

**Details of a Landscaping Scheme pursuant to condition (5) of planning permission CA/05/423 – Wickhambreaux C of E primary School, Wickhambreaux – CA/05/423/R5**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Unit to Planning Applications Committee on 11 April 2006

Details pursuant to Condition (5) proposed by the Governors of Wickhambreaux Primary School and Kent County Council Education and Libraries for the implementation of a Landscaping Scheme pursuant to condition (5) of planning permission CA/05/423 AT Wickhambreaux C of E Primary School, The Street, Wickhambreaux.

Recommendation: Approval be given.

**Local Member(s): John Simmonds**

**Classification: Unrestricted**

**Background**

1. Details of a Landscaping Scheme have been submitted pursuant to condition (5) of the planning permission CA/05/423. Planning permission was granted, and considered at the Planning Applications Committee meeting on 14 June 2005 (following the receipt of objections from neighbours of the school), for the removal of an existing mobile classroom and replacement with a single storey new build extension including the reinstatement of hard surface and landscaping. This was subject to the implementation of a number of conditions, including the submission of a Scheme of Landscaping. The need for a landscaping scheme stemmed from the need to address privacy issues and screening issues between the school and neighbouring properties. Building work is currently near on completion at the site.

**Proposal**

2. Details of the Landscaping Scheme pursuant to Condition (5) of the planning permission CA/05/423 are incorporated within the attached drawing. In all areas subject to planting and turfing (except the planting of the two Field Maples in the established landscape belt to the river frontage) the main contractor would remove all builder's rubbish, de-compact the soil, cultivate and grade to the required levels. The landscape contractor would carry out final topsoil cultivation to planting areas and compaction of turfed areas. Planting areas would receive bark mulch upon completion.
3. Maintenance watering would be carried out by the School until the turf and planting is established.
4. The Landscaping Scheme includes 4 planting areas. Planting area 1 is located to the front of the school building, and proposes a grassed area with picnic bench and the planting of a shrub building. Planting area 2 is located next to the west elevation of the new school building. A grassed area and picnic bench is proposed, with shrub borders. Planting area 3, located along the west boundary of the school site, proposes under-planting the existing hedge with Rubus 'Betty Ashburner' and Genista Hispanica. Existing fencing is also to be retained along this boundary. Planting area 4 proposes the infilling of the gap along the southern boundary with Field Maple and provides that all other existing planting to the river frontage is to be retained.

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5. The Landscaping scheme also proposes the erection of play equipment in the form of a Timberline tyre crossing. The extension of an existing timber fence along the Southwest boundary of the site is also intended, and is proposed to be stained to match the existing fence.

**Consultations**

6. **Canterbury City Council:** has no further comments to provide and states that it is considered that the details relating to the approved scheme can be agreed at the County Planning Authority's discretion.

**Jacobs (Landscaping):** No comments received to date.

**Conservation Officer:** No comments received to date.

**Representations**

7. Two neighbouring properties were notified of the proposed scheme. I have received one letter of representation in response, and their concerns are as follows:
  - The submitted drawing (see appendix) illustrates windows impinging on privacy for the neighbouring property. The 2m line shows the height of the existing fence and the extent of the new windows above this line threaten privacy.
  - The landscaping and boundary treatment scheme needs to remedy the above and they request 600mm trellis-work is added to the top of the existing fence.
  - The gap in the existing landscaping along the river frontage has not been remedied, despite reassurance that this would be the case.
  - Request the two Field Maples to be semi-mature at planting and that there will be additional planting of evergreen shrubs in the under storey.

**Discussion**

8. The Landscaping scheme needs to be considered in the context of the relevant Development Plan Policies (refer to appended policies) and with regard to any other material planning considerations. Note that planning consent for the new building has been given full planning consent.
9. The landscaping scheme was requested in response to the neighbour concerns over possible overlooking and privacy issues that may occur following the erection of the permitted new classroom extension. The landscaping and boundary treatment would be concentrated mainly in the south corner of the school site creating further screening of the new build from the nearest residential property. I would consider that the landscaping scheme to be satisfactory in terms of providing screening and camouflage from this property.
10. Concern has been raised regarding a possible overlooking issue from a window in the southern elevation of the extension and a request has been made to extend the height of an existing fence by adding a run of trellis along the top. I do not consider this necessary and would consider the existing fence to be of a suitable height to prevent any overlooking issues from this window. No objections were raised regarding this window and any potential overlooking issues caused by it in the original application. The

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agent has stated that “although an adult of average 1.8m height could look over the top of the boundary fence when standing on the terrace areas created at the rear of the school extension, due to the drop in ground level down to the neighbouring property, there is no vision to the garden space or onto the principle ground floor rooms. The children at this school are appreciably less in height and could not even see over the top of the existing fence”.

11. It should be noted that the current situation is being viewed in winter months with no leaf coverage to the trees. During spring, summer and into autumn the presence of leaves on the trees to the boundary would further diminish the perception of overlooking when viewed from outside the school boundary.
12. The windows to the school extension are as tall as they are due to conservation requirements to attempt to match the existing school elevations. The building is single storey. The agent has suggested that “the height of the windows may simply be giving the perception that the neighbouring property is being overlooked, when in fact, it is not”.
13. The space where the school extension stands was in use by the previous mobile classrooms. There has been no change (to my knowledge) to the boundary condition since that time and the mobile classrooms were elevated above ground level and any overlooking problem would have been exacerbated by this fact. I consider that the situation as now exists can be interpreted as being less intrusive than when the mobile accommodation existed.
14. The Headteacher is also concerned about any loss of light into external terrace areas at the rear of the school that might occur if the fencing height was to be increased. The Headteacher has also stated that the school is not in continual 24 hour occupation and it is likely that when residents wish to enjoy the use of their gardens at weekends, holidays and evenings, the school will not be occupied. The only possible potential for overlooking would be when the school is in use and for the most part the children would be occupied in supervised and structural learning. This part of the site will not be available to the children during break times.
15. Concern has also been raised regarding the landscape belt to the river frontage with suggestions that the two Field Maple trees specified are not sufficient to close the gap in the landscape belt. I have been informed that the selection of Field Maples was by the landscape consultant and was chosen as a native tree, which would give good coverage for most of the year. The species chosen is a multi stem variety which is of bush forming habit and would give leaf coverage fairly close to ground level. The leaf coverage should begin during spring and last until November. The Maples would be planted with an initial height of between 2.5 and 3.0 metres. I would consider that that the suggested introduction of evergreen plants would be alien to the environment of the tree screen.

**Conclusion**

16. In light of the above, I see no overriding planning objection to the landscaping scheme and consider that it sufficiently fulfils all criteria requested under condition 5 of planning permission CA/05/423. I am satisfied that the School has carefully considered the type of landscaping and planting suitable for this area of the school site and I consider that

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the coverage and screening is satisfactory in terms of shielding neighbouring properties from the new build and any potential overlooking problems; as well as enhancing the school site as a whole. I therefore recommend accordingly.

#### **Recommendation**

17. I RECOMMEND that APPROVAL BE GIVEN.

Case officer – Helena Woodcock	01622 221063
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Background documents - See section heading
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