

**Retrospective application for the installation of CCTV poles and cameras. Minster-in-Sheppey Primary School, Brecon Chase, Minster-on-Sea, Sheerness – SW/06/218**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Unit to Planning Applications Committee on 16 May 2006.

SW/06/218 – Application by the Governors of Minster-in-Sheppey Primary School and Kent County Council Education and Libraries for installation of CCTV poles and cameras (Retrospective). Minster-in-Sheppey Primary School, Brecon Chase, Minster-on-Sea, Sheerness.

Recommendation: Permission be granted.

**Local Members:** Mr A. Crowther

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Site**

1. Minster-in-Sheppey Primary School is located south of Brecon Chase, within the built-up area of Minster. The school site is located on the southern flank of a hillside, with two school blocks located across the slope. The site can be entered via access points on Brecon Chase, Minster Road and Bellevue Road. Residential properties surround the site to the north, south, east and west (please see attached plan).

**Background**

2. The Minster School site is subject to a separate retrospective planning application for the levelling of the existing planning field, under planning reference SW/06/351, which is also being reported to this month's Planning Applications Committee under Item D5.

**Proposal**

3. Retrospective planning permission is being sort for the installation of CCTV cameras and poles at 5 locations around the Minster Primary School site (see attached plans – points 1 through 5). The application includes 14 cameras and associated equipment and 5 poles that position the cameras in excess of one metre from the closest part on the existing school buildings. The CCTV system installed also includes additional cameras located at 5 other positions around the school buildings. However, these cameras are attached to or within one metre of the school buildings and are therefore afforded permitted development rights under Part 33 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.
4. The cameras that require planning consent are positioned on single poles rising above the roofline of the school buildings. All of the cameras are locked in place and cannot be repositioned remotely and the system does not have a zoom function for the images captured. Any alterations to the positioning and field of view would require the manual re-adjustment by the company that installed the system. The camera system can operate under infrared light during low light levels and darkness. This system is triggered by any intrusion into the school site. The range of the infrared facility only extends to the area immediately surrounding the school buildings and does not extend to the perimeter of the school grounds. All images from the cameras are recorded and monitored centrally within the main school office.

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5. The 5 locations requiring planning consent are as follows:

- Location 1, as marked on attached plan, consists of a pole with 4 cameras attached above the north-west corner of school building. Two cameras cover the entrance road and gate onto Brecon Chase, one covers the access onto Bellevue Road and one camera covers the car park.
- Location 2, on the north elevation of the southern school building, consists of a pole with 2 cameras covering the adjacent playground and footpaths between the school blocks.
- Location 3 consists of a pole with 1 camera above the north east corner of the main school building covering the pedestrian access onto Brecon Chase.
- Location 4, above the south east corner of the southern building, consists of a pole with 4 cameras attached covering the car park and vehicle access onto Minster Road, the pedestrian access onto Minster Road, the footpath and space between the 2 school buildings and the area directly adjacent to the southern elevation.
- Location 5 consists of a pole with 3 cameras attached along the south west elevation of the southern building covering the playing field internal footpaths and adjacent playground and field.

(Please see photographs of all the above locations and examples of images taken from the CCTV coverage included within the appendix.)

The other locations marked on the plan consist of lower level eyeball and fixed cameras attached to the school buildings covering doorways and internal pedestrian routes.

#### **Additional Information from the Applicant**

6. In support of the application, the applicant has provided a statement from the company that installed the system confirming that none of the cameras capture views into residential property. Further to the above, the School has also provided still photographs taken from the system showing the key views towards the various boundaries and access points at the site. In addition confirmation has been provided from Kent Police of the benefits of the system in prosecuting individuals for vandalism at the school.

#### **Development Plan Policies**

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

(i) The adopted Kent Structure Plan

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.

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Policy ENV15 New development should be well designed and respect its setting.

(ii) The Deposit Kent & Medway Structure Plan (2003):

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 QL12 Seeks to protect existing community facilities and provide local services in residential areas, particularly where services are deficient.

(iii) Swale Borough Local Plan (2000):

Policy G1 Requires all development to accord with Local Plan Policies, have regard to characteristics of locality and setting, avoid unacceptable impacts on natural and built environments, adopt high standards of design, and cause no demonstrable harm to residential amenity.

Policy E50 Requires development to have regard to security and safety measures.

Policy C1 Subject to compliance with other Plan policies, planning permission will be granted for appropriately located social and community facilities.

(iv) Swale Borough Local Plan First Review: Re-deposit Draft (2005):

Policy E1 Requires all development to accord with Local Plan Policies, have regard to characteristics of locality and setting, avoid unacceptable impacts on natural and built environments, adopt high standards of design, cause no demonstrable harm to residential amenity, and integrate security and safety measures.

Policy E20 Seeks development to integrate security and safety measures.

Policy C1 Supports proposals to improve community services and facilities. Where proposals would meet an identified local need in an accessible location, supports proposals to help maximise the use of existing community services.

### **Consultations**

8. **Swale Borough Council** raises no objection, further to the application being reported to the Borough Council's Planning Committee.

**Minster-on-Sea Parish Council:** no comments have been received to date. Any received prior to Committee meeting will be reported verbally.

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**Local Member**

9. The local County Member for Sheppey Mr A. Crowther was notified of the application on 17 February 2006.

**Publicity**

10. The application was publicised by the posting of one site notice and the notification of 30 neighbouring properties.

**Representations**

11. 5 letters of representation have been received from local residents. The main points raised can be summarised as follows:

- The unauthorised works raising the level of the school playing field has resulted in houses on Bellevue Road being completely exposed to the school site.
- Confirmation is requested as to the position and field of view of the cameras as residents are concerned about the possibility of their houses are being spied upon.
- Concern is raised that the works were carried out without the benefit of planning consent.
- Concern is raised that the cameras operate within the infrared spectrum overlooking properties at night.
- No objection to the cameras in principle if the reassurances in respect of our privacy are met.
- Concern is raised that the positioning of the cameras covering the accesses onto Brecon Chase result in the invasion of privacy. Requests that the current situation be altered to prevent residential property being overlooked.
- The replacement gates on Brecon Chase are unattractive. Requests that the gate be painted to allow them to blend in.

1 letter of representation has been received in support of the application.

**Discussion**

12. This application is for retrospective planning consent for CCTV cameras and poles within the grounds of Minster-in-Sheppey Primary School. It is necessary to consider the development in the context of the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (7) above and the effects of the development in terms of its visual impact, the effects on the local environment and residential privacy.
13. The CCTV system installed consists of 19 cameras positioned at 10 locations around the site, covering the main access routes and thoroughfares. The system includes a number of cameras positioned on poles that rise above the buildings on site. It is these cameras that require the planning consent and have prompted the current application. All other cameras installed on site are afforded permitted development rights.
14. A number of objections have been received from local residents in relation to the CCTV cameras, the views received are summarised in paragraph (11) above. The key

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concerns being raised relate to any potential loss of privacy that may result from the installation of the system, and the retrospective nature of the application.

**Residential Privacy**

15. The CCTV system installed does not have the capacity for the cameras to be moved remotely, nor does it allow the cameras to zoom in. Any alteration of the field of view requires someone to climb up to the cameras and physically reposition them. The cameras are lock into position and the School have provided written confirmation from the company that installed the system that none of cameras capture images into residential property. In addition to this, the School has provided still images of the field of view for the equipment directed toward the boundaries, examples of these are appended below. Having reviewed the system in operation at site, I confirm that none of the cameras capture images that could cause a loss of privacy to any of the surrounding residential properties. Taking all of the above into account, I would not raise objection to the application on residential amenity grounds.

**Location and design**

16. The locations of the cameras requiring planning consent are set above the roofline of school buildings. Minster Primary School is not subject to any specific policy designation by virtue of its location. However, the appropriate Development Plan policies require that any new development is appropriate to its setting and takes account of the local environment. Photographs of the cameras in position are attached within Appendix 1. The cameras and associated infrastructure installed is of a standard design. In my opinion, given the buildings and the urban location, the size and topography of the site the cameras installed are acceptable in the positions shown and the equipment does not detract from the characteristics of the locality. Under the circumstances I would consider that the CCTV cameras and poles are acceptable and accorded with Structure Plan Policy ENV15, Deposit Structure Plan Policies SP1, Swale Borough Local Plan Policy G1, and Draft Swale Local Plan Policy E1.

**Need**

17. Due to the material planning objections that have been raised, need becomes a balancing factor. The applicant has confirmed that the development is required to improve the security of the site and has been brought forward in response to criticism of the security at the site following an Ofsted Inspection of the school. In addition I acknowledge the applicant's comments made regarding the increase in the incidents of vandalism at the site prior to the system being installed, and that since the system has been installed 3 acts of vandalism have been recorded on the system with the footage used by Kent Police to aid their investigations. I would therefore advise that there is an established requirement that schools actively maintain and improve security. Taking the above into account, the proposals accord with Swale Borough Local Plan Policy E50, and Draft Swale Local Plan Policy E1 and E20.

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#### **Conclusion**

18. In principle, I can see no overriding objections to the proposal. The application meets the requirements set out in the appropriate Development Plan Policies. The location and design of the equipment does not materially impact on the visual amenities of the location. Whilst concerns have been raised regarding the privacy of local residents the applicant has provided evidence that confirms that this is not an issue in this instance. Therefore I recommend planning permission be granted accordingly.

#### **Recommendation**

19. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO a condition requiring that the cameras should only be repositioned with the written approval of the County Planning Authority.

Case officer – James Bickle
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Background documents - See section heading
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