

Extensions to provide office, toilet and kitchen space at Kent Communicative & Assistive Technology Service for Children & Young People, Wainwright Place, Ashford – AS/06/530

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

Application by Kent County Council Children, Families and Education for the provision of single storey toilet, office and kitchen space at Kent Communicative and Assistive Technology Service for Children and Young People, Wainwright Place, Newtown, Ashford – AS/06/530

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted subject to conditions

Local Member(s): Mr. G. Koowaree

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Wainwright Place is located to the south-east of Ashford, lying adjacent to the Ashford Designer Outlet Centre. The property consists of a large detached building split in two between a nursery (Cherry Tree Nursery) which occupies approximately 75% of the building and the new Kent Communicative and Assistive Technology Service which lies to the south of the building and occupies approximately 25% of the total floorspace. The front of the property is bordered by Alfred Road leading onto terraced houses, and to the rear a large car park leading onto a railway line looking out towards the Ashford Designer Outlet Centre. To the north of the site is the old Wainwright Place School and to the south a grassed area leading to apartments in Belmont Place. *A site location plan is attached.*

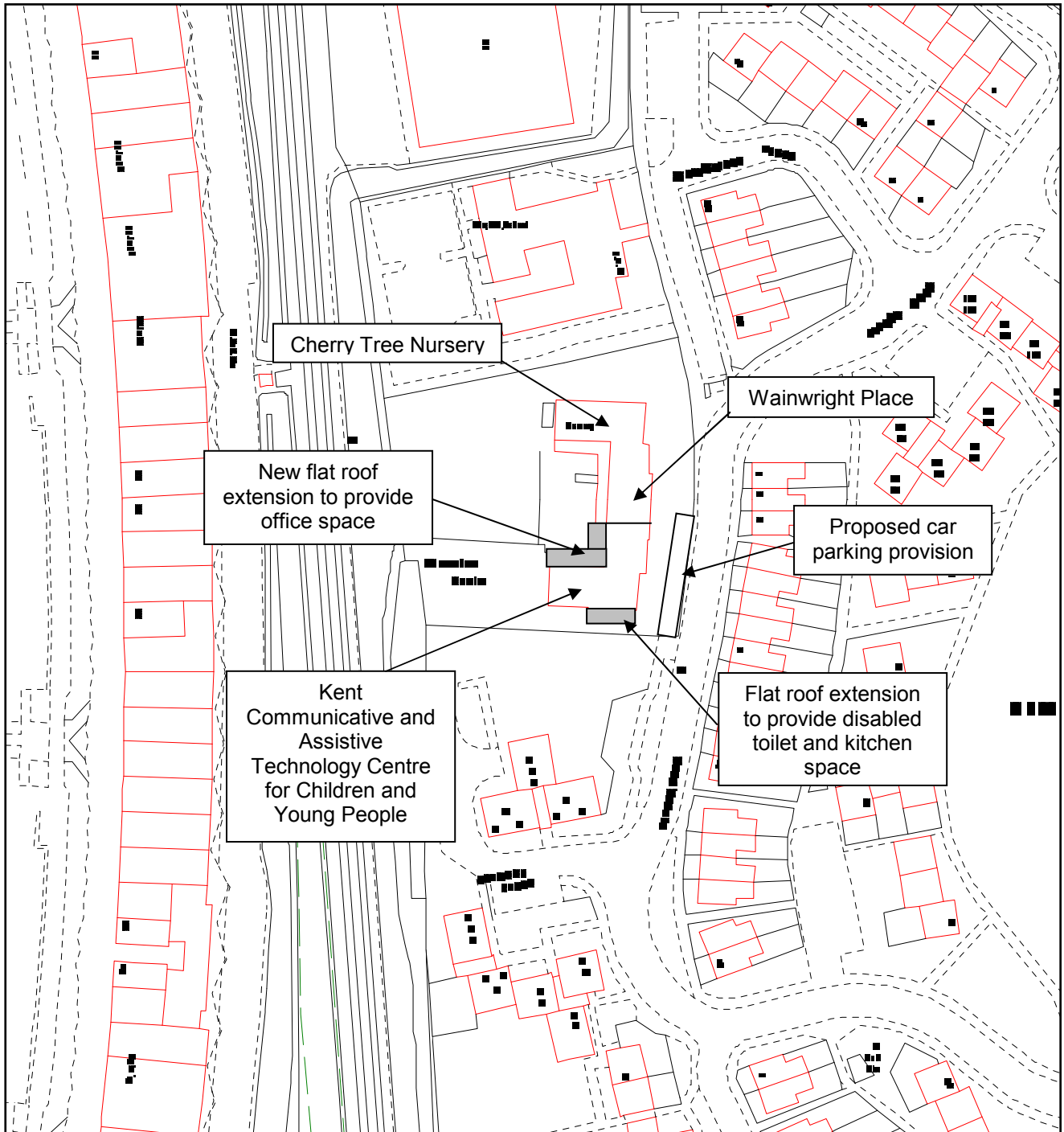
Proposal

2. The application has been submitted for the provision of office, toilet and kitchen space that is proposed to be created by building two single storey extensions at Wainwright Place. The extensions involve the demolition of two existing single storey extensions which are currently in poor state of repair and which do not meet current building standards. Firstly the proposed extension to the north of Wainwright Place will involve the demolition of two flat roofed buildings which occupy a floorspace of approximately 30sq. metres that is currently used as toilets and a storage facility for the centre. The proposal is to replace this with one complete flat roofed extension that would be slightly larger than that of the existing, covering a total floorspace of approximately 34 sq. metres. The extension is proposed to be that of a similar nature to the existing, with a flat roof covered by felt.
3. The second extension that is proposed would take the same footprint as that of the existing single storey extension. At present there is a "lightweight" style gallery / walkway which runs around the west side of Wainwright Place that is currently in a poor state of repair. The walkway consists of a felted flat roof with walls constructed from glazed panels to the top which are footed by light blue panels below. The existing gallery / walkway runs around the entire west side of the building, in an internal courtyard and is used by the Nursery as an outdoor play area. The application is proposed to replace a small section of this walkway which is occupied by the Learning

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Site Location Plan



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Existing Plans

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Proposed Plans

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Amended Plans

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Resource Centre with a brick built extension with windows to match in with the existing building.

4. The applicant has stated that the centre would be used by a maximum of 6 members of staff and 10 people visiting at any one time. The site has been chosen for use by the new Kent Communicative and Assistive Technology Service for Children and Young People as the building has sat redundant since its last use as a Learning Resource Centre.
5. To meet the requirements as set out in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), a new disabled toilet and kitchen needs to be installed to bring the building up to current standards and to allow the centre to be brought into use. Following a survey of the existing site, the most appropriate location for the new toilets and kitchen were found to be that of where the current store and toilets are located in two small single storey extensions. As a result, the proposal put forward is for the demolition of these two buildings and the erection of one slightly larger purpose built building to house the new toilets and kitchen, to meet current building standards and the DDA Act, as well as matching in with the existing structure as near as possible.
6. At present, the centre has very little office space for staff to utilise. This presents major problems for the building, in terms of its operational use, and as such this application entails the provision of new office accommodation. After a survey of the site the best location for new office space was found to be that of the existing gallery / walkway which is in poor state of repair and is vastly under used. It is proposed to demolish a section of this walkway that is occupied by the Learning Resource Centre and build a purpose built single storey extension in its place.
7. It is proposed that the centre would have two dedicated disabled parking bays and four additional parking bays for use by staff and visitors. However, a large amount of additional shared parking is currently available, and would be available for use at the side and rear of the nursery if required by the Kent Communicative and Assistive Technology Service.

Planning History

8. No recent County Planning applications are registered for the Learning Resource Centre at Wainwright Place. However, a planning application was made to Ashford Borough Council for the provision of a mobile classroom for Cherry Tree Nursery under reference number AS/01/1291. This application was permitted for the duration of five years up to 2006. An application has recently been submitted to Ashford Borough Council for the mobile classrooms renewal under reference AS/06/831.

Planning Policy

9. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to consideration of the application:
 - (i) The adopted 1996 **Kent Structure Plan**:

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

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conservation or enhancement of the character of settlement, or detrimental to its amenity or functioning, will not normally be permitted.

- Policy S2 The quality of Kent's environment will be conserved and enhanced and measures taken to minimise any adverse impacts arising from development.
- Policy S9 Has regard for the need for community facilities and services, including education.
- Policy T17 Development will normally be required to provide vehicle parking on-site in accordance with Kent County Council's Vehicle Parking Standards.

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

- Policy QL1 Development should be well designed and respect its setting.
- Policy QL12 Carries forward and amplifies Policy S9 of the Adopted Plan.
- Policy TP19 Carries forward Policy T17 of the Adopted Plan

(iii) The adopted 2000 **Ashford Borough Local Plan**:

- Policy DP1 Planning permission will not be granted for development proposals that are poorly designed in terms of their scale, density, height and layout
- Policy DP2 New development proposals must be designed in a way which represents the character and appearance of the area around it. The local transport system must be capable of properly serving the development proposed taking account of its scale, nature and location as well as ensuring there is safe access to the site, sufficient car parking and adequate space for safe manoeuvring.
- Policy TP11 Proposals for development should provide for the parking of vehicles, in accordance with the Kent County Council's Vehicle Parking Standards

Consultations

7. **Ashford Borough Council** has raised an objection to the above application. Their comments are as follows:

The proposed development is contrary to Policy ENV15 of the Kent Structure Plan 1996, Policy QL1 of the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2003, Policy DP2 of the Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000 and the Government Guidance contained in PPS1 and the advice contained in the Kent Design Guide, and therefore would be contrary to interests of acknowledged planning importance for the following reason:

1. Notwithstanding the development replaces the existing flat roofed extensions, the new design again incorporating flat roof design, represents poorly designed development that fails to demonstrate the design excellence appropriate for

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public buildings and fails to respond sympathetically to the character of the attractive original building.

The further views of Ashford Borough Council will be reported verbally at the Committee meeting following further consultation on an amended scheme

Divisional Transport Manager has no objections to the proposals in respect of highway matters subject to the following condition being attached on any permission granted:

1. The area allocated for parking and / or turning on the submitted plan shall be kept clear of obstruction and shall not be used other than for the parking of vehicles in connection with the development hereby permitted.

Local Members

8. The local County Member, Mr. G. Koowaree, was notified of the application on the 23 March 2006.

Publicity

9. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice and the individual notification of 25 neighbouring residential properties.

Representations

10. No letters of representation have been received to date with regard to this application.

Discussion

11. The proposal involves two relatively small single storey flat-roofed extensions to the side and rear of Wainwright Place which fail to respond sympathetically to the character and design of the attractive original building. The application needs to be considered in the context of the relevant Development Plan Policies and with regard to any other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. Members will note that the objection to this proposal from Ashford Borough Council was on the basis of the original details submitted by the applicant and further views will be reported verbally to the Committee on the amended proposals.

Design Considerations

12. In terms of the design of the new flat roofed extensions, it can be argued that the overall design does not respond sympathetically to a rather attractive old building with steep pitched roofs and a high level of detailing, in particular with regard to window design and fascia details. The proposed single storey extensions both have flat roofs which detract from the design of the original building. However, it should be noted that the proposals involve the replacement of two existing flat roof extensions to Wainwright Place which received permission and have been built for many years now. Therefore, it should be noted that if permission was granted, then there would only be a very slight increase in the total floorspace of the technology centre. To clarify, the proposals put forward is for the demolition of two flat roof extensions and the re-building with a similar footprint that would bring the centre up to current building regulations.

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13. Firstly, the existing extensions to the south of the Education Centre comprise of two small buildings separated by approximately half a metre gap between (refer to existing plans page 3). It should be noted that the elevation where the existing and proposed extension would be constructed has high level windows above the ground floor, which the applicant states that they would like to retain as these are essential to allow light and ventilation inside the existing building. For this reason, the applicants have stated in a letter responding to Ashford Borough Councils' views that a pitch roof would be more appropriate, that this is simply not possible due to the high level windows above the existing and proposed extensions.
14. However, notwithstanding the fact that high level windows are required for light and ventilation into the existing building, I consider that the extension as proposed represents a poorly designed building which does not match with the attractive nature of the original building. Although an extension was permitted and is currently in situ for a similar structure, I do not consider that this is an overriding issue and would give justification to permit a similar style of building without further design considerations being given to the current proposals.
15. With regard to the single storey extension within the courtyard to the west of the main building, the applicant has proposed to replace a "lightweight" glazed and panel system gallery / walkway with a much heavier brick walled and flat roof extension. At present the existing walkway which runs around the entire west elevation of the building is of a poor state of repair and therefore remains unused. It has been proposed by the applicant to bring this space into use as office accommodation by constructing new walls and a new flat roof. However, given that only a small section of this gallery style walkway is to be replaced, a 'heavy' brickwork structure is felt to be inappropriate in terms of design as this would not respect the characteristics of Wainwright Place. Given the policy backing of ENV15 from the Kent Structure Plan which states that development should respect its settings for sake of the protecting of the built environment, I feel that without further design considerations being given to the scheme, the proposal should not be entertained.
16. Although some effort had been made by the applicant to match the existing windows in terms of their proportions and fenestration details, it is felt that a lightweight structure would work better in terms of matching the existing glazing panels which would remain around rear of Cherry Tree Nursery. It would therefore seem appropriate that a solution be sought in which the detailing of the existing gallery type extension, in terms of the amount of existing glazing, be used as opposed to constructing a heavyweight brick structure that would detract from the original building and any development which has taken place on the site over a number of years.
17. Notwithstanding the need for new education provision, as set out in Policy S9 of the Kent Structure Plan, the design of the extensions needs to be considered fully, taking into account the design excellence put forward in the Kent Design Guide . As a result of the objection received from the Borough Council and the poor design of the proposals put forward, negotiations took place and the applicant has submitted a formal amendment to the original scheme.

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18. Following the concerns raised over the two extensions, the applicant has amended the drawings to revise the side and rear extensions (see amended scheme, page 5). The main changes which have been made in order to address the issues raised are:
- The side extension to the south of the existing building has been amended to include a parapet wall which surrounds the entire flat roof to detract from the typical fascia panels and felted flat-roof;
 - Stone cills have been installed to all windows to reflect the design and features found throughout the existing building;
 - From the front elevation, the side extension has been amended to allow for a brick recessed window with a small obscure glazed opening window to meeting building regulations as necessary for toilets;
 - The rear courtyard extension has been amended to include a lighter weight timber constructed building. This comprises of large glazed panels which match the proportions of the existing gallery extension (which will remain in situ adjacent to the new extension at Cherry Tree Nursery) covered in 'shiplap' style weatherboarding and a felted flat roof;
19. The amended scheme, in my opinion works more sympathetically towards the existing building. The creation of a lightweight structure I consider sits more sympathetically besides the existing glazed walkway and is of a different material to stand besides the original building without detracting from it. Secondly, the single storey extension to house new toilets and kitchen, with the addition of a parapet wall to cover the entire surrounding of the walls, would, in my opinion, prevent the flat roof from being visible against the existing building. This would satisfy the requirements as stated by the applicant to allow light and ventilation into the building, whilst using traditional building techniques to create a flat roof which is not highly visible to the eye.
20. Notwithstanding policy ENV15 of the Kent Structure Plan and QL7 of the Kent & Medway Structure Plan, I feel that the amendments would allow the provision of new education facilities (by allowing the Technology Service to open to the public) as supported by Policy S9 of the Adopted Plan, whilst incorporating design that is of an acceptable standard, and would satisfy Policy DP1 of the Ashford Borough Local Plan.

Transport Issues

21. Policy T17 of the Kent Structure Plan and TP11 of the Ashford Borough Local Plan seeks to ensure that proposals for new development should provide for the parking of vehicles, in accordance with the Kent County Council's Vehicle Parking Standards. As such, the Divisional Transport Manager has advised that a condition be placed on any decision to ensure that any allocated parking / turning as shown on the plans be kept clear of obstruction and not used other than for the parking of vehicles in connection with the proposed development.

Conclusion

21. In conclusion, I acknowledge the objection raised by Ashford Borough Council to the flat roof extensions as originally proposed. However, I consider that following substantial amendments to the scheme, I am satisfied that the proposed design represents a more sympathetic approach towards the existing attractive Wainwright Place Building. Notwithstanding the fact that both extensions proposed entail flat roofs, I consider that the design used is such that the roofs will not be prominent enough to detract from the

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existing roof lines used elsewhere in the existing building. Given the policy backing for the provision of new educational facilities under Policy S9 of the Adopted Plan, I consider that the scheme as amended would not only satisfy the requirements of Policies ENV15 of the Adopted Plan, Policy QL1 of the Kent & Medway Structure Plan and DP1 of the Ashford Borough Local Plan, but also allow for the Kent Communicative & Assistive Technology Service to open and be fully utilised by the community. In addition, I am satisfied that by imposing the condition as stated by the Divisional Transport Manager on any decision, this would satisfy the requirements of the Kent Vehicle Parking Standards and would be in the interest of Highway Safety. Accordingly, I recommend that planning permission be granted.

Recommendation

22. SUBJECT TO the further views of Ashford Borough Council, to be received by the date of the Committee Meeting, I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED subject to conditions requiring that the development be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and a condition requiring the land allocated for parking / turning being kept clear of obstruction and not used other than for parking of vehicles in connection with the development

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