

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.

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**Item D1**

**Application for a new teaching block and associated car parking and multi use games areas at St Augustine Academy, Oakwood Park, Maidstone – KCC/MA/0199/2012 (MA/12/1272)**

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A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 6 November 2012

Application by KCC Property and Infrastructure for the reorganisation of the main academy campus to include demolition of the east block and erection of a new two storey teaching building, retention of the west block, general teaching block and general purpose hall, provision of a new two court floodlit multi use games area, 59 car parking spaces, 56 cycle parking spaces, 6 motor cycle parking spaces and 1 mini bus parking space and provision of associated hard and soft landscaping. Creation of a new surfaced car parking area on academy land to the north of the main campus to provide 28 car parking spaces with associated hard and soft landscaping at St Augustine Academy, Oakwood Park, Maidstone (KCC/MA/0199/2012)

Recommendation: Planning permission to be granted, subject to conditions.

**Local Member: Mr D. Daley and Robert Bird**

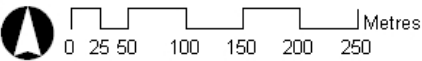
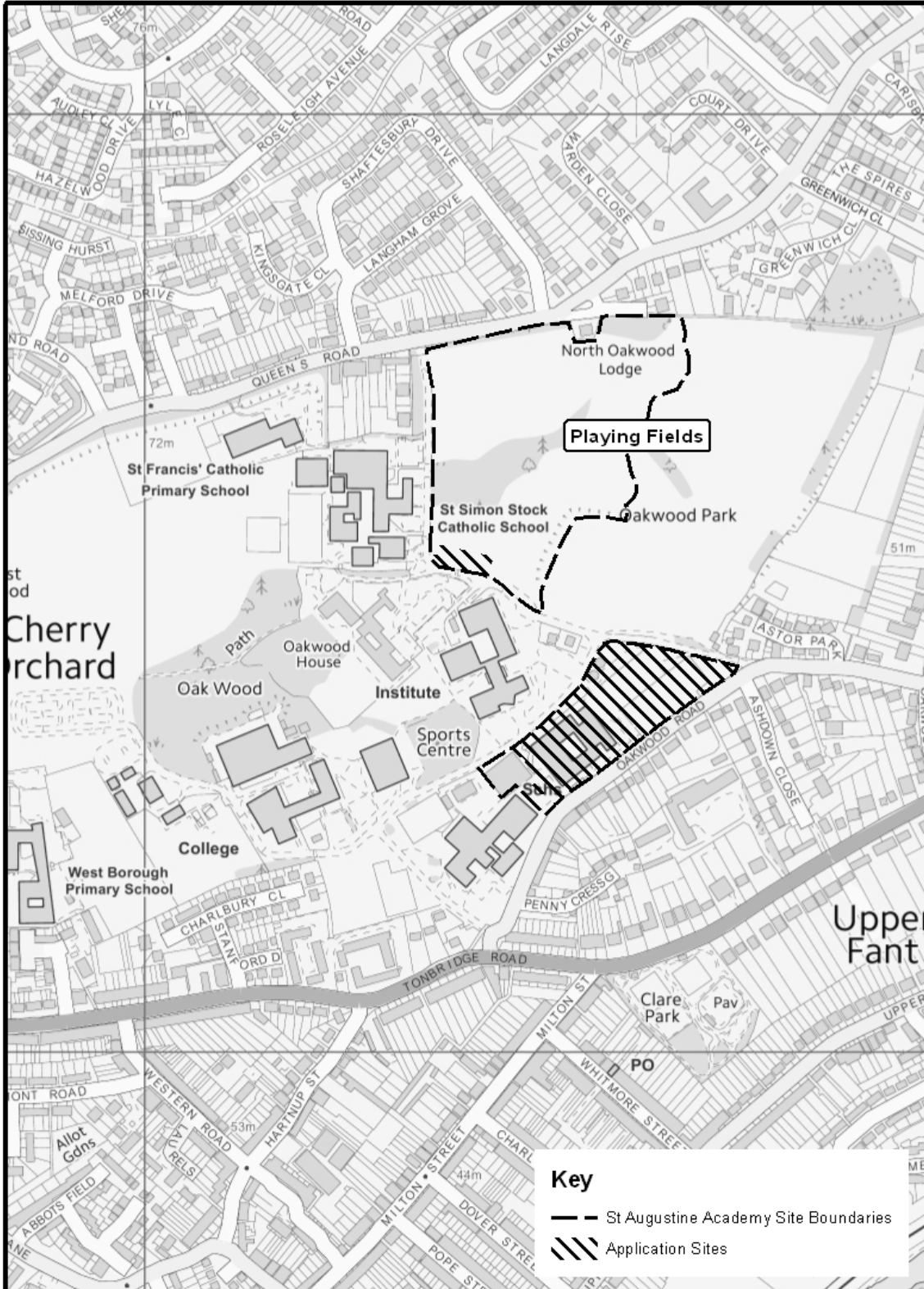
**Classification: Unrestricted**

**Site**

1. The application site is located within the grounds of St Augustine Academy (SAA). The Academy is positioned within the Oakwood Park estate along with a number of other educational facilities and a Kent County Council office/conference facility. Oakwood Park is located approximately 1 km west of Maidstone Town Centre. The Oakwood campus forms part of an area which was originally parkland located between the A26 Tonbridge Road and the A20 London Road and associated with Oakwood House. SAA is located to the southern border of the Oakwood campus and the boundary of the nearest residential property to the site proposed for development is located approximately 25 metres to the south-east across Oakwood Road.
2. The main Academy site includes the existing Academy buildings which comprise a mix of two storey buildings, and includes the Westborough Centre sports hall which is owned by the Academy. However this sports hall is currently not available for public use and is not included in this planning application. The main school building is laid out to the south-west of the site and consists mainly of a flat roofed block built in the 1970s and a new two storey teaching block and assembly hall, that was built some 4 years ago. The main school access point is off one of the private roads that run through Oakwood Park. The Academy also has land to the north of their site, which forms part of the open space in Oakwood Park and is used as a sports and playing field. The application site generally slopes from the north-west toward the south-east, and is located in an elevated position in relation to Oakwood Road, being approximately 2.8 m above the height at the school boundary.

**New Academy building at St Augustine Academy, Maidstone (MA/12/1272)**

**Site Location Plan**



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New Academy building at St Augustine Academy, Maidstone (MA/12/1272)

Planning Application site



**New Academy building at St Augustine Academy, Maidstone (MA/12/1272)**

Woodard Academies  
St. Augustine Academy

Design & Access Statement  
Amount of Development

**4.1 Existing Areas**



- ① Sports Centre 1,979m<sup>2</sup>
- ② West Block 2,467m<sup>2</sup> (+ West Block)
- ③ East Block 2,460m<sup>2</sup>
- ④ Teaching Block 555m<sup>2</sup>
- ⑤ Hall Block 478m<sup>2</sup>
- ⑥ Parking 87 spaces
- ⑦ Hard Play Area 4,512m<sup>2</sup>  
(inc. area adjacent to West Block)
- ⑧ Soft Informal Play 2,609m<sup>2</sup>  
(inc. green space adjacent to SW)
- ⑨ Bower Grove Satellite 184m<sup>2</sup>

NT: Building areas are shown as GIFA

23 May 2012

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**New Academy building at St Augustine Academy, Maidstone (MA/12/1272)**

**5.1 Existing Site Layout**



For the purposes of this document we have looked at all the possible combinations of new build and refurbishment to assess what the best strategy for the Academy site as a whole would be. This process has taken the overall budget into consideration but it was felt that all the options should be represented to justify a way forward. The central option shows the scheme which all parties feel is affordable and provides the Academy with a workable educational facility.

In all options there have been two main assumptions:

- 1 The Sports Block (1) will remain in its entirety.
- 2 The New Hall (5) and Teaching Block (4), completed in 2008 will remain as these buildings are deemed to be of good quality and fit for purpose. (Other than in option E)

There are four main options which are represented in the following option studies, in summary these are:

- A Keep and refurbish all existing buildings (1 to 5) and provide the difference of area in a new building.
- B Remove the East Quad of buildings (3), retain the West Block (2) and refurbish, provide the difference of area in a new building.
- C Remove the West Block (2), retain the East Quad (3) and refurbish, provide the difference of area in a new building.
- D Remove East Quad (3) and West Block (2) and provide the difference of area in a new building.

All options look to provide the Academy with a holistic campus that is capable of delivering the academic vision.

**New Academy building at St Augustine Academy, Maidstone (MA/12/1272)**



**4.2  
Proposed Areas**

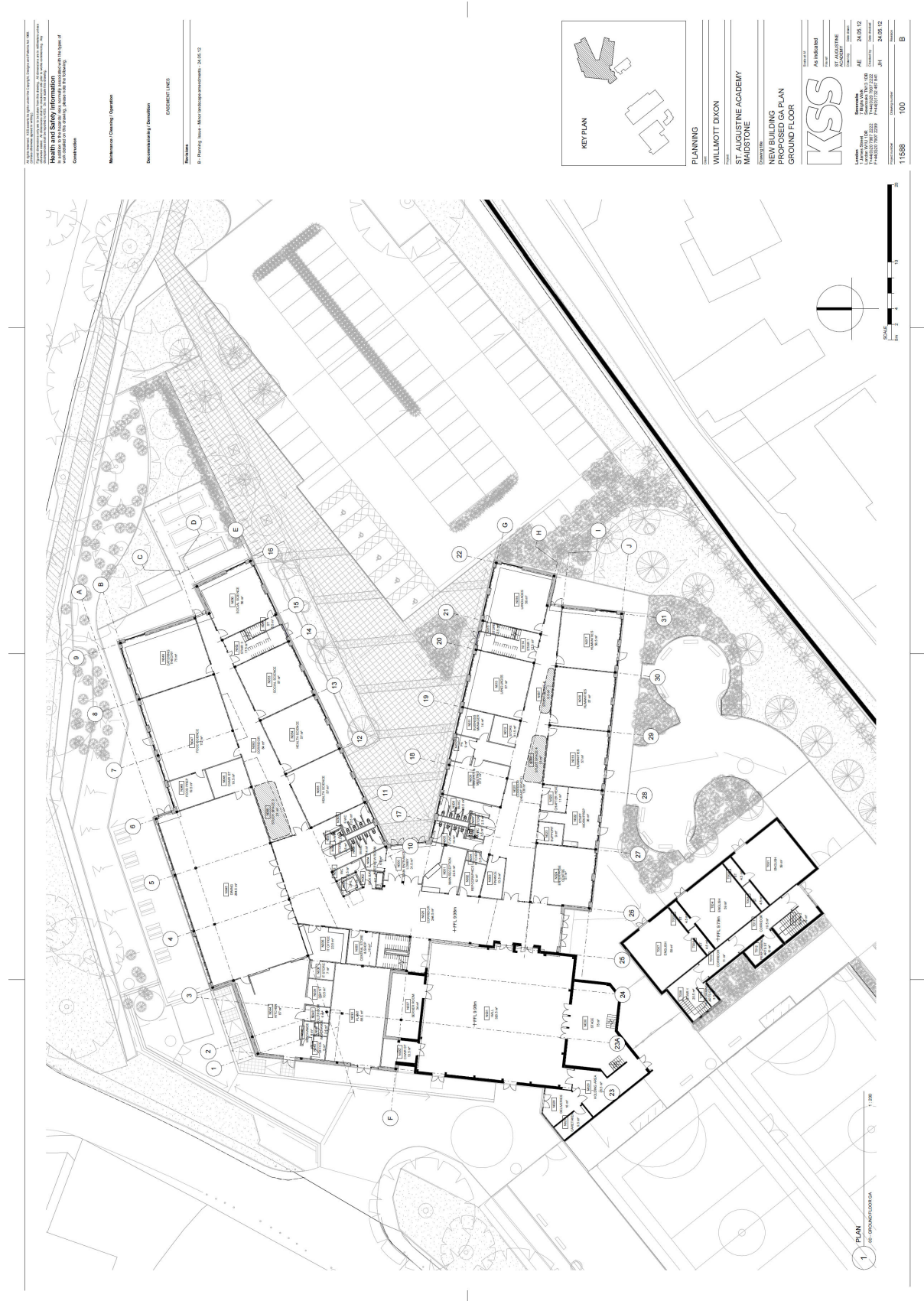


- ① Sports Centre 1,979m<sup>2</sup>
  - ② West Block 2,467m<sup>2</sup> (+ 90m<sup>2</sup> plant)
  - ③ MUGA 1,577m<sup>2</sup>
  - ④ Teaching Block 555m<sup>2</sup>
  - ⑤ Hall Block 478m<sup>2</sup>
  - ⑥ Parking 100 spaces
  - ⑦ Hard Play Area 4,170m<sup>2</sup>  
(inc. area adjoin to West Block)
  - ⑧ Soft Informal Play 2,494m<sup>2</sup>  
(inc. green space adjoin to B5)
  - ⑨ Bower Grove Satellite 184m<sup>2</sup>
  - ⑩ New Build 4,430m<sup>2</sup>
- NT: Building areas are shown as GIFA

# Item D1

## New Academy building at St Augustine Academy, Maidstone (MA/12/1272)

### Proposed new Academy building



**PLANNING**  
 WILLMOTT DIXON  
 ST AUGUSTINE ACADEMY  
 MAIDSTONE  
 NEW BUILDING  
 PROPOSED GA PLAN  
 GROUND FLOOR

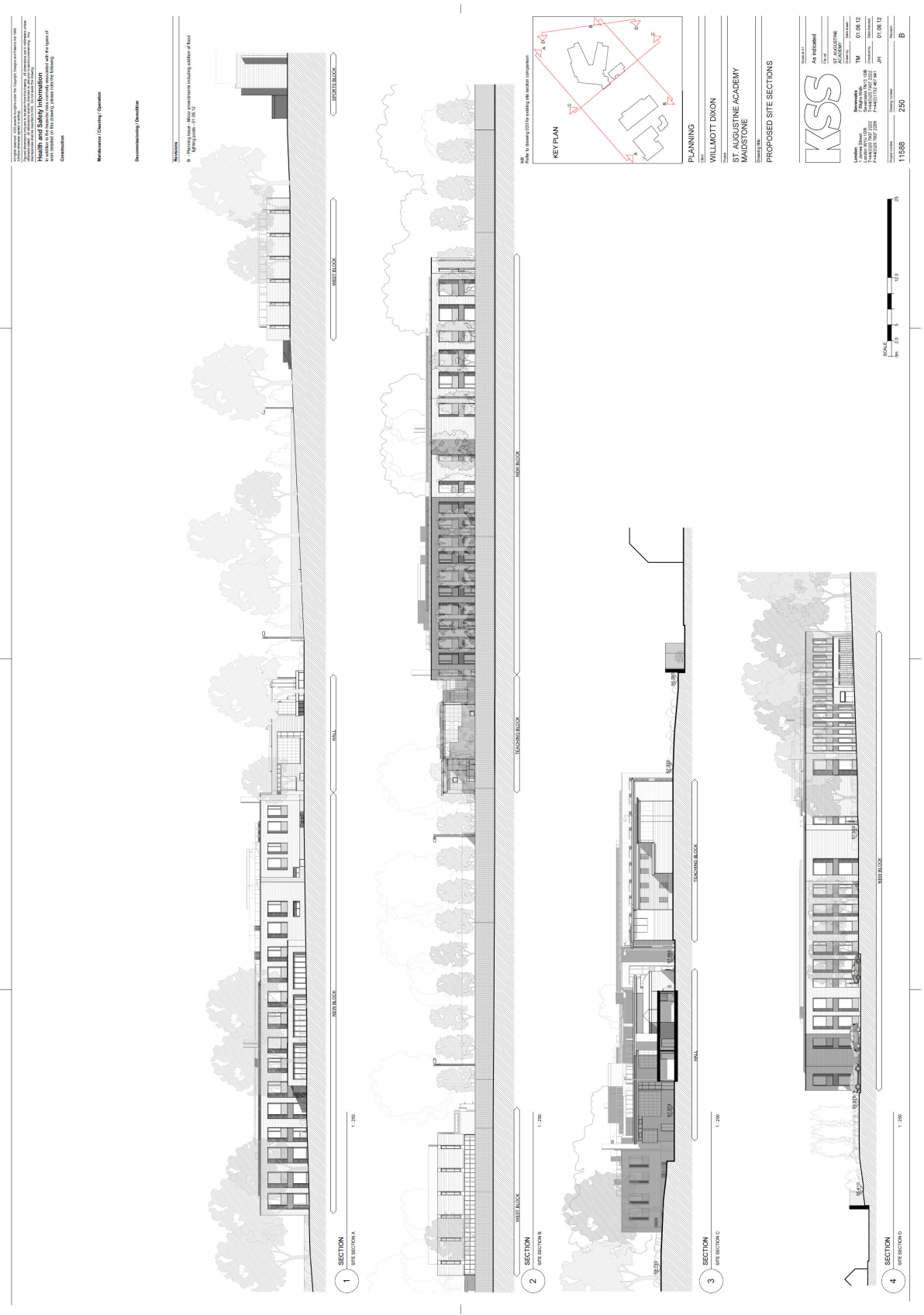
**KSS**  
 As indicated  
 ST AUGUSTINE  
 MAIDSTONE  
 AE PL0812  
 14/08/12  
 14/08/12

**1 PLAN**  
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 115588 100 B

# New Academy building at St Augustine Academy, Maidstone (MA/12/1272)

Item D1

## Proposed elevations



**New Academy building at St Augustine Academy, Maidstone  
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3. There are no site-specific land designations within the Development Plan in association with the site.

**Background**

4. St Augustine's Academy was formed in 2011 as part of the Government's Academies programme and currently operates from the site and buildings of the former Astor of Hever Community School. The Academy forms part of the Kent Batch 2 Academies programme and the creation of a new school site and buildings form a crucial part of the delivery of this programme. The Academy Sponsor is Woodard Schools, the largest group of independent Church of England schools in England and Wales. The role of the Sponsor is to help develop the culture and direction of the new Academy. The Sponsor will also hold a number of seats on the governing body which is typically smaller than a maintained schools governing body. Woodard Schools has a proven record of sponsoring Academies and SAA will become the fifth Academy to be added to the Sponsor's portfolio. It is essential to the sponsor that their exceptionally strong vision is encapsulated in each and every one of their educational institutions. This vision is based in the traditional Anglican values of tolerance, nurture and community, which are embedded through the Chapter Structure, whereby pupils from year 7 to year 13 belong to family groups in which both formal and informal mentoring is facilitated and strong relationships built.
5. The specialism at SAA is Business and Enterprise. However the predecessor school, Astor of Hever Community School, was a specialist sports college from 2005 until closing in July 2011. Therefore, although SAA does not have a specialism of sports it will enjoy the legacy of the predecessor school in this regard with a significant sports complex, although dilapidated, containing a five court sports hall, a dance studio, a community reception, a cardio suite, a resistance suite and teaching space. The Academy currently has capacity for approximately 858 pupils aged between 11 and 18 although the school roll is currently under capacity at 640 pupils. The new sixth form will increase capacity to 950 pupils (750 between the ages of 11 – 16 and 200 sixth form pupils). The sixth form currently has 84 pupils. In total this is an increase of just under 100 pupils capacity. There are currently 117 members of staff, 74 full time and 43 part time and it is anticipated that when the school is at capacity it will employ a total of 134 members of staff.

**Proposal**

6. The application has been submitted by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure, and proposes the demolition of the east block and the reorganisation of the main Academy campus. The proposal comprises:
  - Demolition of 2616sqm of existing school buildings;
  - New Academy building of 4738 sqm over 2 storeys;
  - Retention of the west block, general teaching block and general purpose hall;
  - Provision of a new two court floodlit multi use games area (MUGA);
  - 59 on site car parking spaces;
  - 56 on site cycle parking spaces;
  - 6 on site motor cycle parking spaces;
  - 1 on site mini bus parking space;
  - Provision of hard and soft landscaping, and
  - Creation of a new 28 off site car parking area on Academy land to the north of the main campus with associated hard and soft landscaping.

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7. In the submitted Design and Access Statement the applicant has confirmed that the rationale for the form and type of development at the new SAA was identified early on in the feasibility stages that the level of funding available for new development at the Academy would not allow for wholesale redevelopment of the buildings. The funding available would therefore be concentrated on those areas of the Academy that were in most need of refurbishment or renewal to provide for teaching needs and the Academy's educational model in the future. Various layout options were considered and the final scheme was chosen as it was considered to provide the Academy with a workable educational facility. In all options the Westborough sports hall was to be retained along with the general purpose hall which was only completed in 2008.
8. In the application proposal, the most sub-standard building (east block) is to be demolished and a significant new build element would be provided to house up to date specialist accommodation (science, food technology etc) as well as general teaching space. The west block and the two newer two storey buildings currently accommodating the English Department (general teaching block) and the general purpose hall and reception area would be retained and refurbished as the fabric of these buildings are of better quality and they provide a more flexible layout. The west block would be remodelled and refurbished to accommodate art, technology and general purpose teaching space as well as the Learning Resource Centre. On the footprint of the east block which would be demolished, a two court, floodlit MUGA is proposed.
9. An element of new build would be located on the eastern side of the site where the current car park is located and would comprise two wings extending from the existing general purpose hall which would be retained. A singular entrance would be provided for pedestrians and vehicles as well as students and visitors to improve security for pupils and staff whilst promoting the Woodard philosophy of openness and inclusion. The design philosophy for the entrance is to emphasise the inclusive, nurturing environment that the Academy promotes, with the Academy chapel clearly visible on approach at the heart of the building. Covered cycle stands for 50 cycles plus 6 visitor cycle spaces would be positioned to the side of the main walkway at the entrance providing secure and visible cycle storage for students. An area is set aside for future expansion to provide a further 85 spaces in line with KCC guidelines.
10. Parking for the new Academy is proposed to be split into two separate areas. At the main Academy site it is proposed to provide 59 car parking spaces whilst a new area accommodating 28 car parking spaces would be created on the western corner of extended land to the north of the Academy site, on land within the Academy's control, which is currently not used for sports nor is it suitable for forming a sports pitch. The Academy also has control over 13 echelon parking spaces on the access road fronting the Academy site and sports hall as well as a further 29 echelon parking spaces, which are currently leased out to Mid Kent College. The Academy does not believe that they need to make use of these additional parking spaces but should future demand dictate they are able to take back the use of the spaces from Mid Kent College. Therefore a total of 100 car parking spaces would be available with 87 spaces provided on and off the Academy site.
11. The current grass sports pitches and facilities would all be retained in the current form with space to the south of the new two MUGA's creating a series of natural play areas and breakout spaces.
12. The applicant has confirmed that the new building is only two storeys in height and appears low and flat within its immediate landscape. The building would take advantage

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of the slope on the site by carving it out, which reduces the visual impact and apparent height when viewed from the Oakwood campus from the north. It takes a similar flat roof form to the existing Academy buildings. The applicant has further commented that the design for the new building aims to combine a greater visual presence for the Academy through moving the building closer to the eastern and prominent boundary whilst ensuring the building remains consistent with and does not dominate its surroundings. The mass of the new building has been fully considered by the applicant in terms of its impact, particularly upon residential properties to the south. The scheme proposes to remove substandard and unattractive form of the existing east block which presented direct overlooking opportunities. The new building has been sited so as to avoid any elevations directly facing the residential properties along Oakwood Road.

**Planning Policy**

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

- (i) **National Planning Policy and Guidance** – the most relevant National planning policies and policy guidance are set out in:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(ii) ***Development Plan Policies***

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

Policy AOSR7 The Local Development will make Maidstone the focus of expansion and investment in new further or higher education facilities, support high quality proposals for intensifying or expanding the technology and knowledge sectors.

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

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

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

Policy 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.

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.

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- Policy BE1 Seeks new development to help improve the built environment with design solutions relevant to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place.
- 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 Seeks 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 States that local planning authorities, taking into account demographic projections, should work with partners to ensure adequate provision of pre-school, school, and community learning facilities.
- Policy W2 Encourages sustainable design, construction and demolition.

**Important note concerning the South East Plan:**

*Members will already be aware of the relevant South East Plan policy considerations in relation to the proposed development, in that The Plan was revoked and later reinstated pending the enactment of the Localism Bill. Members will also be aware that they have to have regard to the policies in the SEP and the Government's intention to abolish the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) as material considerations. However the weight to be accorded is a matter for the decision makers. Members will note that the Localism Bill has now been enacted; however the SEP remains in effect until such time as the Government complete the formal process of revoking the Plan*

**Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan (2000) (Saved) Policies:**

- Policy CF9 Seeks to ensure that where appropriate, the providers of education facilities make provision for dual use of facilities in the design of new schools and will encourage the dual use of educational facilities (new and existing) for recreation and other purposes. Development proposals which incorporate such use will be permitted except where the increased level or duration of activities is incompatible with local residential amenity.
- Policy ENV6 Seeks to ensure that where required a landscape scheme, including surfacing and boundary treatment, to be carried out as part of the development proposals.
- Policy ENV23 Seeks to ensure that proposals for new development which would result in the net loss of open space or sport and recreation facilities, will not be permitted unless there is a proven overriding need for the development and there is no deficiency of open space or recreation facilities in the locality and alternative provision of an equivalent community benefit can be provided to replace the loss.

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- Policy T1 Seeks all development to be safely and securely related to the highway network.
- Policy T13 Seeks development that meets adopted parking standards.
- Policy T23 Seeks to ensure that traffic generated by development proposals is acceptable in terms of its impact on the transport network and on the local environment.

**Maidstone Local Development Framework: Core Strategy (2011) Public Consultation Policies**

- Policy CS1 Seeks new development to be focused within and next to Maidstone's urban areas and infrastructure to be brought forward in a timely way to provide for the needs arising from development.
- Policy CS3 Seeks development within the urban boundary of Maidstone that contributes positively to the locality's distinctive character.
- Policy CS6 Seeks sustainable design and development that responds positively to and maintains local distinctiveness and townscape.
- Policy CS7 Seeks to guide the location of development in order to reduce the need for private transport and maintain highway safety, and ensure the highways, public transport, walking and cycling needs arising from development are satisfied.

**Consultations**

14. **Maidstone Borough Council:** Raises no objection subject to conditions covering the following issues are recommended for the development:

Restrictions on hours of use for the MUGA; measures to prevent light spillage from the site; arboricultural method statement; hard and soft landscaping and implementation; boundary treatments; material samples; secure parking provision; air quality emissions reduction; and updated travel plan.

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

"The Oakwood Park Campus is served by three private roads which are maintained by Kent County Council (KCC). Therefore KCC Highways and Transportation can act only in an advisory capacity in assessing proposals for the modification of these roads, the private accesses to and from them and their associated foot/cycleways. The roads are traffic calmed with a series of road humps. The road to the north of St Augustine Academy is one-way, with bollards preventing eastbound traffic movements. The road to the east of the Academy is tree-lined, 3.5 metres to 4.0 metres in width and provided with passing places.

It is proposed that the primary vehicle access will be relocated to the east of the site on the private site road that links Oakwood Road and Queens Road. This would enable the existing access to be used for service vehicles only and as an emergency access. Footway provision on the Oakwood Park Campus is generally considered to be good, although the private road to the east of the Academy has limited pedestrian facilities.

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Pedestrian access to the Academy would be gained via the proposed eastern entrance; therefore a short section of footway to the west of the private road would be provided by the applicant.

It is proposed that a total of 100 car parking spaces would be provided, which is significantly below the number allowed for in the Kent and Medway Structure Plan – Supplementary Planning Guidance 4, which recommends one space per member of staff plus 10% for primary and secondary schools and one space per seven students for further and higher education establishments. On the basis of the figures provided in the Transport Statement, this would allow for approximately 175 spaces to be provided at the redeveloped Academy. Whilst it is noted that the Academy does not permit sixth form students to park on the site, the Transport Statement should recognise that this is known to have impacts on surrounding roads, which could increase as a result of the proposed development.”

*Following a site meeting and additional information about sixth form parking being submitted, the following comments have been received:*

“I am in receipt of the further information provided by the applicant regarding on-site parking by sixth formers at St Augustine’s Academy. I remain concerned that there would appear to be a continuing lack of understanding of the potential impact on neighbouring areas if adequate parking is not provided on-site. However, I would recommend that this matter is addressed through a revised School Travel Plan, to be approved by KCC, which includes a robust and regularly monitored action plan for reducing car-borne trips to school by sixth formers.”

**Maidstone Borough Council’s Parking Manager:** Comments as follows:

Historically Oakwood Park students have parked in the surrounding roads, which in turn have caused problems for local residents. Reduced parking levels were identified in areas such as Shaftesbury Drive, Kingsgate Close and Langham Grove which in turn caused a number of difficulties for local residents. A number of incidents involving property access obstruction and obstructions to junction sightlines were also reported to Maidstone Borough Council.

As a result, the Parking Services Operations team were required to introduce parking restrictions. In the main these have been successful in reducing levels of anti social parking and obstruction; however the restrictions continue to be a burden for local residents and their visitors. Vehicle dispersal into other roads is evident across a wider residential area.

It should be noted that the extent of parking problems in the local vicinity is likely to increase as the report identifies that the school has less students than the potential capacity. A further increase in students and visitors will therefore significantly impact on the surrounding roads and extend to other residential areas which may require a further increase in parking restrictions. This will therefore impact on a wider community.

It is noted that the School discourages sixth form student parking on site, however this exacerbates the problem and migrates vehicles into local roads. The report clearly identifies that the number of proposed parking spaces is significantly lower than the required amount. Regrettably I am confident that it is likely that overspill would occur if the proposal was agreed in its current form.”

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*Following a site meeting and additional information about sixth form parking being submitted, the following comments have been received:*

“I agree with comments made by the County Council’s Highways and Transportation Officer and the consideration that robust monitoring should form part of the School Travel Plan, I can confirm that I have no further comment or objection in relation to the proposal.”

**Sport England:** Raises no objection subject to the imposition of a condition regarding a Community Use Agreement.

Sport England has noted that the proposed off-site car parking area would appear to be sited on an area of open land encapsulated by mature trees to the north, west and east and a hard standing road to the south and not big enough to accommodate the smallest playing pitch. The area is therefore incapable of being used for marking out playing pitches or part thereof. Sport England is therefore satisfied that this aspect of the proposal would satisfy their policies, in that the development only affects land incapable of forming a playing pitch and part thereof and does not adversely affect existing pitch provision on the site.

Development as part of the reorganisation of the main campus would be sited on the existing MUGA. However the key potential sports benefits of the proposed development are considered to be as follows:

- The proposed MUGA would replace the existing MUGA. This would be built to modern standards and would be superior in quality to the existing hard surfaced courts that they would replace on the site in terms of a surface that is sufficient for use in all weathers and floodlighting;
- The MUGA would be suitable for a number of sports;
- The MUGA would be available for use during winter months and low natural light Levels; and
- The facility would therefore encourage increased participation levels.

In relation to the impact on existing sports facilities, the proposed development would be sited on an existing MUGA. The adjacent playing field would not be affected by the proposed development and therefore existing playing pitch provision would be maintained.

**Environment Agency:** Raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions regarding to surface water drainage and contamination.

**The County SUDS Officer:** Raises no objection subject to further ground investigations being undertaken to ensure the appropriateness of the drainage solutions selected at the specific locations proposed.

**The County Biodiversity Officer:** Raises no objection subject to the recommendations provided within the two Ecology Scoping Reports are adhered to.

**The County Archaeologist:** Raises no objection subject to the imposition of a condition regarding 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:

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"I do not consider that the proposals would cause any significant adverse landscape and visual impacts. It is unfortunate that the proposals would involve the removal of seven existing trees within the main part of the site and two existing trees in the vicinity of the proposed off site car park, but I consider that the proposed tree loss is reasonably localised and would not have a significant impact on the appearance of the wider landscape. I therefore recommend that detailed landscape proposals are submitted to KCC for approval. These details should include proposed plant species, sizes, spaces and densities and would be acceptable by way of a planning condition.

Furthermore the submitted Hard and Soft Landscape drawing illustrates the extent of existing hedgerow to be removed at the proposed entrance. Whilst the extent of loss is not marked on clearly, the extent of retained hedgerow either side is clear and I tend to agree that the extent of proposed planting would mitigate the loss of this section of hedgerow. The applicant confirms that this drawing takes into account the required visibility splays which have been developed in line with transport consultant, therefore I am satisfied that the illustrated extent of tree loss is accurate. I note the proposed plant species and densities are also on this plan, which are appropriate, and consider that it would be acceptable if further details including plant numbers are agreed by way of planning condition

Furthermore I do not understand part of the justification for the off site car parking ('the remote location for the car park has been selected as it is both too steep and too small to provide a compliant area for sports pitches') because the off site car park comprises a reasonably level, open, corner of the wider Oakwood Park. However if the car parking spaces definitely cannot be accommodated within the main school site, tree protection details for the car park and also for the main part of the site need to be clarified. These would be acceptable by way of a suitably worded planning condition. It should be noted that the latest guidance on tree protection is *BS5837: 2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – recommendations.*"

**The County Council's Street Lighting Advisor:** Comments as follows:

"The lanterns offered for the project are of the flat glass type, which have zero upward light output when mounted horizontally and also therefore minimise spill light. I am happy for the floodlights to be tilted up to 5°. The actual lighting levels on the playing areas are acceptable.

The calculations and diagrams supplied indicate a worst situation of 4.42 lux at property 44 Oakwood Park Road. This may be about 5 lux when the installation is brand new but still well within the guidelines of below 10 lux.

I also note that the car park and general area lighting is proposed to be using flat glass lanterns so should not be a problem although the lamps used are brighter than those on the road providing the street lighting.

As there appears to be very little in the way of natural screening between the areas to be lit and the adjacent properties I suggest that it would be prudent to have a caveat to the effect that in the event of complaints there should be a proviso for fitting baffles or louvres to the floodlights or lanterns to reduce the impact if considered necessary."

**The County Council's Noise Advisor:** Comments as follows:

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“The Application proposes the construction of 2 new floodlit MUGA’s running east to west along Oakwood Road and 30m from the boundary of the site. In addition, the proposed MUGA is located approximately 25m to the southwest of the existing MUGA, and therefore, new properties on Oakwood Road are likely to be exposed to noise from the proposed MUGA.

The Noise Assessment (NA) provides activity noise levels for 5-a-side football of 54 dB  $L_{Aeq}$  at a distance of 20m. It shall be noted that from previous assessments that Jacobs have undertaken and through the consideration of numerous sports pitch and MUGA applications on behalf of KCC Planning Unit, we have typically observed noise levels between 61 and 68 dB  $L_{Aeq}$  at 10m from the edge of the pitch where a crowd is present. For such sites we have in the past advised using an activity noise of 65 dB  $L_{Aeq}$  at 10m. Pace Consult Limited (the author of the NA) have previously submitted assessments to Kent County Council using this activity noise level. With no or little spectators we have typically advised on an activity noise level of 60 dB  $L_{Aeq}$  at 10m. We would assume large numbers of spectators are unlikely to be present at the proposed MUGA, and therefore, the activity noise level of 60 dB  $L_{Aeq}$  at 10m is considered representative.

A noise level at the nearest residential property of 52 dB  $L_{Aeq}$  is predicted at the nearest residential property using the above representative activity noise level. This predicted noise level is similar to existing measured average ambient noise level during the weekday evening periods at nearby residential premises. Therefore, an increase in ambient noise level of approximately 3 dB would be expected during these periods. It shall be noted that this meets the increase in noise which we would consider represents a significant change, i.e. 3 dB or greater.

The NA also presents typical  $L_{Amax}$  noise levels from MUGA activities which we consider to be representative. The NA demonstrates that  $L_{Amax}$  noise levels from the proposed MUGA will be similar to those currently experienced by nearby residential properties during the evening periods.

A noise monitoring survey was undertaken during a normal school day between the hours of 11:00hrs and 15:00hrs and in the evening between 20:00hrs and 21:30hrs. We note from the application documents that the proposed hours of operation for the MUGA are 08:00hrs to 22:00hrs, Monday to Sunday and including bank holidays. We note that no noise monitoring was undertaken during the proposed hours of use during the weekend. We consider it likely that existing noise levels will be lower during the weekend periods particularly in the early morning (08:00hrs – 09:00hrs) and late evening periods (21:00hrs to 22:00hrs). Therefore, given that the predicted noise levels currently demonstrate impacts bordering on significant during periods where existing noise levels are considered to be higher, we would request that further noise monitoring be undertaken which includes the morning and evening weekend periods.”

*An updated noise monitoring was undertaken as requested and the County’s Noise Advisor has concluded that:*

“The Applicant’s acoustic consultant has updated the Noise Assessment in line with our previous comments. Additional noise levels have been measured during the evening and weekend periods demonstrating a lower baseline than previously provided. In using the update baseline noise levels, the Noise Assessment demonstrates that, when compared against the predicted noise levels emanating from the proposed MUGA, adverse impacts on nearby residential properties are likely. To offset this, a 2m noise barrier is proposed within the Noise Assessment along the southern boundary of the MUGA’s.”

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**Crime Prevention Officer:** Raises no objection.

**Local Member**

15. The local County Members, Mr Daley and Mr Robertson were notified of the application on 4 July 2012. Unfortunately Mr Robertson has since passed away and a local election for the vacant seat was held on 18 October and Mr Robert Bird was duly elected. Due to the time constraints he has not been notified of this planning application.

**Publicity**

16. The application was advertised by the posting of a number of site notices and the notification of 175 neighbours. A notice was also placed in Kent On Sunday on 15 July 2012.

**Representations**

17. Letters of representation have been received from local residents. The main points raised in relation to this application can be summarised as follows:
- The proposed games area should not be used out of school hours.
  - There is already a floodlit games area for general use at Westborough Sports Centre.
  - Noise pollution during out of school hours is not something that residents want pushed onto them.
  - The use of whistle, bad language will be amplified due to the surrounding buildings.
  - Hazard of balls getting onto the road.
  - Object to the use of flood lighting, however low or shielded, will spill over into Oakwood Road due to the height of the sports area above the road and the houses.
  - Stopping the use of the area by the general public would make it unnecessary to install such lighting.
  - The proposed games area is too close and overlooking residential homes as the ground level of the school is 2 metres above Oakwood Road and the houses.
  - The noise generated will be exacerbated by the fact the game area is positioned between two high rise buildings.
  - The games area will ruin the quiet evenings of the residents of Oakwood Road.
  - Understand the need for a games area during school term time but renting it out to the public for the rest of the time is ludicrous.
  - The campus already has a floodlit games pitch away from the residential area so why cannot this be developed and used for the public.
  - Lives will be blighted with the excessive noise and light.
  - Oakwood Road is unsuitable for construction traffic.
  - Objection on traffic grounds.
  - The existing ragstone wall is not of sufficient height to either screen the houses in Oakwood Road from the glare of the floodlights nor will it offer any protection from any noise generated from the playing areas.
  - With the proposal to increase current school roll from 650 to 950 pupils, the continued expansion of schools/colleges in Oakwood Park has inevitable implications for the residents of surrounding roads and the landscape and recreational amenity provided by the green areas of the park.

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- Alarmed to see it is proposed to make inroads into the green playing field area to create a car park, which also forms an important landscape as well as educational resource.
- Loss of the school playing field, whether marked out formally or not, is a current national policy issue.
- Seems to be no overriding need for this loss of open space to create an off site car park.
- Most seriously concerned about this incursion into the green sector of the park will set a precedent for future incursions.
- Could a temporary planning permission be considered for the off site car park?

**Discussion**

18. In considering this proposal regard must be had to Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (13) above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance, including the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
19. This application has been reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee following the receipt of objections from six local residents. The main issues relating to this application include siting & design, lighting, noise, the MUGA's, transport and parking issues and landscaping.

## Siting and design

20. The St Augustine Academy site is part of the Oakwood Park campus and is bounded on three sides by roads with Oakwood Road to the south and un-named campus roads to the north and east. All the Academy's buildings and parking facilities are located here. The western elevation of the Academy backs onto the Oakwood Park Grammar School Site and to the north is the University of the Creative Arts (UCA). The Academy also owns playing fields within the Oakwood Park campus, which are to the north of the Academy buildings.
21. The planning application proposal is for the most sub-standard building (east block) to be demolished and a significant new build element to be provided, to house up to date specialist accommodation (science, food technology, etc.) as well as general teaching space. The west block and the two newer two storey buildings currently accommodating the English Department (general teaching block), and the general purpose all and reception area, would be retained and refurbished as the fabric of these buildings are of better quality and they provide a more flexible layout. The west block would be remodelled internally and refurbished to accommodate art, technology and general purpose teaching space as well as the Learning Resource Centre. On the footprint of the east block, which would be demolished, a two court, floodlit MUGA is proposed.
22. An element of new build would be located on the eastern side of the site where the current car park is located and would comprise two wings extending from the existing general purpose hall which would be retained. A singular entrance would be provided

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for pedestrians and vehicles as well as students and visitors to improve security for pupils and staff.

23. The form of the building, the elevational treatment, including the arrangement of windows and doors will be noted from the attached drawings. In terms of materials, the walls are proposed to be a local brick stock which complements the brown brick of the remaining buildings and the red brick of Oakwood House. The window arrangement is to provide colour and relief to the elevation with coloured render panels and louvres, which will reflect the colours related to SAA. It is also proposed to have a flat roof on the new building.
24. The proposed new build form is no bigger volumetrically than the existing East Block which it replaces but it uses the space more efficiently. The applicant has ensured that the building shows respect to the landscape, neighbours and visual composition across the site, and thus the new building is only two storeys in height and appears to sit relatively low and flat. It also takes advantage of the slopes within the site, by carving the building into the ground and thus reducing the visual impact and apparent height from the north. That would also ensure that the Academy's buildings sit more prominently within the Oakwood Park campus itself, without imposing unduly on the surrounding townscape.
25. The Academy site is situated on ground that slopes downwards toward Oakwood Road, and as such the application site is in an elevated position in relation to the properties on Oakwood Road. Whilst no objections have been received regarding the height or location of the proposed of the new building, objections have been raised to the proposed two court floodlit MUGA's which would be located on the site of the demolished East Block, in terms of increased noise and light spillage from the lighting columns. Visually on the area of the old East block, the neighbours who previously fronted this building (property numbers 46 to 52 Oakwood Road) would no longer see an Academy building but rather a 3m high ball enclosure fencing and a total of four 8m high floodlighting columns located on each corner of the two MUGA's. The new building is proposed to be moved onto the old car park and so it would now be closer to the residents living in properties no's 56 to 60 Oakwood Road, however most of the new building is set further north into the site than the old East Block with just one of the new wings now proposed to be facing Oakwood Road.
26. The applicant has confirmed that various options were considered for the proposed new Academy building within the Academy grounds which are limited by the space necessary to accommodate the buildings, MUGA's and new car and cycle parking area. Also taking into consideration the need to minimise the impact of demolishing and building the new Academy building and associated MUGA's and parking whilst not disrupting the day to day activities of running the Academy. Taking account of the size of the development proposed and the existing buildings on and around the Academy grounds, I consider that there is a limited number of options available to locate the development as proposed.
27. The overall form of the new buildings aims to minimise the impact on the residential properties to the south of the site. The existing East block which fronts directly onto the houses in Oakwood Road would be removed and replaced with a new building further to the east of the site on the existing car park and hard play area. That would remove the existing element of overlooking potential currently presented by the building. The new building has been designed so that there are no elevations perpendicular to Oakwood Road south, thus reducing the potential for overlooking of properties along the road from

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the new building. The new building also proposes an oblique relationship to the housing, which would in turn, reduce the perceived mass of the buildings and limit the direct overlooking. I therefore do not consider that the scale and massing of the proposed new Academy building would be unacceptable.

28. Overall I consider that the siting and layout are appropriate in planning terms taking consideration of the site levels, surrounding neighbours and adjacent roads. The layout of the new building, car and cycle parking and two court MUGA's is logical and makes the most of the site available. I also consider that the proposed design of the building, including the scale, form, appearance and materials to be appropriate and acceptable, bearing in mind the variety of building styles and materials throughout the surrounding townscape. I would not therefore raise a planning objection to the proposal on grounds of design, siting and layout subject to the considerations below.

#### Floodlighting

29. A number of objections have been received from neighbours concerned about the proposed floodlighting for the two court MUGA and the adverse effects it might have upon properties in Oakwood Road, as that road sits lower than the Academy site. Coupled together with 8 metre high columns, neighbours were concerned about looking up into the lighting units and suffering from the lights being switched on until 10pm in the evening. Some neighbours do not wish to see the sporting facilities available to the public, especially after school hours and at weekends. Whilst no neighbours have specifically objected to the proposed hours of use, or to the proposed finish time of 10.00pm, they do not want the use of the MUGA's beyond school time to spoil their enjoyment of their evenings or weekends.
30. The positioning of the proposed MUGA's and the specification of the lighting design has been designed to ensure that the use of the floodlighting has no detrimental impact upon the residential properties around the site. A general lighting assessment was prepared and set out in detail the location and type of external lighting proposed around the site. The strategy proposed the minimum necessary to ensure the safety of users around the site at night time. The lux levels of lighting resulting from the MUGA floodlighting was plotted on a drawing and this showed that the intensity of the floodlighting dropped off sharply around the MUGA and would decrease to 5 lux by the southern boundary of the site. Guidance from the Institute of Lighting Engineers states that light trespass into windows should not exceed 10 lux pre-curfew and 2 lux post curfew to ensure no unacceptable light intrusion. When applying this to the proposed MUGA lighting, the light spill is shown to have reduced to 5 lux by the southern perimeter. The nearest residential properties are located on the southern side of Oakwood Road further south of the site, and calculations and diagrams supplied indicate a worst situation of 4.42 lux at property 44 Oakwood Park Road. This may be about 5 lux when the installation is brand new but still well within the guidelines of below 10 lux.
31. The nearest lighting column would be facing into the site and so residents would only see the back of the lighting columns. The lighting columns would be located on the edge of the MUGA, on the inside of the proposed noise barrier. The distance of the lighting column to the frontage of its nearest property in Oakwood Road, No 44, measures 34 metres. The distance of the other lighting column and the frontage of its nearest property, No 52 Oakwood Road, measures 40 metres. Furthermore, as mitigation works are proposed to erect a 2 metre high sound barrier, this would also

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have a visual effect from Oakwood Road and the properties along the southern boundary.

32. Whilst the light spill would be satisfactorily contained well within the Academy's grounds, there would still be a view of the illuminated area from some of the neighbouring properties, but I am satisfied that the technical specifications for the luminaires are such that there would be no impact outside the pitch itself. Moreover, apart from one property being located 34 metres away from the proposed location of the floodlighting column, the floodlighting would not, therefore, be unduly intrusive of neighbouring occupiers.
33. The County's Street Lighting Engineer has comments that there appears to be very little in the way of natural screening between the areas to be lit and the adjacent properties, and it has been suggested that it would be prudent to have a caveat to the effect that in the event of complaints there should be a proviso for fitting baffles or louvres to the floodlights or lanterns to reduce the impact if considered necessary. Furthermore, to increase the visual screening between the MUGA's and the properties in Oakwood Road, the vegetation screening can also be reviewed and increased accordingly. Both of these items can be dealt under planning conditions, should planning permission be granted.
34. Therefore it is considered that the lighting strategy proposed would accord with the aims and objectives within the NPPF and subject to increased planting along the Oakwood Road frontage, I see no reason to raise an objection to proposed floodlighting subject to conditions outlined above.

**Noise**

35. Local residents have also expressed concern over the noise implications of the proposed MUGA's, particularly with regard to evening and weekend use. It is important to note that the Academy does have an existing MUGA but that is not used. However the provision of a synthetic floodlit pitches would increase the intensity of use; enable use in inclement weather and extend the hours of use beyond those afforded by natural daylight. The applicant has undertaken a Noise Assessment which has been submitted in support of this planning application.
36. From the studies undertaken into the likely noise generation from the new MUGA's, the applicant had concluded that the predicated levels of noise from the MUGA'S at the boundary of the proposal site, based on worst case scenario assessment, would actually be below the current ambient noise level produced by distant and local traffic and by children using the school grounds at break time. However the County's Noise Advisor requested that the noise survey also includes an evening and weekend assessment and an updated the Noise Assessment in line with those requirements was provided. Additional noise levels have been measured during the evening and weekend periods demonstrating a lower baseline than previously provided. In using the updated baseline noise levels, the Noise Assessment demonstrates that, when compared against the predicted noise levels emanating from the proposed MUGA, adverse impacts on nearby residential properties are likely. To offset that, a 2m noise barrier is proposed within the Noise Assessment along the southern boundary of the MUGA's. It is therefore been considered that through the introduction of this 2 metre high noise barrier, the noise from the use of the MUGA's would be reduced to acceptable levels such that there should be no demonstrable harm to residential amenity.

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37. One of the objections raised from the neighbouring properties was the potential increase in noise from spectators and the possible use of bad language. Whilst planning conditions can control the hours of use, it cannot control how many spectators may turn up or what is said. However the proposed noise barrier, which is proposed to extend further than the fencing around the MUGA, will go some way to stifling the noise generated from the spectators. Any complaints in that regard could be taken on board by the Academy, who have the power to terminate future use by anti-social players or spectators.
38. In the light of the above, I do not consider that the use of the pitch within the hours specified by the applicant would have a detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents with regard to noise. This is on the basis that the proposed acoustic fencing is provided and installed prior to first use of the pitches and constructed in accordance with the submitted details. Should permission be granted, a condition of consent would ensure that this was the case.

**Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and sports pitches**

39. The proposal includes the introduction of two new floodlit MUGA's on the area of the demolished east block. The proposed MUGA's would allow a wider range of sports to be played with the facility to extend the period of use particularly in the winter and it is proposed to strictly control the use of the floodlighting. It is proposed that the MUGA's would be operational from 08.00am to 10.00pm throughout the whole of the week, including Saturday and Sunday as well as Bank Holidays. These times would allow greater use of the facility by outside groups and individuals, allowing the wider community to benefit from the proposed new Academy development. It is also proposed that the MUGA's are enclosed by a 3 metre high ball catch fencing, which will prevent any stray ball from going out of the site and potentially landing in Oakwood Road.
40. Due to the proposed hours of use, the MUGA's are proposed to be floodlit, with four 8 metre high columns located on each corner. Hard and soft play areas are also proposed in the areas around the new building and the MUGA's. The MUGA's have been oriented in an east to west direction so that only one court flanks the residential properties along Oakwood Road. Along the southern edge of the MUGA nearest to Oakwood Road, a 2 metre high noise barrier would be erected to provide a further visual and noise barrier to the properties located in Oakwood Road. The distance between the edge of this noise barrier and the properties in Oakwood Road measures between 34 metres at its nearest point, and 40 metres at the furthest point.
41. The proposal for the two court MUGA's are supported by Sport England, who consider the siting of the new building and car parking area to the north would not constitute any loss of playing field. Sport England also notes that the proposed MUGA would replace the existing MUGA, which would be built to modern standards and would be superior in quality to the existing hard surfaced courts that they would replace on the site, in terms of a surface that is sufficient for use in all weathers and with floodlighting. The MUGA would be suitable for a number of sports and it would be available for use during winter months and low natural light levels. Finally, the facility would therefore encourage increased participation levels, which also accords with Development Plan policies strongly promoting that.
42. The Academy currently provides 31,788sqm of playing pitches with no on-site provision for games courts. The rearrangement of the site as proposed would fully retain the

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existing 31,788sqm of playing pitches and provide 1577sqm of new games courts in the form of a MUGA. The new Academy development would therefore present no loss of playing pitches and would facilitate extensive upgrading in the quality, type and accessibility of provision including games court facilities. The Westborough Sports Hall (which is outside of the red area for this planning application) is currently not available for public use but the Academy are funding some upgrade work to the interior to allow public use in the future. That is entirely separate to the academy proposal. The sports hall of course can only provide for a certain range of sports and the Academy currently have limited outside sports facilities with the tennis courts/playground area unfit for sports use. The proposed MUGA is therefore important to the Academy in providing for a wider range of sports education and use, as well as providing a community use out of Academy teaching hours.

**Community Use**

43. As mentioned previously, it is proposed that there is a community use of the two court MUGA, a principle that is supported by wider Government aspirations for extended school use and community activities. However at this stage there are few details against which to assess the potential impact. Maidstone Borough Council is supportive of the application and has suggested restrictions on hours of use for the MUGA.
44. In the light of this and in order to protect the amenities of nearby residential properties, it would be appropriate for details of community use to be submitted for approval pursuant to planning condition. These details would need to include proposed hours of use, the types of use proposed, and the frequency of use, as well as detailing how the use of the facilities by the local community would be managed. 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 must strictly adhere to the hours of use and details given. Subject to the imposition of such a condition, I consider the community use of the development would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenities of the locality.

**Highways and parking**

45. Oakwood Park accommodates a number of large educational establishments along with Oakwood House, a KCC hotel and conference facilities, and as such Oakwood Park generates a significant level of movement and traffic, to and from the site on a daily basis. That has resulted in long standing car parking problems with Oakwood Park that has migrated into the residential roads surrounding the site, to the inconvenience of the local residents.
46. The primary vehicular access for the Academy would be relocated to the east of the site in the private estate road which links Oakwood Road to Queens Road. This would provide direct access to the car parking area to the south of the new building. The creation of a new access to the east of the main site would allow the existing access to the north to be used only for service vehicles and as an emergency access. Acceptable visibility splays can be achieved at the new access point but this would require the existing hedge to be set back and maintained. This proposal has been assessed and deemed acceptable by both Highways and Transportation and the Landscape Engineer. Furthermore, pedestrian access to the main site would be gained via this new access. A short section of footway on the western side of the private estate road would be introduced along with a crossing point just south of the new Academy access. This,

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along with the existing section of footway to the east of the site road, would provide a continuous paved route from Oakwood Road to the Academy.

47. It is proposed that a total of 100 car parking spaces would be provided, which is significantly below the number allowed for in the *Kent and Medway Structure Plan – Supplementary Planning Guidance 4*, which recommends one space per member of staff plus 10% for primary and secondary schools and one space per seven students for further and higher education establishments. On the basis of the figures provided in the Transport Statement, this would allow for approximately 175 spaces to be provided at the redeveloped Academy. However the applicant has provided information on both existing and future staffing at the Academy to confirm that the proposed number of 100 car parking spaces is adequate for the Academy's present and future use. Currently the daytime maximum number of staff is 90, taking into account those who do not regularly attend the site and others arriving after the Academy day has ended, such as cleaners. Currently there are 117 (74 full time and 43 part time) members of staff. The projection upon realising the full 950 pupils on site is for 134 staff on the site, but again not all of these would be full time and others would attend the site out of hours. It is therefore forecast that in the Transport Survey that staff parking would not exceed 86 spaces and this is slightly above the work journey mode share for the UK of 70-80%.
48. A parking accumulation survey was also undertaken at the Academy in January 2012, which showed a maximum car accumulation of 70 vehicles for two 15 minute periods between 10am and 11am. These figures were then correlated in the Traffic Assessment with the results of the staff questionnaire survey that was undertaken and applied to the proposed staff uplift upon occupation of the new Academy buildings (total 134 staff), which shows a likely future parking demand for 86 spaces. As mentioned previously in paragraph (10), the Academy also has control over the 13 parking spaces on the link road fronting the sports hall building (included within the 100 total spaces offered for the development) as well as a further 29 spaces, which are currently leased to Mid Kent College, along the St Augustine site frontage. The applicant has confirmed that the Academy do not believe that they will need to make use of these additional spaces, but should future demand dictate so, they are able to take back the use of these spaces from Mid Kent College.
49. Whilst the justification provided by the applicant as to why the Academy does not need to provide the maximum level of parking that the current Kent and Medway Structure Plan parking standards require, has been accepted by both KCC's Highways and Transportation and MBC's Parking Manager, concern had been raised by both that no parking provision had been provided for sixth form parking.
50. The Academy has confirmed in writing that it makes it clear to sixth form pupils prior to enrolment that they have a policy of not permitting students to bring cars to the site, either to park on the site itself or to park on local roads. The Academy encourages the use of non-car modes through its Travel Plan, in particular local buses and the Freedom Pass available through KCC. The Academy confirmed further that it takes a strong stance on this issue, with non-compliance being dealt directly by the Principal and that they are active in working with other institutions on Oakwood Park to ensure that its activities do not adversely impact on the amenity of its neighbours.
51. A further survey of how current sixth formers travel to the site was carried out. The data show a total of 72 out of the current sixth form roll of 84 to have been surveyed and this concluded that no sixth formers currently drive and park either on the site or in the

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surrounding roads. These data were also factored up to show the breakdown for each category of travel based on a full sixth form of 200 students.

52. It has been stated previously by MBC's Parking Manager that historically Oakwood Park students have parked in the surrounding roads, which has caused problems for local residents. Reduced parking levels were identified in areas around the site which in turn caused a number of difficulties for local residents. A number of incidents involving property access obstruction and obstructions to junction sightlines were also reported to Maidstone Borough Council. Therefore as a result, the Parking Services Operations team were required to introduce parking restrictions, which in turn saw further vehicle dispersal into other roads which is evident across a wider residential area.
53. Whilst both KCC Highways and Transportation and MBC's Parking Manager have expressed concerns over 6<sup>th</sup> form parking, they have accepted that subject to robust monitoring as part of the School Travel Plan which ensures that if the situation with sixth form parking was to change at the Academy, or if it was noticeable that more students cars were parking outside the site, then there would be some further control that could be introduced at a later date and then the development would be acceptable. Given the above and the requirement for a robust monitoring of the Travel Plan to be conditioned if planning permission was to be granted, I consider the application to accord with policies relating to parking standards and Travel Plans, and would not raise an objection on highway grounds.

#### Off site car parking area

54. A 28 space off-site car park is proposed on Academy land which is to the north of the main site and forms part of the Academy's playing field. This parking area forms part of the Academy's 100 car parking provision for the site. The area forms part of the Academy's playing field and is enclosed by an area of trees and grassland. Policy ENV23 presumes against new development which would result in the net loss of open space or sport and recreation facilities, unless there is a proven overriding need for the development and there is no deficiency of open space or recreation.
55. An objection has been received from a neighbour to this proposal to create this off-site car parking area as it encroaches upon the green wedge of Oakwood Park, which is used by the various educational establishments within Oakwood Park for sporting recreation. Currently this area is undeveloped with a number of mature trees and other vegetation. The applicant had been requested to justify why this area was being proposed for car parking and confirmed that this area was not used for formal sports or games because of the topography of the land and the existing trees constraints. The applicant concluded that the development proposed would not therefore result in the loss of sporting facilities nor formal open space.
56. It has been further suggested that a temporary planning permission should be considered for this off-site car park. However Members should be mindful that if they consider this area suitable for a car park from the outset, it ought to be judged acceptable in the long term. Indeed, Sport England has noted that the proposed off-site car parking area would appear to be sited on an area of open land encapsulated by mature trees to the north, west and east and a hard standing road to the south and not big enough to accommodate the smallest playing pitch. It has been concluded that this area is therefore unsuitable of being used for marking out playing pitches or part thereof. Sport England is therefore satisfied that this aspect of the proposal would satisfy their

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policies, in that the development only affects land incapable of forming a playing pitch and part thereof and does not adversely affect existing pitch provision on the site.

57. The County's Landscape advisor has assessed the justification for the off-site car parking, and accepts that if the car parking spaces cannot be accommodated within the main school site, tree protection details for the car park and also for the main part of the site need to be clarified. These could be assessed by way of a suitably worded planning condition.
58. Reference is made to the Saved Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan Policy ENV23, as this forms part of the current development plan. The Borough Council has yet to adopt its Core Strategy Policies which means the Oakwood Park site is not, for the purpose of current planning policy, designated as Green Wedge at present. Saved Policy ENV23 seeks to prevent proposals that would result in a loss of open space or sporting facilities unless there is a proven overriding need for the development. The playing fields associated with the Academy are located within the urban boundary of the town and are not designated as public open space on the current Maidstone Proposals Map. In terms of informal use of the Academy's playing fields and land to the north, the applicant has confirmed that there would be more than sufficient space and land remaining after the introduction of the car park to allow for the continued informal games use.
59. The off-site car park has been located in the least visually prominent part of the Academy's land to the north of the main site. This car park would be surrounded by existing trees and would be used as an overflow car park. This car park is not proposed to be fenced off in any way with a low grass bund created to the site road boundary as a natural means of discouraging unauthorised access. The car park is proposed to be surfaced with a cell web construction to ensure the root protection areas of the trees within and surrounding the car park are protected. The proposed surfacing has been specifically chosen to ensure that it fits in well within its location and presents a natural finish.
60. Given the above and no objection raised from Sport England, Maidstone Borough Council and the County's Landscape advisor, to the loss of this small section of playing field and that is deemed unusable for formal play, I see no overriding reason to raise an objection to this off-site car parking area.

**Construction traffic**

61. An objection was raised on the grounds that Oakwood Road is not suitable for construction traffic. The applicant has confirmed that construction traffic would be routed along Bower Mount Road from Tonbridge Road, immediately right onto the Oakwood campus and left into the Academy site. This route would be for incoming and outgoing vehicles which would avoid any HGV traffic using the residential southern section of Oakwood Road, and the route would be included within the Construction Management Strategy, which is proposed as a planning condition, should planning permission be granted.

**Landscaping**

62. The application proposes the removal of seven existing trees within the main part of the site and two existing trees in the vicinity of the proposed off-site car park. Whilst none of the specimens to be removed have been identified as being of the highest quality and value within the Arboricultural Development Report, tree removal is especially

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unfortunate on the site because mature trees contribute significantly to the character of Oakwood Park. However the County's Landscape Advisor has concluded that the proposed tree loss is reasonably localised and would not have a significant impact on the appearance of the wider landscape. Furthermore the Landscape officer considers that the proposals would not cause any significant adverse landscape and visual impacts because the new build would replace the East Block, which would be demolished, and would be viewed within the general context of the existing school development. There could be increased light spill within the area from the proposed MUGA's, particularly affecting residential properties to the south along Oakwood Road. However, the MUGA's would only be lit intermittently and for short periods when in use. Proposed buffer planting along the southern boundary would also help to soften lighting impacts and views of the school development in general. The proposed removal of the existing hedgerow along the private estate road to create the new vehicular entrance to the site has been considered and the proposed replacement hedge planting has also been deemed acceptable.

63. In mitigation for the loss of trees from the site, the applicant had provided details of a landscape scheme. I would recommend that the proposed planting between the MUGA's and the new building and the site boundary be reviewed and increased accordingly to provide a greater visual barrier between the facilities being provided on site and the surrounding properties. I would further recommend that should the application be granted planning permission then the completion of the proposed landscape scheme to be carried out within the first planting season following occupation of the development, be made a condition of any decision. I would therefore not raise any objection to the application on landscape grounds, subject to conditions covering, amongst other matters, the completion of the landscape scheme as proposed and including a review of the proposed planting scheme along the Oakwood Road frontage; replacement planting should there be any failures within the scheme and tree protection measures during construction for the remaining trees on site.

**Conclusion**

64. In summary, I consider that, subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, this proposed development constitutes sustainable development, with an appropriate standard of design and layout, which would not have significantly detrimental effects on the residential or local amenity, the street scene and character of the area, or the local highway network. In my view, the development would not give rise to any significant material harm and is in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies, as well as the National Planning Policy Framework. I am aware of no material planning considerations that indicate that the conclusion should be made otherwise. However I recommend that various conditions be placed on any planning permission, including those outlined below.

**Recommendation**

65. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
- the standard 5 year time limit;
  - the development carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
  - the submission of details of all materials to be used externally;

## Item D1

### **New Academy building at St Augustine Academy, Maidstone (MA/12/1272)**

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- a scheme of landscaping, including hard surfacing, its implementation and maintenance;
- measures to protect trees to be retained;
- no tree removal during the bird breeding season;
- development to accord with the recommendations of the ecology survey;
- a programme of archaeological works;
- Secured by Design principles to be achieved;
- a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good' to be achieved;
- revised School Travel Plan to include a regularly monitored action plan for reducing car-borne trips to school by sixth formers;
- a community use agreement relating to the MUGA's including hours of use;
- details of foul and surface water drainage;
- a 2 metre high noise barrier to be provided prior to first use of the MUGA's
- fitting baffles or louvres to the floodlights or lanterns to reduce the impact if required;
- 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 of Sundays and Bank Holidays;
- construction management plan, including access, parking and circulation within the site for contractors and other vehicles related to construction and demolition operations;
- measures to prevent mud and debris being taken onto the public highway;
- measures to prevent dust nuisance during the demolition phase.

Case officer – Lidia Cook
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Background documents - See section heading
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