

Item D3

Demolition of modern extension and construction of replacement extension to form house master's accommodation at Cranbrook School, Cranbrook – KCC/TW/0421/2011

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 6 December 2011.

Application by Governors of Cranbrook School for proposed demolition of a modern extension which forms part of the house master's accommodation and construction of a new extension to form replacement house master's accommodation to the rear of School Lodge (revised application) at School Lodge, Cranbrook School, Waterloo Road, Cranbrook, TN17 4JD - KCC/TW/0421/2011 (TW/11/3044)

Recommendation: Permission be granted, subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr R. Manning

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The application site forms an area immediately to the rear of School Lodge on Waterloo Road, Cranbrook. School Lodge is a large three storey property constructed in 1877, which is located opposite the main Cranbrook School House. The property forms the first purpose built boarding house commissioned by the School and continues to be used as such today. The application site is located to the rear of School Lodge to the east of Waterloo Road. The site forms the footprint of a modern single storey extension, along with an adjacent fenced private garden that serves the flat. There are two ornamental cherry trees within this courtyard area. The house master's extension was built to the rear of the boarding house in the 1980's and extends accommodation provided for this purpose within the main house. The north east elevation is formed by boundary wall with adjacent residential properties, including the grade II listed Rose Cottage. A second two storey extension to School Lodge is located immediately to the south-west. This extension is of a modern design that uses materials that differ from the original house.
2. Residential properties are located immediately to the north and west along Waterloo Road, and further to the south west on The Hill. Land immediately to the south and east of the application site falls within the Cranbrook School grounds and includes an old wooden demountable building, two sheds and an open field/ garden providing amenity space for the boarding house. Please see general location plan attached.
3. The application site lies within the Limits of Built Development for Cranbrook, the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Cranbrook Conservation Area, as defined by the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan. Rose Cottage the property immediately to the north is a grade II listed building and the main Cranbrook School House opposite School Lodge is grade II* listed. There are a number of other listed properties

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along Waterloo Road and within the local area in either direction. School Lodge itself is not a listed building; however the building has an important impact on the character of the Conservation Area. There are no other site specific designations, although more general development plan policies are set out in paragraph (8) below.

Background

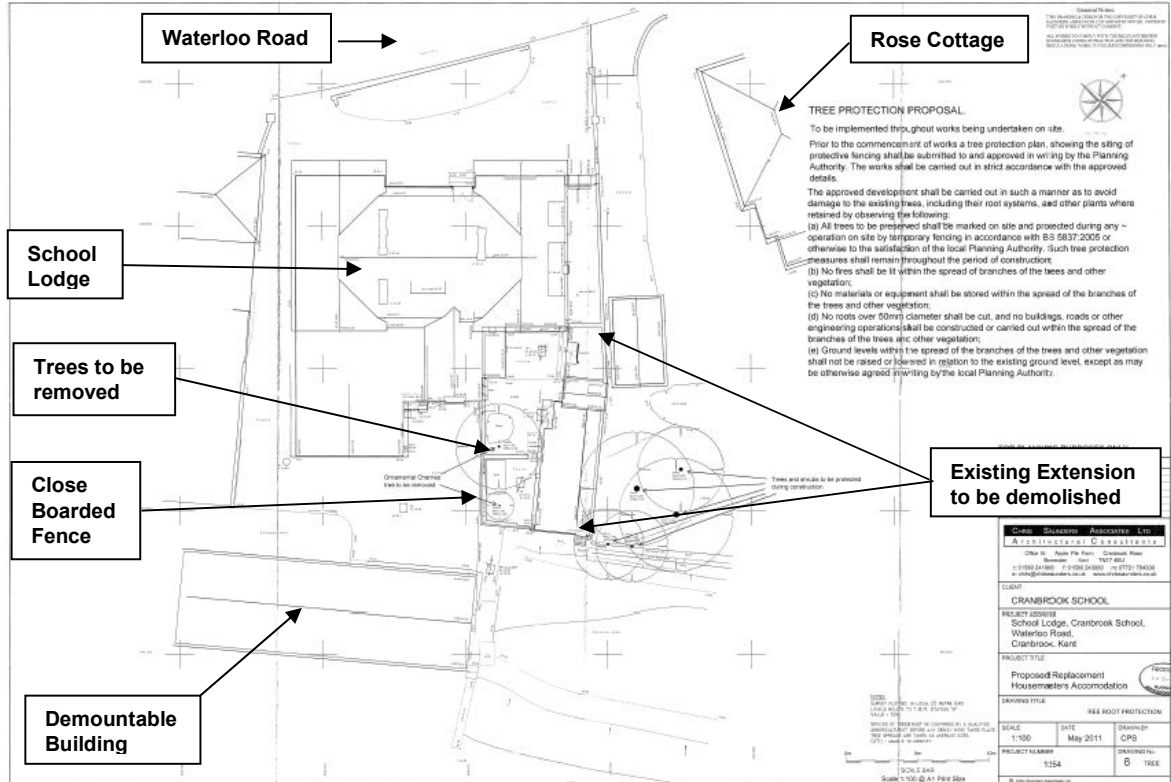
4. A similar application to redevelop the house masters accommodation at School Lodge was submitted earlier this year (under planning reference TW/11/1786). This application was subsequently withdrawn on the recommendations of officers due to objections received to the proposal on design grounds. The current application represents a revision of the earlier submission that amends the original design in response to objections previously received, and further to pre-application discussions with the County Council's Conservation Architect.

Proposal

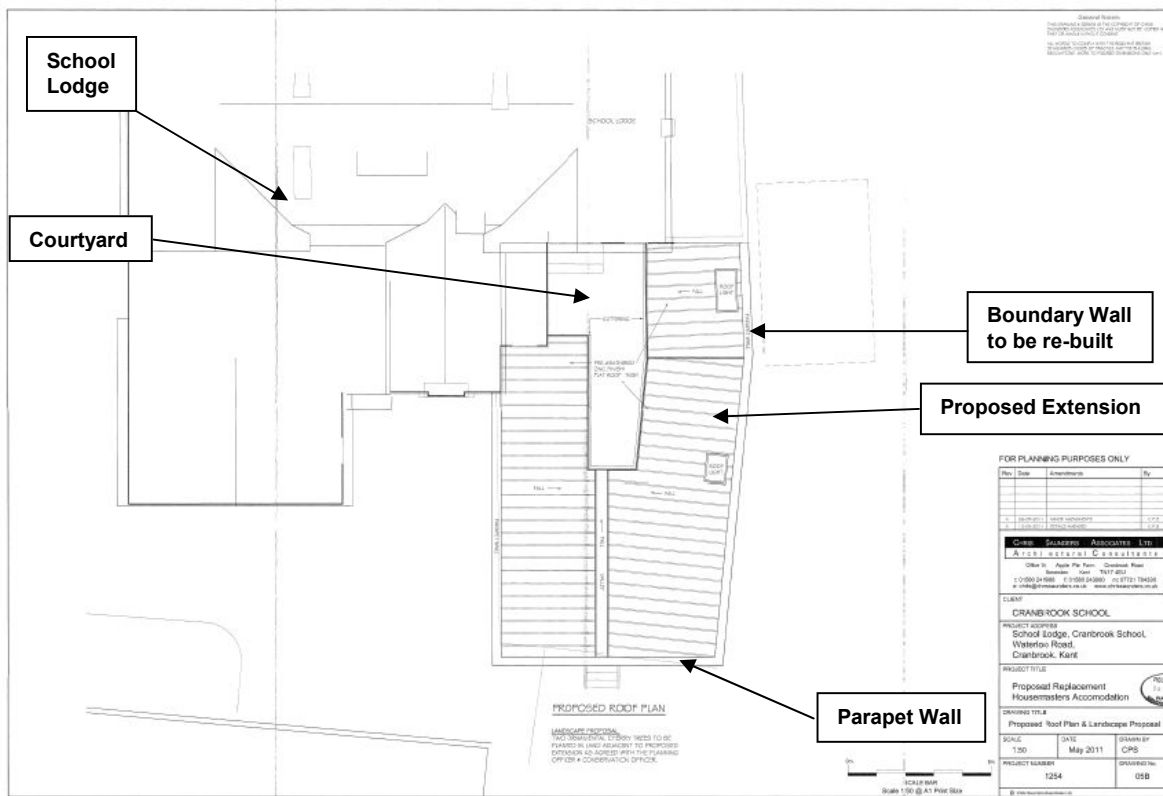
5. The application proposes the demolition of a modern single storey extension and adjoining boundary wall to the rear of School Lodge and the construction of a new extension to form replacement house master's accommodation. The existing extension, built in the 1980's, is no longer considered to provide adequate accommodation for the house master and his family. The building consists of a lean-to type extension constructed off the garden wall using a mono-pitch roof with a slate finish.
6. The proposed extension would seek to modernise the accommodation providing additional internal floor-space to meet the needs of a modern family home (approximately 83 m², an increase in 40 m² over the existing provisions). The proposed accommodation would be built mainly over the footprint of the existing extension and part of the adjacent yard area. The proposed floor plan includes 4 bedrooms, a bathroom, an en-suite bathroom and storage space. This new accommodation would be used with existing rooms within the main house to form the house master's accommodation. The layout would create a courtyard area to the centre of the new extension, increasing the available light within the development and providing private outdoor space separate to that available to the main boarding house. The application includes a commitment to replace 2 ornamental trees that would be felled with suitable replacements within the near by garden of the main house.
7. The proposed extension would form a single storey building with a shallow pitched roof (3 degrees) hidden behind a parapet wall. The roof would be finished using pre-weather zinc and includes roof lights to improve natural light within the building. The main facing elevations would be constructed using brickwork to match the main house with a similar bond (English Garden Bond) and mortar finish. The parapet has been designed to be formed from weathered facing brickwork, rather than a coping stone, to give the impression of a traditional garden wall. The re-built boundary wall elevation to the north-east would be constructed using the reclaimed bricks from the existing wall. All windows and doors would be completed in aluminium using a matt black finish, with guttering and downpipes shown in pre-weathered blue-grey zinc to match the roofing material.

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Existing Block Plan

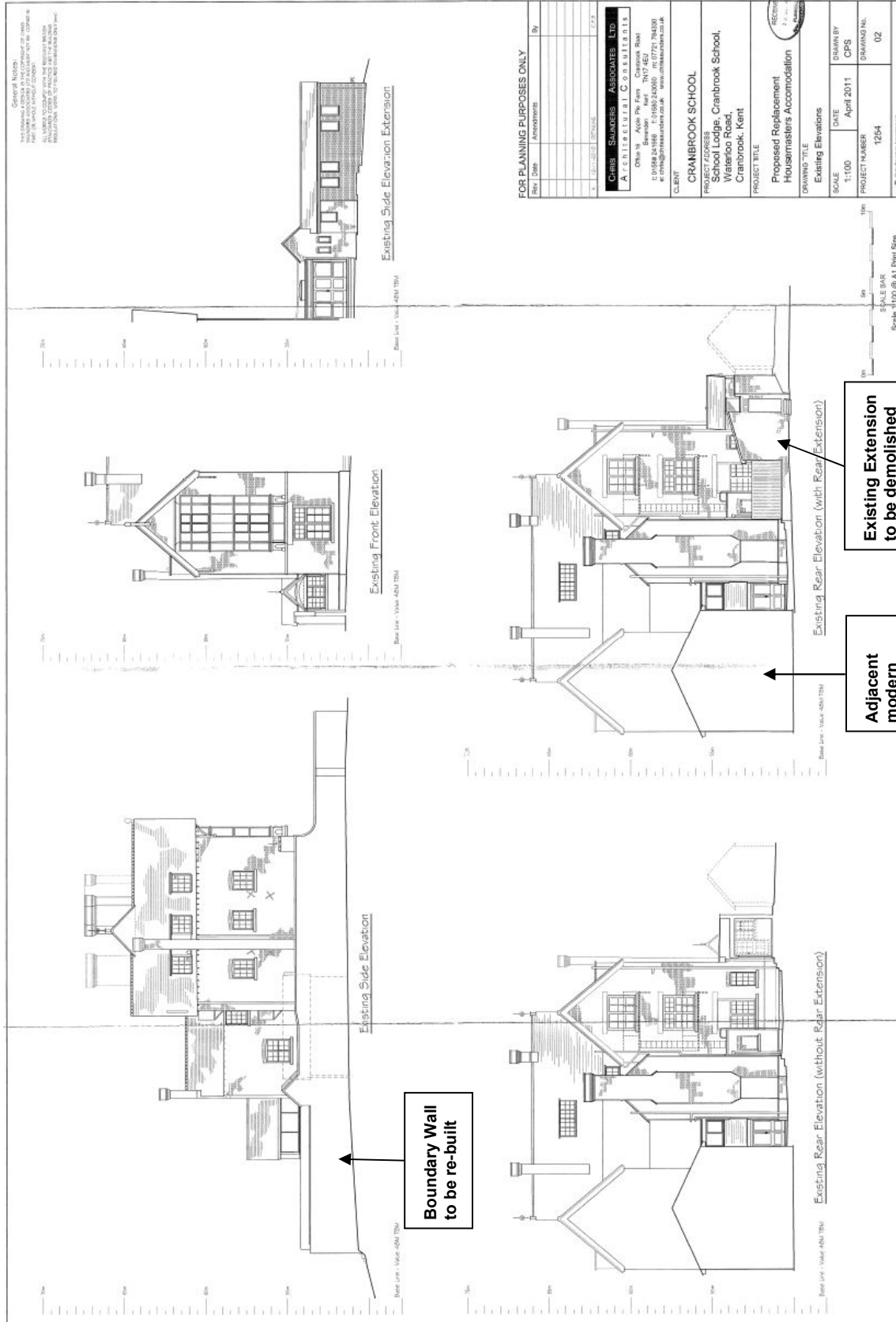


Proposed Roof Plan



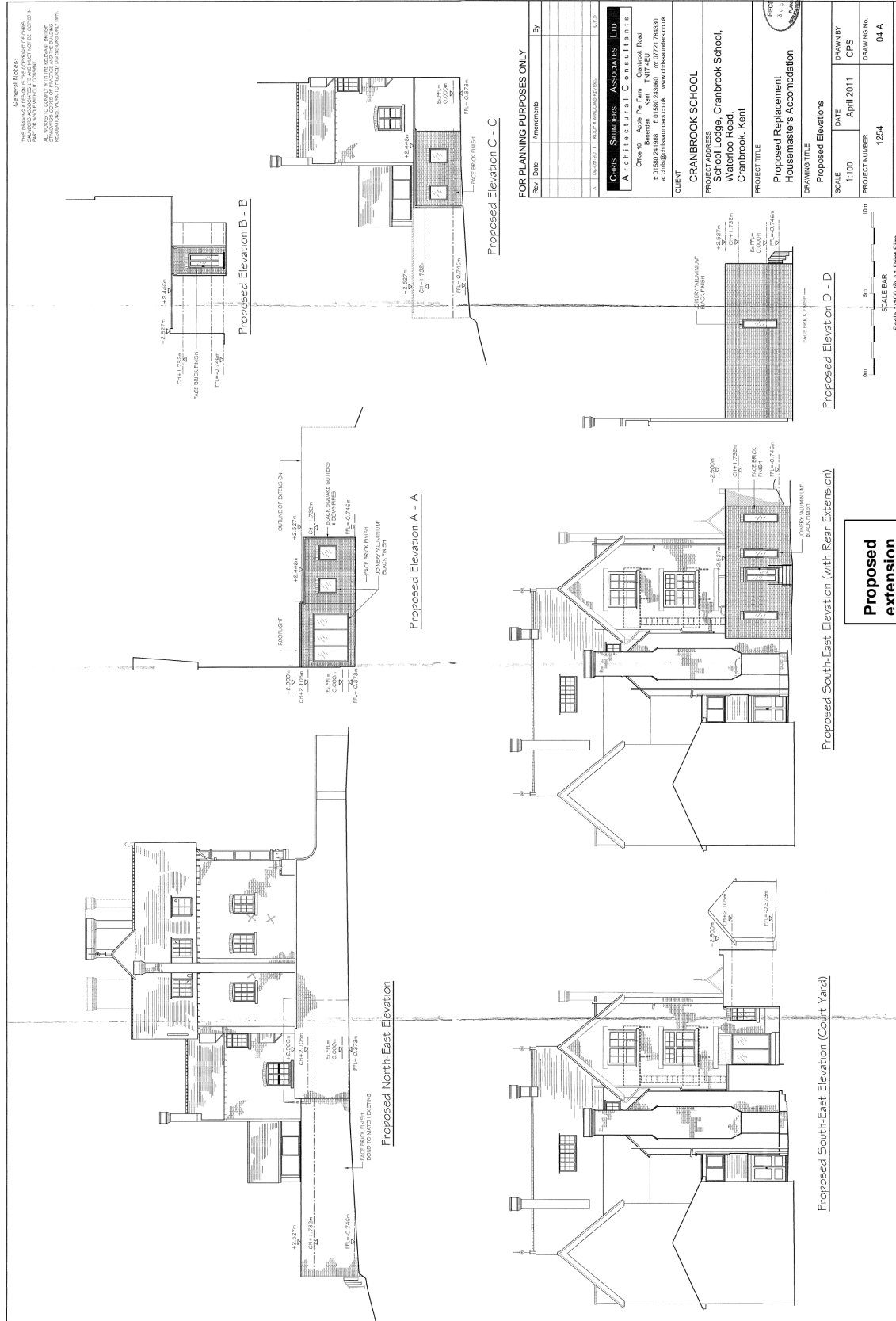
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Existing Elevations



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Proposed Elevations



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Planning Policy

8. The Government Guidance and Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of this application:

(i) **National Planning Policy and Guidance** – the most relevant National Planning Policies are set out in:

PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Development), **PPS5** (Planning for the Historic Environment), **PPS7** (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) and **PPS9** (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation).

(ii) **The South East Plan (2009):**

Policy SP3 Seeks to focus development within urban areas to foster access to services and avoid unnecessary travel.

Policy CC1 Seeks to achieve and maintain sustainable development in the region.

Policy CC4 Seeks new development to adopt sustainable construction standards and techniques.

Policy CC6 Seeks sustainable and distinctive communities that respect the character of settlements and landscapes, and achieve a high quality built environment.

Policy NRM1 Seeks to maintain and enhance ground water quality through the avoiding adverse effects of development on the water environment.

Policy NRM5 Seeks to avoid net loss of biodiversity and pursue opportunities to achieve a net gain across the region.

Policy C3 Gives high priority to conservation and enhancement of natural beauty with Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

Policy BE4 Seeks to support small rural towns as local hubs, seeking to protect and enhance the character and appearance of individual towns.

Policy BE6 Supports proposals which protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment.

Policy S3 Seeks to ensure the adequate provision of pre-school, school, and community learning facilities.

Important note concerning the South East Plan:

Members will already be aware of the relevant South East Plan policy considerations in relation to the proposed development, in that The Plan was revoked and later reinstated pending the enactment of the Localism Bill. Members will also be aware that they have to

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have regard to the policies in the SEP and the Government's intention to abolish the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) as material considerations. However the weight to be accorded is a matter for the decision makers. Members will note that the Localism Bill has now been enacted; however the SEP remains in effect until such time as the Government complete the formal process of revoking the Plan

(iii) Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Development Framework: Core Strategy (2010):

- Policy 1 Seeks priority to be given to previously developed land with the Limit of Built Development.
- Policy 4 Seeks to conserve or enhance local sense of place and character of urban and rural landscapes including the High Weald AONB, the Borough's heritage assets, including Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, and avoid a net loss of biodiversity across the Borough as a whole.
- Policy 5 Encourages sustainable design, construction techniques and seeks to ensure a high quality of design.
- Policy 12 Requires all development within Cranbrook to have particular regard to conserving and enhancing the character of the Conservation Area and setting of the town within the High Weald AONB.

(iv) Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan (2006):

- Policy EN1 Seeks all proposals to be compatible with neighbouring uses and not cause significant harm to the amenities or character of an area, to respect the local context and local character of the built up area or landscape.
- Policy EN5 Seeks proposals within a conservation area to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including in terms of scale, massing, roofscape, materials, detailing, boundary treatment and landscaping; and seeks to protect trees or other features important to the character of area.
- Policy EN13 Seeks to protect trees within a Conservation Area unless the removal would be of good arboricultural practice or the desirability of the proposal outweighs the amenity value of the tree(s).
- Policy EN16 Seeks to protect groundwater quality.
- Policy EN26 Seeks proposals within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to protect or enhance the natural beauty and special character of the landscape.

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Consultations

9. **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council** – objects on the following grounds:

'The Borough Council raises an objection to to the proposal as it is considered that the replacement extension would not conserve or enhance the Conservation Area in terms of its relationship with the character of the house and its associated rear yard area. As such, it is contrary to Policies 4 and 12 in the Core Strategy 2010 and Policies EN1 and EN5 in the Local Plan 2006.'

10. **Cranbrook Parish Council** – no objection in principle, however raises concern about the design of the roof and does not consider that this would be sympathetic to the original features of the existing building.

11. **Environment Agency** – no objection to the proposal; considers that the application poses a low environmental risk, drawing attention to the EA's good practice guide for developers.

12. **The County Council's Conservation Architect** – no objections to the application on the grounds that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the setting of the Conservation Area and its special interest. The Conservation Officer comments as follows:

'The proposal to improve the staff living accommodation within the enclosure of the current area set aside for the same use is located at the rear of the building. As such it will not be visible from the public highway and in my view has very limited, if any, impact on the setting of the Conservation Area. At a site inspection I noted that there was a contemporary extension to the rear of an adjacent building, which I presume is also within the Conservation Area. As such I consider that the current proposal is an appropriate response to creating the living accommodation within a private walled enclosure attached to the rear of the non listed building. Indeed the replacement of existing (unsightly) close boarded fencing with a good quality red stock brick will be an enhancement to this area of limited access. The proposed use of a good quality metal roof finish, in this case zinc, will presumably have a standing seam to the joints, and will weather in time to produce a colour similar to lead, which would not be out of keeping on an extension to a building of this style. Furthermore the proposed design has the benefit of concealing the roof from general view, but when viewed from above (only possible from some of the rear windows of the attached building) one sees a good quality roof finish, similar to traditional lead, but not as susceptible to theft as lead roofs are. The proposed external windows have been designed as "slots" in the brick wall, a design response to the concept of creating accommodation behind a wall, and I support this option, although clerestory windows above the wall would have been an alternative response to the idea of the wall wrapping around the accommodation. Window fenestration should be a slim line design (such as aluminium) and dark in colour to again emphasise the concept of "slots" in the wall. Raising the height of the boundary wall is relatively minimal to only a portion of the existing boundary wall and adjacent to unoccupied and overgrown land, which we could not access at the site meeting. I agree that it is important to retain the boundary wall as this forms part of an earlier defined boundary, but do not consider it out of keeping with the Conservation Area to allow the wall to be raised over a short length in height to conceal the roof behind'.

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13. **The County Archaeologist** – no comments received on drafting this report; any views received prior to Committee Meeting will be reported verbally.

Local Member

14. The local County Member for Cranbrook, Mr Roger Manning was notified of the application on 10 October 2011.

Publicity

15. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice, an advertisement in a local newspaper, and the individual notification of 17 nearby properties.

Representations

16. No letters of representation have been received in response to the above publicity.

Discussion

17. The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of a modern extension and construction of a new extension to form house master's accommodation to the rear of School Lodge. The application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of an objection received from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and concerns received from Cranbrook Parish Council, both on design grounds; please see paragraphs (9 - 10) for details. No representations have been received from neighbouring properties.

18. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (8) above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore the proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising during the consideration of the application.

19. In my opinion, the main determining issues in this particular case can be summarised by the following headings:

- location and design considerations, including the impact upon the Cranbrook Conservation Area and the AONB; and
- other relevant planning considerations.

Location and design considerations

20. The proposed development falls within the limits of built development, the Cranbrook Conservation Area and the High Weald AONB, as well as in close proximity to a number of listed buildings, including the adjacent Rose Cottage. On this basis South East Plan Policies CC6, C3, BE4, BE6, Local Plan Policies EN1, EN5, EN26, and Core Strategy Policies 4, 5 and 12 are particularly relevant to the determination of this application in that

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they seek new development that has particular regard to conserving and enhancing the character of the Conservation Area, the setting of Cranbrook within the High Weald AONB and other heritage assets. The development plan policies seek proposals that incorporate a high quality of design that reflects character and appearance of its surroundings.

21. The Borough Council raises an objection to the application on the grounds that the proposals would not conserve or enhance the Conservation Area in terms of the extension's relationship with the character of the house and its associated rear yard area. Under the circumstances, the Borough Council considers that the application is contrary to Policies 4 and 12 in the Core Strategy and Policies EN1 and EN5 in the Local Plan. The Borough Council's views accept that the existing 1980's extension proposed to be demolished has a '*utilitarian design of little architectural merit*' and that its replacement would be acceptable. However, the views suggest that the proposed extension would be of a greater scale and mass than the existing provisions which would, in their opinion, cause greater harm to the main house and the yard space immediately to the rear of the property. The Borough Council acknowledges that the site would not be visible from the public realm, however considers it is part of the school complex and would be seen by various people.
22. Whilst Cranbrook Parish Council has no objection in principle to the proposed extension, the views received raise concern over the design of the roof, which in the Parish Council's opinion would not be sympathetic to the original features of the existing building.
23. The County Council's Conservation Architect raises no objection to the application, advising that in his view the application would have a very limited, if any, impact on the setting of the Conservation Area. He considers the extension would be an appropriate response to the need to extend the non listed property in this location, noting that the design would incorporate high quality materials sympathetic to the main house. He supports the contemporary design concept of creating the accommodation within a private walled enclosure through the use of a shallow pitched roof hidden behind a parapet wall. He comments that '*the replacement of the existing (unsightly) close boarded fencing (that encloses the existing extension) with a good quality red stock brick would be an enhancement*'.
24. It is noted that the current application represents a revised design prepared by the applicant in response to objections to a previous planning application. At the time, the previous application was withdrawn by the applicant on the recommendation of officers pending a resubmission. The revised approach was subject to pre-application discussions with the County Council's Conservation Architect prior to this application being submitted.
25. In my opinion the objections raised by the Borough Council concerning the design of the extension, its impact on the character of School Lodge (a non listed building) and the Conservation Area are not of sufficient weight to warrant the refusal of this application. I would argue that the latest approach would now preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area. The changes to the design from the scheme previously applied for (being a shallow pitched roof hidden behind a parapet) mean that the development would not be visible from outside the site, reducing any impact on surrounding properties. The application proposes to preserve the garden wall that forms the boundary of the site with adjacent residential property. It is agreed that this wall forms an important part of the

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character of the house and the application proposes re-building it as part of the extension using reclaimed materials to preserve the appearance. In fact, through the use of parapets to each elevation the entire extension would be hidden behind what would appear to be an extended garden wall and would only be visible at a very local level immediately to the rear of School Lodge.

26. I note that the extension would create a small increase in the overall size and mass of the original, creating an additional 40m² of new floor space over the existing provisions. This floorspace is needed to create the additional living accommodation required for the house master and his family. It is noted that revisions made to the proposed extension have sought to minimise the height and perceived mass to reduce the overall impact. The original design included mono pitched roofs that would have been more visible and had more impact than the current scheme.
27. The overall height of the boundary wall and parapet of the extension would not materially differ from the ridge height of the current extension. The footprint of the proposed building would cover the existing extension and the close boarded fenced area that currently serves as garden space for the existing accommodation. I therefore do not consider that the proposed extension would materially alter the appearance or the space available within the yard to the rear of the house, which is one of the concerns raised by the Borough Council. The proposed extension would still be viewed as a subservient and ancillary structure to the main house, not unlike the type of outhouses you would normally expect to see attached to houses built in the same period. The extension is considerably smaller both in floorspace and mass of the other modern two storey extension to the rear of the property, and efforts have been made to ensure that any impacts from the current proposal are kept to a minimum. I do not consider that the size of the extension would be disproportionate to the main building or detract from the overall character.
28. Due to the proposed siting, design and layout, the extension would not affect privacy to neighbouring properties or result in any overbearing presence. It is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of the potential impact on residential amenities.
29. If the extension is considered to be acceptable in terms of its size, and would not materially impact on the relationship between the house and the yard space or on the Conservation Area, the key determining factor, in my opinion, would be the visual appearance of the extension in relation to the character of the rear elevation of School Lodge.
30. The design concept would be to create elevations that give the impression of a garden wall enclosing the entire extension within and creating a private court yard area. The approach would use high quality materials and finishes to the exterior of the building, including brickwork, bond and mortar to match the main building and existing garden wall, alongside aluminium framed windows and zinc roofing. The tall narrow windows and door shown to the exterior of the building are design to appear as slots within the wall further enhancing the design concept. These windows draw their proportions from the fenestration of the main house, which includes large full height windows divided by glazing bars.
31. In my opinion, the contemporary design is sympathetic to the character of the main house; the single storey approach and roof design mean the proposals would not dominate the

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main elevation, and through the demolition of a lesser quality extension and associated fencing could be seen to improve the overall appearance of the rear of the house. On this basis I am satisfied that due to the siting, design, and materials proposed, the development would preserve the visual character of School Lodge and would preserve the special character of the Cranbrook Conservation Area, the adjacent listed buildings and High Weald AONB.

Other considerations

32. The proposed extension would involve the loss of two cherry trees which fall within the Conservation Area. Both trees are located to the rear of School Lodge within the garden area that serves the existing house master's accommodation.
33. In respect of the loss of the trees, the Borough Council's Tree Officer does not raise an objection. It is noted that the two ornamental trees are relatively small and are not visible from the public realm; therefore in my opinion their removal would not be detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area or the amenity of the street-scene. The application proposes to plant suitable replacement trees close by, within the garden of the main house. I am therefore satisfied that the felling of the trees on the site would be acceptable in this particular case.

Conclusion

34. In weighing the considerations set out above, I am satisfied that the design of the extension would preserve and enhance the character of School Lodge and the adjacent listed Rose Cottage. The approach would minimise the impact of the development on the immediate surroundings and the extension would not be visible from the public realm. Therefore, subject to the conditions set out below, I consider that the proposal would be in accordance with the relevant development plan policies, including preserving the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Recommendation

35. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
 - the standard time limit;
 - the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
 - the external materials used to be in accordance with those specified within the application;
 - the replacement tree planting to be completed within the first planting season following completion of the development;
 - precautions to prevent the deposit of mud on the highway; and
 - controls on the hours of operation during construction work.

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Case Officer: James Bickle

Tel. no: 01622 221068

Background Documents: see section heading