

Business Resource Centre, Landscaping and Car Parking, St Edmunds School, Dover – DO/05/729.

A report by Head of Planning Applications Unit to Planning Applications Committee on 13 December 2005.

DO/05/729 - Application by the Governors of St Edmund's School and KCC Education and Libraries for a 2 storey business resource centre including associated hard and soft landscaping and enhanced car parking. St Edmunds School, Old Charlton Road, Dover

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr Newman and Mr Sansum

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. St Edmund's School is located off of Old Charlton Road. Residential properties are located to the west and north and to part of the south of the site. Charlton Primary School is also located to the south and St Mary's Cemetery to the east (see site location plan).

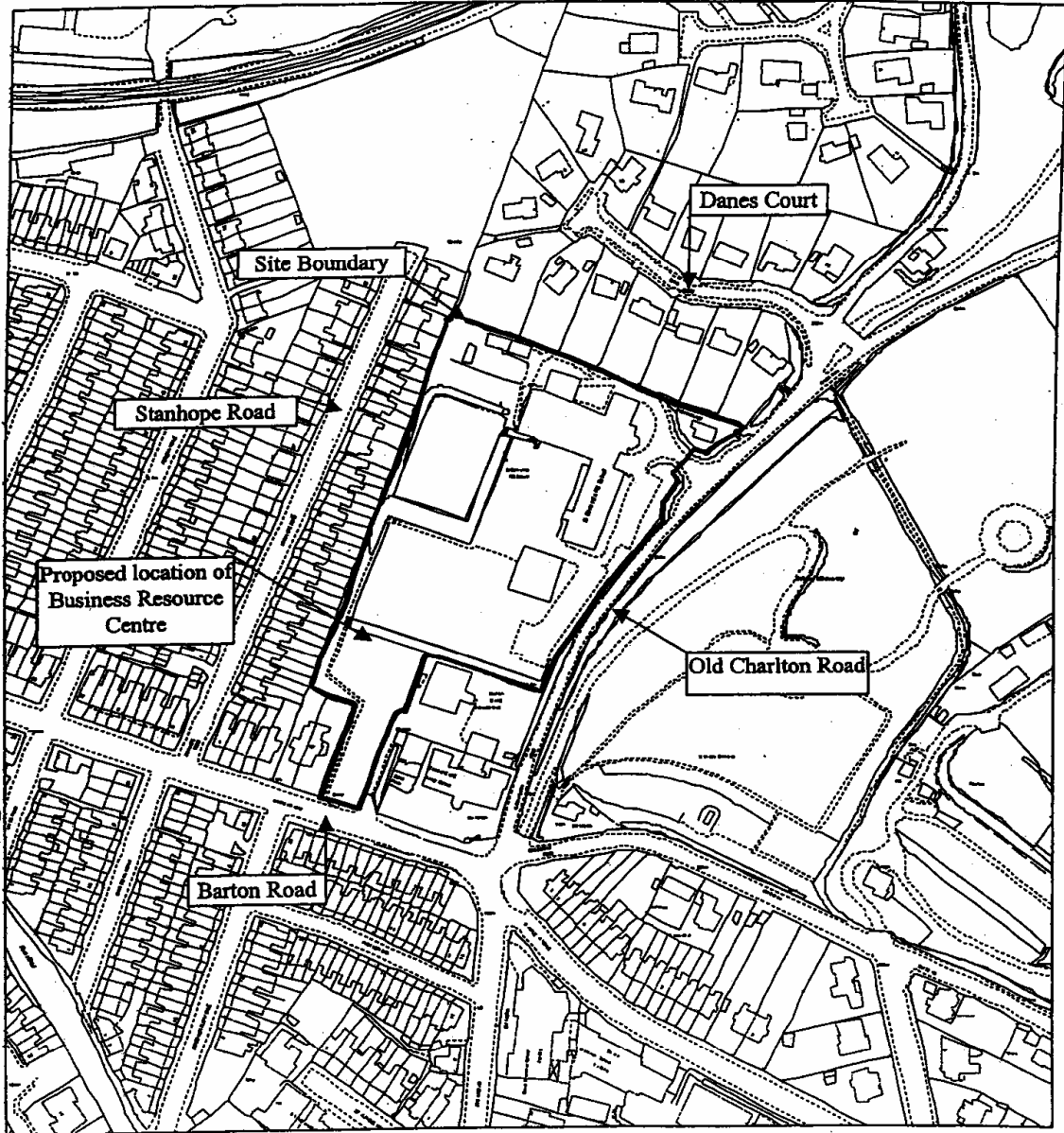
Proposal

2. Planning permission is sought for the erection of a business resource centre. It is stated that the proposal has been developed in response to the School's vision for a flexible and open learning resource centre where the senior section of the school can develop their curricular studies in a stimulating, open and mature environment. It is further stated that the facility would be available for community and local school cluster use and local business involvement would be encouraged. It is intended that Information Technology would be at the core of the facility.
3. It is proposed to locate the development to the south of the site on an area of land that currently consists of soft landscaping (~~see attached plans~~). To the east of the application site is Charlton C of E Primary School, to the west and to part of the south is housing. A car park is also located to the south. To the north is a hard surface play area.
4. It is proposed to construct the building using a variety of materials. A smooth profile colour coated composite cladding panel is proposed for the ground and first floor walls. Additionally for the ground floor walls vertical oak boarding in a natural finish is proposed along with coloured render, painted exposed steelwork and slate. A colour coated roof sheet is proposed with colour coated aluminium eaves and verge closures. Colour coated aluminium windows, doors and curtain walling are also proposed.
5. It is expected that the facility would be available for use by pupils at St Edmunds School and by four other secondary schools in Dover. Approximately 16 pupils per day would attend the facility from other schools. It is also expected that some facilities would be available for use by individual members of the community during the day however that would not be on a regular basis. Adult Education classes would occur from 1630 hours finishing at approximately 2100 hours. It is anticipated that Adult Education courses would cater for 12 – 15 participants.

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Site Location Plan

Not to Scale

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6. Ancillary works include the upgrading of the existing car park and the inclusion of dedicated disabled parking. It is also proposed to use spoil from excavations to remodel the embankment to the north west corner of the site and to undertake landscaping.

Development Plan Policies

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

(i) The adopted 1996 **Kent Structure Plan:**

Policy S1	Seeks sustainable patterns and forms of development.
Policy S2	Seeks to conserve and enhance the quality of Kent's environment.
Policy S9	Has regard for the need for community facilities and services, including education.
Policy ENV15	New development should be well designed and respect its setting.
Policy ENV16	Specifies the need to make the best use of land in built up areas, balanced against the objective of maintaining, and where possible, improving environmental quality.
Policy ENV18	In the control of development, important archaeological sites will be protected. Preservation in situ of archaeological remains will normally be sought.
Policy ENV20	Requires development to be planned and designed so as to avoid or minimise pollution impacts.
Policy NR3/4	Development will not be permitted which would have an unacceptable effect on the quality or potential yield of groundwater resources or in the quality of surface water.
Policy T17	Development will normally be required to provide for vehicle parking on site in accordance with Kent County Council's Vehicle Parking Standards.

(ii) The Deposit 2003 **Kent Structure Plan:**

Policy SP1	Seeks to protect and enhance the environment and achieve a sustainable pattern and form of development.
Policy QL1	Development should be well designed and respect its setting.
Policy QL8	Seeks to protect and enhance the archaeological and historic integrity of important archaeological sites and requires archaeological assessment and/or field evaluation of potentially

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important sites along with the preservation of remains or by record.

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| Policy QL12 | Seeks to protect existing community services. Flexibility in the use of buildings for mixed community uses and the concentration of sports facilities at schools, will be encouraged. |
| Policy TP19 | Development proposals must comply with the respective vehicle parking policies and standards adopted by Kent County Council. |
| Policy NR4 | Requires development to be planned and designed so as to avoid or minimise pollution impacts. |
| Policy NR7 | Development will not be permitted where it would give rise to an unacceptable impact on the quality or yield of Kent's watercourses, coastal waters and/or ground water resources. |

(iii) The adopted 2002 **Dover District Local Plan:**

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| Policy WE1 | Seeks protection of groundwater Source Protection Zones |
| Policy DD1 | Requires development to be well designed and respect its setting. |
| Policy CF1 | Proposals for the establishment or expansion of community facilities will be permitted provided that they are well related to the community, which they serve. |
| Policy ER5 | Proposals for, amongst other things, noise creating development, which by itself or in association with other noise sensitive sources is likely to cause degradation to the amenity of noise sensitive uses in the vicinity will not be permitted unless suitable mitigation measures can be carried out to ameliorate problems associated with noise. |
| Policy TR7 | Requires provision to be made for cycle parking and on site vehicle parking where a development would attract vehicles |
| Policy HE6 | Sets out criteria for development in relation to archaeological remains |

Consultations

8. **Dover District Council:** raises no objection. Recommends that a condition is imposed on any grant of planning permission restricting the use of the café to between the hours of 0830 and 1730 hours Mondays to Fridays, 0830 to 1730 hours Saturdays. There should be no use of the premises at any time on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Dover Town Council: raises no objection.

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Divisional Transportation Manager: raises no objection. Is encouraged that cycle parking is included in the proposal and that for safety reasons mini-buses would be excluded from the car park.

Environment Agency: raises no objection. Provides advice on the location of the site and requests that a condition is attached to any grant of planning permission requiring the submission of a scheme for the disposal of foul and surface waters. Comments on soakaways and drainage and fuel, oil and chemical storage. Requests a condition is placed on any grant of planning permission relating to action to be taken if contamination is found to be present at the site.

Babtie (Noise): advises that the noise report that was submitted assesses the noise impact from the proposed business centre on the school grounds. Is satisfied that providing the following recommendations are included as conditions on any planning permission granted, that the amenity at the closest noise sensitive receivers should be safeguarded:

- The close boarded fence as detailed
- External door to café and internet area to be kept closed after 1630 hours
- No music is played in the café and
- Mechanical plant noise is limited as detailed.

Babtie (Landscaping): no comments received.

County Archaeologist: requests that a condition is placed on any grant of planning permission requiring the securing of the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable.

Local Member(s)

9. The local County Members for Dover Town, Mr Newman and Mr Sansum were notified of the application on 16 June 2005.

Publicity

10. The application was publicised by an advertisement in a local newspaper, the posting of one site notice and the notification of 32 neighbouring properties.

Representations

11. 1 letter of representation has been received to date. The main points raised can be summarised as follows:
 - Objects to the application. Is concerned about an increase in traffic and the ability of the surrounding roads to cope with this, particularly due to the volume and speed of the traffic
 - Concerned about an increase in traffic noise, particularly during 'anti-social' hours.
 - Concerned about a loss of privacy, particularly from the café with its outdoor eating facilities, and that it would have a detrimental effect on security/safety due to the public having access to the rear boundaries of residential properties
 - Concerned about potential smells and noise from the development

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- The development is inappropriate for a residential area, other more suitable venues should be considered.

Discussion

12. This proposal is for a business resource centre at St Edmunds School. I can see no objection in principle to the proposal given that it would be contained within the boundaries of the existing education site. However, it is necessary to consider the development in the context of the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (7) above, in terms of its location and visual impacts and the effects on the local environment and amenity.

Location

13. The proposed development would be located towards the south of the school site to the west of Charlton Primary School and to the south of a high level playground. Residential properties are located in close proximity to the west and to the south. Also to the south is the existing car park and a shared vehicular access onto Barton Road (see attached plans). Concerns have been raised about the appropriateness of the location of the proposed development (see paragraph 10) and it has been requested that other 'more suitable' locations be investigated. I would advise that given the constrained nature of the school site, and the space requirements of the new building there appear to be relatively few locations where the development could be sited. To site the development anywhere other than in its proposed location would appear to impact on the school's playground and this would be to the detriment of the school's sporting facilities. The proposed location of the development therefore appears to be the only viable location for this facility on this school site. However, the proposed site is in a sensitive location close to residential properties and it is therefore necessary to consider the impact of siting the development in this area. This is discussed below.

Design

14. Given the prominent location of the development on the site, the design of the proposed development is of paramount importance. Development Plan Policies seek for new developments to be well designed and respect their setting.
15. With regard to the design approach that has been taken, the applicant has stated that they have endeavoured to achieve a learning facility suitable and flexible in use to teach and inspire both senior pupils and external students from the wider community. This flexibility is shown in the design of the development through amongst other things, it being possible for the two ground floor classrooms to be made into one large space through the retraction of a sliding/folding screen. An external folding glazed screen is also proposed which would allow for the inner building to be opened up to the external decked café area. Pupils would access the development via a bridge, which would link from the first floor of the building to an existing playground. Community access to the building would be from an entrance at ground floor level.
16. It is proposed to construct the building from a variety of materials. These include colour coated steel cladding panels, aluminium glazing sections, colour coated steel roofing panels and cedar boarding (see attached plans). I note that the proposed materials are very modern and are in direct contrast to the existing school building and the surrounding residential properties, which are of traditional brick construction. I would

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advise that I consider these modern materials to be appropriate in this case as it would provide a building which stands out from the existing buildings reflecting its use as a business resource centre. The specific colours used for the materials would be of particular importance to ensure that the building does not appear too industrial and I would therefore recommend that a condition is placed on any grant of planning permission requiring the submission of details and samples of all materials that are to be used externally.

17. The design of the development also includes a protected external play area, an external café space and a piazza and these would consist of decked and soft landscaped areas. I have no objection in principle to external facilities being provided in conjunction with the development providing they are sensitively designed, their use is adequately controlled and they would not cause a detrimental impact to residential amenity. The detailed design of the external areas have not been provided to date and these details should be required to be submitted by condition. The hours of use and the noise implications of the external facilities are discussed below.
18. Overall I consider that the design of the building is of a high standard and it makes good use of the site and location, given the nature of the use it intends to accommodate.

Over Looking

19. Due to the design of the development and its proximity to residential properties there is the potential for overlooking to occur particularly to properties in Barton Road and Stanhope Road. There is also the potential for overlooking of Charlton Primary School to occur.
20. The façade of the proposed building would be approximately 26 metres from the façade of the nearest residential properties on Barton Road and Stanhope Road. This figure exceeds the 21 metre facing window distance set out in Kent Design Guide. Additionally, due to the design of the building there would be only high levels windows at first floor level and doors at ground floor level on the elevation facing Stanhope Road and this would reduce the potential for over-looking to occur. Furthermore, the provision of a comprehensive landscaping scheme along the boundary with Stanhope Road would help to screen the development from the residential properties. Whilst there is a large bank of windows along the elevation facing the properties on Barton Road, due to the location of the building within the site, the building would be largely viewed on an angle and this would reduce the potential for direct views to occur.
21. The façade of the proposed building would be approximately 6.5 metres from the façade of Charlton Primary School. The design of the development shows that at first floor level all of the windows on the building would be high level. At ground floor however there would be a large bank of glazing (see attached plans). I acknowledge therefore that there would be direct over-looking of the Charlton Primary School as a result of the location and design of the proposed development. However, I consider this to be acceptable in this particular case due to the fact that the building would be over-looking an educational site and the Primary School has been consulted about the application and have made no representations. The guidelines for protecting residential amenity do, of course, only relate to residential properties.
22. There is also the potential for over-looking to occur from the external areas. Currently the land consists of soft landscaping and it would be possible for pupils to access the

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whole of this area up to the site boundary. Through the introduction of the external areas, this would formalise the activities taking place in this area and the size of the external area would limit the amount of people in the area at any one time. As outlined by the applicant, they are willing for conditions to be imposed on any grant of planning permission restricting the use of the area to up until 1630 Mondays to Fridays with no use on Saturdays or Sundays. Therefore whilst I note that there would be a change in how this area of the site would be used as a result of the development, I do not consider that this change would be so significant that it would cause an over-riding loss of amenity from over-looking. As outlined in paragraph (17) above details of the external areas should be required to be submitted by condition and details of boundary landscaping should also be required. These would help to reduce the potential for over-looking to occur.

Noise

23. The proposed development would be in close proximity to a number of residential properties and the noise emanating from the development has the potential to be experienced at the closest of these properties. In particular, there is the potential for noise to be experienced from the use of the car park, from any mechanical plant and from the external areas. I would advise that given its size, the number of people that could use the external area at any one time would be restricted and therefore this would reduce the potential for noise to be generated from this element of the proposed development. Additionally, the applicant has agreed to limit the use of the external areas so that they are not used after 1630 hours Mondays to Fridays or at all on Saturdays and Sundays. Furthermore given the number of people involved and that fact that essentially the car parking is an upgrade of an existing facility, I do not anticipate that there would be a significant increase in noise from this element of the proposed facility.
24. A noise impact assessment has been undertaken by the applicant's acoustic consultant to determine existing noise levels and the potential noise generated from the development. The assessment recommends that a close boarded timber fence be introduced along the site boundary with the properties in Stanhope Road to provide some mitigation of noise from the facilities at the most affected closeby properties and recommends that a condition is imposed upon any grant of planning permission requiring the mechanical services plant to meet a certain noise limit and requiring a scheme of attenuation to be submitted before any plant is operated at the premises. Jacobs Babbie have advised that providing the fence is provided, the external door to the café and internet area is kept closed after 1630 hours, no music is played in the café and mechanical plant noise is limited that this should safeguard the amenity at the closest noise sensitive receivers. I would therefore recommend these recommendations form conditions on any grant of planning permission.

Hours of Use

25. As outlined in paragraph (5) above the facility would be used from approximately 0830 to 2100 hours. During normal school hours the predominant use of the facility would be by pupils at St Edmunds School and by approximately 16 pupils from four other secondary school's in Dover. It is also anticipated that some facilities would be available for use by individual members of the community during the day however this would not be on a regular basis. It is proposed to use the facility outside of normal school hours to run Adult Education classes starting at 1630 hours. It is expected that

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Adult Education courses would cater for 12 – 15 participants. As detailed in paragraph (23) above, following consultation with the applicant, they have agreed that the external areas of the facilities would not be used beyond 1630 or at weekends.

26. I have no objection to the proposed hours of use and I consider that by limiting the use of the external areas to normal school hours that this would limit the potential for a loss of residential amenity to occur. As highlighted in paragraph (24) above, a noise survey has been undertaken and provided the recommendations for conditions as set out in paragraph (24) are imposed on any grant of planning permission it is considered that the amenity at the closest noise sensitive receivers should be safeguarded.

Traffic and Car Parking

27. It is proposed to upgrade an existing car park at the site providing 26 parking spaces and to provide 2 dedicated disabled parking bays. Currently this car park is used by St Edmunds School and Charlton Primary School and 6 to 8 cars from the primary school use the car park daily. It is proposed to provide the primary school with 8 dedicated parking bays as part of the proposed development.
28. St Edmunds School would be the predominant user of the facility during the day and the 16 students from the four other schools would either access the site via a service bus or walk. Whilst some facilities would be available for use by individual members of the community during the day this would not be on a regular basis and therefore, it is unlikely that there would be a significant increase in vehicle movements at the site during normal school hours as a direct result of the development.
29. The greatest potential for an increase in vehicle movements to occur is therefore during the evening when Adult Education classes would be run. The courses would cater for 12 to 15 participants and the applicant has advised that they envisage that some of the participants would either walk, cycle or travel by public transport due to the fact that most attendants would be from the local area. Given that the Adult Education classes would take place outside of normal school hours, car parking would be available in the upgraded car park. Therefore whilst I note that there would be an increase in vehicle movements at the site in the evenings as a result of the development, due to the relatively small number of people involved, I do not consider that this increase would be significant enough to warrant refusal of the application.

Archaeology

30. There is the potential that archaeological remains could be affected by the proposed development. The County Archaeologist has therefore recommended that a condition is placed on any grant of planning permission making provision for a programme of archaeological work. I would advise that the condition suggested by the County Archaeologist, which requires that no development takes place until the implementation of a programme of archaeological work has been secured in accordance with a written specification and timetable, would be appropriate in this instance.

Water Resources/Contamination

31. The application site lies in a vulnerable location in terms of groundwater protection where potable supplies are at risk from activities at the site. Therefore the Environment Agency has advised that all precautions should be taken to prevent accidental

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discharges and spillages to ground. The Environment Agency has recommended the imposition of conditions relating to the submission of drainage details and actions to be taken if contamination is found and these should be imposed on any grant of planning permission. Information has also be provided on fuel, oil and chemical storage and the applicant should be advised of this by a suitably worded informative.

Conclusion

32. The application has to be considered in relation to the location of the proposed development and the need for it set against the impact of the proposal in the context of the Development Plan. Whilst concerns have been raised by a local resident about the appropriateness of the site and the potential for noise disturbance and a loss of amenity to occur, the noise survey that is being undertaken should demonstrate whether the noise generated from the development would be acceptable. Furthermore the use of condition to limit the hours that the external facilities can be used would assist in reducing the potential for a loss of amenity to occur. I therefore recommend accordingly.

Recommendation

33. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO conditions including the standard time condition, the submission and implementation of a scheme of landscaping, the development be carried out in accordance with the approved plans, hours of use of the café of 0830 and 1730 hours Mondays to Saturdays with no use on Sundays and Bank Holidays, the submission of details of external materials, the submission of details of the external play area, café space and piazza, hours of use of the external areas of up until 1630 Mondays to Fridays with no use on Saturdays and Sundays, hours of use of the building (except the café) of up until 2100, the securing of the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable, the provision of a close boarded timber fence along the site boundary with the properties in Stanhope Road, noise limit for the mechanical services plant and a necessary scheme of attenuation, the external door to the café and internet area being kept closed after 1630 hours and no music being played in the cafe.

Case officer - Lucy Owen	01622 221053
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Background documents - See section heading
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