

Appendix to Item D4

APPLICATION CA/06/469 – SINGLE STOREY NURSERY BUILDING TO THE REAR OF THE EXISTING SCHOOL AT HERNE BAY INFANT SCHOOL, STANLEY ROAD, HERNE BAY

NOTES of a Planning Applications Committee Members' site meeting at herne Bay Infant School on Tuesday, 27 June 2006.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr R E King (Chairman), Mr J B O Fullarton, Mrs S V Hohler, Mr G A Horne, Mr S J G Koowaree, Mr T A Maddison, Mr R A Marsh, Mr W V Newman and A R Poole *Mr C J Law was present as the Local Member.*

OFFICERS: Mr J Crossley and Miss A Michalska (Planning); Ms S Bengé (Kent Highways) and Mr A Tait (Democratic Services).

THE APPLICANT: Herne Bay Infants: Ms A Hooker (Head Teacher), Mr M Pearce (Chairman of Governors) and Mr D Stewart (Architect).

Members observed the arrival of the pupils at the school gates, paying particular attention to the traffic using Stanley Road and Arkley Road before the meeting commenced.

- (1) The Chairman opened the meeting by explaining that its purpose was for Members of the Committee to see the application site and listen to the views of those present.
- (2) Mr Crossley introduced the proposal, which had been made jointly by the School Governors and KCC Children, Families and Education. He said that it consisted of a single storey nursery building in the green space behind the school gates in what would have become the Infant School's grounds. The Nursery would provide places for two groups of 26 children (one group using it in the mornings, the other in the afternoons).
- (3) Mr Crossley went on to say that the Nursery would be built using traditional brick and a pitched metal deck roof, broadly in keeping with the rest of the school and properties in this high density residential area. The area itself was part of a Conservation Area, so design was an important consideration.
- (4) Mr Crossley reminded the Committee that this application had come forward to the Committee a week earlier with an Officer recommendation of objection on transport grounds. He did not consider that there were any other grounds for objection in terms of design, playing field loss or impact on residential amenity. The only grounds for recommending refusal were highways concerns.

- (5) Mr Crossley then went into greater detail about the highways objection. He said that in July 2003 permission had been granted for the erection of a Foundation Stage building. Kent Highways had raised no objection at that time on the understanding that there would be no increase in the number of staff and pupils arising from the development. This particular application would, however, involve additional staff and pupils, although some of the children might be siblings or live locally. It was recognised that the School Travel Plan would reduce the volume of traffic around the site.
- (6) Ms Bengé (Kent Highways) said that she had inspected the traffic situation at the school on two occasions. Each time, the traffic had been far more congested than on this occasion. She added that there was no staff parking in the school grounds, so any increase in numbers would make the congestion unacceptable, particularly in Stanley Road.
- (7) Mr Stewart (Architect) agreed with Mr Crossley's presentation. He asked Members to note that the Permission for the Foundation Stage building had not included any condition restricting numbers at the school on Highways grounds. He added that pre-school Nursery classes and associated school runs were already taking place on Wednesdays and that there had been no objections from neighbours. These classes consisted of 20 youngsters as well as staff, who would transfer to the Nursery building if permission were granted.
- (8) Mr Stewart then said that the Travel Plan worked very well and had been developed by the School because the amount of on-site parking that could be provided was extremely limited. This was an urban school in a tight-knit residential area. The majority of the pupils lived within 10 minutes' walking distance of the School and it was anticipated that the majority of the Nursery cohort would probably be related to children already attending the School.
- (9) Mr Pearce (Chairman of Governors) said that the School had consulted the public extensively on the proposal and that there had been no objections. The School was in the middle of Herne Bay, and it was impossible to develop additional car parking spaces. In fact, the School had no wish to do so. Some of the Governors did not want any spaces at all in the school grounds. The School Travel Plan had been developed entirely on the School's initiative. It was very successful to the point where there would be 5 walking busses in September. He estimated that 95% of the pupils lived within ten minutes of the School and said that the only time that there was a problem was when it poured with rain, leading a greater number of parents to use their cars.
- (10) Ms Hooker (Head Teacher) said that the Travel Plan was extremely successful because of the efforts of the School's Family Liaison Officer and because the children were very keen on it. The Travel Plan therefore represented a sustainable change. She did not believe that many children

from outside the catchment area would come to the Nursery and therefore concluded that the proposed development would not make a significant difference in highways terms.

- (11) Mr Maddison asked whether a condition could be applied limiting the numbers at the School to 360 (including those attending the Nursery). Mrs Bengé replied that when giving her advice, she had to assume that the School was at full capacity. Ms Hooker explained that the School was legally obliged to take up to 30 children in a class if a sufficient number expressed a preference. Mr Crossley added that it would not be possible to control school roll numbers by use of planning conditions.
- (12) Mr Horne asked whether the Walking Bus went to school every morning and afternoon. Ms Hooker confirmed that this was the case.
- (13) In response to another question from Mr Horne, Ms Hooker said that the Nursery would require 3 additional members of staff. Because of the comparatively low intake at the School, two members of staff would have to be redeployed to the Nursery. In practice, there would only be one additional member of staff.
- (14) Mr Law, the local Member said that he supported the application and underlined that there had been no traffic restriction attached to the Foundation Stage building Permission. He then said that £98,000 had been made available for traffic calming measures in the Kings Road (to the north of the School). This would take the form of a 20mph zone and would result in traffic levels being diverted away from the area. He added that in 2005 he had pursued with Kent Highways a request from some local residents to turn Arkley Road into a one way system. Highways had opposed this suggestion on the grounds that traffic levels did not merit it.
- (15) Ms Hooker said that this part of Herne Bay suffered from the highest deprivation indices within the Canterbury cluster. Building the Nursery would help ameliorate matters by enabling the School to sustain Early Years provision.
- (16) The Chairman thanked everyone for attending. The notes of this site visit would be appended to the Planning Applications Committee report when the application was considered on 18 July.