

**3 Pagodas at The Bradbourne School, Sevenoaks.
SE/06/1256.**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 18 July 2006.

Application by The Governors of Bradbourne School and KCC Children, Families and Education for 3 new pagodas at The Bradbourne School, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks. SE/06/1256.

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mr N. Chard

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The Bradbourne School is located on the A25 to the north of Sevenoaks. The site is in the Metropolitan Greenbelt and situated inside the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is also in an area of Local Landscape Importance. A site location plan is attached.

Background and Proposal

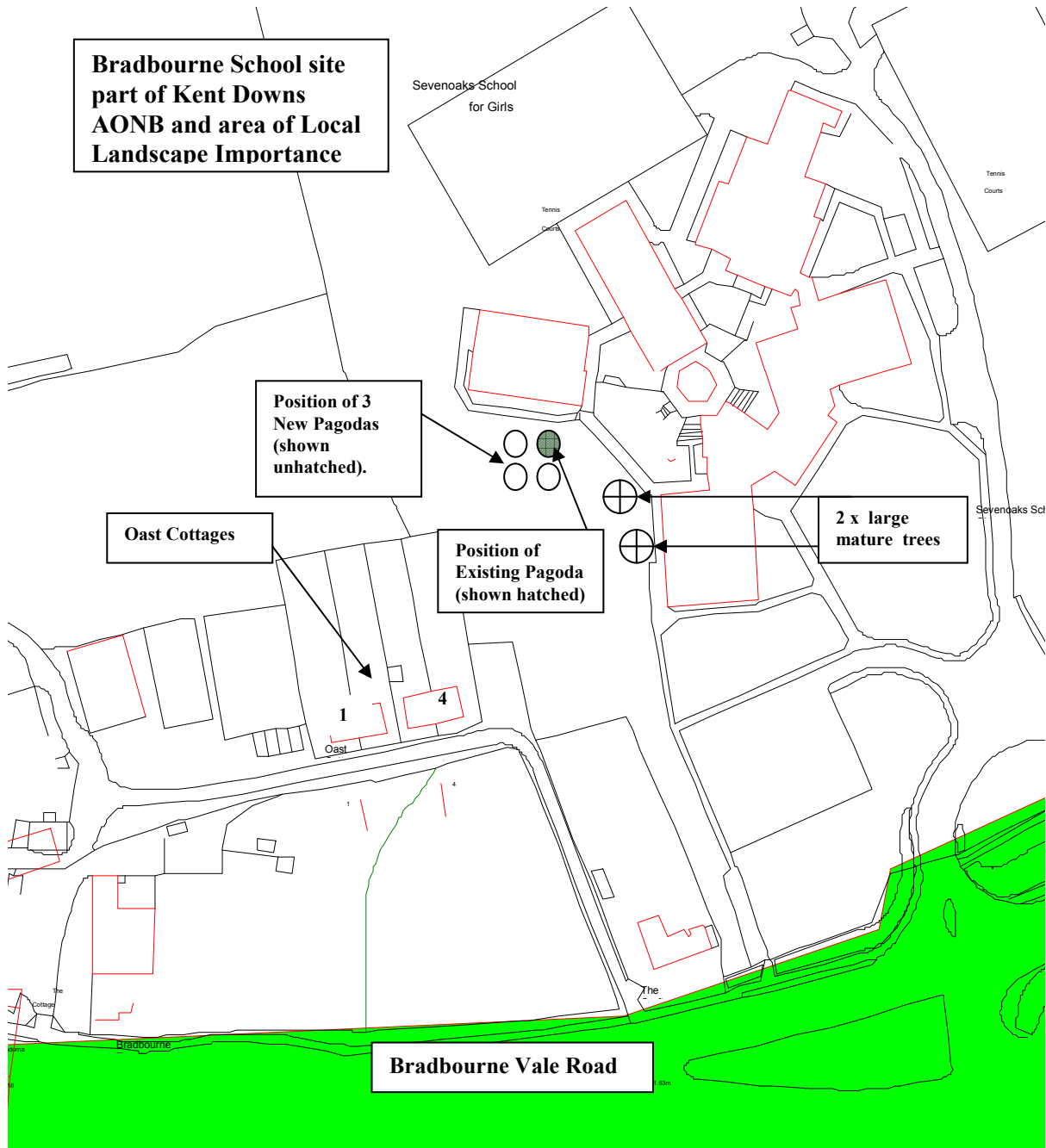
2. In June 2005 planning permission was granted for one blue coloured Pagoda measuring 5m x 5m (16'4" x 16'4") on the playing fields to the south east of the main school buildings, to be used as outdoor shelter for students during break periods. In May 2006 an application for an additional three Pagodas of the same measurements was received. The first of the three structures is to be situated next to the existing, away from the school buildings. The remaining 2 are to be situated directly in front to create a square of 4 pagodas.

Existing Pagoda



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Site Location Plan



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Site Layout Plan

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Planning Policy

3. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant of consideration for the application:

(i) The adopted 1996 Kent Structure Plan:

Policy S2 The quality of Kent's environment will be conserved and enhanced and measures taken to minimise any adverse impacts arising from the development.

Policy S9 Has regard to the need for community facilities and services, including education.

Policy ENV3 The Local Planning Authorities will provide long-term protection for the designated Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Proposals for development that would be inconsistent with the conservation of natural beauty will be weighed in the light of their importance in securing the economic and social well being of the area.

Policy ENV15 The character, quality and functioning of Kent's built environment will be conserved and enhanced. Development should respect its settings. Development which would be incompatible with the conservation or enhancement of the character of settlement, or detrimental to its amenity or functioning, will not normally be permitted.

Policy MGB3 Within the Green Belt there is a general presumption against inappropriate development. The construction of new buildings is inappropriate unless it is for the following purposes:

Essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and which do not conflict with the purposes of land in it.

(ii) The September 2003 deposit draft of the Kent & Medway Structure Plan:

Policy SP1 Conserving and enhancing Kent's environment and ensuring a sustainable pattern of development. Encouraging high quality development and innovative design that reflects Kent's identity and local distinctiveness and promoting healthy, safe and secure living and working environments.

Policy E4 Carries forward and amplifies Policy ENV3 of the Adopted Plan.

Policy SS9 Carries forward Policy MGB3 of the Adopted Plan.

Policy QL1 Development should be well designed and respect its setting

Policy QL12 Carries forward and amplifies Policy S9 of the Adopted Plan

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(iii) The adopted 2000 Sevenoaks District Local Plan:

- Policy EN1 Proposals for all forms of development and land use must comply with the policies set out in this plan, unless there are overriding material considerations.
- Policy EN6 Development, which would harm or detract from the landscape character of the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, will not be permitted.
- Policy EN8 Proposals in Areas of Local Landscape Importance must not harm the local character of the area. Particular attention should be paid to the design, layout and landscaping of any development and to its boundaries with the open countryside.
- Policy GB1 The approved boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt is defined as beyond the boundaries of the urban areas listed on the Proposals Maps including Sevenoaks & Sevenoaks Weald.
- Policy GB2 Within the Green Belt there is a general presumption against inappropriate development. The construction of new buildings is inappropriate unless it is for the following purposes:
Essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation which preserves the openness of the Green Belt and which do not conflict with purposes of and in it.
- Policy GB4 Any development approved within or conspicuous from the Green Belt must be sited, designed and use materials that maintain the open character of the area, avoid detriment to visual amenity and minimise any potential harm.

Consultations

4. **Sevenoaks District Council** – Expresses concern that the siting of the 3 new pagodas in connection with the existing one, would detract from the openness of the Green Belt, and suggest a position closer to the existing built forms, and a colour that is less intrusive.

Sevenoaks Town Council – No comments

Local Members

5. The Local County Member, Mr N. Chard, was notified on the 22 May 2006 and supports the application. He also declares that he is a LEA appointed governor.

Publicity

6. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice and the individual notification of 10 neighbouring residential properties.

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Representations

7. One letter of representation has been received from a neighbouring resident. The main points of concern included invasion of privacy and having to put up with a lot of noise at lunchtimes. Comments that the colour of existing pagoda 'sticks out like a sore thumb' at winter time when there are no leaves on the trees and suggests a colour more favourable to the environment. The resident also asks whether KCC is prepared to pay for the materials for a closeboard fence.

Discussion

8. This proposal seeks to provide the school with 3 new pagodas to act as sun shields for the students, to match the one existing pagoda that was granted planning permission in 2005. The original pagoda application received no objections. The main issue to consider here is the suitability of 3 more pagoda structures situated within the confines of the Metropolitan Green Belt and the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and whether a development of this nature may affect the character and/ or appearance of the site, detracting from the openness of the Green Belt. Whilst the provision for educational needs are acknowledged by Structure Plan Policy S9, the proposal must also be considered against the relevant Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 3 above. These policies, as well as presuming against inappropriate development within the MGB, afford long-term protection to the landscape over other considerations, with concern for the preservation and enhancement of the built environment and protection of local amenity.
9. The proposed site for the 3 pagodas is in the south-east area of the school site, located between an existing single storey classroom and the original main school building. The area of land where the pagodas are to be sited is a grassed area including two large, mature deciduous trees (shown on location plan) and picnic style tables, and is currently used as a lunch and break time recreation area.
10. Members will note the objections received and in respect of these, the applicant has considered the views and has responded as follows:
 - The School has in recent years, purchased a new fence for the neighbours as a goodwill gesture.
 - The applicant feels that there is no intrusion on the privacy of the neighbours as most of the pupils are in many areas of the school during their lunchtime. We do not consider that the noise generated from a few more children would be any more worse than it is at the present time.
 - The School remains quite happy with the colour and location for the new pagodas feeling that they would match in with the existing pagoda, which was granted planning permission in 2005.

Impact on the Metropolitan Green Belt in relation to Development Plan Policies

11. Policy MGB3 of the Kent Structure Plan and Policy GB2 of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan refers to Green Belt development in relation to facilities for outdoor recreation/sport, whilst at the same time preserving the openness of the MGB. Policy GB4 of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan furthers this point by stating development must be sited, designed and use materials that maintain the open character of the area.

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It could be argued, therefore, that the proposal might not respect the openness of the MGB. In response to this I would argue that due to the relatively small and lightweight nature of the pagodas, coupled with the fact there is already one in situ it does not constitute a substantially greater conflict to the openness of the Green Belt than at present. Under the circumstances, I do not consider that the proposed development constitutes a significant conflict with Green Belt policy.

Impact on the Landscape and Local Amenity

12. Policy ENV3 of the Adopted Kent Structure Plan seeks to protect and enhance the North Downs AONB. Priority is given to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty over other planning considerations. This is reflected in Policy EN6 of the Adopted Sevenoaks District Local Plan where proposals are only permitted if they conserve or enhance the natural beauty and special character of the landscape. Whilst the proposal needs to conserve, or enhance the special landscape character of the area, I consider that its visual impact on the wider landscape is visually very limited due to its relatively secluded siting by the present school buildings and proximity to large mature trees. In terms of appearance, given that the application entails three more pagodas, the same as the one already in situ, there would be some visual impact on the existing landscape. However, given the fact that one of the new structures would be sited immediately next to the existing pagoda and the other two would be directly in front of these, it is fair to say that the rear two pagodas would not be that visible, whilst looking from certain angles, concealed by the front two pagodas and from the side elevations by the school buildings. The pagodas would put the development 5 metres closer to the boundary fence of 4 Oast Cottages but that still leaves a substantial distance between the proposal area and the boundary fence. The local residents' concerns regarding the colour of the pagodas in winter time. I believe can be addressed by way of the front two pagodas being a colour that is more conducive to the environment. The rear two pagodas would be sufficiently screened by the front two pagodas and the surrounding buildings, to be able to remain blue in colour. Should Members be minded to grant permission, it would seem sensible to require by condition that the pagodas be coloured accordingly. By ensuring that the colours of the front two are such, the visual impact of the pagodas would be less intrusive and detracting from the openness of the Green Belt and more sympathetic to a location within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
13. In my opinion, the three new pagodas are a sufficient distance from the neighbouring property to prevent an increase in invasion of privacy. Any increase in noise would be significantly screened through the existing fencing and vegetation, which would also ensure that views of the pagodas would be minimal throughout the greater part of the year. However a colour that is more conducive to the environment would lesson this as a cause for concern during the winter months, I suggest a neutral or brown colour to be more suitable.
14. It should be noted that Policy S9 of the Adopted Kent Structure Plan and amplified by Policy QL12 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan: Deposit Draft 2003, refer to the need for community facilities including education which this application is in accordance with. The applicant is all too aware of the importance of protection against the sun's harmful rays and after the success of the first pagoda, the decision was taken to apply for three more, to create a square of four in total. I consider that the high design quality of the proposal is in agreement with Policy SP1. The applicant has attempted to locate the pagodas closer to the existing school buildings but two very large mature deciduous trees as shown on the site plan prevent this from being a realistic option. I do not consider that a siting in this location is in opposition with EN6 of the Sevenoaks District Plan. It is within the MGB and AONB, but I am of the opinion that the screening

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currently in place, coupled with the proximity of the site to the existing school buildings and the relatively lightweight/small scale nature of the structures, outweighs the negative impacts of the proposal. Therefore in my opinion this proposal does not significantly depart from the Local Plan to warrant refusal. As a consequence I am proposing that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

Conclusion

15. In conclusion, whilst I acknowledge the effect that the pagodas have on the Metropolitan Green Belt, I recommend that planning permission be granted subject to conditions including submission to the County Planning Authority the colour of the proposed pagodas, in order for a colour to be chosen that is more conducive to the Green Belt environment and considered less intrusive to the local amenity. Additionally, I would urge that the School look to locate any future developments in rear areas of the school that are more secluded and distanced from neighbouring properties.

Recommendation

16. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO conditions requiring the submission of the pagoda colours to the County Planning Authority, and the development being carried out in accordance with the approved plans.

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