

Retention of Mobile Classroom at Tunstall Church of England (Aided) Primary School, Tunstall – SW/05/1426

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 14 February 2006.

Application by the Diocesan Board of Education and Kent Education and Libraries for the retention of a mobile classroom.

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mrs. B Simpson & Mr R. Truelove

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Tunstall Church of England Primary School is situated alongside the main road (B21613), which runs through Tunstall village. The mobile classroom is located to the south-west of the school site and lies approximately one metre from the boundary to 'The Oast', a Grade 2 Listed Building. Behind the school, to the west is the new Tunstall Memorial Village Hall and associated car park. The application site is located outside the built up area boundary as defined in the adopted Local Plan. The main school building is Grade 2 Listed and the school grounds are located within the Tunstall Conservation Area. *A site location plan is attached.*

Proposal

2. The application has been submitted on behalf of the Diocesan Board of Education and KCC Education and Libraries and proposes the retention of the existing mobile classroom. The applicants have provided the following supporting information:

"The current school roll is 209, structured in seven classes. The mobile unit needs to be retained to enable efficient delivery of the Curriculum to children in their appropriate age groups. This unit is intended to be temporary until grant is made by the Department for Education and Skills to replace all temporary accommodation on site."

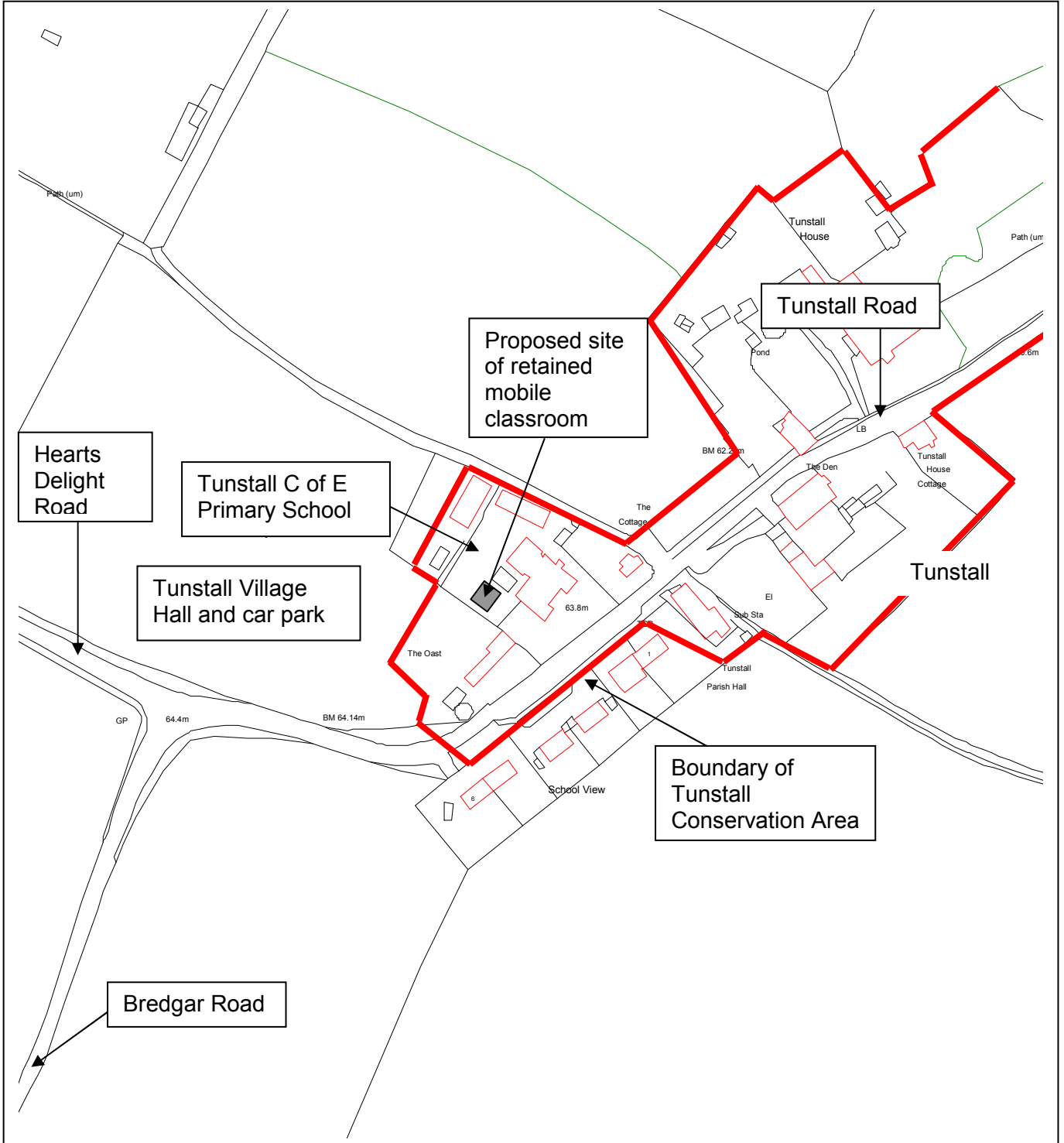
Planning History

3. This application for the retention of a mobile classroom at Tunstall C.E Primary School relates to permission SW/02/762 that was granted on 10 October 2002, following the original application being reported to the Planning Applications Committee on 1 October 2002.
4. The provision of a new playing field and associated access by the conversion of an existing agricultural field (SW/05/1356) is currently ongoing. Tunstall School Travel Plan was approved in July 2005, under condition 4 of decision SW/02/762 for a new mobile classroom at Tunstall Primary School. In June 2005, car parking at the front of the main School building was refused under application no SW/05/254.

Item D2

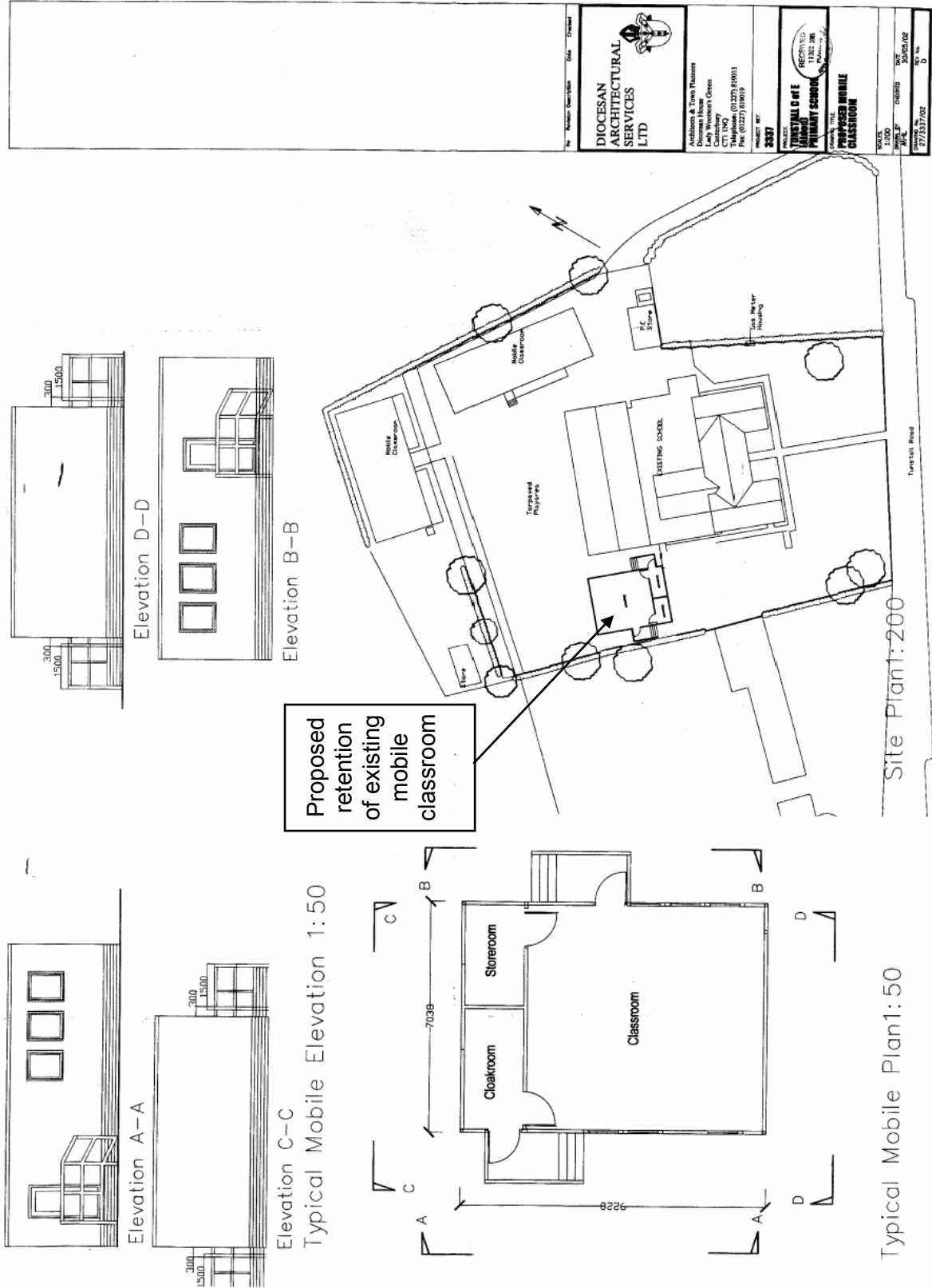
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Site Location Plan



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Proposed Plans and Elevations



| No. | Revision/Description | Date | Checked |
|-----|------------------------|----------|---------|
| 1 | Issue for Planning | 15/05/02 | |
| 2 | Issue for Construction | 20/05/02 | |
| 3 | Issue for Construction | 27/05/02 | |

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TUNSTALL C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL
 PEARSONS MOBILE CLASSROOM

SCALE: 1:100
 DATE: 20/05/02
 DRAWN BY: JLF
 PROJECT NO: 27/05/02
 SHEET NO: D

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Planning Policy

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

(i) The adopted 1996 **Kent Structure Plan**:

Policy S2 The quality of Kent's environment will be conserved and enhanced and measures taken to minimise any adverse impacts arising from the development

Policy S9 Has regard for the need for community facilities and services, including education.

Policy ENV1 The countryside will be protected for its own sake and development should seek to maintain or enhance it.

Policy ENV15 The character, quality and functioning of Kent's built environment will be conserved and enhanced. Development should be well designed and respect its setting. Development that would be incompatible with the conservation or enhancement of the character of a settlement, or detrimental to its amenity or functioning, will not normally be permitted.

Policy ENV17 The primary planning policy towards conservation is to preserve or enhance their special character and appearance. Development, which would harm that special character, will not normally be permitted.

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

Policy SP1 Seeks to conserve and enhance Kent's environment and ensure a sustainable pattern of development

Policy QL1 Carries forward and amplifies Policy ENV15 and RS1 of the Adopted Plan

Policy QL12 Carries forward and amplifies Policy S9 of the Adopted Plan

Policy QL7 Carries forward and amplifies Policy ENV17 of the Adopted Plan

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

Policy C1 Concerns new development and the provision of social and community facilities

Policy G1 Seeks to avoid unacceptable impacts on the natural and built environment and requires new development to:
(i) accord with the policies and proposals of the Plan unless material consideration indicate otherwise;
(ii) have regard to the characteristics and features of the site and locality;

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- (iii) cause no demonstrable harm to the residential amenity and other sensitive neighbouring uses;
- (iv) provide convenient and safe pedestrian access and avoid and unacceptable consequences in highway and infrastructure terms; and provide parking and servicing facilities sufficient for the traffic likely to be generated.

Policy E9 Concerns development of the countryside of the Borough, outside the built-up area boundary

Policy E36 Concerns development within or adjacent to Conservation Areas

Policy E39 Concerns proposals which affect a Listed Building

(iv) The re-deposit 2005 draft **Swale Borough Local Plan First Review:**

Policy E1 Sets out standards for general development proposals

Policy E14 Concerns development which affects a Listed Buildings

Policy E15 Concerns development within or adjacent to Conservation Areas.

Consultations

6. **Swale Borough Council** considered this application at its Planning Applications Committee on 5 January. The outcome of the Committee meeting is summarised below:

- “Members concurred that rather than the renewal of the mobile classroom it would be preferable for a permanent structure to be provided in the future. They agreed, with some reluctance that no objection be raised”.

Tunstall Parish Council considers that permission should not be given for the mobile classroom to remain. Funding should be obtained for permanent buildings.

Environment Agency has no objection to the proposal submitted, however offers advice to ensure that discharges and spillages to the ground do not occur during construction and in subsequent operation.

Divisional Transport Manager has no objection to the proposal in respect of highway matters.

Tunstall Village Hall Management Committee objects to the renewal of the existing temporary permission for the following reasons:

- “The Village Hall car park provides a pick-up and drop-off facility for pupils attending the school. We objected to the original application for the additional classroom as we considered the additional pupil numbers would cause chaos in the car park. This has proven to be the case despite the School staggering the afternoon pick-up times;
- Councillor Morgan insisted that at the original planning meeting that the School should be obliged to manage the pick-up and drop-off regime to ensure a safe environment for the children. This was supported by Members and was to form part of the permission conditions;

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- The management of vehicles has not taken place. In mornings and afternoon parents regularly drive and park on the pedestrian area in front of the Hall and then reverse off onto the main circulatory road. This should be the principal drop off point but no one from the school stops this malpractice.
- The car park fills up early in the afternoon with parents parking and waiting to collect their children.
- None of this is satisfactory to the safe working practice of the car park and ensuring pupils are protected.
- Permission was granted three years ago, which required the School to provide a Travel Plan in consultation with interested local parties. We have commented on a draft plan and now understand a final plan has been approved – we have not yet received a copy.”

Local Members

7. Mrs B. Simpson and Mr M. Truelove, the local County Members were notified of the application on the 31 October 2005.

Representations

8. The application was publicised by an advertisement in a local newspaper, the posting of a site notice and the notification of 7 neighbouring properties.
9. One letter of objection has been received from a local resident. The issues raised are summarised as follows:
 - Mobile classrooms are very obtrusive and right on the boundary of our house;
 - It would seem appropriate to re-site these mobiles or come up with an alternative solution to our problem;
 - It was never intended that the mobile classroom be situated in its current position;
 - Do not wish to upset all that the School is trying to achieve, but would like to see this issue addressed.

Discussion

Introduction

10. The proposal relates to the need for the retention of an existing temporary mobile classroom at Tunstall C of E Primary School. The application needs to be considered in the context of the relevant Development Plan Policies, which include the impact that this scheme will have on the surrounding rural area, Conservation Area and the Grade 2 Listed School building.

Siting and Appearance

11. The mobile classroom which this application relates to is currently located to the south west of the main school buildings, lying directly adjacent to the boundary between both the school and neighbouring property, The Oast. At present the mobile classroom is extremely close to the boundary, and as such, some concerns have been raised from a nearby neighbour regarding the visual impact of the mobile classroom.

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12. The applicants have responded to the concern raised by the visual impact of the mobile classroom, and have proposed to erect a 2m high wooden panelled fence along the boundary between the school and the adjoining property, The Oast. The School has also confirmed the intention to install obscured glazing window film to the south-west windows of the mobile classroom overlooking The Oast. This will help eliminate the visual impact of the mobile from the neighbouring property; as well as prevent the overlooking of the neighbouring garden from inside the mobile classroom.
13. With regard to the impact of the mobile classroom, I consider than the retention of this development would have minimal impact on both the Conservation Area and the Grade 2 Listed Building given that it is entirely for temporary period. However I would not wish to see the building retained in situ indefinitely. It can also be noted that this is a retention of an existing, previously approved, temporary permission (SW/02/762).

Need for Mobile Classroom

14. The mobile classroom is currently used as a teaching facility that continues to be required by the School until such time as it can be rehoused in new accommodation. It has been noted that the replacement of Tunstall's mobile accommodation is top priority for both the Diocesan Board of Education and Kent Local Education Authority. As Tunstall is an aided school, major building works would be grant aided by the Department for Education and Skills. However, following a successful bid to gain funds for new accommodation at another school in the county, under Department for Education and Skills Regulations, they are not in a position to make another bid until 2007. It has also been noted in a letter from the Diocesan Board of Education that the County Planning Authority might consider renewing the mobile classroom for a further five years. They have stated that if funding becomes available sooner, then the mobile classroom would be removed once new accommodation was completed.
15. Tunstall School has 7-year groups of pupils. Pre Ofsted inspection, these 7 year groups were divided into just 6 classrooms. Post Ofsted inspection, the new temporary mobile allowed these classes to have individual classrooms of their own. It can be noted that should consent not be given for the retention of the mobile classroom there would be no intention to reduce pupil numbers, thus there would be little material reduction in car-park use by parents.

Car Parking

16. Some concerns relating to the exiting traffic management of parents "dropping off" and "picking up" their children have been raised by the Tunstall Village Hall Management Committee. They were opposed to the original application (SW/02/762) for the mobile classroom as they considered additional pupil numbers would cause chaos in the car park. The Management Committee claims that this has proven to be the case despite the School staggering the afternoon pickup times.
17. The Governing Body at Tunstall Church of England Primary School has commented on the views of the Tunstall Village Hall Management Committee. They claim that the Village Hall car park's existence, and the subsequent increase in its use is a product of its own success. The School fully recognises its obligations regarding safe car park traffic management, but however considers that this should not obscure the importance of retaining the temporary mobile classroom.

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18. With regard to the concerns raised by the Tunstall Village Hall Management Committee, this mobile classroom will not increase traffic movements to or from the school beyond the current situation due to the fact that this application is for retention of an existing mobile classroom. Attention is drawn to the recently approved Tunstall School Travel Plan for alternative solutions to the traffic concerns raised by the Village Hall Management Committee. It can be noted that Kent Highway Services raise no objection to this proposal in respect of highway matters.
19. A Traffic Management Policy (TMP) has been issued by Tunstall School to all parents and has been copied to the Village Hall authorities themselves. The TMP forms part of the School Travel Plan, which has recently been approved by the County Planning Authority. The School claims that random visits are made to the car park by governors or members of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to over-see the driving conduct of parents in the mornings and afternoons and the PTA regularly update parents via fliers or meetings held by the School. Tunstall School admits that the current management of the car parking facilities needs to be urgently reviewed and already the PTA is using a bollard system to prevent inappropriate parking. It can be noted that the School is currently looking at the possibility of employing a person to act as a ‘car park supervisor’ for peak-usage periods. However, it needs to be remembered that the retention of this mobile classroom is not intended to further increase the usage past the present situation in the Tunstall Village Hall car park.

Conclusion

20. In conclusion I consider that the retention of a previously permitted application would not have a significant detrimental impact on the setting of a Grade 2 Listed Building or the surrounding Conservation Area. With the addition of a timber fence and obscure glazed windows, I consider that the retention of this much-needed mobile classroom will not significantly impact upon both residential and visual amenity. Taking account of the provisions of the Development Plan and material considerations raised during processing, the proposed retention of the existing mobile classroom is considered to be acceptable for a temporary period of 3 years.

Recommendation

21. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO a condition requiring the removal of the mobile classroom from the site by 28 February 2009; a condition requiring details of a 2m high fence being erected along a section of the School boundary with The Oast to be submitted; a condition requiring that obscured glazing film be installed to the windows on the south-west elevation of the mobile classroom, and the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans.

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