on sustainability, consider that the design and appearance of the various built elements are acceptable and would accord with the Development Plan policies.

**Landscaping**

49. As outlined, 8 trees would be removed as a result of the development work. In addition, whilst the development proposes to retain as many trees on site as possible, a number of the larger specimens, that it would be desirable to retain, would be located in close proximity to be buildings and hard surfacing.
50. The County Council's Landscape Architects comments are detailed in paragraph (28). They advise no objection in principle to the scheme, however, request further survey work and protection measures in support of the proposals. This detail has been requested from applicant and the survey work is currently being undertaken. Our Landscape Architects confirm that further to receipt of the survey and protection plan a fuller assessment of the proposals in relation to the trees on site can be made.
51. In principle, I have no objections to the trees proposed for removal, most of which are small and in my opinion do not substantially contribute to the amenity of the local environment. However, some of the larger trees located close to the proposed development potentially have a greater value. I therefore consider that it necessary that the applicant provide further supporting information reassuring any concerns about potential impacts of the proposals on the trees to be retained.
52. Objections have been received from nearby residents to the landscaping proposed in association with the junior hard play area include in the proposals. However, as detailed above, this facility is now being proposed along with the associated landscaping in an alternate location well away from neighbouring properties. Therefore, I do not consider that this element of the scheme would have a detrimental impact on residential property.
53. With regard to the issue of landscaping, subject to the submission of appropriate survey work and protection measures for consideration, along with conditions covering tree protection and further landscape details, I have no objections to this element of the proposals.



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**Transport and access**

54. There are a number of issues arising in relation to traffic, access and parking as a result of the proposal. These are reflected in the letters of representation summarised in paragraph (23) above and include concerns about the potential for the scheme to intensify congestion and parking problems associated with the school.
55. The existing access arrangements consist of the main entrance to the school grounds on Oxford Road, with a secondary vehicle access off Rutland Way and various pedestrian routes into the site. The Oxford Road access allows on site car parking for 22 vehicles along with a drop off point at the school's main entrance. The Rutland Way access provides parking for a further 12 cars and accommodates delivery vehicles for the kitchen. Parents dropping children off to the nursery also currently use the Rutland Way access. The Primary School accommodates approximately 290 pupils aged 3 to 11, and 32 members of staff.
56. The amalgamation of the former Shepway Infants and Junior Schools on the one site will have focused movements around the school grounds. However, given that the respective school sites are directly adjacent to each other the level of traffic in the locality would not have increased. The amalgamation occurred earlier this year and the junior class are already accommodated on site in temporary buildings. I would advise that the proposed development is primarily for the refurbishment and improvement of existing facilities on site and for permanent accommodation replacing temporary mobile units. The only element of the application that has the potential to generate additional movements associated with the site are the community facilities included.
57. The application proposes to retain the existing Oxford Road entrance, improving the emergency access arrangements to the buildings proposed on site. The drawings received show a 37 space car park that represents a future aspiration and does not form part on the current proposals. Maidstone Borough Council has indicated that they would be unlikely to support this provision in the future. The current proposal includes a new access point off the eastern end of Rutland Way, along with a new road layout and the relocation and extension of an existing car park. The proposals would allow the creation of a one way system through the site and include a small increase in parking provision from 12 to 15 spaces (including 2 dedicated accessible spaces) along with improved arrangements for delivery vehicles.
58. In support of the application the current adopted Travel Plan for Greenfields Primary School has been received. Kent Highway Services have confirmed that the School Travel Plan Officer approved the plan in March 2006. The document details objectives set by the school to reduce the number of children travelling to school as the sole passenger in a car and to increase the number of pupils walking to school by February 2007. The Travel Plan process is an ongoing approach to managing and reducing congestion, which the school are signed up to and is subject to regular review.
59. The Divisional Transport Manager's comments are set out in paragraph (25). In conclusion, he advises that the new access proposed to Rutland Way is acceptable and that the introduction of a new internal road layout along with additional parking spaces on site should assist traffic flow on Rutland Way, and as such raises no highway objection to the application.

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60. Concern has been raised by a nearby resident about potential pedestrian safety in light of the vehicle access proposed at the end of Rutland Way; given that the footpath between Greenfields and Rutland Way joins directly to the highway with no connecting footpaths. A suggestion has been made that an appropriate pedestrian barrier be provided to prevent any conflict between vehicles using the proposed access and pedestrians. The Transportation Manager has advised this would be an appropriate solution and the applicant has agreed to undertake the improvements as part of the scheme.
61. Development Plan policy as set out in the Kent and Medway Structure Plan and Maidstone Local Plan is that development will only be permitted where the site is well served by public transport, walking and cycling and complies with vehicle parking standards. I would advise that the Primary School is well served by public transport and the footpath network, situated within a residential area. The car parking provision is acceptable in light of the staff and pupil numbers attending the school. I acknowledge that there is congestion associated with the school during the peak hours around school start and finish times. However, this is not unlike problems experienced by all schools around the County. The improvements to vehicle accommodation on site along with an ongoing commitment to the Travel Plan process should keep traffic generated by the proposal within acceptable limits. I would advise that the Community facilities included within the application are not of a sufficient scale to generate an unacceptable increase in traffic. On the basis of the details set out above and taking account of the Transportation Manager's comments, I would not raise objection to the proposals on highways grounds.

**Community Use**

62. Concerns have been raised by local residents about the use of the school site for wider community functions. I would advise that this is part of the Primary Schools commitment to the Government initiative for Extended Schools, making the best use of the buildings and facilities for the benefit of the wider communities. It is a Government remit that all schools offer a core set of extended services by 2010.
63. The application proposes a certain level of community use of the development; and the provision of improved facilities to support an extended service at the school is referenced as one motivation/ need for the scheme. The proposal incorporates a Full Service Extended School building providing office space for a function that already exists at the school. The proposal also includes the retention and upgrade of a temporary building on site to provide new community rooms in support of the schools role within the local community. Uses of these new spaces would include supporting the education function, providing accommodation for learning and leisure opportunities for pupils, their parents and the wider community during the day and after school. The primary hours of use proposed would be 0800 to 1800 Monday to Friday, with use of the facilities on occasion outside these hours in the evenings and at weekends, in a similar manner to the use of the existing school facilities.
64. Community/ dual use of school sites is well supported by Structure Plan Policy QL11, and Maidstone Local Plan Policy CF9. Encouraging flexibility in the use of buildings for mixed community uses, and the concentration of sports facilities at schools where activities are compatible with local residential amenity. Clearly, the proposed use beyond normal hours has the potential to impact on residential properties, as a result of

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activities on site and any associated vehicle movements. However, I would advise that space provided within the proposed development is not sufficient in scale to generate a substantial increase in activity at the site. Any use of the existing facilities on site in association with an educational use, such as the playing field and existing school building is a school management issue and does not require the benefit of express planning consent.

65. Being located within the urban area of Maidstone the school site is well related to public transport and pedestrian networks. Taking the above into account along with the scale of the proposals, I do not believe that the facilities proposed within this application, in support of the Extended School function, are likely to result in an unacceptable impact on the residential environment, and as such I would raise no objection to this element of the application.

**Need**

66. Whilst it is not normally necessary to prove a need for a development the applicant has provided confirmation of the motives that have brought about this application. The primary reason being the provision of suitable permanent accommodation for the Primary School, and replacing mobile buildings that have only been accepted on site as a temporary measure. The motives set out in paragraph (21) above also include the refurbishment and upgrade of existing buildings, and to improve the position of the school as a resource supporting the wider community. Given the under provision of suitable permanent teaching accommodation on site and the support provided to community use of schools by Government guidance and the Development Plan, I would advise that this need for the proposed development has been demonstrated and this is sufficient to override the planning concerns which have been raised.

**Conclusion**

67. I consider the proposed development to be acceptable in terms of its location, design and visual appearance. It is noted that a number of concerns have been raised by nearby residents about, amongst other matters, traffic problems associated with the school, as discussed above. However, the Divisional Transport Manager has considered the scheme and has not raised an objection. The proposed development does not propose an increase in pupil or staff numbers over those already attending. Whilst any community activities could increase the number of people visiting the site, I do not consider that any impact would be unacceptable or substantial enough to warrant refusal of the application. The introduction of the new access and car parking arrangements should help assist traffic flow in and around the site. Therefore, subject to submission of appropriate tree survey work and additional information on the design of the community building for further consideration, I would not raise a planning objection and recommend accordingly.

**Recommendation**

68. I RECOMMEND that, SUBJECT TO the submission of tree survey work and design details for the proposed community building for further approval, PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions, including the following:

- the standard time limit,

## Item D4

### **New buildings, playground, access/car park, and extension of existing accommodation. Greenfields Primary School, Maidstone – MA/06/1560.**

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- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details,
- details of external materials,
- a scheme of landscaping,
- details of tree protection measures,
- parking/turning area be provided prior commencement of use,
- confirmation that the development will be constructed in a sustainable and energy efficient form,
- details of external lighting,
- details of hard landscaping,
- no lights to be erected within or adjacent to Junior hard play area,
- implementation and ongoing review of the Travel Plan,
- details of foul and surface water drainage,
- hours of working during construction to be restricted to 0800 and 1800 Monday to Fridays, and 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays,
- provision of pedestrian barrier to footway between Rutland Way and Greenfields,
- provisions for cycle parking,
- removal of temporary mobile classroom permitted under planning reference MA/06/756, and
- detailed drawings for the proposed junior hard play area.

Case officer – James Bickle	01622 221068
Background documents - See section heading	