

SECTION D  
DEVELOPMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Background Documents: the deposited documents; views and representations received as referred to in the reports and included in the development proposals dossier for each case; and other documents as might be additionally indicated.

**Item D1**

**Redevelopment of existing school site including the erection of a three storey academy building at Knole Academy – SE/12/1163 (KCC/SE/0140/2012)**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 9 October 2012.

Redevelopment of existing school site to include: retention of existing school buildings, erection of a new three storey Academy building, retention of temporary classroom permitted under reference SE/11/258 for a further temporary period until the new academy building is finished and decant complete, relocation of storage containers and garage to northern perimeter of the site, removal of current nursery building and relocation of use within existing academy dance studio, retention of existing hard surfaced games courts and sports playing fields and creation of a new All Weather Pitch, and hard and soft play/recreation areas. Provision of 195 on site car parking spaces, 12 motorcycle parking spaces, 2 mini-bus parking spaces, 1 mini-coach parking bay, 8 bus/coach pickup/dropoff bays, 222 cycles spaces. Retention of existing vehicular access entrances onto Bradbourne Vale Road, and creation of a new access to the southern car park to provide for a bus drop off loop and associated hard and sort landscaping at Knole Academy, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks - SE/12/1163 (KCC/SE/0140/2012)

Recommendation: Subject to the views of Sport England, I recommend that the application be referred to the Secretary of State as a departure from the Development Plan on Green Belt grounds, and that subject to his decision, planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

**Local Members:** Mr N Chard

**Classification:** Unrestricted

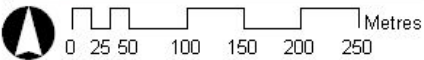
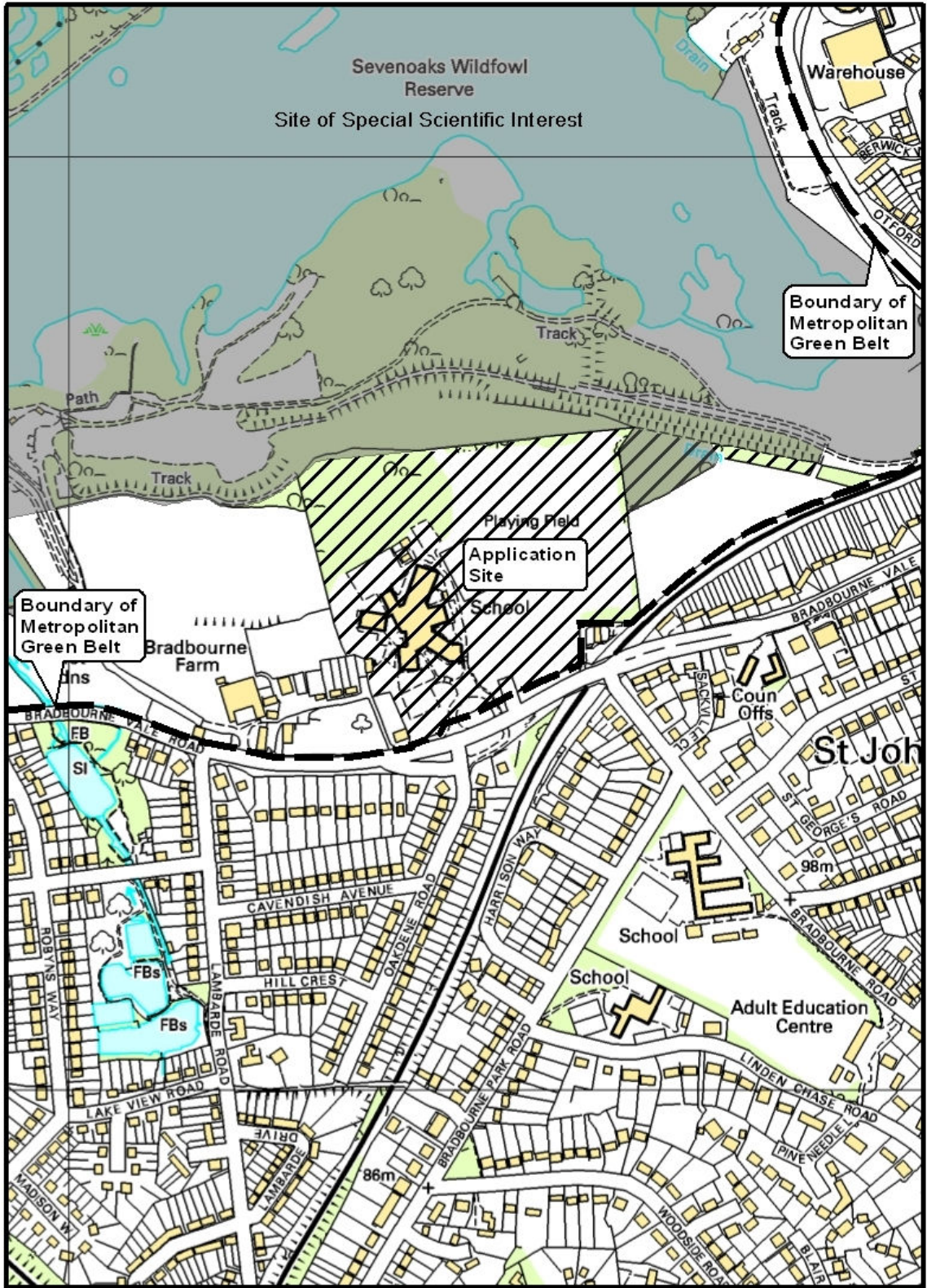
**Site**

1. Kent County Council is seeking planning permission to construct a new facility for Knole Academy in Sevenoaks, on the same site as the existing Academy. The application site comprises the existing buildings and grounds of the former Bradbourne School for Girls, situated on the west side of Sevenoaks just over a mile from the town centre. The site lies on the northern side of the A25 Bradbourne Vale Road, which is a main arterial route into and out of Sevenoaks from the west. The application site is 9.36ha, and comprises a mix of two and three storey buildings, with some single storey elements, largely built in the 1970/80s, but with a newer classroom block and reception area to the front of the site. The bulk of the built development on this site is concentrated in the south-western corner, with open grassed playing fields and unused scrubland to the north east. The existing Academy buildings are set back from the A25, behind an area of natural landscaping, parking areas and an access drop off loop. The topography of the site slopes down steeply in a northerly direction, away from the A25. As a result, the Academy buildings are set at a lower level than the road. From the car parking area and drop-off loop, however, the site remains fairly even in terms of gradient.

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### SITE LOCATION PLAN



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**Redevelopment of existing school site including the erection of a three storey academy building at Knole Academy – SE/12/1163**

EXISTING SITE LAYOUT



# Item D1

## Redevelopment of existing school site including the erection of a three storey academy building at Knole Academy – SE/12/1163

### PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT



**Item D1**

**Redevelopment of existing school site including the erection of a three storey academy building at Knole Academy – SE/12/1163**

PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN



1 P\_AGAL000 - Ground Floor Plan  
1:200



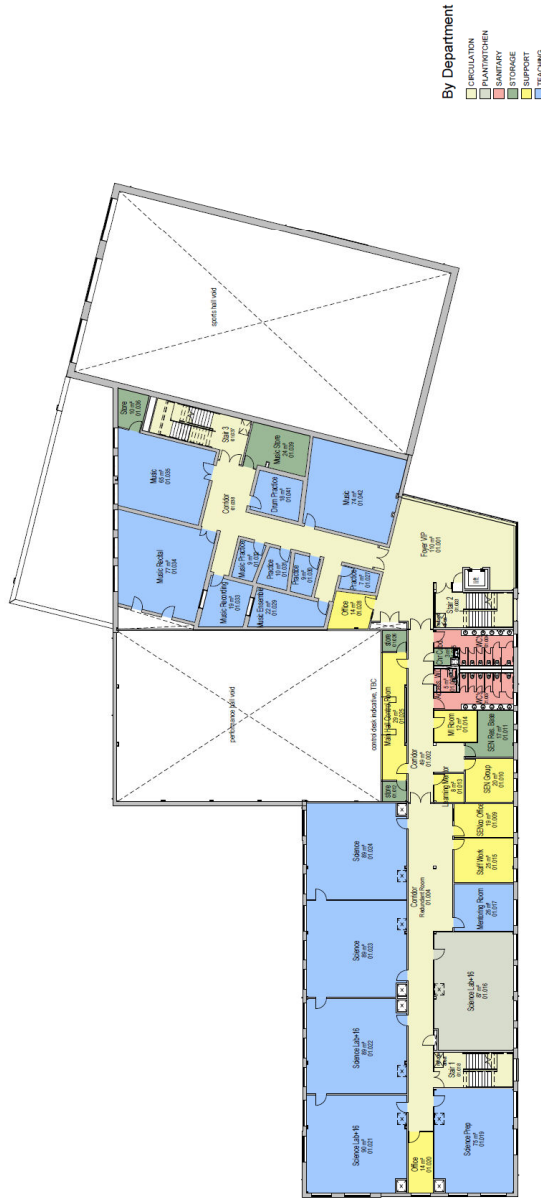
PROPOSER: **KNOLE ACADEMY**  
 PROJECT NO: **1163/2011/02/001**  
 DRAWN BY: **AB2/10/05**  
 CHECKED BY: **AB2/10/05**  
 DATE: **05/08/11**  
 SCALE: **1:200**  
 SHEET NO: **1**  
 TOTAL SHEETS: **1**



NO.	REVISION

## Redevelopment of existing school site including the erection of a three storey academy building at Knole Academy – SE/12/1163

### PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN



1 P\_AGAL001 - First Floor Plan  
1:200



Project: Knole Academy  
Phase: PLANNING PERIOD LEVEL  
Date: 12/09/17  
Author: J.L.  
Checked: J.L.  
Scale: 1:200  
Drawing No: P\_AGAL001

Project: Knole Academy  
Phase: PLANNING PERIOD LEVEL  
Date: 12/09/17  
Author: J.L.  
Checked: J.L.  
Scale: 1:200  
Drawing No: P\_AGAL001

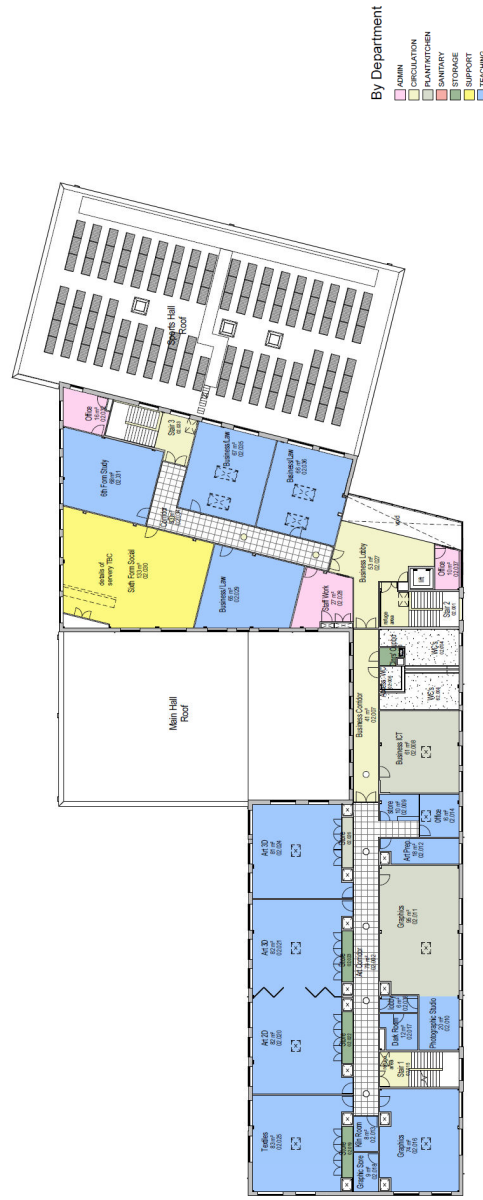


NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE
1	ISSUED FOR EXAMINATION	12/09/17
2	ISSUED FOR EXAMINATION	12/09/17
3	ISSUED FOR EXAMINATION	12/09/17
4	ISSUED FOR EXAMINATION	12/09/17
5	ISSUED FOR EXAMINATION	12/09/17
6	ISSUED FOR EXAMINATION	12/09/17
7	ISSUED FOR EXAMINATION	12/09/17
8	ISSUED FOR EXAMINATION	12/09/17
9	ISSUED FOR EXAMINATION	12/09/17
10	ISSUED FOR EXAMINATION	12/09/17

# Item D1


## Redevelopment of existing school site including the erection of a three storey academy building at Knole Academy – SE/12/1163

### PROPOSED SECOND FLOOR PLAN



1 P\_AGAL002 - Second Floor Plan

1:200


  
**Knole Academy**  
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 WWW.KNOLEACADEMY.CO.UK

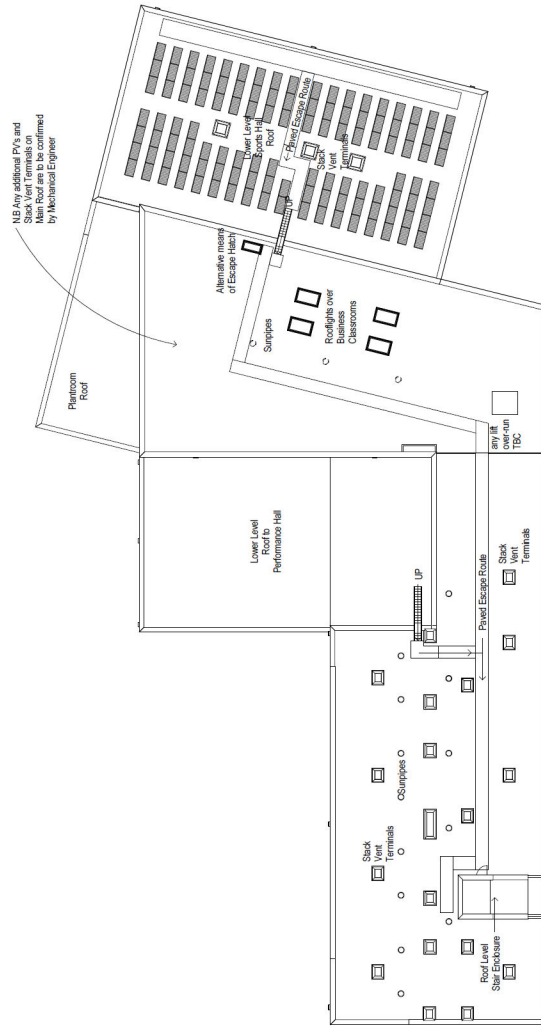
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Date: August 2017  
 Issue: 1.0  
 Project: P\_AGAL002  
 Drawing: P\_AGAL002  
 Scale: 1:200  
 Author: [Name]  
 Checker: [Name]  
 Approved: [Name]

No.	Description
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**Redevelopment of existing school site including the erection of a three storey academy building at Knole Academy – SE/12/1163**

PROPOSED ROOF PLAN



**1 P\_AGAL003 - Roof Level Plan**  
1:200

**hunters**  
ARCHITECTS

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0121 714 2400  
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**Knole Academy**  
KNOLE ACADEMY - PLANNING APPLICATION  
10/2016  
A-2016/09  
1



NO.	DATE	BY	REVISION



**Redevelopment of existing school site including the erection of a three storey academy building at Knole Academy – SE/12/1163**

PROPOSED ELEVATIONS



SOUTH EAST ELEVATION



SOUTH WEST ELEVATION

NOTE: PLANNING AMENDMENT DRAWING  
THIS DRAWING REPLACES STUDIO E ARCHITECTS DRAWING NO: 1256 REZ21 REV 02

NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION

**Knole Academy**  
 PLANNING AMENDMENT DRAWING NO: 1256 REZ21 REV 02  
 YEAR: 2024  
 DRAWN: [Name]  
 CHECKED: [Name]  
 DATE: 12/11/2024

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# Item D1

## Redevelopment of existing school site including the erection of a three storey academy building at Knole Academy – SE/12/1163

### PROPOSED ELEVATIONS



NORTH EAST ELEVATION



NORTH WEST ELEVATION

NOTE: PLANNING AMENDMENT DRAWING  
THIS DRAWING REPLACES STUDIO E ARCHITECTS DRAWING NO. 1266 REZ22 REV. 02

NO. 1266 REZ22 REV. 02	DATE: 12/12/22
DRAWING TITLE	
PROJECT NAME	
CLIENT NAME	
ARCHITECT NAME	
ARCHITECT ADDRESS	
ARCHITECT CONTACT	
ARCHITECT PHONE	
ARCHITECT EMAIL	
ARCHITECT WEBSITE	
ARCHITECT SOCIAL MEDIA	
ARCHITECT LOGO	

**Knole Academy**  
 PLANNING AMENDMENT DRAWING NO. 1266 REZ22 REV. 02  
 PROJECT NO. 1266 REZ22 REV. 02  
 DATE: 12/12/22  
 DRAWING TITLE: PLANNING AMENDMENT DRAWING  
 PROJECT NAME: KNOLE ACADEMY  
 CLIENT NAME: KNOLE ACADEMY  
 ARCHITECT NAME: HUNTERS  
 ARCHITECT ADDRESS: 111-113 HIGH STREET, LONDON, E15 2ET  
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 ARCHITECT SOCIAL MEDIA: @huntersarchitects



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2. Access to the site for both vehicles and pedestrians is from the A25 Bradbourne Vale Road. From the eastbound carriageway there is a dual access which provides entrance and exit from this side of the road. Vehicles exiting here are, however, already prevented from turning right. From the westbound carriageway the site is accessed via a dedicated underpass which extends from Oakdene Road, under the A25 to the school. This underpass is two way and allows for both entrance and exit from the site. There are footways along the underpass, as well as at the eastbound access. A turning loop is located to the front of the site, which allows for two school coaches to enter and wait on site at any one time. 109 car parking spaces are currently provided across the site.
3. The whole of the school site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, and outside of the settlement confines of Sevenoaks. Adjacent to the northern boundary of the Academy site lies Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, which is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The application site does not lie within any other statutory designations. There is little built development surrounding the site, but areas of residential development lie to the opposite side of Bradbourne Vale Road, to the south, and further east along the road. Two pairs of semi detached cottages lie to the south west of the site, with number 4 Oast Cottages lying immediately adjacent to the Academy site of the south western boundary. A further detached dwelling lies to the west of the Academy site frontage.
4. In light of the site's Green Belt designation, this application has been advertised as a Departure from the Development Plan, and would be referred to the Secretary of State for his consideration should Members be minded to permit. *A site location plan is attached.*

### Background

#### Academy Status

5. The Knole Academy was formed in 2010 as part of the Government's Academies Programme. The Academy has, until recently, operated from the sites and existing buildings of two predecessor schools, Bradbourne School for Girls (on the application site), and the Wildernesse School for Boys. The two schools have recently amalgamated onto one site, at the former Bradbourne School for Girls, leaving the Wildernesse site vacant and redundant in terms of educational provision. Prior to that, these schools have expanded to absorb pupil intake from outside of Sevenoaks, following the closure of other schools such as Edenbridge. Temporary modular accommodation has been provided on the Bradbourne site to accommodate the additional pupils as an interim solution, until such time as permanent purpose new build facilities are provided. This application seeks to provide the required permanent accommodation and associated facilities.

#### Amended design

6. Objection was raised by Sevenoaks District Council to the application as originally submitted on, amongst other matters, design grounds. As a result of this objection, the applicant has made minor amendments to the design including the removal of Brise Soleil, reorganisation of roof plant, changing the window design from a domestic window to something more suitable in a school, and changing the layout of materials to add verticality to the building. The amended design was submitted on the 24 August 2012, and has been subject to consultation with the District and Town Council, as well

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as the County Member. It is the amended design that will be discussed and detailed within this report.

#### **Proposal**

7. This application has been submitted by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure Support, and proposes the erection of an additional academy building and associated facilities. The applicant is proposing to re-organise and redevelop the site to provide new/re-modelled facilities for the six form entry Knole Academy. The main elements of the proposal are as follows:
  - New build facilities for 1550 pupils consisting of 1200 pupils aged 11-16 and 350 sixth formers, together with all requisite teaching/support staff;
  - Provision of external sports facilities including a new all weather pitch and external climbing wall facility;
  - New school/community car parking areas with provision for 195 new car parking spaces;
  - The re-organisation and re-landscaping of extensive areas of the school site.

#### Accommodation

8. The existing school buildings are proposed to be retained in their entirety, which have a gross internal floor area of around 7650m<sup>2</sup>. In order to accommodate the expansion in pupil numbers brought about by the amalgamation with the Wildernesse School for Boys, the applicant advises that approximately 7558m<sup>2</sup> of additional floor space is required. The proposed new build structure is a three storey building to the north of the existing school buildings, which would include a four court sports hall and large assembly performance hall, in addition to general teaching spaces. The new building would have a footprint of 2761m<sup>2</sup> and would be constructed upon an area of existing car parking, in addition to soft and hard landscaped areas, which also accommodate a number of temporary storage buildings and a modular building which is home to a nursery. It is proposed to relocate the nursery facility to the existing dance studio on site, which is a modular building to the south west of the school's existing built facilities. An enlarged parking provision of 195 spaces is proposed in two new parking areas, in addition to improved pick-up/drop-off facilities. Access and car parking provision is outlined in more detail in paragraphs 13, 14 & 15.
9. The applicant advises that the location of the new building has been selected to a) respect the overall use pattern of the site, and b) to enable construction to be undertaken whilst the existing buildings remain in operation. The site's sensitive location within the Green Belt has also been taken into consideration by the applicant in the preparation of the development layout. The site breakdown is proposed as follows:
  - Existing building footprint - 4912m<sup>2</sup>
  - Proposed building footprint – 2761m<sup>2</sup>
  - External recreational space excluding formal pitches – 19968m<sup>2</sup>
  - Sports pitches and dedicated perimeter/view areas – 22145m<sup>2</sup>
  - Habitat and planting areas – 30684m<sup>2</sup>
  - Entrances, dedicated visitor access, car/bus parking and service yard – 13164m<sup>2</sup>The combined building footprint of the existing and proposed Academy buildings would be 7673m<sup>2</sup>, which is 8% of the total site area.
10. Early consultation with the School established what accommodation needed to be provided within the new building. The new build and the existing accommodation on site

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would be reorganised into logical coherent department zones where possible. Changing facilities are proposed to be sited between the sports hall at the eastern end of the new building, and the performance main hall at the centre of the building, to not only meet Sport England requirements, but to allow access from both halls, providing support and change areas during staged performances in the main hall. The music department would also be located between the two halls, again with convenient adjacency to the main performance hall space. Design & Technology is proposed on the ground floor, to the west of the main hall, and science facilities would be located adjacent to this at the western end of the building. An external learning zone is proposed between the existing science block and the new building, which would incorporate a science and growing garden, an area in which science experiments could be undertaken, and a wildlife habitat garden and possible pond. At the first floor level, new science rooms and prep laboratories are proposed. On the top floor it is proposed to locate sixth form spaces, the art department and the business studies department. Sixth form spaces are located so as to maximise high level views across the Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, and the art department would be located to the western end of the building, to maximise light and to enable long distance views. An external climbing wall is proposed on the eastern end of the building, on the elevation of the sports hall facing the proposed new car parking area.

11. A single storey boiler house/plant room is proposed to be sited to the north of the new Academy building, which would have two boiler flues which would extend approximately 1.1m above the roof.
12. This application also proposes the continued temporary retention of the two storey modular classroom block, which was granted permission by the County Council as an interim solution to the accommodation problems on site. The classroom block is located to the southern corner of the site, to the east of the access road, and was granted temporary permission which expired in June 2012. However, this application was submitted prior to the expiration of that permission. It is proposed to retain the classroom block until the new Academy building as proposed is complete and fully operational.

**Access and car parking**

13. The existing vehicular and pedestrian access arrangements are not proposed to be altered in any way as a result of this application, with access via the Bradbourne Vale Road, either direct or via the dedicated underpass depending on direction of travel. Currently on site there are 109 car parking spaces, approximately 72 of which are where the new Academy building is proposed to be constructed. The School was keen to maintain its existing bus drop off and queuing arrangements, and so this provision would be retained to the front (south) of the site.
14. This application proposes a total of 195 car parking spaces, provided in four separate car parks. The existing car park to the south east of the site, adjacent to the existing main entrance, would accommodate 2 disabled spaces, in addition to the bus drop off loop and mini bus parking. Another existing car park, to the west of the existing access road that runs to the rear of the site, would be retained, accommodating a further 8 spaces. Two new car parks are proposed, the first of which would be located to the east of the existing access road and existing buildings, upon the area which currently accommodates the two storey modular classroom block referred to above. This car park is proposed to accommodate 103 parking spaces. The second of the new car parks is proposed to the rear of the site, to the east of the proposed new Academy building. This car park would provide 82 car parking spaces, as well as a pick-up/drop-off area, and

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access through to the service yard behind the new building. Across the site, 10 disabled parking bays are proposed, and an additional 7 larger spaces. 11 motorcycle parking spaces are also proposed adjacent to the new building.

15. With regard to bicycle parking, KCC standards require 1 space for every 7 pupils which would equate to 222 spaces. The applicant is proposing to provide 136 covered cycle spaces at this time, which is the amount required to achieve BREEAM credits. However, an area for future expansion would be set aside for the remaining 86 spaces should they be required in the future. The cycle parking area is proposed to the south of the site, adjacent to the pedestrian only access point from Bradbourne Vale Road.

#### Design and appearance

16. The applicant advises that the restricted area of land available for development means that a three storey building is required to provide the level of floor space required by the Academy to accommodate the additional pupils on site. The building has been designed with a staggered northern elevation, and an angled sports hall block, which aids in breaking down to overall bulk of the building, whilst, the applicant advises, reflecting the overall fragmented layout of the existing development. The entrance to the new Academy building would be demarcated with a triple height glazed entrance and over sailing portico. A double height glazed 'VIP and circulation area' sitting above the main entrance foyer would provide a dramatic space for internal and external views of the building. The angled wall of the sports hall would create an approach plaza to the entrance, creating a 'sense of arrival'. The eastern end of the building, the sports hall elevation facing the new car park, would accommodate an external climbing wall.
17. The applicant considers that the main objective for the design appearance of the proposed Academy building has been to provide a strong contemporary image that is not only in keeping with 'its strength of purpose and educational orientation and specialism's', but also in keeping with the sensitivities of the site and surroundings. The façade materials include buff coloured brick, render and curtain walling. The brickwork is proposed at ground floor level, with occasional vertical brickwork 'columns' on the main teaching classroom wing, to serve to balance the length of the building. These vertical brickwork elements also act as 'bookends', framing areas of rendered façade and adding visual weight to the overall appearance of the building. The choice of materials is in part to do with robustness, to ensure that the lower levels of the facades that are within hands reach can withstand the wear and tear of daily intensive use. The applicant advises that the use of masonry also ties in with the existing buildings and the paved materials that will form adjoining surfaces. Windows are either cut into the masonry or, for more significant elevation openings such as the main entrance foyer, are completed in full height curtain walling. The brickwork finish is also proposed to extend up to full height of the larger hall volumes to create unified brick clad volumes that help break up and articulate the elevations.
18. The upper floors of the Academy building are proposed to be finished in pale rendered insulation. As these areas are a storey above ground level they are less susceptible to knocks and impact damage. The applicant advises that the choice of material here was driven by a desire to create a consistent appearance that blends in with the sky line and provides variation across the elevational length of the building. The applicant states that they have proposed a propriety insulated render as, when detailed correctly, it generates a crisp and lasting appearance and requires little maintenance. Windows and curtain walling would be aluminium framed and powder coated. The Academy's name and logo is proposed to be displayed on the brick wall of the sports hall, adjacent to the main entrance of the new building.

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19. Since this application has been submitted, further technical design of the building structure has mitigated the need for sprinklers, which in turn has enabled a lowering of the storey heights. As a result of this, the height of the main teaching block has been reduced from 12.5m by 1.1m to 11.4m. The heights of the proposed performance hall and sports hall remain unchanged at 9.1m and 9.6m respectively. A number of sun tubes and roof lights are proposed to supplement day light in some classroom spaces and upper level corridors. Wind catchers and mono draught units are also proposed to form part of the ventilation strategy for the building. Solar thermal panels would also be strategically placed across the roof.

Community Use

20. It is proposed that the new Academy facilities would play an important role in enhancing the community use of the site. The proposed site re-organisation and new provisions would allow effective community use of a range of facilities, most noticeably the sports hall, climbing wall, performance hall and associated spaces. The applicant advises that the proposals have been developed to facilitate the community use of a range of on site facilities outside of school hours. Strategic zoning and permit controls would allow for restricted access, and facilities provision depending on the user group. The main halls, sports and performance areas, and smaller areas such as specific classroom blocks, could be segregated to allow for community use. With a separate reception area, the new build structure would have a number of natural control points, and separate access from the changing rooms to the external sports field and MUGA would allow easy access for user groups. The applicant advises that access for all has been designed to comply with Sport England guidance and advice. Car parking would be available on site to accommodate community users of the facilities.

Ecology and Landscaping

21. An Ecological Scoping Survey was submitted with this application which was undertaken to identify the presence or likely presence of any notable protected species or habitats. The reports summary and recommendations consider that the presence/possible presence of Japanese Knotweed, nesting birds, bats, badgers, hedgehogs, reptiles and common toad should be taken into account before and during development works. With regard to Japanese Knotweed, it is recommended that a skilled and experienced contractor be used to prevent the spread of this highly evasive species. Pursuant to this, the applicant advises that the Japanese Knotweed, located to the north of the site, has been treated and is under a process of eradication. Three herbicide spray treatments were required, the first of which was undertaken in October 2011, the second in April/May 2012, and the last a month later. The treatment is expected to have killed all of the knotweed material.
22. With regard to nesting birds, bats, badgers, hedgehogs and the common toad, recommendations are made as to how works should proceed and what should be done should such species be discovered. Most of the Academy site is considered to be unsuitable for reptile habitats, although the north eastern corner is identified as an area which could be suitable for reptiles, particularly slow worms, given the low scrub and herb vegetation. The Scoping Survey recommends that, if that area would be affected by the proposed development, a presence/likely absence survey for reptiles is carried out. If reptiles are found to be present then they should be relocated, either on or off site. This survey has subsequently been undertaken which identified the presence of slow worms and the common lizard. A reptile mitigation and method statement is included within the survey.

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23. It is also important to note that beyond the northern margins of the development area and the Academy site boundary, is the Sevenoaks Gravel Pits SSSI. The Scoping Survey recommends that reptile fencing should be installed to isolate the SSSI to ensure that reptiles could not migrate during the construction works.
24. An Arboricultural Survey and Assessment was also submitted with the planning application, in addition to an outline hard and soft landscaping specification. With regard to soft landscaping, the applicant advises that planting within the school grounds is important to provide enclosure, shelter, interest for wildlife and general visual attractiveness. The overriding aims for the landscape design are to retain and enhance as much of the soft vegetation on site as possible, and to mitigate any loss where this is unavoidable.
25. A small number of individual trees and an area of scrub woodland to the north of the site are proposed for removal because they are either too close to the proposed building footprint or car parking areas. The trees are largely located to the north of the site and are being removed as part of the Japanese Knotweed eradication programme in any event. The Arboricultural Report states that the proposal would result in the loss of 10 trees and 3 groups of trees, including one category B tree, 8 category C trees and groups, and one category R tree (requires removal). No category A trees are to be removed. These trees would be replaced and additional trees introduced (44 new trees in total) with the same or similar species found elsewhere on site, and would be located in parts of the site where they would enhance the character of the Academy, and provide seasonal variation. The existing trees to be retained would be protected during construction in accordance with BS5837: Trees in Relation to Construction.
26. The applicant advises that the proposed hard landscape material palette has been selected to create a good quality, low maintenance and robust scheme. The footway areas at the front of the school, across the car parking area entrances and along building thresholds are proposed to be delineated with concrete slab paving flags with block paving used to delineate the disabled parking bays. The proposed car parking areas, and active play areas, would have a continuous tarmacadam surface, whilst concrete tactile paving would be used around the science garden. The All Weather Pitch would be surfaced with 3G synthetic grass. The wider site boundary would remain as existing in terms of fencing and screening.

**Security**

27. The applicant advises that the security strategy aims to create a safe, reassuring environment for students, whilst at the same time welcoming the wider community and expressing a civic presence, embodying the Academy's 'forward thinking and creative learning ethos'. The existing buildings would operate in the same manner to which they do currently, with controlled access at the main entrance, car park barriers and CCTV surveillance. The entrance to the new Academy building would have a similar controlled access arrangement and CCTV coverage. The proposed all weather pitch would also be enclosed with fencing to make sure that the surface would not be damaged by unofficial use. Safety lighting in accordance with Secure by Design guidelines would be provided along the main pedestrian routes, within the main entrance plaza and outdoor learning areas, and in the car park. Barriers, drop bollards and secure gates would control the zoning of the site, separating public and private areas.



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Lighting

28. The applicant advises that external lighting of the site would create attractive and safe lighting levels in keeping with the character of the landscape. The applicant considers that the specific choice of lighting, both in terms of fitting type and lighting levels, would address security throughout the site, be attractive, and relate to the character of the scheme whilst avoiding light pollution to the surrounding community. Lighting would be designed in accordance with ILE Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light, and would utilise high efficiency light sources to satisfy BREEAM requirements. Proposed column mounted lighting to the access road would provide 10 lux at ground level with a minimum uniformity of 0.4, lighting to the car park would provide 10 lux at ground level with a minimum uniformity of 0.25, and lighting to pedestrian only routes would provide 5 lux at ground level with a minimum uniformity of 0.25. All external lighting would be contactor controlled via a photocell and digital timer arrangement, with a manual override switch. No lighting of the All Weather Pitch is proposed.

Sustainability

29. The applicant advises that the project would achieve a minimum 'Very Good' rating under BREEAM for schools. The energy strategy developed by the applicant is based around the established hierarchy of reducing energy demand through passive design, utilising efficient plant and controls to take full advantage of the passive design, and using appropriate low and zero carbon technologies. The applicant proposes to create well daylit and naturally ventilated spaces, and aims to incorporate sun pipes, wind catchers, rainwater harvesting, mains water leak detection, lighting controls, ground source heat pumps, and PV Cells and Solar Thermal Panels into the development.

*The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Statement, Lighting Assessment, Outline Hard and Soft Landscape Specifications, Drainage Assessment Report, Ecological Scoping Survey, Ground Investigation Report, Additional Ground Investigation Report, Proposed Remediation Strategy, Acoustic Assessment, Acoustic Strategy, Renewable Energy Assessment, BREEAM Pre-Assessment, Transport Assessment and Travel Plans, Arboricultural Survey/Assessment, Archaeology Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment, Statement of Community Involvement,, Utilities Statement and Site Waste Management Strategy.*

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

**Planning Policies**

30. **The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The NPPF is planning policy guidance and 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), although PPS10 relating to Planning for Sustainable Waste Management is currently retained.

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The NPPF contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The new Framework 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:

1. be genuinely plan-led;
2. a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places people live their lives;
3. proactively drive and support sustainable economic development;
4. secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity;
5. 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;
6. support the transition to a low carbon future, taking account of flood risk and costal change and encourage the reuse of existing resources and the development of renewable energy;
7. contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution;
8. encourage the effective use of land by reusing brownfield land, providing that it is not of high environmental value;
9. promote mixed use developments;
10. conserve heritage assets;
11. 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;
12. 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:

The NPPF sets out the Government's objectives for promoting sustainable growth and prosperity, whilst planning for strong vibrant and healthy communities. Good design is identified as important for sustainable development, with the planning system expected to promote good design for all development. Green Belt protections are maintained within the NPPF (section 9), which carries forward the principles of the former PPG2, in that inappropriate development harmful to Green Belt should not be permitted. However, land within the Green Belt that has been developed in the past may be used for new development in some circumstances. Local Authorities are

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also required to enhance the Green Belt, by the introduction of paths, ecological enhancement and planting, for example. As part of the Government's objective to promote healthy and sustainable communities, paragraph 72 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools, ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the demand of existing and new 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. The NPPF also sets out planning's important role in tackling climate change, protecting the natural environment, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, limiting noise and light pollution, and protecting the historic environment. Section 7 of the NPPF (in particular paragraphs 56-64) set out guidance to achieve good design.

The Government is committed to the principles of the Green Belt and to maintaining tight planning controls over development on Green Belt land. It is expected that all planning applications for development in the Green Belt be subject to the most rigorous scrutiny, having regard to the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy as set out in the NPPF; that is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The openness of Green Belts is considered to be their most important attribute and therefore there is a general presumption against inappropriate development, which is by definition harmful and should not be permitted, unless it can be justified by very special circumstances.

**Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development 15 August 2011**

31. (i) The adopted **South East Plan 2009**:

**Policy SP5** Refers to Green Belts, supporting their retention.

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

**Policy CC4** Refers to sustainable design and construction.

**Policy CC6** Refers to sustainable communities and character of the environment.

**Policy CC7** States that the scale and pace of development will depend on sufficient capacity being available in existing infrastructure to meet the needs of the development. Where this cannot be demonstrated the scale and the pace of the development will be dependent on additional capacity being released or the provision of new infrastructure.

**Policy T4** Refers to parking standards and the provision of adequate secure cycle parking.

**Policy NRM2** Water quality will be maintained and enhanced through avoiding adverse effects of development on the water environment.

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**Policy NRM5** Requires Local Planning Authorities and other bodies to avoid a net loss of biodiversity, and actively pursue opportunities to achieve a net gain across the region.

**Policy NRM10** Measures to address and reduce noise will be developed at regional and local levels.

**Policy BE1** Local Authorities and their partners will use opportunities associated with new development to help provide significant improvements to the built environment.

**Policy C5** Seeks to ensure better management of the rural-urban fringe.

**Policy S1** Supports measures for developing and shaping healthy sustainable communities, including community access to amenities such as parks and physical recreation activities.

**Policy S3** States that, local planning authorities, taking into account demographic projections, should work with partners to ensure the adequate provision of pre-school, school and community learning facilities.

**Policy S5** Refers to cultural and sporting activities, and encourages local authorities and their partners to improve the overall standard of fitness, enhance cultural diversity and enrich the overall quality of life.

**Policy S6** Encourages the mixed use of community facilities, and requires community facilities to be located and designed appropriately.

**Policy W2** Encourages sustainable design, construction and demolition.

***Important note regarding 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 should also 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.*

(ii) **Sevenoaks District Local Plan: Adopted 2000:**

**Policy EN1** - Proposals for all forms of development and land use must comply with the policies set out in this Plan, unless there are overriding material considerations. Scale, height, design, layout, retention of important features (such as trees), residential and local amenity, access and parking are just some of the criteria which should be considered in the determination of a planning application.

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**Policy EN4A** - Proposals for all forms of non-residential development must make satisfactory provision for the safe and easy access of those with disabilities.

**Policy NR10** – Proposals for all forms of development should minimise pollution of the environment through the careful design and layout of any buildings or land uses.

**Policy VP1** – Vehicle parking provision in new developments will be made in accordance with KCC adopted vehicles parking standards.

(iii) **Sevenoaks District Core Strategy: Adopted February 2011:**

**Policy LO8** – Seeks to maintain the extent of Green Belt, and conserve and enhance the countryside, including the distinctive features that contribute to the special character of its landscape and its biodiversity.

**Policy SP1** – Requires all new development to be designed to a high standard, reflect the distinctive local character of an area, create safe, inclusive and attractive environments, incorporate sustainable development principles and maintain biodiversity.

**Policy SP2** - Sets standards for sustainable design and construction. Institutional development will be required to achieve a BREEAM rating of at least 'very good'. In order to achieve this the proposal will be expected to demonstrate 10% energy savings through renewable sources.

**Policy SP10** – Promotes the provision of multifunctional green space by linking existing green space areas. The Policy also seeks the retention of open space, sports and recreational facilities, including indoor facilities of value to the local community, unless any loss can be justified by additional provision of at least equivalent value to the local community.

**Policy SP11** - Seeks to conserve biodiversity, to ensure no net loss through development and to promote opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

**Consultations**

32. **Sevenoaks District Council** commented on the application as originally submitted as follows:

“Whilst the District Council supports the development of the Knole Academy, it objects to this application on the following grounds:

1. The proposed new building to the north of the existing school buildings, as a result of its arrangement and massing with large unrelieved sections of elevations coupled with its resulting height and large amount of roof plant on the

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main section of building, would result in a visually unattractive form of development failing to add to the overall quality of the surrounding area. The development would therefore be contrary to Policy EN1 of the Sevenoaks Local Plan, Policies SP1 and LO8 of the Sevenoaks Core Strategy and guidance contained within section 7 of the NPPF (in particular para. 58).

2. The proposal would result in a significant increase in car parking on the site resulting in harm to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area and having a negative impact upon Green Belt openness as well as promoting and increased dependence upon motorised transport. The increase in parking proposed is not sufficiently justified by the accompanying 'DHA Transport Assessment' which indicates that 'the forecast maximum school parking accommodation is expected to be in the order of 150 vehicles' (para 8.5.5). For these reasons the development is contrary to Policy EN1 of the Sevenoaks Local Plan, Policies SP1 and LO8 of the Sevenoaks Core Strategy and guidance contained within section 4 of the NPPF (in particular para. 58).

The District Council also raises concern over the following issues:

1. The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and constitutes inappropriate development that should not normally be allowed other than in very special circumstances. Whilst the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment demonstrates that the visual impacts of the development would be relatively constrained by surrounding topography, it is the Council's view that the proposal for a substantial and bulky building would have a significant impact upon Green Belt 'openness' generally. The additional ancillary works proposed (in particular the provision of large additional car parking areas) would have some additional negative impact upon Green Belt openness.

The 'DHA Planning Statement' April 2012 sets out the applicant's case for very special circumstances (paras. 4.2.16 to 4.2.49).

The District Council acknowledges the Government's objective to ensure 'that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities' and that LPAs should 'give great weight to the need to create expand and alter schools' (NPPF para. 72). This objective should be given some weight as a material consideration however, in terms of the Green Belt consideration, the County Planning Authority should, in consultation with the Local Education Authority, be satisfied that the very special circumstances set out by the applicant based on an educational need and relating to the amalgamation of the school on one site outweigh the harm to openness identified above.

Firstly, it is suggested by the applicant that the continued operation of the academy from two separate sites is impracticable. The District Council notes that there appears to be no undertaking to remove buildings on the former Wildernesse School site (also within the Green Belt) as a direct 'trade-off' with the building proposed and as such there would be a significant net increase in built form. In the absence of such a 'trade-off', the County Planning Authority should be satisfied that the current arrangement is impracticable and unsustainable in the long-term and that the benefit of amalgamating the school on one single site in terms of the quality of the educational provision constitutes overriding very special circumstances.

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Secondly, the resultant scale of the building appears to be partly as a result of a proposed increase in the pupil roll number at the school. The County Planning Authority, in consultation with the Local Education Authority, should be satisfied that there is sufficient strategic need for additional places at the school over and above those resulting from the amalgamation of Bradbourne School and Wildernesse Schools.

The County Planning Authority should then be additionally satisfied that there are no alternative more suitable sites for the development (either the building or school as a whole) and that the building itself has been designed and sited to minimise its impact upon Green Belt openness as far as is reasonably practicable.

Whilst the highways and access improvements arising from the amalgamation are capable of being a very special circumstance in this case, for the reasons set out above the District Council raises concern that insufficient justification has been provided to justify the extent of additional car parking areas on the site. The proposed car parks have some negative impact upon the Green Belt in their own right.

2. The County Planning Authority, in consultation with Sport England, should be satisfied that sport and recreation facilities, including playing fields, pitches and amenity areas of value to the community are appropriately retained in accordance with SP10 of the Sevenoaks Core Strategy. It should be satisfied that the resultant facilities are sufficient to accommodate the increase in the pupil roll number at the school so as to avoid additional pressure on local facilities. “

Following the submission of revised design details (see paragraph 6), Sevenoaks District Council comment as follows:

“The District Council considers that whilst the amendments constitute an improvement in terms of the resultant appearance of the building, in comparison to the originally submitted scheme, the amendments do not fully overcome the objections previously raised particularly in terms of the buildings massing, large sections of unrelieved elevation and prevalence of roof plant.

The District Council continues to raise objection to the proposal and all comments raised in the District Council’s previous response remain relevant.”

**Sevenoaks Town Council** recommends approval of the application.

**Kent County Council Highways and Transportation** comment as follows:

“Using the numbers of students and staff given in page 2 of the Travel Plan it is unclear how the maximum provision of 203 spaces given in paragraph 4.6.3 of the Transport Assessment is arrived at. However of key importance in the car parking standards for schools is note 3 which states that appropriate provision should be made for the setting down and picking up of children in a safe environment in a manner that does not unduly interfere with the operation of the public highway and paragraph 3.4.1 of the Transport Assessment is considered to be most apt and fitting in this regard. The allocation for visitors and those dropping off children near to the site entrance is welcomed and considered to be of road safety and local residential benefit.

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The actual total allocation of 195 spaces is not considered to be excessive when considering the various analyses that the applicant's transport consultant has made and the School's aspirations for the future. Whilst the School Travel Plan in contradiction rightly aims to reduce the need for this car parking, I would agree with the comments made in 8.5.6 in that depending on the success of the plan, adjustments or re-allocation of the car parking can be made, notably with respect to car sharing spaces. Appropriate provision has been made for cycling, motorcycling, mobility impaired, mini bus and mini-coach parking."

**Environment Agency** raises no objection to the application subject to the imposition of conditions regarding surface water disposal, surface water drainage, a remediation strategy to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site, and control of piling and any other penetrative foundation designs in those parts of the site that could pose a risk to groundwater. Further advice and guidance is provided regarding drainage and storage of fuels and chemicals. The Environment Agency states that the proposed development would only be acceptable if the planning conditions as worded in their response are included on any permission granted.

**Sport England** is currently assessing additional information submitted in support of this application. Comments are awaited, and Members will be updated of Sport England's views at the Planning Applications Committee Meeting.

**The County Council's Biodiversity Officer** is satisfied that the submitted surveys have adequately assessed the impact of the development on protected species, including Reptiles and Bats. The implementation of the mitigation measures detailed within the reports must be secured by conditions of consent. Ecological enhancements should also be incorporated into the development, and further consideration should be given to managing and enhancing the buffer area between the proposed development site and the adjacent SSSI.

**Kent Wildlife Trust** raises no objection to the application, following the applicants submission of further details with regard to the enhancement of the buffer zone between the development site and the adjacent SSSI, and the submission of a 5 year Environmental Management Plan.

**Natural England** confirms that the application site is in close proximity to Sevenoaks Gravel Pits SSSI. However, given the nature and scale of this proposal, Natural England raises no objection to the proposal being carried out according to the terms and conditions of the application and submitted plans on account of the impact of designated sites. Natural England also considers that appropriate mitigation has been proposed with regard to protected species.

**The County Archaeologist** raises no objection subject to a condition being placed on any grant of planning permission requiring the securing of the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, to be undertaken in accordance with a written specification and timetable.

**The County Council's Landscape Advisor** comments as follows:

"I accept the justification for the extent of development, and that the design aims to reduce the impact on the openness of the Green Belt and to retain as much existing vegetation as possible. I also appreciate that proposed planting



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is extensive and would potentially exceed vegetation removal (pending details, see below). However although the proposals would be set within the context of the existing school development, there would be a degree of encroachment within the Green Belt and some localised impact on the openness of the Green Belt and this should be balanced against the need for the development.

I note the following amendments to the Landscape Hard and Soft General Arrangement Plan (Drawing Number D1941L.100 Revision H) in response to my previous comments:

- The applicant has increased the extent of proposed planting, including additional native shrub planting, native hedgerow and meadow mix. Although the details of this planting appear to be indicative, I consider that detailed landscape proposals would be acceptable as a condition to any planning permission granted.
- I am pleased to note that the proposed car park has been moved by 2.5m as recommended by the arborist to avoid root damage to existing trees.”

#### **Local Member**

33. The local County Member, Mr Nick Chard, and the adjoining local County Member Mr John London, have been notified of the application and the amended design details. No views have been received.

#### **Publicity**

34. The application was publicised by the posting of 4 site notices, advertisement in a local newspaper, and the individual notification of 54 neighbouring properties.

#### **Representations**

35. To date, I have received 3 individual letters of representation from 2 local properties/residents.

A summary of the main issues raised/points made to date are set out below:

- Concerned about the existing dance studio being used as a nursery;
- The existing dance studio is only a few feet from the end of a resident's garden, and noise from the studio is a nuisance;
- The use of the dance studio as a nursery would create even more noise and nuisance, over longer hours. No objection is raised to a 0730 start, but strong objection is raised to a finish past 1600;
- The nursery/dance studio building should be moved to another area of the school site, away from residents;
- The fencing along the western boundary of the site should be replaced as it is in a poor state of repair;
- Parents are currently using the private road leading to local properties and the Wildfowl Reserve as a car park/waiting area at drop-off/pick-up times.

I have also received a letter of representation from Matthew C.F. Dickins, the District Councillor for Sevenoaks Northern. Mr Dickins states that he writes further to the submission of Sevenoaks District Councils (SDC's) objections, and comments as follows:

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“From a practical perspective I must disagree with SDC’s second point of objection regarding parking provision. At school pick up time, Oakdene Road and Lambarde Road are lined with the parked cars of people collecting their children. The noise greatly disturbs the residents of these otherwise quiet roads and quantity of vehicles presents a highway safety hazard. As such, I wholly support the proposed increase in on site parking provision at Knole Academy.

To clarify, these are my own views as the local District Member, as such they should not be considered to be part of SDC’s response.”

**Discussion**

36. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraphs 30 & 31 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 Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance, including the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. Issues of particular relevance include impact upon the Metropolitan Green Belt and wider landscape, siting, massing & design, highway implications and access, landscaping, and whether the development is sustainable in light of the NPPF.
37. Policy BE1 of the South East Plan, Policy EN1 of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan, and Core Strategy Policy SP1, seek to conserve and enhance the environment and require development to be well designed and respect its setting. This is particularly relevant to this site which is identified within the Sevenoaks District Local Plan as being within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Policy LO8 of the Sevenoaks District Core Strategy seeks to resist inappropriate development within the Green Belt, unless justified by exceptional circumstances. Reference is made to PPG2 which has been replaced by the NPPF. The NPPF says “as with previous Green Belt Policy, inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances”. The NPPF does not explain in any detail what ‘very special circumstances’ means, but does go on to say “very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations”. Any built development within the Metropolitan Green Belt could affect the openness of it and would be contrary to planning policies. On this basis the development proposed must be considered as a departure from the Development Plan. Therefore, if Members were minded to grant planning permission, the application would need to be referred to the Secretary of State for his consideration.

Green Belt considerations

38. By virtue of the criteria in the NPPF, and various Local Plan Policies, the development is inappropriate in Green Belt terms. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and it is for the applicant to demonstrate why permission should be granted. Such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt and whether or not there are very special circumstances that would warrant setting aside the general presumption against inappropriate development.

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39. A 'planning statement' was submitted in support of this application, which sets out what the applicant considers to be the very special circumstances that warrant setting aside the general presumption against what would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. As part of the very special circumstances justification, the applicant has considered three further alternative development options for the Knole Academy:

Option 1: Do nothing and retain a split campus;

Option 2: Find another non Green Belt site for the Academy to relocate to;

Option 3: Deliver the new Academy using or directly replacing the existing built footprint on the current application site.

The following paragraphs outline why these 3 options were not considered to be appropriate or acceptable, leading to a discussion of the development as proposed.

40. However, in general it is important to note that the redevelopment of the Academy would significantly improve the educational and sporting facilities at the Academy, which would benefit existing pupils, staff and the wider community. Prior to becoming an Academy, Bradbourne and Wildernesse Schools were the only secondary schools serving Sevenoaks Town and the surrounding villages. However, only 35% of students resident in the Sevenoaks Town area attend the schools, with Sevenoaks District being one of the largest exporters of students within Kent. One of the main aims of creating the Academy was to attempt to reverse this trend and retain a higher percentage of Sevenoaks based attendance and student population through providing a high performing, co-educational local secondary school which would present a credible and preferable alternative to schools outside of the town. The provision of new development for schools is specifically supported in National Planning Policy, and the Government has pledged further support for school development in their DCLG Policy Statement Planning for School Development (2011). Against this background of strong policy support, I consider that the principle of redeveloping the Academy to provide a new school building and better sports facilities is acceptable. However, notwithstanding the established use of the application site, the proposed redevelopment of the Academy represents development which by definition is inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Before assessing the case of very special circumstances justifying the development upon the application site, the three options above, including alternative sites must first be considered.

41. First, with regard to option 1 above, the applicant advises that if the Academy were to remain as it is, operating from the existing buildings and campuses of two separate sites, a mile apart, it would be impossible to bring about the transformational change in the standard of education and facilities which is necessary to ensure the continued improvement in education attainment of the Wildernesse School Pupils (prior to becoming part of Knole Academy, the Wildernesse School was recovering from a low point of educational attainment). Retaining the split campuses would, the applicant advises, present significant difficulties both perceptually as well as logistically. The consolidation to one site and the re-organisation of the former Bradbourne School is central to successfully delivering the Academy's educational model, and the elements of the new building work are considered to be critical to transforming the ethos and overall image of the Academy. Retaining two sites would disperse the impact of the new building work, and would present an unsustainable arrangement in terms of access, management and effective overall teaching, with students and teachers continuing to be shuttled from one site to the other. The applicant considers that the cohesive power of operating as a whole from one site would not be achieved in this scenario.

42. Furthermore, the Expression of Interest for the Academy was based on the two sites being consolidated to one and, therefore, the overall support and funding for this

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Academy has been secured on this basis. The applicant advises that the 'do nothing' option is unacceptable and would not bring about the improvement in educational provision that is required by Central Government and their agencies. In light of this, and having accepted that the only option for the provision of improved Academy facilities is to develop on one site, it is important to consider option 2 - whether an alternative non Green Belt site is available to develop.

43. It is recognised that the preferable policy position would be to locate the Academy development outside of the Green Belt. As the whole of the Academy site (the former Bradbourne School), and that of the second Wildernesse Site, are within the Green Belt, the only option to achieve development outside of the Green Belt would be to relocate the Academy to an alternative site elsewhere in the District. The applicant advises that relocating to an alternative site would present significant logistical and financial cost, not least from potential site acquisition which would add heavily to the Academy's development costs. Due to cuts in the original funding budget, the proposed development has already been scaled back from a complete new build, to retaining buildings where possible to ensure that the most important elements of the Academy can be delivered as new build. The level of funding available through the Academies programme would, therefore, fall far short of that required to acquire and develop another alternative site, whether it be outside the Green Belt or not. In addition, the existing Academy serves a local community need, and relocation to an alternative site (assuming that one could be found) would result in the loss of a local community hub, and would not present a sustainable solution. New development on an alternative site in another part of Sevenoaks would not meet the needs of the existing community and the residential development south of Bradbourne Vale Road. Given that the whole of the District is within the Green Belt, the development also needs to be seen in context; concentration on one site might mean more built development on a Green Belt site, but it avoids development on other sites in the Green Belt, such as the Wildernesse site, and in other towns such as Edenbridge, which are now within the Academy's catchment area.
44. In addition to the cost implications of acquiring an alternative site, such a step would also significantly delay the development programme and extend the time period for delivering the new Academy campus. The applicant advises that there is a pressing need to raise educational standards at the school, and the new Academy campus would play a critical role in achieving this. The programme for creating the Academy and securing the new campus is running to a tight time scale, with completion of the works due in September 2013. If a new site were to be acquired prior to the development commencing, this would add considerably to the development programme, which would, the applicant advises, have a negative impact on the 'ability to implement the educational model in its entirety and thereby raise standards'. In light of the information provided in support of the need to redevelop one of the existing sites, and in considering that both of the existing sites are established educational campuses, I see no other viable alternative than the redevelopment of one of the school sites. Having accepted that the Academy could not be moved to an alternative site, I consider that the applicants are left with only one option - to provide new and improved Academy buildings on one of the existing School sites within the Green Belt.
45. The applicant advises that the choice of site to consolidate development of the Academy on has been carefully considered with extensive analysis of the locational, environmental, strategic and financial constraints and values of each site. Following this analysis, the applicant advises that the decision was taken to relocate to the Bradbourne School (Knole West) site rather than the Wildernesse School (Knole East) site for the following reasons:

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- Thorough conditions surveys of the buildings and grounds of each site were undertaken, which concluded that many of the buildings on the Knole East site were in a poor condition and past their useful lifespan, whereas at Knole West there are a greater number of more recently completed buildings that are considered to be in good condition;
  - During the process of developing the strategy for the new Academy development, the Department of Education significantly reduced the funding available. The former wholesale development strategy had to be rethought, and funds focused on the areas which would bring about the most community benefit. The result of this was that some of the existing building on whichever site was chosen would need to be retained alongside a smaller proportion of new build;
  - Fully costed options for part redevelopment/part refurbishment of existing buildings at both sites were drawn up, which clearly showed that given the poor conditions of the buildings at Knole East and the funding available, Knole West presented a more suitable base as the condition of existing buildings required less refurbishment and would therefore allow for a more extensive proportion of new build. This was considered by the applicant to be the preferable option in terms of maximising the benefit to the community in terms of the achieving the most from the funding available;
  - A further key consideration was the transport implications of the Knole East site. The Knole East site (Wilderness) currently experiences very heavy traffic build up at the junction on the A25 at peak times. Consolidating the Academy onto that site, with the attendant uplift in pupils would increase traffic in this location, exacerbating existing congestion problems. Any proposal to relocate solely to this site would, therefore, undoubtedly require additional measures to be introduced to mitigate any impact on the local highway network, which would not be affordable given the reduced funding available for the Academy development.
46. Notwithstanding the above, the Wilderness Knole East site is also within the Green Belt, and within an area of suburban low density housing. Having accepted that the redevelopment of one of the existing Academy sites is the only option available, and in consideration of the information provided by the applicant, as set out above, I consider that the currently proposed redevelopment of the Bradbourne Knole West site is a far more suitable option than the redevelopment of the Knole East site. The District Council note that there appears to be no undertaking to remove buildings on the former Wilderness School Site as a 'direct trade-off' with the building proposed, and that in the absence of such a trade off, the County Planning Authority should be satisfied that the current split site arrangement is impracticable and unsustainable in the long term, and that the benefit of the amalgamation in terms of the quality of educational provision constitutes overriding very special circumstances. I consider that the applicant has provided sufficient justification and a case of need for the redevelopment of the Bradbourne School site, and that continued use of the two sites would not prove sustainable or practicable in the future, nor would it provide a level of accommodation required to house modern teaching practices to meet community needs. Having accepted that the Academy should be located on one site, and that that site should be the existing campus of the Bradbourne School, it is now essential to consider the implications of development on that site and assess the merits of the development scheme as proposed.
47. As detailed in paragraph 39, and discussed in previous paragraphs, one remaining alternative option to the development as proposed is option 3 – to deliver the new Academy using or directly replacing the existing built footprint on the current application site. It is important to note that the whole of the Knole West school site is within the

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Green Belt, including the area of built development. Any development on the site would, therefore, be development within the Green Belt. However, building upon the existing footprint could potentially be a more acceptable alternative to encroaching upon undeveloped areas of the school site and this option needs to be considered. As outlined above, during the process of developing the strategy for the new Academy development, the Department of Education reviewed the funding allocated for the Knole Academy development, and reduced it significantly. As a consequence, the Academy has had to reconsider its development strategy for a total rebuild, to focusing funds on the areas which would bring about the most change and be of most community benefit. Existing school buildings therefore need to be retained, being refurbished where required. However, the provision of an element of new build is essential in achieving the standard of educational facilities required, and in providing an independent campus specifically for the Knole Academy. The applicant advises that the potential to provide the new elements required wholly within the existing developed part of the site has been fully explored but is severely hampered by the size of the site, the need to retain the existing school buildings, and the need to provide accommodation for students and teachers during construction. In addition, improved sports and car parking facilities are required, which could not be accommodated within the confines of existing development.

48. The potential to provide the required new elements of the Academy campus wholly within the existing developed part of the site has been explored by the applicant. I accept the applicants arguments concerning the provision of a new building, and associated car parking and sport facilities, and agree with the applicant in that they could not be accommodated within the existing built footprint due to the confined size of the site, the requirement to retain existing buildings, and the need to provide accommodation for students and teaching during the construction period. I also recognise that the phasing of a new campus on the existing developed part of the site would result in a cramped spatial layout and would be extremely difficult to implement without impacting negatively upon teaching and day to day management.
49. Having accepted that new build elements would be required, and that the redevelopment of the Academy campus could not be contained within the footprint of existing built development, the impact of the development as proposed on the Green Belt needs to be considered as discussed. Prior to submitting this application the applicant undertook a feasibility study, reviewing various options for the redevelopment of the site. The development as now proposed was considered by the applicant to provide the best solution for the school, whilst minimising the impact on playing field provision and the openness of the Green Belt. The applicant advises that the Academy development has been designed to ensure that any harm to the openness of the Green Belt is minimised. The new Academy building which would house teaching, sports and performance accommodation, has been designed to occupy a compact minimum footprint (2761m<sup>2</sup>) and to maintain the existing three storey height that prevails to the rear of the site. The building as proposed presents the minimum height and footprint needed to provide the schedule of accommodation, whilst delivering the transformational teaching and learning environment needed for a modern community facility.
50. The approach taken to the site layout and design maximises the use of the existing developed footprint as far as possible. The proposed new building would be located primarily on the footprint of the existing rear car parking area/hardstanding, and an area currently home to a plethora of temporary storage buildings and a nursery. The NPPF supports development of previously developed land within the Green Belt in some circumstances, and by building upon existing areas of hardstanding, and upon the

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footprint of temporary buildings to be removed, the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt is minimised. The built form of the main Academy building would, however, extend beyond the current development footprint, into the area of scrub/woodland to the north of the existing campus development. The applicant advises that the built development outside of the current developed footprint is essential in delivering a functional and efficient building layout, and that the building design has focused on minimising outward built form, scale and mass to mitigate the impact on the openness of the Green Belt. It should also be noted that the area of scrub/woodland that would be affected by the proposed development has recently been cleared as part of the Japanese Knotweed eradication programme, as outlined in paragraphs 21 & 25 of this report.

51. The proposed new car parking areas would be located to the east of the site, on land that is partially developed as a service compound (to the north) and to the south which accommodates the two storey temporary modular building which currently houses the additional pupils on site. The car parking areas, along with the proposed all weather pitch, would also take in an element of undeveloped land. The car parking areas would be located as close to the existing and proposed built development on site as possible, and would, I consider, offer a logical extension of the built zone of development on the eastern side. Views of the two car parking areas would be limited to the north by the distance from a public view point and to the south by the relief of the land, sitting much lower than the road. The extensive existing planting and screening along Bradbourne Vale Road would also aid in mitigating views of the development.
52. To assess the visual effect of the development, and to demonstrate the resultant degree of harm, the application was accompanied by a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The LVIA confirms that, although the proposed Academy building, car parking and all weather pitch would extend slightly further into the Green Belt than existing development on site, their proximity to the existing facilities on site means that the proposed development would still appear joined to, and integrated with, the existing building fabric, largely maintaining the open character of the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, the visual separation provided by the local topography and existing perimeter and internal vegetation means that localised changes proposed to the layout of the site accommodation would have no discernible effect on the character of the surrounding landscape at a local scale. The LVIA concludes that the presence of the new building, car parks and all weather pitch would inevitably have some impact, but that the development would be contained to their immediate context of Academy development, and would have only a limited effect on the openness of the Green Belt. The County Council's Landscape Advisor has considered the LVIA and advises that there would be some localised impact upon the Green Belt. This limited impact upon the openness of the Green Belt needs to be balanced against the wider need for the development.
53. The applicants, in my view, have demonstrated a case of need for new educational and sports facilities to meet local community needs. A split campus, using existing buildings, is not suitable to accommodate modern teaching methods and is, therefore, no longer fit for purpose or sustainable. In my view, it would be difficult to dispute the case made, not only on the basis of the need to be on one site but also the adequacy of the existing accommodation to meet changing education requirements and practice. I would therefore accept the education need for the new accommodation. The applicant concludes that overall, it is considered that the need for additional facilities at the Academy, together with the provision of improved facilities for community use, demonstrate very special circumstances for overriding Green Belt policy constraints in

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this instance. Having accepted the need for the redevelopment of the Academy buildings, and accepting the need to redevelop on the existing Knole West site it has been necessary to consider whether the redevelopment could be contained within the existing footprint of built development on site. I accept the applicant's argument that satisfactory built development could not be contained within the existing extent of built development, and consider that the proposed development option is the most suitable out of those considered at the feasibility stage. Whilst there is inevitably some impact on the Green Belt, the LVIA demonstrates that the presence of the new buildings, car parks and all weather pitch would be contained within the immediate context of Academy development, and the effect on the openness of the Green Belt would be limited. The proposed layout represents the option which strikes the best balance between minimising intrusion into the Green Belt and providing sufficient accommodation and facilities to enable the Academy to deliver its educational model and operate successfully.

54. Overall, I accept the applicant's assessment and application of Green Belt Policy as set out in the submitted documentation, and I have considered this in the context of the amended policy following publication of the NPPF. The development is inappropriate development for the purposes of Green Belt consideration and is, therefore, by definition harmful. Nevertheless, in my view, the considerations summarised above are sufficient collectively to constitute very special circumstances capable of outweighing harm, in this particular case. Furthermore, I accept that the particular siting and design of the proposals has been carefully considered to help mitigate the impact of the development on the functioning and openness of the Green Belt. Accordingly, I do not consider that an objection on Green Belt grounds would be warranted in this particular case. However, if Members were minded to grant permission, the application would need to be referred to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for his consideration before permission could be granted.

Siting and Design

55. Having accepted the siting of the proposed facilities in Green Belt terms, the siting must also be considered in terms of residential and local amenity. The siting and design of the development has not met with objection from local residents as the proposed Academy building, and associated facilities, would not directly impact upon the amenity of local properties due to physical and visual separation. The only objection received with regard to the site layout concerns the proposal to relocate the nursery into an existing modular building on site, which currently houses the dance studio. This single storey building is located to the south west of the school site, to the rear of a local property, 4 Oast Cottages. The application for the dance studio building (SE/06/2478) was considered by Members at Planning Applications Committee in February 2007, where Members resolved to grant permission. The Committee Report presented to Members stated the following:

*“The mobile classroom at its closest point to the boundary of 4 Oast Cottages would be between 10 and 14 metres. It is worth noting that at the closest point the boundary is already well screened by semi-mature trees and a 2.5m fence. The nearest façade of 4 Oast Cottages would be some 40 metres from the site of the mobile classroom. Physical constraints prevent the mobile classroom being moved immediately further to the north.”*

56. The residents of 4 Oast Cottages are concerned over the proposed relocation of the nursery into the dance studio building, and consider that the nursery would create additional noise and nuisance, over longer hours. No objection is raised to a 0730 start



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time, but strong objection is raised to a finish past 1600. It is also suggested that the building should be moved to another area of the site, or the nursery be located within the main school buildings.

57. The existing nursery building is located to the rear of the site, and would be displaced by the proposed new Academy building. The current nursery operates on a daily basis from 9am until 3pm, with approximately 15 children per session (2 sessions per day) aged from 2 to 5 years. It is proposed to replicate the existing nursery activities within the dance studio building, but to extend the hours of opening to address the needs of working parents and staff at the Academy. The application seeks permission to operate from 0730 to 1800, Monday to Friday, 52 weeks of the year. The applicant advises that the existing dance studio is available for use throughout the day between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday, and between 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays. The applicant advises that careful and in-depth discussion took place regarding the location of replacement nursery accommodation, and the logistical solution was to use the existing dance studio. I am advised that this was due to safeguarding issues for small children, the fact that there is no spare capacity within the existing buildings and financial constraints within the build budget.
58. Concern is expressed that use of the building as a nursery would generate more noise than the existing use as a dance studio. I consider that internal use of the building as a nursery would not generate any more noise than the existing use, which involves amplified music and the noise associated with groups of students dancing. Although children at play can be noisy, strict supervision would control this, and I do not consider that the level of noise would be any worse than the existing. The nursery does however have external play, which could generate additional noise over and above that currently experienced. However, the applicants have confirmed that the external play area would be positioned to the north of the building, so that the building would lie between the play area and the resident's property, acting as a sound barrier. The applicants have also proposed to plant a row of trees against the boundary fence to further diffuse sound. As outlined above, the existing boundary is already well screened, with a 2.5m fence and existing semi-mature trees. This, coupled with the additional planting proposed, and the fact that the building is over 10m from the site boundary, and some 40 metres from the nearest façade of 4 Oast Cottages, leads me to conclude that the proposed use of the building as a nursery would not have a significantly detrimental impact on the amenity of the neighbouring property. I consider that that hours of use proposed are acceptable, bearing in mind existing hours of use of the building and the school site as a whole, and see no reason to impose a 1600 finish time given that the general Academy uses will be continuing to operate during that period. The additional tree planting to the boundary should be provided, however, and this would be covered by a condition of consent should permission be granted.
59. Sevenoaks District Council has, however, raised objection to the application on the grounds that 'the proposed new building, as a result of its arrangement and massing with large unrelieved sections of elevations, coupled with its resulting height and large amount of roof plant on the main section of the building, would result in a visually unattractive form of development, failing to add to the overall quality of the surrounding area'. As a result of this objection, the applicant has amended the design and elevational treatment from that as originally proposed to the scheme detailed and shown in this report. The applicant has made minor amendments to the design including the removal of Brise Soleil, reorganisation of roof plant, changing the window design from a domestic window to something more suitable in a school, and changing the layout of materials to add verticality to the building.

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60. First, with regard to height and massing, it is important to note that the proposed Academy building would be at the rear of the site, behind the existing school buildings, and at a lower level than the A25 fronting the site. The applicant has submitted photomontages from various viewpoints which demonstrate that only limited views of the building would be possible, all of which are set within the context of existing buildings on site and existing and proposed landscaping. Views from the nature reserve to the north of the site are the most prominent, but due to existing tree planting and topography these views are restricted, and long distance views would be against a backdrop of the town of Sevenoaks. Notwithstanding this, the applicant has advised that since the application was submitted further technical design of the building structure has mitigated the need for sprinklers, which in turn has enabled a lowering of the storey heights. As a result of this, the height of the main teaching block has been reduced from 12.5m by 1.1m to 11.4m. The heights of the proposed performance hall and sports hall remain unchanged at 9.1m and 9.6m respectively. This lowering in height has further reduced the scale and massing of the building, and means that views of the proposed building are even less intrusive. As detailed in the Green Belt section of this report, the submitted LVIA also concludes that the proposed development would appear as a conjoined and integrated part of the existing building fabric, largely maintaining the open character of the surrounding landscape. The LVIA also states that the local topography and existing perimeter and internal vegetation means that the development proposals would have no discernible effect on the character of the surrounding landscape at a local scale.
61. The applicant considers that the scale of the new building is appropriate to its nature of use and location. The proposed building would retain the prevailing three storey scale of development to the rear of the site and, as discussed above, would be largely obscured from public views. The building has been designed to accommodate as compact a footprint as possible so as to minimise further encroachment into the Green Belt. The resulting three storey development, which includes a sports hall and performance hall, both of which are large scale spaces, is in scale with the existing buildings on the school site. Taking into account the site layout, the level of screening, the limited views from public vantage points and the scale and massing of existing development on the site, I consider the scale and massing of the proposed building to be acceptable and in context with the remaining Academy campus. I see no reason to refuse the application on this ground.
62. Sevenoaks District Council also raises concern over the 'large amount of roof plant' proposed. A number of sun tubes and roof lights are proposed to supplement day light in some classroom spaces and upper level corridors. In addition, wind catchers and mono draught units are proposed to form part of the ventilation strategy for the building and solar thermal panels would be strategically placed across the roof. These elements of sustainable design are part of the development's BREEAM credentials, as supported by Development Plan Policy, such as Sevenoaks District Core Strategy Policy SP2, which requires institutional development to achieve a BREEAM rating of at least 'very good', and advice in the NPPF on design and sustainability infrastructure. The applicant advises that this development is seeking to achieve a BREEAM rating of 'very good', but the sun tubes, roof lights, wind catchers and solar thermal panels are key to achieving this rating. Their removal would be contrary to the underlying principles of development plan policy and, although not ideal in visual terms, the 'plant' would only be partly visible from limited vantage points, and is fairly low key in nature when viewed in the wider built environments. I would not wish to raise objection to this element of the development as I consider that the benefits of the 'plants' inclusion outweighs the minor negative visual impact.

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63. The District Council's objection also refers to 'large unrelieved sections of elevations' and states that the building would be a 'visually unattractive form of development, failing to add to the overall quality of the surrounding area'. As a result of this point of objection, the applicant has revised certain elements of the design in an effort to address the concerns raised. First, the windows as originally proposed were very domestic in scale, with a main opening casement and a top fanlight. To my mind, these windows were not of an appropriate design for an educational establishment and gave the impression that the building was domestic in nature. They also clashed with the scale and massing of the building which, although is considered to be acceptable, is of a scale above and beyond a domestic building. The applicant has, therefore, amended the window design to 'ribbon windows' subdivided into three panes, arranged vertically, which either stand alone or pair up to form one large window subdivided into 6 panes. This design of window is more appropriate for the educational building proposed, and reflects the scale and massing of the building. I therefore consider the amended window design to be acceptable, and see no reason to seek to amend that further.
64. Concern was also raised about the 'large unrelieved sections of elevations', and the applicant has addressed this by adding verticality to the elevations, removing the strong horizontal differentiation between materials that was originally proposed. The layout of the materials has altered, with sections of facing brickwork being extended vertically through the rendered upper floors, forming 'columns' on the main teaching classroom wing. These vertical brickwork elements also act as 'bookends', framing areas of rendered façade and adding visual weight to the overall appearance of the building. The brickwork finish is also proposed to extend up to full height of the larger hall volumes to create unified brick clad volumes that help break up and articulate the elevations. The building has also been designed with a staggered northern elevation, and an angled sports hall block, which aids in breaking down the overall bulk of the building, whilst reflecting the overall fragmented layout of the existing development on site. The entrance to the new Academy building would be demarcated with a triple height glazed entrance and over sailing portico and the angled wall of the sports hall would create an approach plaza to the entrance, creating a 'sense of arrival'. The eastern end of the building, the sports hall elevation facing the new car park, would accommodate an external climbing wall which would add interest to the otherwise blank brickwork elevation.
65. The applicant considers that the main objective for the design appearance of the new Academy building has been to provide a strong contemporary image that is not only in keeping with 'its strength of purpose and educational orientation and specialisms', but also in keeping with the sensitivities of the site and surroundings. The façade materials include buff coloured brick, render and curtain walling. The choice of materials is in part to do with robustness, to ensure that the lower levels of the facades that are within hands reach can withstand the wear and tear of daily intensive use. The applicant advises that the use of masonry also ties in with the existing buildings and the paved materials that will form adjoining surfaces. Windows are either cut into the masonry or, for more significant elevation openings such as the main entrance foyer, are completed in full height curtain walling.
66. Although the District Council continues to object to the application following the amendments made by the applicant, I am of the opinion that the design alterations have made a significant positive change to the overall appearance of the building. Notwithstanding this, it is also important to note that, as discussed above, wider views of the building from public vantage points are limited. The proposed building will really only be fully visible from within the site, in which case it would be viewed against the backdrop of existing buildings on site, within the context of an educational campus.

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Nevertheless, I do not consider that the proposed building would be a 'visually unattractive form of development'. In my view the Academy building would respect the character of the site, and would not detract from the overall quality of the surrounding area. The development is therefore, in my view, in accordance with the principles of Development Plan Policy and respects the character and appearance of the surrounding development in terms of scale, massing, design and appearance. Subject to the imposition of conditions regarding the submission of final details of external materials and external lighting, I do not consider that the design, massing, or scale of the building would have a significantly detrimental impact upon the appearance or amenity of the locality and, therefore, would be acceptable.

Retention of modular building

67. As outlined in paragraph 12 of this report, this application also proposes the continued temporary retention of a two storey modular classroom block, which was granted permission by the County Council as an interim solution to accommodation needs on the site. The classroom block is located to the southern corner of the site, to the east of the access road, and was granted temporary permission which expired in June 2012. However, this application was submitted prior to the expiration of that permission. The application proposes to retain the classroom block until the new Academy building is complete and fully operational.

68. It should be noted, however, that until the temporary classroom block is removed from the site, the proposed car parking area to the east of the access road at the southern end of the site cannot be implemented. The applicant has, therefore, suggested that a condition of consent, should permission be granted, be worded as follows:

*'The two storey modular classroom block shall be removed in its entirety from the site and all works to create the car parking area upon which the classroom block currently stands shall be complete within 1 month of notification having been given to the County Planning Authority of completion of the new building hereby permitted and the decant of students to that building.'*

69. Logistically the new building needs to be complete and fully operational to enable removal of the existing temporary accommodation. The car parking cannot be completed until the modular building is removed and, therefore, the approach suggested by the applicant appears to offer a sensible and appropriate solution. The condition as worded above would ensure that the modular building was removed and the car parking completed and fully operational within 1 month of the completion of the new build and the decant of students into that building. I consider this to be an appropriate and acceptable way of dealing with the phasing of the development, and should permission be granted, the condition as worded above would be imposed upon the consent.

Access and Car Parking

70. As outlined in paragraphs 13-15 of this report, the existing vehicular and pedestrian access arrangements are not proposed to be altered in any way as a result of this application, with access via the Bradbourne Vale Road, either direct or via the dedicated underpass depending on direction of travel. This application proposes a total of 195 car parking spaces, provided in four separate car parks, two of which are existing, and two of which are proposed. The existing car park to the south east of the site, adjacent to the existing main entrance, would accommodate 2 disabled spaces, in addition to the bus drop off loop and mini bus parking. Another existing car park, to the west of the

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existing access road that runs to the rear of the site, would be retained, accommodating a further 8 spaces. Two new car parks are proposed, the first of which would be located to the east of the existing access road and existing buildings, upon the area which currently accommodates the two storey modular classroom block referred to above. This car park is proposed to accommodate 103 parking spaces. The second of the new car parks is proposed to the rear of the site, to the east of the proposed new Academy building. This car park would provide 82 car parking spaces, as well as a pick-up/drop off area, and access through to the service yard behind the new building. Across the site, 10 disabled bays are proposed, and an additional 7 larger spaces. 11 motorcycle parking spaces are also proposed adjacent to the new building.

71. Sevenoaks District Council has raised objection to this application as it considers that the proposal would result in 'a significant increase in car parking on site, resulting in harm to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area, and having a negative impact upon Green Belt openness, and increasing dependence on motorised transport'. The Green Belt implications of the car parking areas have been considered and accepted in earlier paragraphs of this report. However, the amount of car parking does need to be considered and discussed.
72. As part of this consideration, it is important to note that a local resident has expressed concern over the existing parking situation at school peak times, with parking on local roads inconveniencing local residents and restricting access to emergency vehicles. The District Councillor for Sevenoaks North, Matthew Dickins, has also expressed support for the additional car parking provision on site, due to existing parking problems at school pick-up and drop-off times. The applicant states that the level of car parking proposed is a balance between the need to provide for the transport needs of the Academy, whilst minimising the impact on the Green Belt. The applicant has calculated that Kent Vehicle Parking Standards would require a maximum of 203 car parking spaces, so the 195 proposed is slightly under this requirement, and a substantial increase over the existing provision of 109 spaces. In addition, the proposed south eastern car park would provide provision for visitors to the site and those dropping off children, negating the need to park on the public highway.
73. Although Kent County Council Highway's and Transportation are unclear as to how the applicant has generated the maximum provision figure of 203 spaces, the Highway Officer states that of key importance in the car parking standards for schools is note 3 which states that 'appropriate provision should be made for the setting down and picking up of children in a safe environment in a manner that does not unduly interfere with the operation of the public highway'. The allocation for visitors and those dropping off children near to the site entrance is therefore welcomed and considered to be of road safety and local residential benefit. The actual total allocation of 195 spaces is not considered to be excessive by Highways and Transportation, especially when considering the various analyses that the applicant's transport consultant has made and the school's aspirations for the future. Whilst the School Travel Plan, in contradiction, rightly aims to reduce the need for this car parking, the Highways Officer agrees with the comments made in the submitted Travel Plan, in that adjustments or re-allocation of the car parking can be made, notably with respect to car sharing spaces.
74. With regard to bicycle parking, KCC standards require 1 space for every 7 pupils which would equate to 222 spaces. The applicant is proposing to provide 136 covered cycle spaces at this time, which is the amount required to achieve BREEAM credits. However, an area for future expansion would be set aside for the remaining 86 spaces should they be required in the future. I consider this to be an acceptable approach, and ongoing monitoring and review of the School Travel Plan would ensure that the

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additional cycle parking would be provided as and when required. Kent County Council Highway's and Transportation confirm that adequate provision has been made for cycling, motorcycling, mobility impaired, minibus and coach parking.

75. In considering the above, I consider that an adequate and appropriate level of car parking is proposed. However, should permission be granted, it would be appropriate to impose conditions of consent which would ensure the provision and future retention of the car parking, cycle parking, coach parking/waiting, access, and circulatory routes as proposed. In addition, I consider that an updated Travel Plan should be submitted within six months of the date of occupation of the development, should permission be granted, and that the Travel Plan should thereafter be subject to ongoing monitoring and review. Subject to these conditions, I see no reason to refuse this application on the grounds of access and car parking.

#### Lighting

76. In addition to the above, the applicant advises that the car park would be operational during the opening hours of the Academy, which would extend into the evening to allow for out of hour and community use of the proposed facilities (community use to be discussed below). However, the indicative details of the lighting scheme (see paragraph 28) demonstrate a specification that would provide lighting levels lower than the maximum levels recommended within the appropriate guidance, with the orientation and angle of lamps as such that lighting levels and light spill would be well contained and localised. The site topography and existing and proposed tree planting would also aid in mitigating the visual impact of the car park, including when lit. Therefore, I consider that, should permission be granted, final details of the external lighting specification/scheme for the whole development, including the car park, access road, and the buildings, hours of operation and details of control mechanisms, should be submitted for the prior written approval of the County Planning Authority. Subject to the imposition of that condition, I am satisfied that the development would not lead to undue light pollution, and see no reason to refuse the application on this ground. For the avoidance of doubt, lighting of the All Weather Pitch is not proposed.

#### Boundary Fencing

77. A local resident, who owns land to the west of the application site and uses it for the grazing of horses, as part of their riding centre, has expressed concern over the condition of the existing chestnut post and wire fencing along the western site boundary. The Academy has written to the resident directly, and has confirmed in writing their agreement to repair the fencing along this boundary, securing the application site and adjoining field. This matter is being dealt with as part of the Academy's general maintenance and not as a requirement of this planning application. The resident has not contacted me further with regard to this matter so I am satisfied that the issue is satisfactorily resolved.

#### Playing field provision

78. Sport England has requested additional information from the applicant with regard to summer and winter sports pitch layout, and the provision of football pitches and cricket facilities. The applicant has provided this information and Sport England are currently formulating its formal consultation response. Members will be advised of Sport England views at the Planning Applications Committee meeting, and the recommendation in this report is, therefore, subject to Sport England's views.

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Landscaping and Biodiversity

79. As outlined in paragraphs 21-26 of this report, an Arboricultural Survey and Assessment was submitted in support of this application, which identified the type, size and value of the trees on site. A small number of individual trees and an area of scrub woodland to the north of the site are proposed for removal because they are either too close to the proposed building footprint or car parking areas. The trees are largely located to the north of the site and are being removed as part of the Japanese Knotweed eradication programme in any event. The Arboricultural Report states that the proposal would result in the loss of 10 trees and 3 groups of trees, including one category B tree, 8 category C trees and groups, and one category R tree (requires removal). No category A trees are to be removed. These trees would be replaced and additional trees introduced (44 new trees in total) with the same or similar species found elsewhere on site, and would be located in parts of the site where they would enhance the character of the Academy, and provide seasonal variation. The existing trees to be retained would be protected during construction in accordance with BS5837: Trees in Relation to Construction.
80. The County Council's Landscape Advisor does not raise objection to this application, and states that proposed planting is extensive and would potentially exceed vegetation removal. In addition, the justification for the extent of the development is accepted, and it is considered that the proposed site layout and design would retain as much existing vegetation as possible. However, further details of the proposed landscaping scheme should be submitted pursuant to condition, should permission be granted. Therefore, a detailed scheme of landscaping and tree planting would be required pursuant to condition and the scheme of landscaping would be required to include details of plant species, sizes and locations of planting, tree protection, fencing, hard landscaping, and details of trees to be planted to the boundary adjacent to the proposed nursery building (as discussed above). In addition, a condition of consent would ensure that all trees to be retained are protected in accordance with BS5827: Trees in Relation to Construction. I consider this to be acceptable, and therefore, subject to the imposition of conditions, see no reason to refuse this application on landscape impact grounds.
81. An Ecological Scoping Survey was also submitted with this application which was undertaken to identify the presence or likely presence of any notable protected species or habitats. The reports summary and recommendations considered that the presence/possible presence of Japanese Knotweed, nesting birds, bats, badgers, hedgehogs, reptiles and common toad should be taken into account before and during development works. With regard to Japanese Knotweed, I am advised that the required treatment programme has been completed. With regard to nesting birds, bats, badgers, hedgehogs, and the common toad, recommendations are made as to how works should proceed and what should be done should such species be discovered. With regard to Reptiles, the submitted mitigation strategy must be implemented and followed prior to and during construction works. The Scoping Survey also recommends that reptile fencing should be installed to isolate the application site from the adjacent SSSI to ensure that reptiles could not migrate during the construction works. The County Council's Biodiversity Officer also recommends that further consideration should be given to managing and enhancing the buffer area between the proposed development site and the adjacent SSSI, and I consider that this could be incorporated into a habitat management/biodiversity enhancement plan.
82. Subject to the imposition of conditions to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the submitted Ecological Surveys, and that a habitat management/biodiversity enhancement plan be submitted for consideration and approval, I do not consider that the proposed development would have a negative

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impact on biodiversity and/or protected species. I therefore see no reason to refuse the application on this ground.

Community Use

83. As outlined in paragraph 20 of this report, it is proposed that there would be community use of the school buildings and the associated sports facilities, a principle which is supported by Development Plan Policy and wider Government aspirations for extended school use and community activities. However, community use of the proposed facilities, and the implications of this, must be balanced against the impact upon the amenity of neighbouring properties. Therefore, in order to protect the amenities of local 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, a pricing policy, details of access by non-school users/non-members, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review. The submitted details would be subject 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 would be required to 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.

Drainage and contaminated land

84. The Environment Agency raises no objection to this application subject to the impositions of conditions. The Environment Agency require the submission of various components of a scheme to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site, the submission of a verification report demonstrating completion of the remediation strategy regarding contamination of the site, the submission surface water drainage details, the submission of piling and other foundation designs which use penetrative methods, and conditions controlling the infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground. Therefore, should permission be granted, conditions would be imposed covering the matters raised above. That would ensure that the development would not result in an unacceptable level of pollution, in accordance with the principles of Development Plan Policy. In addition, the Environment Agency's advice and guidance regarding drainage, contamination, watercourse, and fuel/chemical storage could be covered by an informative.

Archaeology

85. An Archaeological Desk Assessment accompanied this planning application. The County Archaeologist has concluded that in order to secure the appropriate level of evaluation and mitigation of archaeological potential at the site, a condition of consent should be imposed. It is requested that no development takes place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable. I consider that the suggested condition would be an appropriate requirement in ensuring an acceptable level of evaluation and mitigation of the archaeological potential of the site. Therefore, subject to the imposition of the required condition, I do not consider that this proposal would have a detrimental impact on archaeological remains.



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#### Secured by Design

86. The applicant advises that the principles of Secured by Design, as they apply to schools, have informed the design process. The proposed development would provide enhanced security to the site and school buildings. Some of these matters, such as on-site 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 security lighting. However, they would otherwise accord with Development Plan Policy in respect of providing 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 and, in part, by planning condition i.e. details of lighting and on-site fencing.

#### Sustainable construction

87. The applicant advises that the project would achieve a minimum 'Very Good' rating under BREEAM for schools. As outlined in paragraph 29 of this report, the building would include a number of sustainable features and 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 further details in relation to this. In particular, the developers are already tasked with meeting the exacting design standards demanded of them by the Academy funding process and any planning controls in this regard could be duplicating, and potentially conflicting with, such requirements.

#### Construction

88. Given that there are nearby residential properties, if planning permission is granted it would, in my view, be appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of construction and demolition in order to protect residential amenity. I would suggest that works should be undertaken only 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.

89. In addition, I consider it appropriate that details of a Construction Management Strategy be submitted for approval prior to the commencement of development. That should include details of the methods and hours of working, location of site compounds and operative/visitors parking, details of site security and safety measures, lorry waiting and wheel washing facilities, and details of any construction accesses. Therefore, should permission be granted, a Construction Management Strategy would be required pursuant to condition and the development would thereafter have to be undertaken in accordance with the approved strategy

90. 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.

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**Conclusion**

91. This proposal has given rise to a variety of issues, including the need for very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the impact of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt. However, I consider that very special circumstances have been demonstrated in this particular case for overriding Green Belt policy constraints in terms of i) the education need for replacement and improved school accommodation to cater for pupils resident in this Green Belt District, ii) the lack of alternative sites and sites not in the Green Belt and iii) the mitigation proposed by the applicant with regard to the visual impact on this part of the Green Belt. In addition, subject to the imposition of the conditions outlined throughout this report, I consider that the proposed development would not have a significantly detrimental impact on local residential amenity or the local highway network, and would accord with the principles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF. Therefore, subject to the views of Sport England and subject to the imposition of conditions, I am of the opinion that the proposed development would not give rise to any material harm and is otherwise in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies and the guidance contained in the NPPF. Therefore, I recommend that the application be referred to the Secretary of State as a departure from the Development Plan on Green Belt grounds, and that subject to his decision, permission be granted subject to appropriate conditions

**Recommendation**

92. SUBJECT TO the views of Sport England, I RECOMMEND that the application BE REFERRED to the Secretary of State as a departure from the Development Plan on Green Belt grounds, and that subject to his decision that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO conditions, including conditions covering:

- the standard time limit (5 years in this instance);
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- removal of the modular classroom building and completion of the south eastern car park within one month of completion and decant into the new build;
- the submission of details of all materials to be used externally;
- details of all external lighting, including hours of operation;
- a scheme of landscaping, including hard surfacing, its implementation and maintenance;
- The provision of trees to the boundary with number 4 Oast Cottages;
- measures to protect trees to be retained;
- habitat management plan/biodiversity enhancement strategy, including monitoring and management;
- no tree removal during the bird breeding season;
- development to accord with the recommendations of the ecological survey;
- reptile mitigation and fencing;
- a programme of archaeological works.;
- Secured by Design principles to be adopted;
- a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good' to be achieved;
- details of community use relating to use of the indoor and outdoor facilities, including hours of use;
- submission of an updated Travel Plan within six months of occupation, and thereafter ongoing monitoring and review;
- provision and retention of car parking, coach parking/waiting, cycle parking, access, circulatory routes and turning areas;

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- further works with regards to contaminated land;
- details of surface water drainage;
- details of piling and other penetrative foundation designs;
- control of surface water drainage;
- 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 strategy, including access, lorry routing, parking and circulation within the site for contractor's and other vehicles related to construction and demolition operations;
- measures to prevent mud and debris being taken onto the public highway.

93. I FURTHER RECOMMEND THAT the applicant BE ADVISED of the following informatives:

- Account should be taken of Environment Agency's advice relating to drainage and soakaways, contamination, watercourses and fuel/chemical storage;

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