

SECTION D
DEVELOPMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Background Documents - the deposited documents, views and representations received as referred to in the reports and included in the development proposal dossier for each case and also as might be additionally indicated.

Item D1

Erection of Sessional Nursery, Herne Infant School, Palmer Close, Herne, Nr. Canterbury – CA/05/1634.

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 21 March 2006

CA/05/1634 - Application by the Governors of Herne Infants School and KCC Education & Libraries for erection of a sessional nursery to house 26 children and creation of external play area – Herne Infant School, Palmer Close, Herne, Nr. Canterbury.

Recommendation: Permission be granted.

Local Members: Alan Marsh

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The application site lies within the Herne Infant School site, Palmer Close, Herne. The proposed site of development is located adjacent to the main school block, with the schools playing field to the south and west. Herne Junior School adjoins the Infant School to the north east off School Lane. The Infant School's vehicular access is through Palmer Close off Streetfield off School Lane, with pedestrian access to the west via Norton Avenue. Residential properties are located adjacent to the school grounds to the north and west of the site (see attached plans).

Background

2. A planning application to form the new Herne Infant School was permitted by the County Planning Authority in November 1992, under planning reference CA/92/256. The proposals involved the development of a new school building, vehicle access, drop off facility and car park.
3. In April 2005 the County Planning Authority permitted a proposal for the development of a conservatory style extension to the front of the existing school building, under planning reference CA/05/398.

Proposal

4. The application proposes the construction of a Pre – School Nursery within the grounds of Herne Infants School. The development would involve the construction of a freestanding, single storey building, together with an adjacent external play area. The proposed site is located towards the centre the Herne Infant School site, adjacent to the main school block.
5. The proposed building is shown on the submitted drawings as a traditional masonry construction clad externally in brickwork and set under a pitched roof. The materials proposed are Yellow Buff stock, together with Red stock brick banding details with the roof to be clad in concrete tiles. The windows are to be constructed of double glazed upvc units with folding sliding doors to be constructed of aluminium, and the main entrance and fire doors constructed from stained hardwood.

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A covered canopy / porch is included within the application, linking the entrance to the Nursery with the main school building. This porch would be finished with the same roofing material as proposed for the Nursery.

6. The external play area would consist of hard and soft landscaping enclosed within a timber palisade fence. A covered play terrace under the pitched roof of the proposed building would enclose part of the external space available for the Nursery.
7. The proposed building would house a sessional Local Education Authority run Nursery for pre-school children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old. The Nursery would run morning and afternoon sessions for a period of 2.5 hours, with the morning commencing between 0900 – 0930 and the afternoon session commencing between 1300 – 1330. Each session would accommodate up to 26 children. No early morning or post school sessions are proposed in association with this application.

Development Plan Policies

8. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are consideration to be the most relevant to 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.
Policy ENV15	New development should be well designed and respect its setting.
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 QL12	Seeks to protect existing community services. Seeks to make provision for the development of local services in existing residential areas and in town and district centres, particularly where services are deficient.
Policy TP2	Development sites should be well served by public transport, walking and cycling, or will be made so as a result of the development. Requires travel plans to be established for

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larger developments that generate significant demand for travel.

Policy TP19 Development proposals must comply with the adopted vehicle parking policies and standards.

(iii) **The Canterbury District Local Plan (1998):**

Policy D1 Requires all development to be of a high standard of design, be sympathetic to the surrounding area, avoid the loss of open areas, have adequate car parking and access, and avoid disturbing or conflicting with adjoining uses.

Policy D38 Seeks to prevent the loss of open space. Proposals will only be permitted where there would be no material harm to the contribution the space makes to visual or recreational amenity.

Policy D62 New development will accord with Kent County Council's Vehicle Parking Standards.

(iv) **The Canterbury District Local Plan: Deposit Draft (2001):**

Policy BE1 Seeks proposals of high quality design that respect the existing environment.

Policy C8 Requires new development to accord with Kent County Councils adopted Vehicle Parking Standards.

Policy C10 Supports proposals for new community facilities provided the development is appropriately designed and located, and highway safety would not be prejudiced.

Consultations

9. **Canterbury City Council** raises no objections to the proposal.

Herne and Broomfield Parish Council no comments received to date.

Divisional Transportation Manager raises no objections subject to a condition requiring the update and approval of the existing School Travel Plan to take account of the nursery proposed.

The Divisional Transport Manager advises that, "the Infant School has a School Travel Plan and some children use a walking bus. The adjacent Junior School, however, does not have a travel plan. It is possible for parents dropping off / collecting children to park in a number of places with both schools linked by a series of footpaths. Despite the village car park now being pay and display it is fully occupied at the end of the school day. Norton Avenue is also used by parents as is School Lane and Streetfield Close.

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Whilst I can understand the frustration residents are experiencing, it is a situation that occurs at schools throughout the County. To provide a car park capable of accommodating the majority of parents' vehicles would need a large area of land, which would be unused for most of the day.

Returning to the application site, the Infant School enjoys the benefit of some 30 parking spaces. However, despite a turning / drop off facility, I am advised the gates are closed. You may wish to examine the relevant consent to see if this is contrary to the imposed conditions. The proposed nursery use will inevitably create a small increase in traffic, however, some of the trips will be joint with existing trips to the schools for older children. A potential way to avoid conflicts with the school traffic might be to impose conditions on the hours of operation such that they are staggered.

In taking all the above into account I do not object to the proposal subject to the infant school travel plan being updated to take account of the nursery proposal.”

Advises further that the control of off site parking and introduction of resident parking schemes is a District Council function.

Local Member(s)

10. The local County Member for Herne and Sturry, Alan Marsh was notified of the application on 13 December 2005.

Publicity

11. The application was publicised by posting of one site notice and the notification of 38 neighbouring properties.

Representations

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

- Objects to the loss of grassed amenity space at the Infant School.
- Objects to the potential for the proposal to generated additional traffic and exacerbate the existing traffic problems. Considers that the additional 52 children attending the site would significantly increase traffic congestion on the already strained residential roads around the school site.
- Asks whether the parking arrangements and wider impacts of the potential traffic have been considered.
- Raises concern about the existing traffic associated with Herne Infant and Junior Schools and the local privately run Nursery, with parents parking inconsiderately, double parking, narrowing the roads and holding up traffic in Streetfield and Norton Avenue.
- Raises concerns that emergency vehicles would be delayed by traffic problems/ unable to access all properties in surrounding residential roads during peak times.
- Requests that Streetfield and Norton Avenue should be made a residential parking area only.
- Requests that parking attendants should be in force during the morning, lunchtime and afternoon pickups.

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Discussion

13. This application is for the construction of a new single storey Pre-School Nursery within the grounds of Herne Infant School. It is necessary to consider the development in the context of the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (6) above and the effects of the development in terms of its location and visual impact and the effects on the local environment and amenity.
14. The Nursery proposed would provide a Local Education Authority run facility providing care for up to 26 children in one morning session and a further 26 children during an afternoon session. The facility would employ three members of staff and would expand the facilities offered at the Herne Infant School site.

Location

15. The proposed location for the nursery building would be to south east of the main school block on part of the grassed amenity space available at the site, adjoining the existing hard surfacing and the playground provided at the school. The proposed site would not impact of the playfield provided in association with the school.
16. The area of playing field to the west of the site is covered by Policy D38 of the Canterbury Local Plan, as set out above, that seeks to prevent the loss of protected open space. However, as stated, the site proposed by this application does not impact on the playing field and would not in my opinion result in any material harm to the contribution that the spaces makes to the visual or recreation amenity of the local environment. There are no other existing land designations in association with the site.
17. The applicant has confirmed that the location put forward within the application has been carefully consider and represents, in their opinion, the most appropriate location when considering the schools requirements, the practicalities of the site and the overall impact of the building on the surrounding environment. A number of location within the site were considered, however, these were discounted either through their impact on the playfield, their remote location to the access via Palmer Close, or the security implications for the external play facilities. The proposed location is in close proximity to the existing facilities, and as such would benefit from the supervision and security provided at the site. The location shown on the submitted drawings is near enough to the main entrance to the site to allow the easy access at the start and end of nursery sessions.
18. In my opinion, the proposed location is the most appropriate within the constraints of the school grounds. The location allows easy access to the main school block and the front entrance of the school grounds, whilst shielding the external play area from the public reception areas. The siting limits the loss of practical amenity space, and its proximity to the south west of the main school building, away from the nearest residential properties, would limit the visual impact of the structure. I would therefore advise that, subject to the consideration of design and traffic impacts, the siting of the building is acceptable and accords with Structure Plan Policy ENV15, Deposit Structure Plan Policies SP1 and QL1, Canterbury Local Plan Policies D1 and D38 and Draft Canterbury Local Plan Policy BE1.

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Design

19. The proposed design adopts a traditional tiled pitch roof and brick construction and, in my opinion, the materials specified would be acceptable in this location. The height and massing of the proposal reflects the school buildings and surrounding properties. In my opinion, the overall effect of the design is appropriate in its setting, the development would not dramatically increase the footprint of the built development at the site, or have an undue impact on the surrounding environment in visual terms. As such the development accords with Structure Plan Policy ENV15, Deposit Structure Plan Policies SP1 and QL1, Canterbury Local Plan Policy D1 and Draft Canterbury Local Plan Policy BE1.

Traffic and Access

20. The key concern raised by the residents of Streetfield and Norton Avenue is in relation to traffic implications of the proposal. As with many schools around the County, Herne Infant School generates additional traffic at peak times that impacts on the surrounding residential streets. In particular concerns have been raised in this case as to the traffic generated by the existing facilities at Herne Infant School and the adjoining facilities at Herne Junior School. The roads most heavily affected are Streetfield Close, which serves the main vehicular access to the site and Norton Avenue, which has a pedestrian access that links to both the Junior and Infant School sites. I would draw Members' attention to the concerns raised by local residents above, along with the comments made by the Divisional Transport Manager.

21. The development would provide care facilities for up to 26 children per session and accommodate an addition 3 full time staff at the site. As such the development has the potential to increase the level of traffic generated by the school and careful consideration has to be given to the traffic implications of the proposal.

22. The school site is located off Streetfield Close and the traffic generated by the school and potentially by the proposed nursery would concentrate on this road, alongside School Lane, and Norton Avenue. The school is served by an existing 31 space car park and a drop off facility, this application does not propose to alter or add to these existing facilities.

23. The Divisional Transport Manager has confirmed that he has no objections to the car parking arrangements proposed for the nursery function, and the number of spaces available at the school, as part of the existing facilities are sufficient and accord with the adopted Kent Vehicle Parking Standards. The Transport Manager has pointed out that the drop off facilities at the site are not being used during peak times. In response to this point the applicant has confirmed that the drop off facility is not currently used and has explained that it has proved difficult to operate in the past, stating that, when in operation, the facility frequently became obstructed as parents of younger children do not tend to just drop off their children and move on, preferring to accompany them to the classrooms or assembly areas. As such, there were frequently queues of traffic down Palmer Close into Streetfields and, given the dangers of children passing in and around moving traffic, the School has made a management decision to close the gates during peak times. I would advise that the conditions placed on the original planning consent for the school building and associated facilities require that the car park and drop off area be kept available at all times when the school is in operation. Taking the above into account, I would advise were the Members mind to grant planning approval for the

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nursery facility, the school should be required, by way of condition, to reinstate the use of the drop off facilities and look at ways to manage its use.

24. I would advise that the Divisional Transport Manager has confirmed that the Herne Infant School has an approved School Travel Plan and operates facilities such as a walking bus in an attempt to reduce the number of car journeys made in association with the school and encourage more sustainable approaches to travel. The Transport Manager advises that the development would generate some additional traffic and suggests that staggering the start and finish times for the proposed nursery could reduce any impact the development may have on the existing traffic problems. Further to that, and subject to the submission of an updated School Travel Plan being provided prior to first operation of the nursery, the Transport Manager does not raise any objections to the scheme on highway grounds.
25. Whilst I can understand the concerns raised by local residents in relation to the potential for the scheme to generate additional traffic, it should be noted that the Divisional Transport Manager has assessed the scheme and visited the site during peak times and raises no objection to the proposal. He advises that the concerns raised in relation to residential parking are a District Council function. Canterbury City Council raises no objections to the application. I would advise that the suggestion put forward by the Divisional Transport Manager in relation to the drop off facilities and operating times, alongside the revision of the approved Travel Plan for the school would count towards reducing the impact of the proposed facility on the surrounding road network. Taking all of the above into account, I do not consider that the traffic implications of the proposal are of sufficient weight to justify an objection to this application, but do consider that the existing purpose built drop off area should be reinstated and its use managed by the school. In principle, the proposals accord with the objectives of the Structure Plan Policy T17, Deposit Structure Plan Policies TP2 and TP19, Canterbury Local Plan Policies D1 and D62 and Draft Canterbury Local Plan Policy C8.

Need

26. 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 Educational Authorities provision of appropriate facilities for Pre-school children in the area. The proposal forms part of the authorities commitment to improving this function across the County through the provision of up to 72 new nurseries. I have no reason to doubt the need for the improved facilities.

Conclusion

27. In principle, I can see no overriding objections to the proposal. The application meets the requirements laid out in the appropriate Development Plan Policies. The location and design of the building is in keeping with the existing environment and would not materially impact on the visual amenities of the location. The development would not impact on recreation amenities available to the school and locates the development within an existing education site. Whilst concerns have been raised regarding the schools existing traffic impacts and the potential for the proposed development to exacerbate these problems, in the absence of objections from Kent Highway Services or Canterbury City Council on these grounds, I consider that the benefits of the provision of a nursery facility to the wider community outweigh any detrimental impacts the proposal may have. Therefore subject to conditions proposed to mitigate for any harm resulting from the development, I recommend planning permission be granted.

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Recommendation

28.1 RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the conditions including the standard time conditions, the development being carried out in accordance with the approved plans, the provision of a revised School Travel Plan prior to the first occupation of the development, the staggering of opening and closing times to that of the main school, the drop off area to be reinstated and kept available, details of external lighting, construction times, and controls of on any future changes in the use of the building.

Case officer – James Bickle	01622 221068
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Background documents - See section heading
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