

Retrospective application for the provision of external storage space - Tunstall CofE School, Sittingbourne – KCC/SW/0155/2012 (SW/12/740)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 24 July 2012

KCC/SW/0155/2012 – Retrospective application by Tunstall CE (Aided) School for the provision of external storage space for both outdoor play equipment and maintenance equipment at Tunstall CE (Aided) School, Tunstall Road, Tunstall, Sittingbourne

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions

Local Member(s): Mr M.Whiting, Mr A.Willicombe

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Tunstall Church of England Primary School is located within the village of Tunstall, on the edge of Sittingbourne, along the main road from the town which leads southwards towards Bredgar. The site lies wholly within the Tunstall Conservation Area, and is bounded by the main road to the south east, residences to the south west, and agricultural fields and the grounds of the village hall to the north east and west. The main building to the school is Grade II Listed, dating from the 19th Century. The adjacent residence ‘The Oast’, to the south and west, is also Grade II Listed.
2. The school building is set back from the road and there is a low level fence (which was the subject of a recent planning application that was reported to Members in March of this year) and another higher fence within the school site which runs parallel to the school building. A series of 6 sheds, varying greatly in size and height have been erected over a period of 3 years in various locations along the perimeter of the school site, but are mostly obscured from view by the boundary treatment. However all of these sheds are located within the curtilage of the Listed Building

Background

3. The Planning Applications Group received a telephone call in December 2011 informing that the existing chestnut fencing at the front of the school was being replaced without permission. A retrospective planning application (KCC/SW/0009/2012 and SW/12/92) was subsequently submitted and reported to Members at the 13 March 2012 Committee Meeting. However as a result of this telephone call and application, the Planning Authority was also alerted to the fact that over a period of 3 years, a series of 6 sheds, of varying size and height, have been erected in various locations along the site perimeter. Under the circumstances the School were advised to prepare an inventory of all of the sheds and to submit a retrospective planning application to test the planning merits of this development.

External storage space, Tunstall Primary, Sittingbourne – SW/12/740



Site Location Plan

External storage space, Tunstall Primary, Sittingbourne – SW/12/740

Notes:
 Do Not Scale.
 Report all discrepancies, errors and omissions.
 Verify all dimensions on site before commencing any work on site or preparing shop drawings.
 All materials, components and accessories are to comply with the relevant British Standards, Codes of Practice, and appropriate manufacturers recommendations that form the basis of this specification.
 For all specialist work, see relevant drawings.
 This Area Plan and Schedule are the right of Diocesan Architectural Services Ltd (© Diocesan Architects).

Rev	Date	Description



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PROJECT TITLE:
 12-030
 TUNSTALL C OF E
 PRIMARY SCHOOL
 EXTERNAL STORES

DRAWING DESCRIPTION:
 SITE PLAN

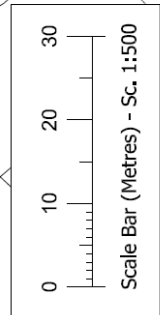
SCALE:
 1/500 @ A3
 DATE:
 MAR 2012

DRAWN BY:
 MG
 CHECKED BY:

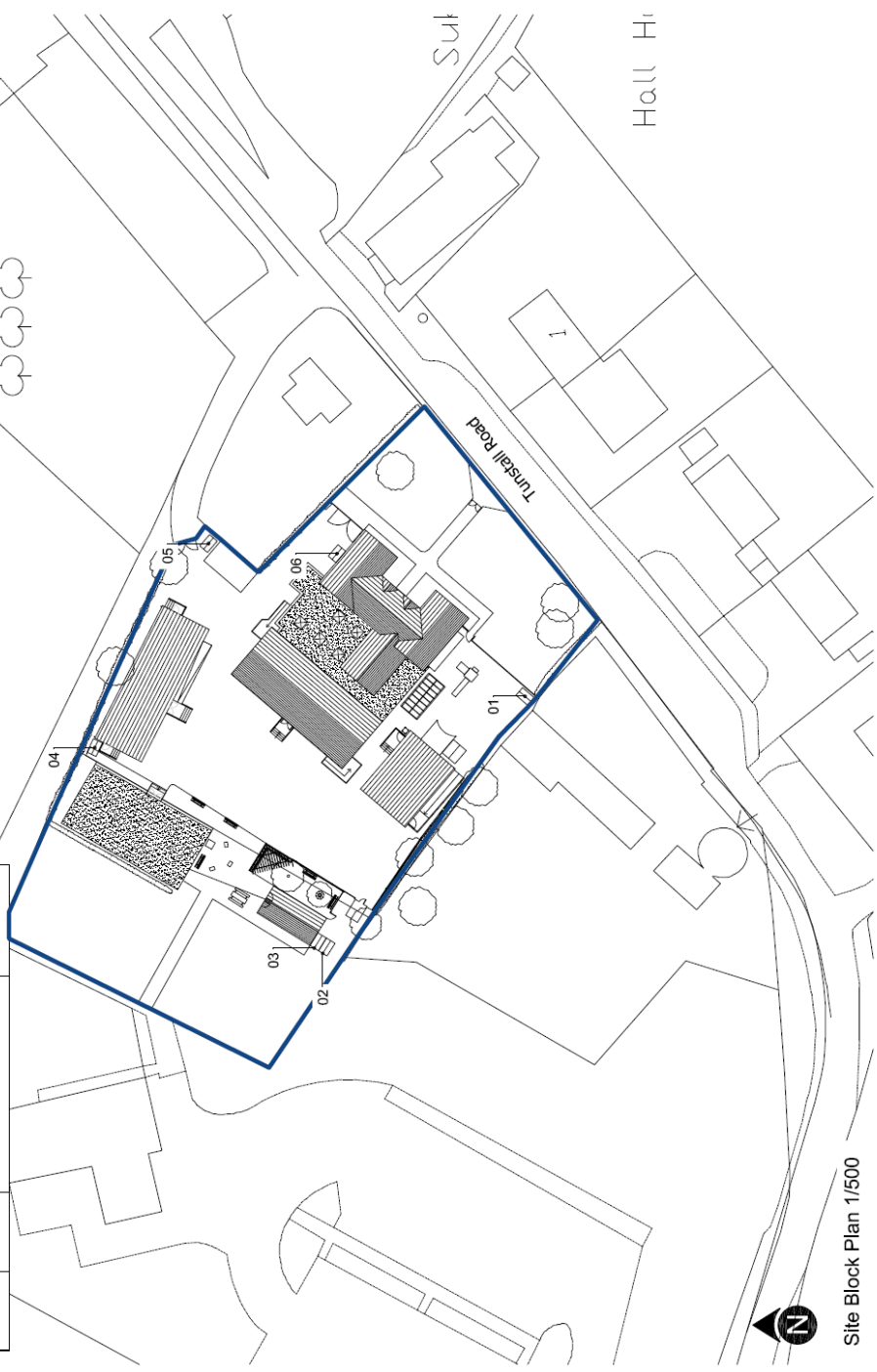
STATUS:
 PLANNING

DRAWING NUMBER:
 12-030/01

REVISION:



Shed Key			
Number	Size	Use	Materials
	3.6 x 2.4m	External Play Equipment Store	Timber
	21.8 x 1.2m	Caretakers maintenance store	Timber - Painted
	31.8 x 1.2m	File store	Timber - Painted
	41.2 x 0.6m	Gardening Equipment Storage	Green Plastic
	51.8 x 1.2m	Staging Store	Timber
	61.8 x 1.2m	Cleaning Equipment Store	Timber



Site Block Plan 1/500

External storage space, Tunstall Primary, Sittingbourne – SW/12/740

12-030/03



Shed 01



Shed 02 & 03 (Front Elevation)

External storage space, Tunstall Primary, Sittingbourne – SW/12/740

12-030/03



Shed 02 & 03 (Rear Elevation)



Shed 04 (Generic Image)

External storage space, Tunstall Primary, Sittingbourne – SW/12/740

12-030/03



Shed 05



Shed 06

External storage space, Tunstall Primary, Sittingbourne – SW/12/740

Proposal

4. Tunstall CE School is applying for retrospective planning permission for the installation of a series of 6 external storage sheds. These sheds are fulfilling a shortfall in space to store the educational and maintenance equipment required to teach the students and maintain the school buildings. The sheds have been installed on the site for a period of between 1 and 3 years and have been placed on the site in close relation to their intended purpose. All of these locations are to the perimeter of the school site and are mostly obscured from external view by the boundary treatment, apart from the largest shed (shed no.1) which can be just seen over the school fence. The sheds are not bespoke designed units but are instead standardised designs. Tanalised timber cladding has been used for the newer sheds with the older sheds being painted green in recent years. The sheds vary in size with the smallest shed having a footprint of 1.2m x 0.6m and the largest being 3.6m x 2.4m.

Planning Policy

5. The most relevant Government Guidance and Development Plan Policies summarised below are appropriate to the consideration of this application:
 - (i) **National Planning Policy and Guidance** – the most relevant National planning policies and policy guidance are set out in:

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England and as guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications. It does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. The NPPF replaces the majority of the Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs).

The NPPF contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The new Framework also refers to the UK Sustainable Development Strategy Securing the Future which sets out 5 guiding principles for sustainable development: living within the planet's environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society, achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance and using sound science responsibly. In terms of the planning system, the NPPF identifies that there are 3 dimensions to sustainable development which create 3 overarching roles in the planning system - economic, social and environmental. These roles are mutually dependent. Within the over-arching roles there are 12 core principles that planning should achieve. These can be summarised as:

- be genuinely plan-led;
- a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places people live their lives;
- proactively drive and support sustainable economic development;
- secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity;
- take account of the different roles and character of different areas, including protecting Green Belts, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities;
- support the transition to a low carbon future, taking account of flood risk and coastal change and encourage the reuse of existing resources and the development of renewable energy;
- contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution

External storage space, Tunstall Primary, Sittingbourne – SW/12/740

- encourage the effective use of land by reusing brownfield land, providing that it is not of high environmental value;
- promote mixed use developments;
- conserve heritage assets;
- manage patterns of growth to make fullest use of public transport, walking and cycling; and focus significant development in locations which can be made sustainable; and
- take account of strategies to improve health, social and cultural well being, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

In terms of delivering sustainable development in relation to this development proposal, the following NPPF guidance is particularly relevant:

- Chapter 4 (Promoting sustainable transport);
- Chapter 7 (Requiring good design);and
- Chapter 8 (Promoting healthy communities);

The Framework also requires that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems. It states that those determining applications should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

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

- 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 S3 Seeks to ensure the adequate provision of pre-school, school, and community learning facilities.
- Policy S6 States that local planning authorities, taking into account demographic projections, should work with partners to ensure adequate provision of pre-school, school, and community learning facilities.
- Policy BE1 Seeks new development to help improve the built environment with design solutions relevant to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place.

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 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

External storage space, Tunstall Primary, Sittingbourne – SW/12/740

(iii) The adopted **Swale Borough Local Plan (Saved Policies) 2008**

- Policy SP7 Community services and facilities:
- To satisfy the social needs of the Borough's communities, planning policies and development proposals will promote safe environments and a sense of community by:
 - Increasing social networks by providing new services and facilities;
 - Safeguarding essential and viable services and facilities from harmful changes of use and development proposals.
- Policy C1 Existing and new community services and facilities:
- The Borough Council will not permit proposals that involve the loss, or change of use, of a local community facility, where this would be detrimental to the social wellbeing;
 - The Borough Council will grant planning permission for new or improved community services and facilities.
- Policy E1 General development criteria, proposals should:
- Accord with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise;
 - Reflect positively characteristics and features of the site and surroundings;
 - Protect and enhance the natural and built environments.
- Policy E6 The countryside – Development proposals will only be permitted when:
- Providing a service that enables rural communities to meet their needs locally; or
 - It provides for essential community infrastructure.
- Policy RC2 Retaining and enhancing rural services and facilities.
- Policy E14 Development involving listed buildings:
- Proposals will only be permitted if the building's special architectural or historic interest, and its setting, is preserved.
- Policy E15 Development affecting a Conservation Area:
- Development should preserve or enhance the special character of the conservation area.
- Policy E19 Design Criteria:
- Development proposals should be of high quality design and respond positively to design criteria.

Consultations

6. **Swale Borough Council:** Raises no objection, subject to the application being granted 2 years temporary planning permission.

Tunstall Parish Council: Raises no objection, subject to the same conditions being attached as to the temporary classrooms

External storage space, Tunstall Primary, Sittingbourne – SW/12/740

KCC Conservation Architect: Has raised reservations only about sheds no 1 and 6, where these are sited without consideration of the adjacent historic buildings. The siting of these two sheds is not only unsympathetic to the immediate setting of historic buildings but is also a fire risk to the adjacent buildings. If locations for these two sheds could be found away from these buildings, then no further adverse comments would be raised. It has been further suggested that due to the accumulation of ad hoc sheds and outbuildings that has accrued over a period of time, that at some point in the future the School needs to consider a comprehensive review of storage and consolidating these sheds into fewer storage units of a unified design, such as feather edged timber framed buildings of matching colour.

Local Member

7. The local County Members, Mr M.Whiting and Mr A.Willicombe, were notified of the application on 22 May 2012.

Publicity

8. The application was advertised by the posting of a site notice, the notification of 13 neighbours, and an advert was placed in the Kent on Sunday on 27 May 2012.

Representations

9. Four letters of representation have been received from local residents. Two letters were objecting to the application and two were in support. The following comments raised by local residents are summarised below:

Objections

- There is yet another retrospective planning application.
- It is alleged that if the application was submitted in advance then likely to be rejected but by continuing developing in the hope that a retrospective application will be dealt with more sympathetically.
- The number of external sheds is indicative of the fact that there is not enough storage space internally.
- Not fair on pupils and teacher as it has the effect of taking up again more playground space in an already cramped village school.
- Detrimental to the setting of a Grade II Listed Building as well as being in a Conservation Area.
- These sheds are an obvious sign that the school cannot run with the number of pupils it has.
- If planning permission is granted it should be conditioned with a maximum of 2 years permission, coinciding with the removal of the mobile classrooms, giving the School, the Diocese and Kent County Council sufficient time to consider the current number of intakes in this village school.

In Support

- The school is on a very small site and these sheds are vital.
- Live directly next door at The Oast and one of the sheds abuts my house but I have no problems with it.
- The sheds are discreet and only one is visible from the road.
- The sheds are completely unobtrusive and essential in view of the serious limitations under which the school operates.
- There is not enough room for the children let alone storage facilities.

External storage space, Tunstall Primary, Sittingbourne – SW/12/740

- The school needs some plaudits for coping as well as it does on a difficult site that is not appropriate for teaching in the 21st century.

Discussion

10. In considering this proposal regard must be had to Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (4) 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, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
11. This application has been reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee following the receipt of objections from two local residents. The main issue relating to this application is the visual impact the sheds have upon the setting of the Listed Building, and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
12. The application has been submitted as retrospective, as the six storage sheds have already been on the school site for between 1 and 3 years. All of these locations are to the perimeter of the school site and are mostly obscured from view by the boundary treatment apart from the largest shed (shed no.1) which can be just seen over the school fence. The sheds are not bespoke designed units but are instead standardised designs. Tanalised timber cladding has been used for the newer sheds with the older sheds being painted green in recent years. The sheds vary in size with the smallest shed having a footprint of 1.2m x 0.6m and the largest shed having a footprint of 3.6m x 2.4m.

Location and design

13. The sheds have been placed on the site in close relation to their intended purpose and all are along the school's periphery. The sheds vary in size and height as it depends on the purpose that they are required for and on their design. Two of the sheds abut Listed Buildings (the school building and the neighbouring house) and the Conservation Officer has commented that they are unsympathetic to the adjacent historic buildings. However due to the various constraints that the School has to operate under, including a school building that cannot accommodate play and maintenance equipment, playgrounds that have been further reduced in size to accommodate additional temporary buildings and an increasing school roll, the School has struggled to accommodate all the equipment required to run a school. The School has been asked to investigate if there is a suitable alternative location within the school site for the two sheds that currently abut the school Listed Building and the neighbouring Listed Building. However the School has confirmed that they are unable to accommodate any changes to these two sheds due to the restricted nature of the site. Therefore in this instance the recommendation from the Conservation Officer cannot be implemented without seriously affecting the outside playing area for the school children
14. The six storage sheds have been located so as not to encroach upon the school's playground any more than is necessary. Under normal circumstances a shed would not require planning permission as it would be permitted under Part 32 of Permitted Development. However in this circumstance, all six sheds are located within 5 metres of the school's periphery and therefore would require planning permission. Additionally these Permitted Development Rights do not apply within the curtilage of a Listed Building. However it needs to be borne in mind that this is a relatively minor planning application and most of these storage sheds are not publicly visible from the road to the front.

External storage space, Tunstall Primary, Sittingbourne – SW/12/740

15. The designs of the six storage sheds vary from a small plastic portable storage box to timber sheds, three of which have been painted green. There is no consistency to the size, design, material or colour of the storage sheds. All have been chosen according to the purpose that they will be used for and where they will be located.

Heritage Impact

16. As discussed above, the application site lies wholly within the Tunstall Conservation Area and the six storage sheds are within the curtilage of a Grade II Listed Building. The designs of the various sheds are considered to be not in keeping with the locality, nor the settings of the Listed Buildings. Nevertheless, the implications of removing the storage sheds on the efficient operating of the School would be incommensurate with the degree of harm in visual terms that the setting of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Area are experiencing. It also needs to be borne in mind that other buildings in the Conservation Area, including Listed Buildings, have similar minor outbuildings and are able to site such under Permitted Development Rights without the need for planning consent regardless of any detrimental visual impacts. However I would not wish to encourage further similar development because there would come a time when the cumulative impact of all the minor outbuildings would be sufficiently adverse to warrant refusal of planning consent.

Continued Retention

17. The six storage sheds, as mentioned above, have existed on the site for between 1 and 3 years. They have been placed around the school's periphery close to where they are needed, as a result of insufficient storage facilities within the school building. In considering this planning application it now has to be decided whether these sheds are acceptable and should be granted permanent planning permission or whether they are not acceptable and should be removed. As discussed in paragraph 16, if the six storage sheds are deemed to be acceptable from the outset then they should be equally acceptable on a permanent basis. If the overall harm is acceptable now then there is little logic in granting a temporary planning consent with a view to them being removed in 5 years time, if they are judged to be acceptable now and subsequently in the future.
18. Under normal circumstances, when a storage shed is erected in a residential garden, then this is done so on the understanding that this shed will not have to be removed in a number of years time. A permanent solution is sought from the outset. In this case, the six storage sheds in question erected around the school are of a permanent design to solve a permanent or ongoing storage problem. When Members are considering granting temporary planning permission for mobile classrooms, then that is usually a temporary solution and design intended to be rectified in the future with the building of a permanent facility. In this case, the solution to the chronic storage problem at this school has been solved with the six permanent storage sheds.

Conclusion

19. The retrospective planning application is for a relatively minor development which has been brought about due to circumstances and the constraints of the site, and therefore I do not see any planning reason why permission should be refused. In particular, the extent of the harm to the Listed Building and Conservation Area from the sheds is not as substantial as to warrant an outright refusal of consent, even though their detrimental impact must be acknowledged. The storage sheds have been deemed acceptable from the outset and so permanent planning consent should be granted.

External storage space, Tunstall Primary, Sittingbourne – SW/12/740

Recommendation

20. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED subject to the following condition:

- The units to be removed from the site in the event of the units no longer being needed for storage purposes.

Case officer – Lidia Cook	01622 221063
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Background documents - See section heading
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