

**Demolition of existing school buildings and erection of a new academy, at New Line Learning Academy, Boughton Lane, Loose, Maidstone – MA/08/1700**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 4 November 2008.

Demolition of existing school buildings, erection of a new academy, including erection of new 6 court sports hall, erection of vocational centre (indicative footprint only), re-provision of outdoor playing pitches, new 6 court MUGA, 153 car parking spaces, 150 bicycle spaces, strategic landscaping works and associated circulatory access roads at the New Line Learning Academy, Boughton Lane, Loose, Maidstone - MA/08/1700

Recommendation: permission be granted subject to conditions.

**Local Members:** Mr A Chell and Mr E Hotson

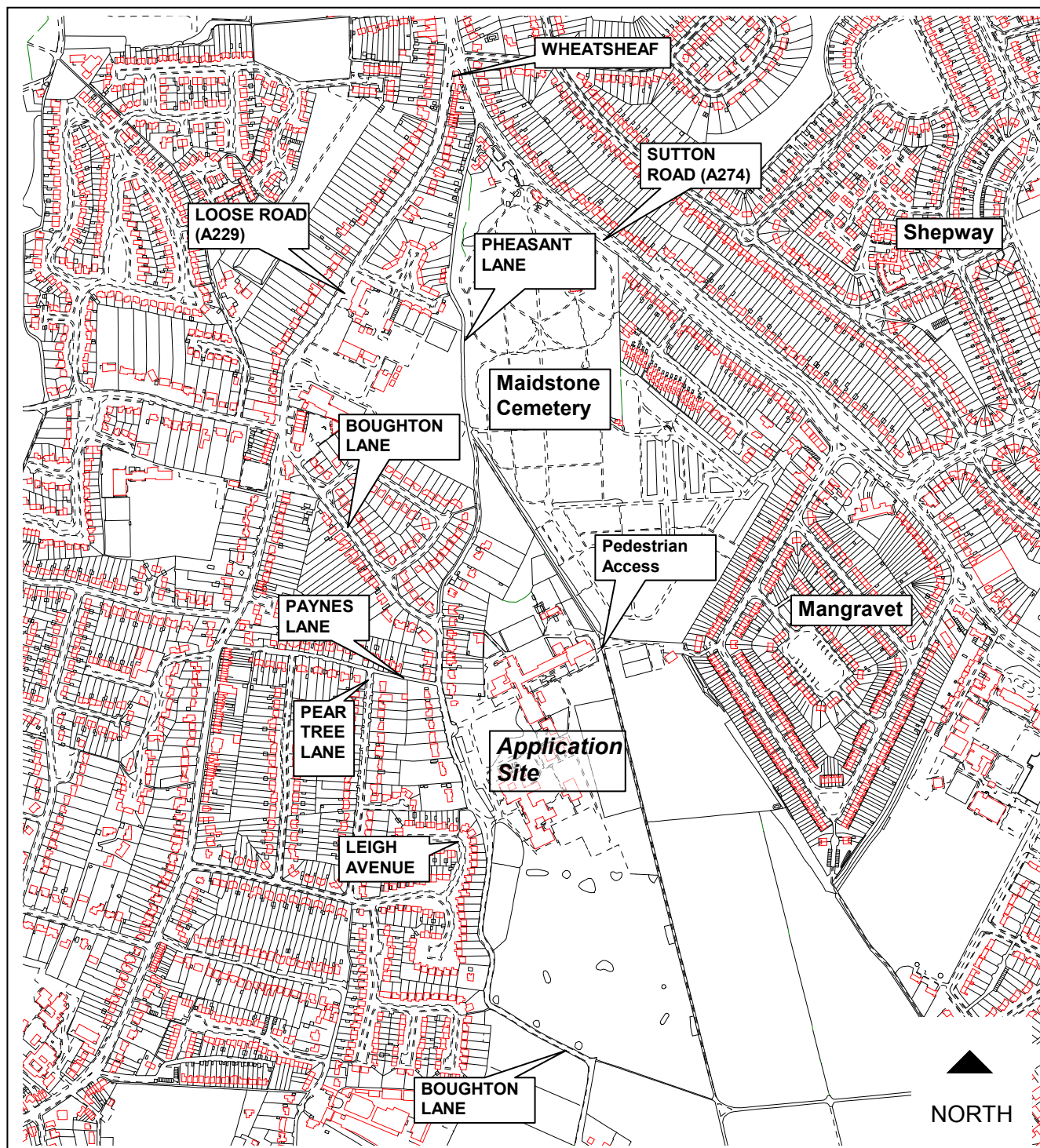
**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Site**

1. The New Line Learning Academy, formally Oldborough Manor Community School, is located approximately 2.5km to the south/south-east of Maidstone Town Centre. It is within an urban-rural fringe location. To the west is the Loose residential area comprising mainly of houses in mature grounds. To the east are the Maidstone Cemetery, a recreation ground and fields, the latter which continue to the south. These areas form a green wedge of land within the urban area between the school and the residential areas of Mangravet, Park Wood and Shepway, where the majority of the School's pupils live. A Public Right of Way runs along the eastern and southern boundaries of the site. The Maidstone-Wide Local Plan shows the whole site to be within the boundary of the urban area but also within the 'southern anti-coalescence belt,' a designation that seeks to maintain the separation of the rural settlements around Maidstone with the urban area and with each other. *A site location plan is attached.*
2. Vehicular access to the school is from Boughton Lane, which connects onto the Loose Road, one of the main routes into Maidstone from the south. This access to the site is laid out with a separate entrance and exit for vehicles. There is a separate pedestrian access to a gate at the north-eastern corner of the site via Mangravet and a path across the recreation ground. A very high proportion of pupils walk to the school from the above housing estates using this route.
3. The site was developed for school use in the 1950s and 1960s with a mixture of 1 and 2 storey school buildings, the use of which has subsequently evolved with a number of other institutional uses, and some additional buildings being added as a result. The total site area is 16.7 hectares of which approximately 50% includes built development (the Northern part of the site) and 50% playing field land/open land (Southern Part). At the northern end of the site is the School Farm and the original 1950s school building(s), with the 1960's buildings to the south of this, with some later, mainly temporary type, buildings between. The New Line Learning Academy, with the exception of the gym which is in the 1950's accommodation, mainly occupies the 1960's buildings. The existing buildings are also occupied by a number of independent uses including Five Acre Wood Special Needs School, Asquith Nursery, Zeroth Active Zone Gym, a Vocational Centre and Loose Baptist Church.

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**SITE LOCATION PLAN**



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4. The southern part of the site comprises school playing fields. Along the western boundary is an extensive tree belt, including Five Acre Wood, which is subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) identified as woodland consisting of Oak, Sweet Chestnut, Ash, Birch and Field Maple. Dotted around the open area are also a number of mature trees of varying ages and condition, which impart a parkland feel to parts of the site.

**Background**

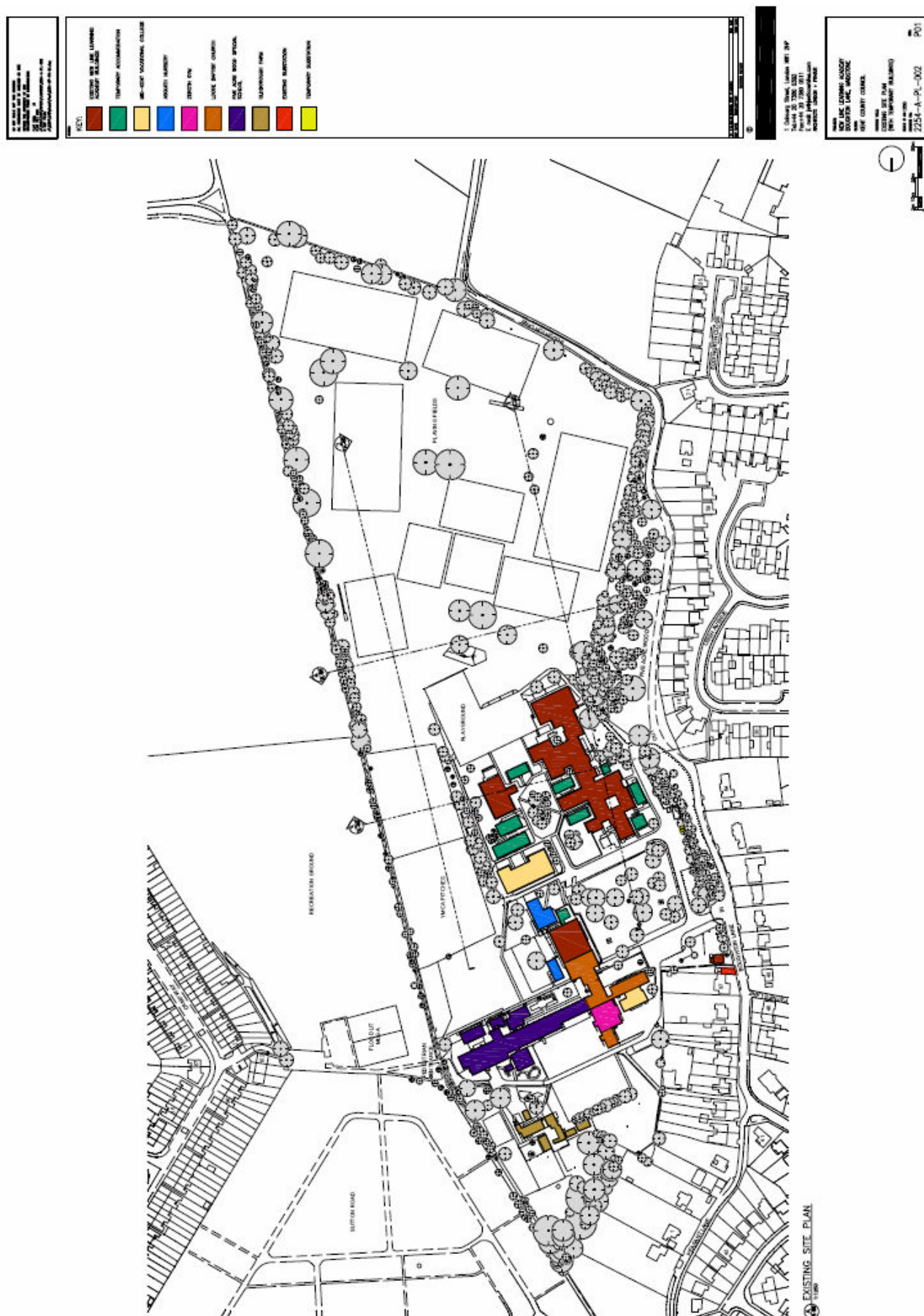
5. KCC Children, Families and Education were granted outline planning permission to construct a new school on the Oldborough Manor Community School site in 2007. This formed part of DfES proposals to make Oldborough Manor Community School/Senacre Technology College and Cornwallis School sites a 'double academy' post July 2007. The size and location of Oldborough Manor Community School meant that it was the applicant's/Academies Trust's preferred location to develop a new single site school academy within a campus setting for Oldborough Manor Community School and Senacre Technology College. The new academy proposals would replace the 1960s buildings with a new, state of the art, high technology school development within an attractively landscaped, campus style setting. A group of Planning Application Committee Members visited the application site on the 19 June 2007 to acquaint themselves with the outline proposals, the site, and the issues that planning application raised.
6. The new Academy was formed in September 2007 by the amalgamation of Senacre Technology College and Oldborough Manor Community School, and is expected to increase its intake over the coming years to 1050 pupils (ages 11 to 16). The applicant advises that the Academy will share its sixth form (up to 550 students) with the sister Academy at Cornwallis School in Hubbards Lane, Maidstone. The Senacre Technology College students moved to the Oldborough Site in June 2008. The amalgamated Academy now comprises both Oldborough and Senacre students (880 pupils in total and 170 staff), and occupies a combination of existing school buildings and temporary accommodation until the new Academy building is completed. The temporary accommodation on the site was subject to a separate planning application, and was granted permission early 2008. Upon completion of the new building the existing school buildings would be demolished. It is proposed that the Senacre Technology College site will be redeveloped for housing to help fund the new Academy proposal. This was subject to a separate outline planning application for approximately 350 houses considered by the Borough Council.
7. The New Line Learning Academy at Boughton Lane would be constructed by Carillion, who are currently the preferred bidder for Kent County Council's New Line Learning Academy and the Kent Batched Academies Programme. Carillion is a framework contractor for the Government's Academies programme, which forms part of the wider Building Schools for the Future Programme (BSF). It is intended that the new Academy building would be constructed by September 2010, including enhanced sporting facilities to compensate for the loss of the Senacre site.
8. The applicant has chosen not to submit reserved matters applications pursuant to the outline consent. As such, the proposal, which will be described and discussed throughout this report, is a new full detailed planning application and must be considered and determined as such.

### Item D3



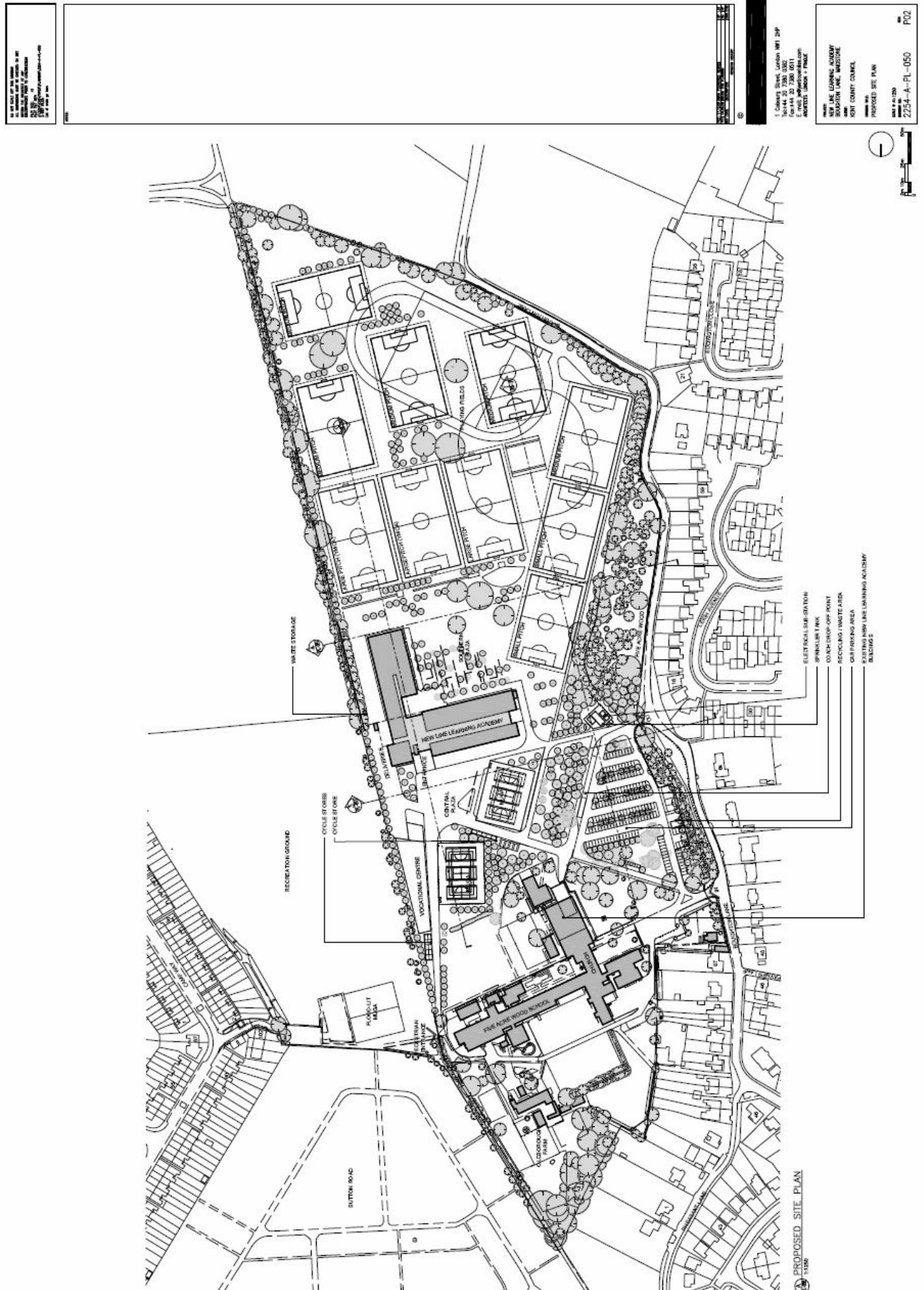


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# Item D3

## Erection of a new academy at New Line Learning Academy, Boughton Lane, Loose, Maidstone – MA/08/1700



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### Item D3





## **Erection of a new academy at New Line Learning Academy, Boughton Lane, Loose, Maidstone – MA/08/1700**

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### **Proposal**

9. This application has been submitted by Kent County Council Children, Families, Health and Education, and proposes the demolition of the existing school buildings and the erection of a new academy and associated facilities. The new school proposals comprise:
  - Demolition of 7,527 sq m (gross) of existing school buildings used by the former Oldborough Manor Community School (other buildings would be retained for the current uses and users);
  - A new academy of 10,450 sq m (gross) on the Oldborough Manor Community School site for up to 1,050 pupils, including a new 6 court indoor sports hall;
  - An indicative location for a new vocational centre of approximately 2,500 sq m (gross);
  - A new Multi Use Games Area (MUGA);
  - New Senior, Medium and Junior grass Playing Pitch provision to meet DfES and Sport England Standards, including community use;
  - Replacement of existing YMCA playing pitches on site;
  - New car parking provision, circulatory access and pedestrian access points; Vehicular access would continue to be from Boughton Lane using the existing in and out arrangement and the main pedestrian access would be the gate to the east to allow access via Mangravet;
  - New strategic landscape provision to create a campus style setting;
  
10. The main objective of this project is to provide a radically transformed education experience for the young people of South Maidstone through the provision of completely new facilities for the two newly created Academies. The ambition is for an educational provision that integrates buildings with service delivery, a new Information and Communication Technology infrastructure, a new model of learning, and more efficient and effective use of public resources. The principal component of the Design Brief is to create Learning Plazas, which are intended to 'deliver the innovative and highly personalised curriculum on offer....which will promote and enhance the ethos and culture of learning, and also facilitate pastoral engagement.' These spaces are learning environments for up to 120 students in 7FE year groups. For most non-practical subjects such as English, Maths, and Humanities, learning would take place in these year based learning plazas, where students would spend around 60-70% of their time. The plazas need to be large flexible spaces, having large, small and individual work spaces, areas where staff can work with small groups and prepare lessons, and would serve as a 'home base' for each year groups 90 – 120 students. The plazas are designed to act as learning areas during lesson time and social areas at break times. The intention is that the learning Plazas, food court and adjoining interaction zones should not look or feel institutional, nor like a traditional school.
  
11. The overall site area is 16.7ha, of which 13.5ha is proposed for re-development as part of this application. A key characteristic of the sites development masterplan is the requirement to work around the existing school buildings, including the temporary buildings currently on site. In addition, the buildings and farm to the north of the site are to be retained, and are not included within this planning application. Although the site appears sizeable, the designation of the anti-coalescence belt means the open space to the south of the site needs to be retained, and opportunities for development are limited and concentrated around the centre of the site, adjacent to the existing school buildings. In addition, the pitch requirements stipulated by Sport England, to compensate for the loss of sports facilities at Senacre, are a key constraint, taking much of the existing

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undeveloped site. The other principle components of the masterplan are the requirements for 153 car parking spaces, storage for 150 bicycles, the need to provide a Vocational Centre (2500 sq m) and the MUGA.

12. It is proposed to construct the Academy on the existing tarmac playground in part, stretching between the sports hall and the eastern boundary fence. The 'L' shaped building would then project to the south, parallel to the site's eastern boundary. The northern limits of the proposed development site are dictated by the location of the science block, which must be retained until the new building is completed. The southern limits of the development are constrained by playing field provision and the site's location within the 'southern anti-coalescence belt'. Once the new building is complete, the students would relocate into the new Academy, and the old buildings would be demolished and the temporary buildings removed. With the proposed building pushed to the eastern side of the site, wrapping around the existing buildings, the forecourt area in front of the new building would become important in landscaping terms and has the potential to become a civic style entrance plaza.
13. The schedule of accommodation based on the DfES Building Bulletin 98 guidelines generates a gross internal building area of 9,421 sq m for the 1,050 students. This application integrates the new school and sports facilities into a single building of 10,450 sq m, including a dedicated unit for the physically disabled and visually impaired, and a CACHE training centre, which would accommodate 60 vocational students training for childcare qualifications and a capacity for up to 35 nursery places. In addition to the above, the Academy would comprise of a range of teaching facilities, including 10 Learning Plazas; a Specialist Plaza containing science laboratories, multi-material laboratory, food technology area, art studios, music rooms; a Food Court; a Dance/Activity Studio, 6 court Sports Hall and associated changing accommodation; a Lecture Theatre; administration areas and a central atrium known as the 'heartspace'.
14. The design brief's aspiration to have no traditional corridors has largely been achieved, with only a single open walkway on the upper level of the specialist block, and short corridors serving administration areas, music and other specialist areas. The Learning Plazas have been designed as double-height volumes to promote natural lighting and ventilation, and accommodate a more intimate teaching environment in mezzanine areas. The plazas would be stacked on top of each other, and extend in an east-west direction, accessed via the 'heartspace' area to the north of them. It is suggested that Year 7 are located on the lower level, and Year 11 on the upper level, and on the eastern end of the building, adjacent to a roof terrace area, signifying progression through the school.
15. The entrance to the school is proposed on the north side of the building, and would be signified by a 'floating' lecture theatre, which would hover over the entrance lobby, denoting a single point of access. The entrance would be adjacent to the central plaza, which would act as a collecting point for pedestrians arriving from the east, as well as vehicle passengers and pedestrians from the west. Pupils, staff and visitors would all share the Academy entrance, which would also provide evening and weekend access to facilities (e.g. the sports hall, MUGA, lecture theatre) by the local community.
16. The applicant advises that the proposed building has been designed to minimise the impact on surrounding residential areas. In particular, the siting of the new school building means that it would be screened from residential properties to the west and long-distance views only would be afforded from the east. The applicant states that the increase in storey height is compensated for by setting the new building further back

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from the site's western boundary to minimise its visual impact from Boughton Lane. The Learning Plaza block is proposed to be broadly equivalent to four storeys in height, whereas the Specialist Plaza would be only two storeys in height. However, the lower floor of the Specialist Plaza would be double-height so that the floor levels align for ease of access from the Learning Plaza block. The CACHE training centre, physically disabled and visually impaired units, and the AEN facilities would all be accommodated within three levels to the north-east of the building, flanking the entrance. The sports hall, located at the southern end of the Specialist Plaza would be lower in height than the Learning Plaza block, at approximately the equivalent to three storeys in height.

17. The Specialist Plaza would accommodate the Academy's entrance and, subsequently, the convergence area for pedestrian flows. This northern facing elevation is, therefore, seen as the more public side to the building and the applicant proposes to use a light coloured masonry to reflect its civic nature. The masonry is proposed to reflect the hues and textures from the local historical and geological context of ragstone, originally quarried in the locality. The Learning Plaza to the south has been developed to take reference from the green landscape. A proprietary framed curtain walling system is proposed to create a random pattern of solid and void, to reflect natural field patterns and the dappled colour variation viewed through mature foliage. Projecting brise-soleil would protect the internal learning environment from solar gain. The Sports Hall and projecting Lecture Theatre would be finished in a proposed timber veil, installed in front of a system of terracotta coloured panels. The buildings, branding, signage and logos would have the look and feel of a business environment, expressing the specialism of business and enterprise.
18. This application also includes a Vocational Centre, although only an indicative footprint of this building is indicated on the submitted plans. The construction of a 2,500sq m Vocational Centre is a long term aspiration for the site, and a separate application for planning permission would be made for this building once funding has been secured and the design developed.
19. Immediately to the north of the new school building a new 6 court Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) was originally proposed. The MUGA was located to the west of the site, adjacent to the proposed Vocational Centre. However, the MUGA as originally proposed extended to the north and would have occupied land immediately adjacent to Five Acre Wood Special School. Five Acre Wood School objected to this element of the proposal (as outlined in para. 31 of this report) as the green space that would have been occupied by the MUGA is the only outdoor informal and formal recreational space that the Specialist School had immediate access to. As a result of this objection, the applicant has amended the positioning of the MUGA, and is now proposing two separate 3 court MUGA's as opposed to the single 6 court as originally proposed. Both of the 3 court MUGA's would be sited to the north of the proposed Academy - the first to the west of the proposed vocational skills centre, and the second to south of the first MUGA, located to the west of the central plaza and to the east of the proposed car parking and landscape area. This layout of the MUGAs leaves an area of open green space for use by Five Acre Wood Special School.
20. The open playing field area has been laid out to accommodate the School's requisite requirement for playing pitch provision, including summer time track and field provision and cricket pitch provision. The layout enables a number of mature trees to be retained within the body of the open playing field site and would retain the dense woodland belt along the site's western boundary. The applicant also states that the proposals have been designed to allow increased usage of the indoor and outdoor sports facilities by

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local community groups. It is intended that that new Academy would support the wider social, environmental and economic regeneration of the area. This would be achieved through community learning and access to the new facilities. The Academy would offer a range of extended school facilities, including access to the sports hall and pitches, and lettings (e.g. the performance or lecture space) by community groups, and adult education classes. In order to maximise extended and community use of the building and its site, including the sports pitches and MUGA, all areas would be accessible from the front entrance plaza, via the main Academy entrance. Hours of community use have not been provided by the applicant.

21. In analysing the landscape context to the site, as well as the site's historical uses, landscape elements like hedgerows, shelterbelts and orchards feature as local landscape elements and have been used to inform the structure of the sites masterplan proposals. A simple path network around the site would facilitate navigation and direct access for students and staff. In addition, the site has 3 main activity zones, sport and play, recreation and relaxation, and external study and research. The landscape masterplan draws together these 3 primary layers to form a coherent masterplan which addresses the Academy's setting in terms of the landscape context, its operations in terms of site access and movement, and its primary role of education through use of different activity spaces. Existing woodland planting and hedgerows would be retained, reinforced and consolidated where possible, and new stands of trees would be planted in suitable areas. As far as possible, plant species would be of local provenance.
22. Vehicular access to the site would remain as existing, via Boughton Lane, which connects with Loose Road. The existing 'in and out' one way system would be retained, and where primary pedestrian routes cross vehicular access or parking areas contrasting colours and textures of materials would be provided. A very high proportion of pupils walk to school from the adjacent housing estates, via Mangravet and across the recreation ground to a gate at the north eastern corner of the school site. Under this proposal, it is envisaged that this would remain the preferred route of choice for pupils either walking or cycling to school.
23. Along the western boundary of the site, 153 car parking spaces are proposed, plus 4 disabled parking bays located in close proximity to the buildings entrance. Cycle parking for 150 bicycles is proposed, for use by pupils, staff and visitors. There would also be parking facilities for up to 6 motorbikes, 2 light goods vehicles and 4 minibuses. The proposals also allow for improved vehicle circulation to enable pupils to be dropped off and picked up during the morning and evening periods. It is proposed that 'parent zones' are clearly identified, and reinforced by signage and road markings to prevent misuse of staff parking and other essential users.
24. In determining the Outline Planning Application a number of highway improvements were agreed to following discussions between the applicant and Kent Highway Services. These highway improvements have formed conditions on the Outline Planning Permission and the Planning Permission for temporary accommodation on site. The applicant is currently working with Kent Highway Services to ensure that the agreed highway improvements are implemented at the earliest opportunity.
25. The applicant advises that the project would achieve a minimum 'Very Good' rating under BREEAM for schools. The building would include a number of sustainable features including a ground source heat pump, solar water heating panels, photovoltaics and would use insulation to secure a thermal performance 15% beyond current standards.



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*The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, Biodiversity Statement, Contaminated Land Investigation, Renewable Energy Assessment, Statement of Community Involvement, Transport and Travel Plans, Arboricultural Survey, Archaeology Statement, Sports Strategy Statement, Drainage Assessment and Flood Risk Assessment.*

*Reduced copies of the submitted drawings showing the site layout, elevations and access are attached.*

### **Development Plan Policies**

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

(i) The adopted 2006 **Kent & Medway Structure Plan**:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Policy SP1  | States that the primary purpose of Kent's development and environmental strategy will be to protect and enhance the environment and achieve a sustainable pattern and form of development.  |
| Policy NR5  | The quality of Kent's environment will be conserved and enhanced, including the visual, ecological, geological, historic and water environments, air quality, noise and levels of tranquillity and light intrusion.<br>Development should be planned and designed to avoid, or adequately mitigate, pollution impacts.<br>Development which would result in, or significantly contribute to, unacceptable levels of pollution, will not be permitted. |
| Policy QL1  | Requires that all development should be well designed and be of high quality. Developments, individually or taken together, should respond positively to the scale, layout, pattern and character of their local surroundings. Development which would be detrimental to the built environment, amenity, functioning and character of settlements or the countryside will not be permitted.   |
| Policy QL11 | Provision will be made for the development and improvement of local services in existing residential areas and in town and district centres, particularly where services are deficient. Flexibility in the use of buildings for mixed community uses, and the concentration of sports facilities at schools, will be encouraged.  |
| Policy EN9  | Seeks to maintain tree cover and the hedgerow network. Additionally, states they should be enhanced where this would improve the landscape, biodiversity, or link existing woodland habitats. Ancient and semi-natural woodland will be protected and, where possible, enhanced.  |
| Policy TP15 | States that development which generates significant increases in traffic, especially heavy goods vehicles, will not be permitted if it is not well related to the primary and secondary road network, or if it would result in a significant increased risk of crashes or traffic delays unless appropriate measures to mitigate the effect of the development have been secured.   |
| Policy TP19 | States that development proposals should comply with vehicle parking policies and maximum standards adopted by the County Council.  |

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(ii) The adopted **Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000:**

Policy ENV22 In dealing with applications to develop existing open areas within the urban areas and village settlements, the Borough Council will have regard to:

- (1) The visual contribution which the existing site and the proposed development will make to the urban or village landscape; and
- (2) The need to uphold and improve the appearance of the locality, with particular emphasis in more densely developed areas; and
- (3) The need to conserve wildlife habitats.

Policy ENV32 Within the southern anti-coalescence belt as defined on the proposals map, development which significantly extends the defined urban area or the built up extent of any settlement, or which, as a result of infilling, consolidates existing areas of development, will not be permitted.

Policy CF9 The Borough Council will seek to ensure, where appropriate, the providers of educational facilities to make provision for dual use of facilities in the design of new schools and will encourage the dual use of educational facilities (new and existing) for recreation and other purposes. Development proposals which incorporate dual use will be permitted except where the increased level or duration of activities is incompatible with local residential amenity.

Policy T13 Car parking provision.

### **Consultations**

27. **Maidstone Borough Council** raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions regarding external materials, external lighting, landscaping, an Arboricultural method statement, hours of community use, a Travel Plan, slab and site levels, disposal of foul and surface waters, provision of parking, access and turning areas, bicycle storage, a construction management scheme and biodiversity enhancement. In addition, a number of informatives are requested by the Borough Council with regards to construction activities.

**Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council** has not commented in the proposal.

**The South East England Development Agency** supports the application and considers that the development would assist in delivering smart growth. In addition, the application is well aligned to the Regional Economic Strategy.

**The South East England Regional Assembly** makes the following observations:

“On the basis of the information provided, it is considered that the proposed development would not materially conflict with or prejudice the implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG9 and Alterations) or the Secretary of States Proposed Changes to the Draft South East Plan (July 2008).”

It is considered that the County Council should use appropriately worded conditions to:

- i) secure an appropriate package of transport infrastructure and other measures to promote alternatives to the car, and an up-to-date Travel Plan;
- ii) secure an appropriate level of car and cycle parking;

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- iii) secure the incorporation of water and energy efficiency measures and the promotion of renewable energy and sustainable construction;
- iv) secure a design relevant to context that promotes a high quality of environment;
- v) secure an appropriate package of measures to prevent and mitigate against air and noise pollution; and
- vi) ensure an appropriate package of protection and mitigation measures to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the site and the surrounding area.

**The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment** has no comment on this application.

**The Campaign to Protect Rural England – Kent Branch** make a number of comments regarding the site layout, building design and access and conclude that CPRE Maidstone supports the proposal. They consider the proposal to be an exciting educational project to enthuse students of school age and adults to grasp the educational opportunities on offer at the NLL Academy. CPRE Maidstone recommends that conditions of consent are imposed to ensure that the quality of design, layout and materials is delivered as proposed; that students are given the opportunity to learn from their environment; that management ensures that there is a high standard of maintenance of those new facilities, especially of the various types of green space for the Academy students, the local community and wildlife so that the Academy is sustainable financially and environmentally and in terms of community support.

**The Divisional Transportation Manager** does not object to this proposal, subject to conditions concerning construction traffic management, and the submission of an up to date Travel Plan. In addition, the programme of previously conditioned highway improvements (on the Outline and Temporary Accommodation Consents) should be updated. The previous condition required the off-site works (with the exception of the Loose Road signals and the pedestrian phase at St Saviours Road) to be completed before September 2008. This date has now passed and the works are still being designed. The Divisional Transportation Manager states that “Ideally these should be in place by the start of the next term i.e. January 2009, but the backstop condition should tie them to the same deadline as the signals works i.e. before the start of the Summer Term 2009.”

**County Council’s Landscape Adviser’s** comment as follows:

“The tree survey for the site is only partially complete and this does make it difficult to comment on the car parking layout and site office location. Although the applicant is keen that these matters are dealt with by Conditions, this would not be a particularly satisfactory way forward. We naturally wish to see as many of the better quality trees as possible retained within the layout and we need to see the applicant’s assessment of the impact on trees as a result of the car park layout and site office location before commenting fully.

In respect of tree number 170 we accept that it cannot be accommodated within the playing field layout.”

The applicant has submitted further tree survey work, and has made minor amendments to the car parking layout in order to retain trees of high quality and worth. This information has been sent to the County Landscape Advisor and further comments are awaited.

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**The County Archaeologist** has requested that a condition be imposed to secure archaeological field evaluation works before the development takes place and following evaluation any necessary safeguarding measures to ensure preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further archaeological investigation and recording.

**The County Council's Biodiversity Officer** has recently been consulted on additional information and final views are awaited. However, a number of conditions of consent are requested concerning bats, trees, badgers, reptiles, birds, biodiversity and habitat enhancement, monitoring and management, and contractor site briefing.

**Environment Agency** has no objections to the application but has made comments and requested conditions be imposed covering surface water drainage and contamination of previously developed land.

**Sport England** does not raise an objection to the proposed development. However, comments on the amended MUGA design and siting are awaited.

**Kent Police Architectural Liaison Officer** comments on the fencing and external lighting and would appreciate further contact with the applicant prior to the commencement of any building work.

**Public Rights of Way Officer** has no objection to the proposals. The Officer has made the applicant aware of the following advice:

"The contractors should be aware that the public have access to the other side of the boundary fences and should safeguard the public from any activities that may cause them harm, such as the erection of screening if necessary. Any work to replace or repair the boundary fences should be carried out mainly from the school side where possible to minimise disruption to the use of the path."

**North Loose Residents Association** comment as follows:

"The increase in student numbers has now occurred together with associated increase in the amount of traffic generated by teaching staff and taxis. Unfortunately, nothing has been done regarding the access from Boughton Lane and, especially in the afternoon, this causes blockages to the residents of the area. Neither has any action been taken about the identified problems with Pheasant Lane.

We ask that time limits be put on construction work and that monitoring takes place to ensure that these are enforced, with limited works on Saturdays and none on Sundays and bank holidays. We also ask what safeguards will be in place for local residents once heavy traffic starts to use Boughton Lane, and that an inspection of the roads takes place beforehand, so that any damage caused to the roads would not be paid for by tax payers.

The documents mention an intention to encourage community use of the redeveloped premises. We request that this be carefully controlled in terms of types of use and with time controls, and monitored, to ensure minimal disturbance to neighbours.



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The woods to the front of the school that exist should be fully retained and strengthened by infilling if necessary, in order to limit light and noise pollution to local residents.”

**Local Member**

28. The local County Members, Mr Chell and Mr Hotson, have been notified of the application.

**Publicity**

29. The application was publicised by the posting of 6 site notices and the individual notification of 60 neighbouring properties. The amended siting of the MUGAs and the minor amendments to the car parking layout were publicised by the posting

**Representations**

30. I have received 2 individual letters of representation from local residents. A summary of the main issues raised/points made is set out below:

- Local residents already have daily experience of what Loose Road traffic is like now and can imagine, fearfully, what the affect will be of a huge increase in traffic turning in and out of Boughton Lane;
- A resident saw some indicative plans of the scheme last year and comments that the design of the building is very futuristic with some unusual finishes. Concern is expressed that such a building would not fit in with its traditional surroundings and that in 10 years time such a building would look faded;

Prior to the revised MUGA layout, I also received a letter of objection from the Governing Body of Five Acre Wood School with regards to the MUGA as originally proposed. A summary of the main planning issues raised/points made is set out below:

- The Planning Application does not accurately reflect the current use of the area of land designated for the MUGA;
- Five Acre Wood School has used the area of land where part of the MUGA is proposed to stand for 19 years;
- Five Acre Wood School use the grassed area for outdoor education activities, sporting activities, breakout activities, and sports days. The close proximity to and immediate access of this area to the pupils is essential;
- Noise and disruption from use of the MUGA would distract pupils;
- Access to and use of the grass area is fundamental to the operation of Five Acre Wood School. Should this application be approved the school would not be able to function.

The applicant amended the layout and siting of the MUGA as a direct response to this objection (as outlined in para. 19 of this report). As a consequence, Five Acre Wood School has formally withdrawn its objection.

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**Discussion**Introduction

31. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan policies outlined in paragraph (26) above. Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. Issues of particular relevance include siting & design, lighting, secured by design, sustainable construction, archaeology, landscaping and biodiversity, community use and sports provision, drainage and transport and access issues.
32. Policy QL1 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan requires new developments to be of a high quality and well designed, and not to lead to a loss of residential amenity. Policies ENV22 and ENV32 of Maidstone Borough Local Plan seek to protect existing open areas and protect the functioning of the southern Anti-coalescence belt in terms of preventing the significant extension of the defined urban areas or the built up extent of any settlement. Further, consideration should be given to the Kent and Medway Structure Plan Policy QL11 and the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Policy CF9 that encourage decision makers to make provision for community facilities. In conjunction with these and other relevant policies, these issues are considered and discussed below. In principle, I see no overriding objection on land use planning grounds, on the basis that site is already well established for the accommodation of educational services and outline permission has already been granted for an Academy providing a similar amount of accommodation to that proposed.

Siting and design issues

33. The site has extensive playing fields and generous green spaces around and between the main areas of built development. These areas all make a significant contribution to the setting of the school and to the local area, including the southern anti-coalescence belt, as well as their use for education, recreation and sport. The protection afforded to the anti-coalescence belt by the Borough Wide Plan Policy ENV32, Development Plan Policies that seek to protect, conserve and enhance the environment, and the protection afforded to playing fields, have been major influences in the master plan that has evolved now forming a basis for this application. It follows consultation with, amongst others, the Borough Council and Sport England, including with regard to the impact of the development on the anti-coalescence belt and the playing fields, respectively.
34. In simple terms, the proposal would involve the re-arrangement of the buildings, hard surfaces and green spaces within the central part of the site. Whilst the gross floor space of buildings would increase, the area of land take would be minimised with a building, in part, the equivalent of 4 storeys in height compared to the existing two storey buildings. The main building and multi-use games areas would be located on the eastern half of this part of the site, an area that at present is occupied by two playing pitches used by the YMCA and the school's hard play area. Once demolished, the current buildings would be replaced in part by a new parking area and a landscaped approach to the new buildings. The balance between built development and green spaces is broadly similar although in this part of the site there would be loss of land for playing field use, i.e. the eastern strip of land with the two YMCA playing pitches. The main playing field area to the south would be similar in area overall but there would be a reordering in the

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way it is laid out so that the space is used more effectively. This would allow for relocation of the two YMCA pitches and meet the summer and winter sport requirements for the new academy.

35. The comparisons described above relating to the existing and proposed layout will also be noted from drawings included within this report. In my view the site layout proposed establishes an acceptable pattern of development within the site so that there is no conflict with objectives of the anti-coalescence belt designation subject of Local Plan Policy ENV32. Indeed the proposal would not result in a significant change to the extent of the built development within the site, retains an appropriate balance of green spaces, provides for enhanced landscaping of the site and maintains the integrity of the main playing field to the south. In these respects, I also consider that it would accord with the other Development Plan Policies that seek to protect, conserve and enhance the environment, and ensure that developments respect their setting and relate sympathetically to their site context. The site as a whole would therefore continue to contribute to the visual character and quality of the area, as well as to the physical separation of the built up areas of Loose and Mangravet.
36. The buildings in the proposed location would be set back from the housing to the west side of Boughton Lane, and would be screened by existing trees and proposed planting. The buildings would also be separated from the housing to the east in Mangravet by the adjacent recreation ground. Proposed planting along the boundary would soften views of the buildings across and from the recreation ground and from the public right of way adjoining the boundary. The new buildings would also sit comfortably within the site between the existing buildings to the north and the playing fields to the south, and allow the new Academy to be constructed whilst the school operates within its existing buildings and temporary accommodation.
37. Taking account of the above factors I would not object to the scale or massing of the proposed buildings. Although the building would be the equivalent of up to 4 storeys in height, I consider that there are benefits to keeping the footprint of the buildings as compact as possible and to reducing land take. In addition, I consider the provision of a single building to accommodate the Academy to be a vast improvement over the dated piecemeal development which currently houses the school, which, in my view, is neither aesthetically pleasing or fit for modern educational purpose. However, although considered to be acceptable in terms of massing and scale, a high quality of design and detailing would be essential.
38. Paragraph 17 of this report outlines the applicant's intentions with regards to design and external materials. Masonry, glazing, curtain walling, brise-soleil and a 'timber veil' are some of the materials proposed by the applicant, which would be used to identify various elements of the building, whilst being sympathetic to the surrounding landscape. The projecting lecture theatre is an important element of the design and would highlight and emphasise the Academy's entrance, performing an important function as well as being a design feature. The building's branding, signage and logos would have the look and feel of a business environment, expressing the specialism of business and enterprise. This is appropriate for the site and reflects the aspirations of the applicant in terms of the environment they wish to create.
39. No objections have been raised to the design of the school building, and I do not have concerns over the design as proposed. However, further details of external materials, including colour finishes, and further details of window/door reveals should be submitted for approval pursuant to planning conditions. Subject to the imposition of these

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conditions, I do not consider that the design, massing, or scale of the building would have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of the locality and, therefore, would be acceptable.

External lighting

40. No details have been provided on external lighting for the development. That can often be a cause for concern raised by neighbouring residents. If permission is granted, it would therefore be appropriate to reserve details by condition so that the type and position of any external lighting can be controlled to ensure any potential nuisance from light pollution can be minimised and to accord with Structure Plan Policy NR5. In addition, for the avoidance of doubt, it would be conditioned that no floodlighting shall be installed on site without the submission and determination of a full planning application.

Secured by Design

41. The applicant has undertaken discussions with the Kent Police Architectural Liaison Officer and it has been agreed that they would adhere to Secured by Design requirements and would fully consult with Kent Police. Some of these matters, such as perimeter fencing and security lighting, would need careful consideration to ensure they were applied in a balanced way so that, for example, the visual appearance of the site was not compromised by inappropriate fencing. They would otherwise accord with Structure Plan Policy QL1 in respect of a safe and secure environment. If planning permission is granted these matters would be dealt with in the drawing up of the detailed design drawings, buildings regulations submissions and, in part, by planning condition i.e. details of lighting and fencing.

Sustainable construction

42. The applicant advises that the project would achieve a minimum 'Very Good' rating under BREEAM for schools. As outlined in paragraph 25, the building would include a number of sustainable features. Maidstone Borough Council request that a condition of consent be that the development achieve at least a 'Very Good' rating, and have requested details of the final rating to be submitted for approval prior to commencement. However, I consider that the applicant has given sufficient information within the planning application to demonstrate how the rating of 'Very Good' would be achieved. I therefore consider it sufficient and acceptable to condition that the development achieve at least a 'Very Good' rating, but not to request the submission of details. In particular, the developers are already tasked with meeting the exacting design standards demanded of them by the Academy funding process. Should permission of granted this would be a condition of consent.

Vocational Skills Centre

43. This proposal includes the erection of a vocational centre, although only an indicative footprint is indicated on the submitted plans. The construction of a 2,500 sq m Vocational Centre is a long term aspiration for the Academy, although funding is not available at this time. The footprint indicated within the application documents is adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site, which is some distance from the closest residential properties (although wider views would be afforded across the recreation ground). The indicative footprint would not prejudice the provision of playing pitches, and is adjacent to the central plaza, suggesting that the building would be an integral part of the site and its overall design strategy. A separate application for planning



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permission would be made for this building once funding has been secured and the design developed. The merits of the future application must be considered at that time. However, subject to the appropriate massing and design of the Vocational Centre, I consider that the indicative footprint sought is acceptable.

Landscaping and Biodiversity

44. Some trees in the central part of the site would have to be removed as a result of the proposed development and a mature tree would be lost as a result of re-ordering the pitches on the playing field. However the intention is to retain trees within the site as far as possible, including the woodland to the west of the playing field and perimeter trees. Furthermore the landscape strategy put forward aims to reinforce the surrounding landscape pattern with new areas of planting, including shelter belts between pitches on the playing field, as well as to strengthen the existing boundary planting where that is necessary, to create a campus style setting. The new planting would be of significant benefit to the site and locality, as well as helping to absorb the new development into its surroundings. The County Council's Landscape Advisor has accepted the loss of the mature tree to accommodate the sports pitches, and has not raised objection to this application. However, further survey work to cover the north west of the site, proposed to house to car parking area, has been requested. The applicant has undertaken this survey work and, subsequently, the car park layout has been amended slightly in order to retain trees of high quality and worth. This information has been sent to consultation with the County Council's Landscape Advisor and further comments are awaited.
45. The woodland to the west of the site is subject to a TPO and, although the applicant is not proposing to undertake works to this area, the protection of the woodland is fundamental. In the event that works to the woodland area are to be undertaken, the applicant should satisfy itself that consent for works to protected trees is not required. In addition, survey work has established that the woodland is home to Badgers, and the applicant should also ensure that further consent in respect of badgers, and other protected Species, is not required from Natural England should works to the woodland be envisaged. Maidstone Borough Council and the County Council's Biodiversity Officer have requested the submission of a Habitat/Biodiversity enhancement strategy, to include the protected woodland and the remainder of the site, and I consider that this should form a condition of consent. This would enhance the ecological value of the site, and improve the local educational and recreational environment.
46. In light of the above, and subject to receiving any further comments before the Committee Meeting, I do not consider that the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on trees. Subject to conditions ensuring that trees to be retained are protected in accordance with BS5827: Trees in relation to construction, that no unauthorised works are undertaken to the TPO woodland, the submission of a Habitat/Biodiversity enhancement strategy, and a scheme of landscaping and tree planting, I see no reason to refuse this application on the grounds of tree related matters. In addition, Maidstone Borough Council has requested that an Arboricultural Method Statement be submitted pursuant to condition, which should include details of any works or operations in the vicinity of retained trees, detailing construction or installation methods to avoid damage to trees, including their roots. Given the fact that a woodland to the west of the site is subject to TPO and a number of mature trees are found within the site, I consider that an Arboricultural Method Statement should also be submitted pursuant to planning condition.

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47. With regards to Biodiversity issues, an ecology report has been submitted with the application and indicates that survey work for protected species has been carried out, in particular for bats, badgers and reptiles. However, the further information has been requested by the County Council's Biodiversity Officer with regards to reptile and trees with the potential to house bats. This further information has been submitted by the applicant and sent to the Biodiversity Officer for comment. Further views on this information are awaited. However, the Biodiversity Officer has already requested a number of conditions of consent with regards to bats, trees, badgers, reptiles, birds, biodiversity enhancement monitoring and management, and contractor site briefing. The imposition of the required conditions would protect wildlife and mitigate against any negative impacts of the development, minimising any disturbance and/or risk to protected species as far as practicably possible. I therefore consider that these should form the basis of conditions of consent should permission be granted.

Transport and access issues

48. The previous Outline Planning Application raised a number of issues relating to transport and access because it involved combining the Senacre and Oldborough Schools on the application site. Following the granting of planning permission for temporary accommodation on site, this amalgamation occurred in June 2008. Both the Outline Planning Application, and the Planning Application for temporary accommodation on site to house the additional pupils until such a time as permanent accommodation for the amalgamated school became available, met with objections on highways grounds. As a result of local objection, and an initial holding objection from Kent Highway Services, the applicant agreed to a number of off site highway improvements and measures be carried out to address increased traffic generation and highway safety, and to cater for walking and cycling. Following discussions, the applicant agreed to undertake certain works, which formed conditions of approval on both the Outline Planning Permission and the Planning Permission for temporary accommodation. These works would however need to be subject to technical approvals and safety audits in due course. The highway works included:
- (i) A contribution towards provision of traffic signals at the junction of Boughton Lane/Loose Road on the basis that they would be part funded by another developer (for the YMCA site in Loose),
  - (ii) The existing 30 mph speed limit along Boughton Lane to be extended past the egress from the Oldborough site subject to consultation,
  - (iii) A footway on the grass verge fronting the site on Boughton Lane to link into the school site,
  - (iv) Widening the footway to the south of the Boughton Lane entrance,
  - (v) Improvements to pedestrian/cycle facilities along the A274 Sutton Road and Mangravet Avenue, including a pedestrian cycleway between St. Saviours Road and Grove Road; a pedestrian phase to the existing traffic lights at the A274/St.Saviour's Road junction; alterations to the radius of Queen Elizabeth Square and a raised pedestrian crossing on Mangravet Avenue, and
  - (vi) Two pedestrian crossing facilities in Wallis Avenue, Parkwood.
49. It should be noted that the applicant is in the process of trying to secure the delivery of the above highway improvements, and is in dialogue with Kent Highway Services in order to gain the relevant approvals/agreements. However, the time frame specified in the previous conditions of consent have slipped in some instances. The Divisional Transportation Manager is not raising an objection to this application on the basis of the delivery of the above improvements and measures. Therefore, should permission be

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granted, it would be conditioned that the above works be completed and operational by September 2009.

50. The Divisional Transportation Manager and Maidstone Borough Council also consider that an updated Travel Plan should be submitted for approval. Thereafter it should be implemented as approved, and be subject to ongoing monitoring and review. In addition, I consider that conditions should be imposed to ensure that the access, parking and turning areas shown on the submitted drawings be completed and fully operational prior to the first occupation of the development. A similar condition would also be imposed to ensure that cycle parking be provided. Subject to the conditions outlined above, I do not consider that the proposed development would have a significantly unacceptable impact upon the local highway network. I see no reason to refuse the application on highway grounds.

Community use and sport provision

51. It is proposed that there would be community use of the school buildings and the associated sports facilities, a principle which is supported by Kent & Medway Structure Plan Policy QL12 and wider Government aspirations for extended school use and community activities. However, at this stage there are few details against which to assess the potential impact. Maidstone Borough Council has suggested that a condition of consent be that the buildings/pitches are not used for community use before 08.00am or after 10.00pm. However, this could be too restrictive for events such as theatrical plays/shows, which may take place in the evening, albeit not on a regular basis. However, the amenity of neighbouring residents must be protected, and the North Loose Residents Association has specifically requested that community use be controlled to ensure minimal disturbance to neighbours.
52. In light of this, and in order to protect the amenities of nearby residential properties, it would be appropriate for details of community use to be submitted for approval pursuant to planning condition. These details would need to include proposed hours of use for indoor and external facilities, the types of uses proposed and the frequency of use, as well as detailing how use of the facilities by the local community would be managed. The submitted details would be sent to consultation with relevant consultees to ensure that the proposed community use would not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of the locality. Once considered acceptable and approved, the community use of the facilities must strictly adhere to the hours of use and details given. Subject to the imposition of such a condition, I consider that community use of the development would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenities of the locality.
53. Sport England has raised no objection to this application and is satisfied that the required number of indoor and outdoor sports pitches/facilities can be provided on site. However, the layout and siting of the MUGA has been amended post receipt of Sport England's comments on the application. Details of the amended MUGA layout and siting have been sent to consultation with Sport England and any further views will be reported verbally to Members at the Planning Application Committee Meeting.

Drainage and protection of water resources

54. The Environment Agency and the Borough Council have both requested that details of drainage be submitted pursuant to condition. The Environment Agency initially objected to this application on the grounds that the submitted Flood Risk Assessment had not adequately dealt with the issue of drainage, and requested a Drainage Assessment be

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submitted in accordance with PPS25. The applicant submitted this information and the Environment Agency subsequently withdrew its objection, stating that they have no objection in principle to the surface water drainage system proposed. However, it is recommended that a detailed scheme for the provision of surface water drainage be submitted. It is considered that this is required to prevent the increased risk of flooding by ensuring a satisfactory means of surface water disposal.

55. In addition to the Environment Agency, Maidstone Borough Council has raised no objection to the proposed development subject to the imposition of conditions, three of which concern drainage. A scheme for the disposal of foul waters is required, in addition to surface waters, and it should be ensured that there would be no discharge of foul or contaminated drainage from the site into ground water or any surface waters. Therefore, should permission be granted, conditions would be imposed covering the matters raised above. This would ensure that the development would not result in an unacceptable level of pollution, in accordance with the principles of Policy NR5 of the Kent & Medway Structure Plan. In addition, the Environment Agency's advice regarding foul and surface water drainage, and contaminated land would be covered by an informative.

#### Archaeology

56. An Archaeological Statement accompanied this planning application, which was sent to the County Archaeologist for comment. The County Archaeologist has concluded that in order to secure the appropriate level of evaluation and mitigation of archaeological potential and impact at the site, a condition of consent be imposed. It is requested that no development takes place until the applicant has secured the implementation of archaeological field evaluation works, and following on from the evaluation, the submission of measures to ensure the preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further archaeological investigation and recording. Therefore, subject to the imposition of the required condition, I do not consider that this proposal would have a detrimental impact on archaeological remains.

#### Construction

57. Given that there are nearby residential properties, if planning permission is granted it would, in my view, be appropriate in order to protect residential amenity to impose a condition restricting hours of construction and demolition. I would suggest that this should be between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays. It is also normal on school sites for contractors to be required under the terms of their contract to manage construction traffic/deliveries to minimise conflict with traffic and pedestrians at the beginning and end of the school day.
58. Maidstone Borough Council and the Divisional Transportation Manager have requested that details of a construction management scheme be submitted for approval prior to the commencement of development. The Borough Council considers that this should include details of the methods and hours of working, location of site compounds and operative/visitors parking, and details of site security and safety measures. I consider that this scheme must also include details of any construction access. Should permission be granted these details would be required under condition.
59. In addition, Loose Resident's Association request that local roads are inspected prior to the commencement of the development, and any damage be made good at the cost of the applicant. I consider that, subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the

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submission of a condition survey prior to the commencement of the development, and the making good of any damage upon the completion of the development, that the development would not have a significantly detrimental effect on the condition of local roads.

60. In addition to the above, should permission be granted conditions of consent would ensure that dust, noise, mud on the local highway network, and other matters associated with construction, would be mitigated as far as reasonably possible so as to minimise disruption to local residents.

**Conclusion**

61. In principle, I see no overriding objection to the proposed development. In particular, the application proposes new Academy buildings on a well-established education site. The proposal would provide a welcome increase in the provision of new and modern education & community facilities. Subject to any further views received before the Planning Applications Committee Meeting, particularly with regards to the revised MUGA location and revisions to the parking layout, I am satisfied that subject to the imposition of conditions, this proposal would not have a significantly detrimental effect on the amenity of local residents, the character of the local landscape or the local highway network. In my view it would not give rise to significant material harm and is in accordance with the general thrust of relevant Development Plan Policies. There are no material planning considerations that indicate that the conclusion should be made otherwise. However, I recommend that various conditions be placed on any planning permission, including those outlined below.

**Recommendation**

62. SUBJECT TO any further views received before the Committee Meeting, I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO conditions, including conditions covering:
- the standard time limit;
  - the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
  - the submission of details of all materials to be used externally;
  - the submission of details of door and window reveals;
  - details of all external lighting;
  - a scheme of landscaping, including hard surfacing, its implementation and maintenance;
  - measures to protect trees to be retained;
  - an Arboricultural Method Statement;
  - the need for a bat survey to be undertaken prior to demolition of the existing school buildings;
  - habitat/biodiversity enhancement strategy, including monitoring and management;
  - protection of badgers from construction activities;
  - no tree removal during the bird breeding season;
  - development to accord with the recommendations of the ecological survey;
  - contractor site briefing;
  - details of fencing, gates and means of enclosure, including colour finishes;
  - archaeological works;
  - Secured by Design principles to be adopted;
  - a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good' to be achieved;
  - the playing field provided and marked out as shown on the proposed site plan;



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- a community use agreement relating to use of the indoor and outdoor facilities, including hours of use;
- implementation of offsite highway improvements and measures before September 2009, including the provision of traffic signals at Boughton Lane, Loose Road junction;
- preparation, submission for approval, implementation and ongoing review of a revised School Travel Plan;
- details of foul and surface water drainage;
- control of discharge of foul/contaminated drainage;
- no flood lighting shall be erected on the multi-use games area, or elsewhere on the site, without the written permission of the County Planning Authority;
- hours of working during construction and demolition to be restricted to between 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays;
- construction management plan, including access, parking and circulation within the site for contractor's and other vehicles related to construction and demolition operations;
- road condition survey;
- measures to prevent mud and debris being taken onto the public highway.

58. I FURTHER RECOMMEND that the applicants BE ADVISED of the following informatives:

- It is recommended that Sport England be consulted by the applicant to ensure that the proposed sporting facilities are designed to satisfactory technical standards. Attention is also drawn to the relevant Sport England Guidance Notes providing technical advice on the appropriate standards for the sports facilities.
- Account should be taken of the comments made by the Environment Agency relating to drainage, contamination, and storage of fuel, oil & chemicals.
- Account should be taken to the comments made by Maidstone Borough Council relating to construction activities.
- The applicant should ensure that further consents regarding works to TPO trees and/or protected species are not required from other Authorities.

Case officer – Mary Green	01622 221066
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Background documents - See section heading
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