

Item D2

Four single storey extensions to main school building at Ethelbert Road Primary School, Ethelbert Road, Faversham – SW/12/884 (KCC/SW/0180/2012)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 12 February 2013.

Application by Kent County Council Education, Learning and Skills for four single storey extensions to main school building, including staff room, planning preparation area room, learning resources area and ancillary accommodation, enabling the provision of an additional classroom within the existing building (amended application) at Ethelbert Road Primary School, Ethelbert Road, Faversham, ME13 8SQ – SW/12/884 (KCC/SW/0180/2012).

Recommendation: Permission be granted, subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr T. Gates

Classification: Unrestricted

Background

1. This application was originally report to the Planning Applications Committee on 9th October 2012, when Members resolved that consideration of the application be deferred to enable further discussion between the applicant and planning officers over the aspect of the application that led to the earlier recommendation for refusal.
2. Following further negotiations, the applicant has proposed an amendment to the original application that makes changes to the design of the development in response to concerns over the layout and proximity of the development to neighbouring property. The amendments proposed are set out in detail below, and include a reduction in the footprint of the front/ north-west side extension, a change to the design of the north-west side extension to incorporate a pitched roof, a new infill extension to the front porch below a mono-pitched roof, and relocation of the main entrance to the school building to allow a level access.
3. This report provides details of the amendments made to the application, the outcomes from a second round of consultations undertaken, and a consideration of the changes to the development and any subsequent representations received that were not covered by the original committee report. The original report is attached as Appendix 1. In determining this now amended application, Members should refer to both reports for the full consideration.

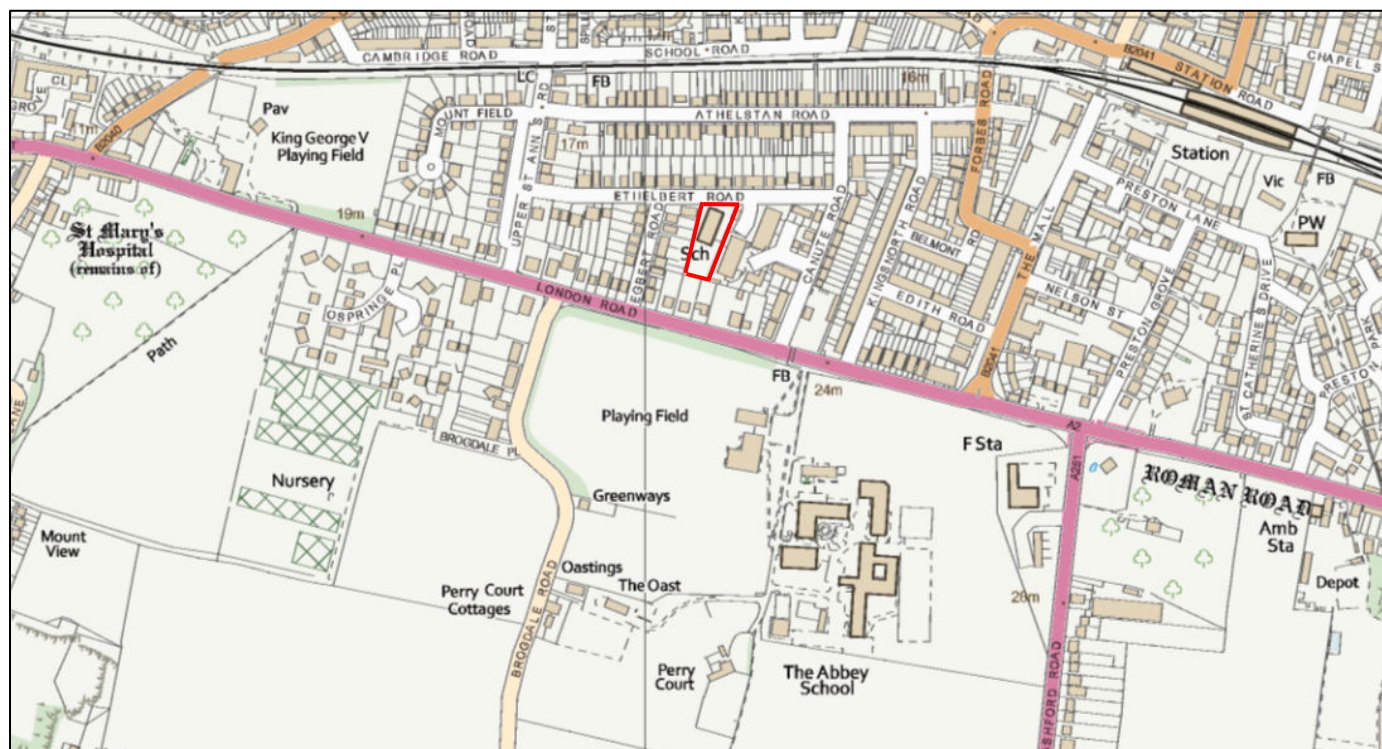
Site

4. The application site falls within the grounds of Ethelbert Road Primary School, Faversham. Ethelbert Road is a small primary school located to the south of Faversham town centre, close to London Road (A2). The school is positioned on a small plot of land (approximately 0.24ha), and is surrounded by residential properties, with a single point of access off Ethelbert Road to the north.

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5. The main school building fronts onto Ethelbert Road to north-west of the plot, with a car park (approximately 6 spaces) and rear access to the north-east, main hard play space to the south, and a small modern classroom building positioned to the rear of the school adjacent to the western boundary. The site is enclosed by a traditional brick wall to the south, east and west. The school building is constructed in a Victorian style and dates from the early twentieth century. A typical elevation consists of yellow stock bricks interspersed with stone work, with double height sash windows. The building features steeply pitched tiled roofs with distinctive gable ends. The building forms an important part of the character and history of the area, although it is not formally listed.
6. The application site falls within the school grounds and consist of 3 small areas of hard standing and an infill extension to the front porch (totalling approximately 120m²). These areas are positioned immediately to the north, north-west, west and south-east of the main building, and are used as pedestrian circulation space, access and storage, with the area to the south east currently accommodating a wooden shed.
7. The Primary School currently consists of 7 year groups totalling 164 pupils from September 2012 with approximately 20 (full time equivalent) members of staff.
8. The application site falls within the built-up area of Faversham as defined by the Swale Borough Local Plan Proposals Map. The school grounds are also within a Groundwater Vulnerability Zone overlying a Major Aquifer, as defined by the Environment Agency. There are no other site specific designations, although more general development plan policies are set out within the original Committee report attached in Appendix 1 – paragraph 10.

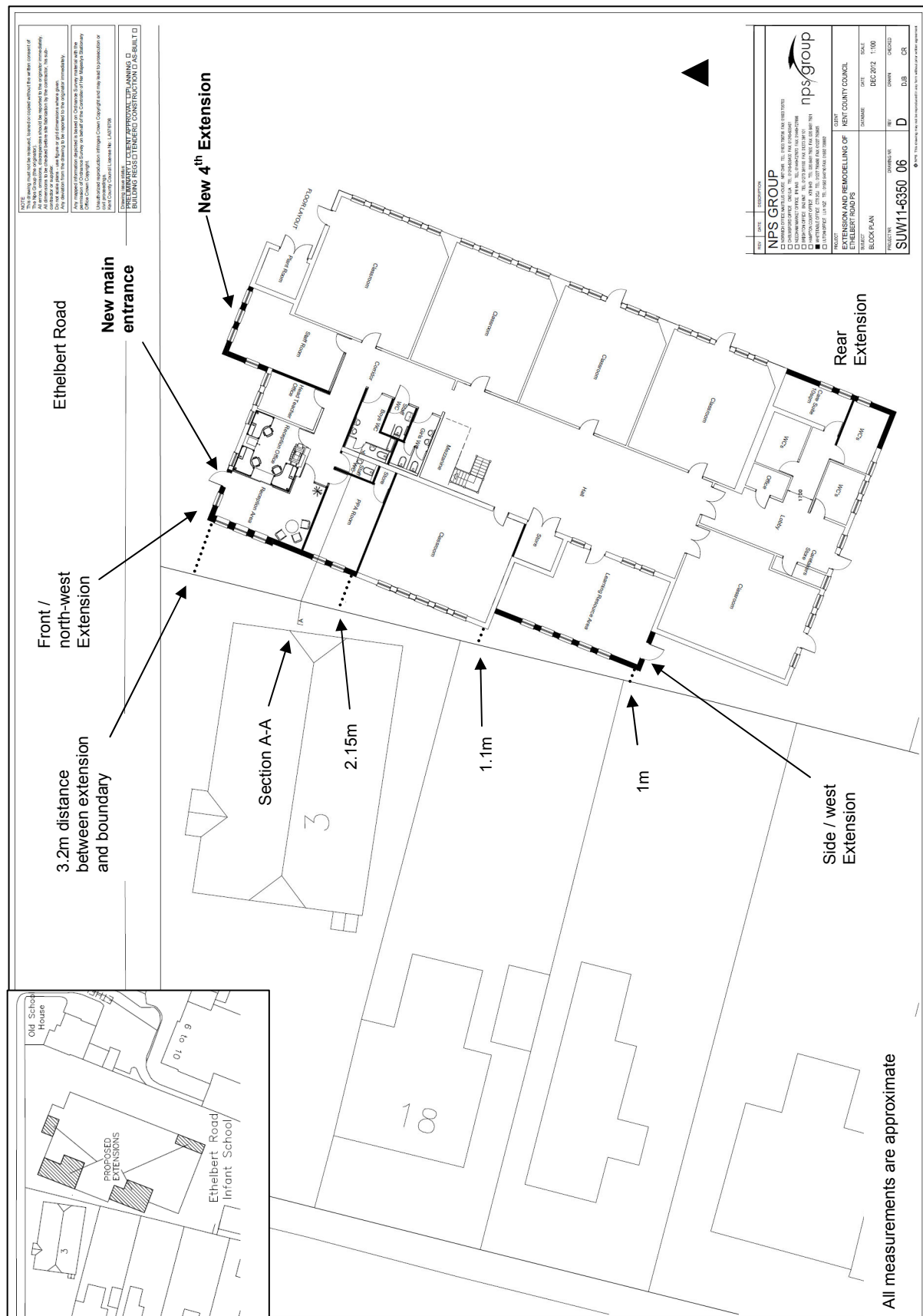
Site Location Plan



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Amended Block Plan



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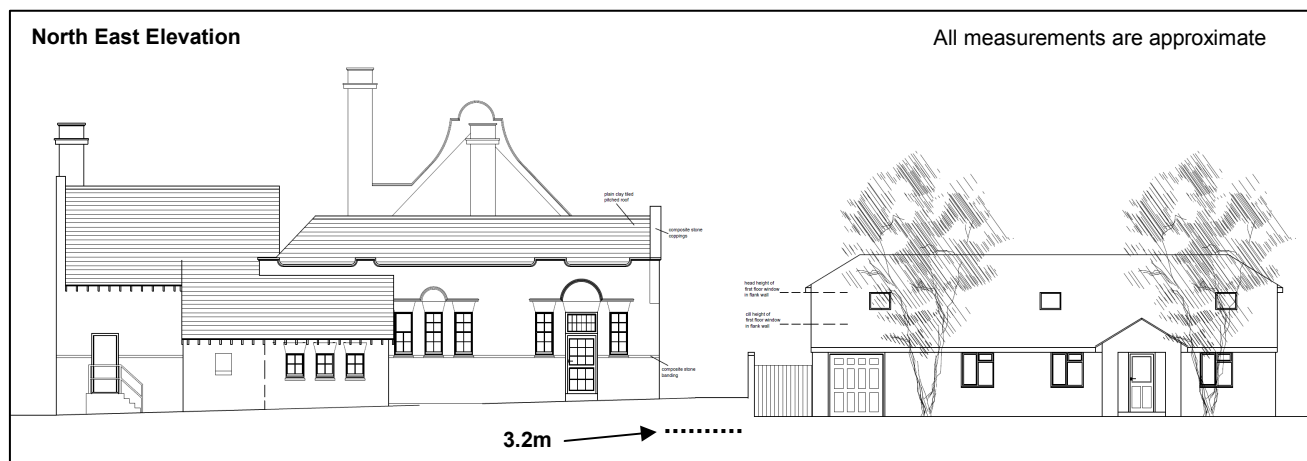
Existing Elevations



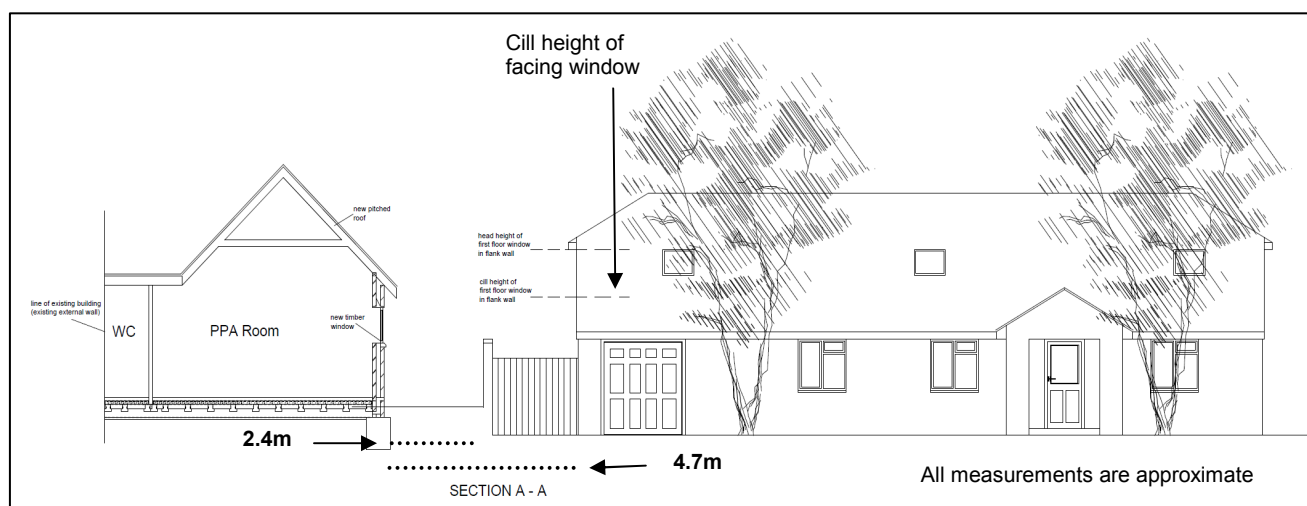
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Proposed section showing the amended street scene elevation (including 3 Ethelbert Road)



Proposed section drawing (A-A) through the north-west side extension (indicating the proposals directly opposite the facing window within the adjacent residential property)



Amended Proposal

9. Members will recall that the original application (reported in October), proposed the construction of 3 separate single storey extensions to the main school building with a new ramp to the front entrance. The amended application now proposes the construction of an additional single storey extension to the front elevation to enable changes to the original design without a material reduction in the floorspace that would be created. The development now proposes 4 new single storey extensions.
10. Following consultation with officers, the footprint of the original extension proposed to the front (north-west corner) of the building has been reduced by approximately 11m². This extension now proposes to carry forward the building line adopted by the existing side extension (permitted in 2002), along with the pitched roof line (which amends a previous proposed flat roof).

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The change to the footprint would move the building line back by an extra metre from the boundary with the adjacent residential property. Whilst the footprint has changed, the general design of the front part of the extension, facing the street, remains the same. This part of the development would extend the existing facade west, re-creating the steeply pitched roof line with a gable end.

11. The amended application proposes to relocate the main pedestrian entrance to the school building as part of the extension to the north-west corner. The ground levels at this part of the site would enable a new entrance to provide an inclusive level access to the building, without the need for steps or a new ramp. The layout of the north-west extension and the adjacent part of the existing main school building (including the main and head teacher's offices) would be redesigned to accommodate the revised access arrangements being proposed. The north-west extension would include a new reception area, a planning preparation area room and staff toilets.
12. As a direct result of the reduced footprint of the development proposed to the north-west corner of the school, a small fourth extension is being proposed to the front elevation, facing Ethelbert Road. This extension would be achieved by infilling and extending the existing front porch area and entrance under a mono-pitched roof, to match the adjacent plant room. This extension would create approximately 11m² of new floorspace. The existing school entrance would be relocated (as set out above) and the fourth extension in connection with part of the existing corridor space behind would be adapted to create a new staff room.
13. Following further consideration of the potential access issues during any construction programme, the applicant has indicated that they may need to demolish part of the existing side extension (permitted in 2002) to enable the construction of the learning resource area extension behind. Any part of the side extension demolished would then be rebuilt as part of the development. The design, footprint and height of this extension would remain the same, with the exception of new facing windows to the west elevation.
14. The design of the proposed learning resource area extension behind, to the west of the school building, would remain unchanged. This part of the development proposes to infill a courtyard area between the building and the boundary wall with a flat roofed extension featuring parapet walls and sash windows. The design of the smaller third extension, located to the south east corner (to the rear of the school site) also remains unchanged.
15. The design approach proposed for all 4 extensions would continue to reflect the architectural style of the main school building, attempting to duplicate existing features and external materials used.

Planning Policy

16. Please see the appended earlier report for a summary of the most relevant Government Guidance and Development Plan Policies – paragraph 10 of Appendix 1.

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Consultations

17. The following consultee responses have been received concerning the amended application. Please see the earlier report at Appendix 1 (paragraph 11) for details of all original comments received, including from the Environment Agency and Kent Highways and Transportation.

Swale Borough Council – no objection to the amendments to the application.

Faversham Town Council – no objection to the amended application.

Local Member

18. The local County Member for Faversham, Mr T. Gates was notified of the amended application on 4 January 2013.

Publicity

19. The amended application was publicised by the re-notification of all neighbouring properties originally consulted and all residents that made representations concerning the application.

Representations

20. Members may recall that a representation was reported verbally to the Planning Applications Committee meeting on 9th October 2012. This consisted of a letter from the current owner/occupiers of no. 3 Ethelbert Road confirming that they had no objections to the design of the original proposals and supported the application. No further correspondence has been received from this property in response to the amended application.
21. In response to the second round of consultations, 3 further letters of representation have been received from neighbouring properties. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:
- Suggests that consideration be given to reinstating the iron railings that historically fronted the school site. Notes that considerable attention is given in the proposal to sympathetically blending in the developments with the materials and features of the original building. Considers that the reinstatement of the railings would neatly fit with this objective and considerably enhance the visual appearance of the school building and proposed changes.
 - Notes that an increase in commuters parking in the surrounding streets on weekdays leaves limited on street parking for parents. This can cause congestion and inconsiderate parking at peak travel times. Asks whether thought has been given to parking for parents dropping off and picking up children? Suggests that if a way could be found to remove the commuters from the roads this would alleviate the problem.

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- Raises no objection to the application, however has concerns regarding the availability of on street parking during the school day. Asks whether an unused area to the west of the school building could be converted into an additional school parking area?

Discussion

22. The application seeks planning permission for four extensions to Ethelbert Road School. The application is being re-reported to the Planning Applications Committee following October's Committee meeting, when Members resolved that consideration of the application be deferred to enable further thought to be given to the layout of the development in relation to a neighbouring residential property. The applicant has subsequently submitted amended plans for the extensions in response to the concerns being raised.
23. Please see paragraphs (17) and (21) for details of all responses received concerning the amended application. Details of all representations originally received are set out within Appendix 1 (paragraphs 11 and 14); these include 2 letters of representation received from nearby residents objecting to the application, primarily on highway grounds and the capacity of the school to accommodate an increase in pupil numbers. These issues were considered in more detail within the appended report.
24. In considering this proposal, regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies and Government Guidance outlined within the appended report. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, National Planning Policy Framework, other Government Guidance and any other material planning considerations arising during the consideration of the application.
25. The key issues to consider as a result of the amended design, and the further representations received can be summarised under the following headings:
- design and layout; and
 - other relevant planning considerations raised concerning the application as amended.

Design and layout

26. Members will recall that in general I was happy to recommend that the design of the original application was considered acceptable in principle and performed positively against the development plan policies in place. However, in my opinion, the layout of the original proposals in relation to neighbouring property at that time was misconceived and too close given the height and mass of the extension proposed.
27. In response to those concerns the applicant has revised layout and design of the proposed front / north-west extension, closest to neighbouring property. The new layout allows for an increased level of separation between the new development and no. 3 Ethelbert Road, moving the extension approximately 1.2m further back from the shared boundary. As a result of the changes, the window to window distance would increase

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from around 2.5 / 3m under the original proposals to in excess of 4m. As set out in the original report, I am satisfied that, given the cill height of the window within the neighbouring property, it is likely that the neighbouring property would overlook rooms within the proposed development, as opposed to the other way around.

28. The revised design now incorporates a pitched roof line to the rear part of the front extension, in place of the previously promoted flat roof with parapet wall. The change in the design would serve to reduce the height of the extension at the closest point between the buildings, opposite the facing window within 3 Ethelbert Road. The proposed pitched roof line copies the design of the existing side extension, detailing an eaves height of 2.8m (in comparison with flat roof with parapet wall originally proposed, which would have measured 3.7m in height at the closest point). Please see the elevation and section drawings included above for more information.
29. The increased separation between the buildings, coupled with the lower eaves height and the pitched roof would now serve to reduce any potential impacts on 3 Ethelbert Road to a more acceptable level. The amended layout also pulls the one and a half storey gable end proposed to the front part of the extension further back from the boundary, reducing the potential for overshadowing or a sense of enclosure to the front of the residential property.
30. Whilst the revised development would still have some impact on the adjacent property, I am now satisfied that the proposals are appropriate in terms of scale, height, massing and appearance, and would not have an unacceptable impact due to the proximity of the buildings. Given the size and nature of the development and the layout of the adjacent residential property, in this instance, I consider that the proposal is sited sufficiently far from 3 Ethelbert Road to not result in material harm to the living conditions which the present and future occupiers can expect to enjoy.
31. I am also satisfied that, if necessary, the proposals to demolish and rebuild part of the existing side extension, including the provision of new windows within the west elevation, would be acceptable in the context of the surrounding built environment.
32. The revised entrance to the school building is considered an improvement, in that it would provide an inclusive level access and would avoid the need for a new ramp that could potentially detract from the overall appearance of the building in the street scene.
33. The fourth extension proposed in the north elevation fronting on to Ethelbert Road, would create approximately 11m² of additional floorspace, replacing that lost as a result of the revisions to the design. This extension would be used in combination with part of the existing hallway and lobby within the main building to provide a replacement staff room. The extension would be achieved by infilling and extending the existing porch under the mono pitched roof, which covers the porch and adjacent plant room. The proposed extension would have a limited visual impact given that it would adapt and re-create an existing design. Subject to the use of suitable matching materials, I consider that the extension would preserve the character of the building and would be acceptable in the street scene.
34. In my opinion, the amended application adequately addresses my earlier concerns about the layout of the development in the context of the surrounding residential properties. I also consider that the changes to the design and new elements of the proposal are all

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considered acceptable. Subject to a condition requiring the submission of all external materials for prior approval, I recommend that the application (as amended) is considered acceptable within the provisions of the Development Plan Policies in place in terms of its layout, sitting, scale, height, mass, overall design and impact on the surrounding built environment.

Other relevant planning considerations

35. Members will note the suggestion made by a neighbouring resident that consideration be given to reinstating the iron railings to the front of the school grounds. I understand from the correspondence received that the original railings may have been removed during the Second World War. Please note that the current application does not include any work to the existing boundary treatment. I completely agree that reinstated railings would serve to enhance the appearance of the building; however there is no scope to require this in the context of the current application as Members are required to determine the application as submitted. I have forwarded the suggestion on to the applicant, and ask that they give the views consideration should a proposal to provide new fencing to the front of the school be forthcoming at any point in the future.
36. With reference to the concern raised by local residents about the increase in commuter parking on the surrounding roads, as stated in the attached report this appears to have been as a result of an extension to the area covered by the local parking permit scheme surrounding Faversham town centre. The control and enforcement of on street parking falls within the Borough Council's remit and cannot be directly influenced by the School or the County Planning Authority. One representation also raised a question as to whether additional parking could be provided on an area to the west of the school building within the school grounds. I note that there is no space on site to expand the existing car park, and that the area identified by the resident potentially falls within the footprint of the development proposed within this application.
37. Kent Highways and Transportation has assessed the scheme in the context of existing and potential highway demand and is raising no objection to the application (please see Appendix 1). I am satisfied that the consideration given to highways matters within the earlier report still stands and therefore I do not raise any concerns over the application from a highway perspective.
38. Please see the appended report (included in Appendix 1) for consideration of other key issues raised in connection with this application. I remain satisfied that the proposals are still acceptable in terms of the various other issues considered in the 9 October 2012 committee report.

Conclusion

39. Having considered the amended application, the additional representations received since 9 October 2012, and all other issues arising from reconsidering the proposed development, I am satisfied that the proposal is now acceptable in terms of its design and layout in relation to the existing built development.

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40. I also remain satisfied that the proposals are acceptable in terms of the various other issues considered in the attached October 2012 committee report (included in Appendix 1), including in terms of highway considerations and the capacity of the school site to accommodate an increasing school roll. On this basis, I recommend that planning permission is granted subject to the conditions set out below.

Recommendation

41. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED to the proposed development as now amended, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:

- the development to be commenced within 5 years;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- details of all external materials to be submitted for prior approval;
- the existing boundary wall to be protected and maintained on site;
- precautions to prevent the deposit of mud on the highway; and
- controls on the hours of operation during construction work.

Case Officer: James Bickle

Tel. no: 01622 221068

Background Documents: see section heading

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Three single storey extensions to main school building at Ethelbert Road Primary School, Ethelbert Road, Faversham – SW/12/884 (KCC/SW/0180/2012)

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

Application by Kent County Council Education, Learning and Skills for three single storey extensions to main school building, including staff room, planning preparation area room, learning resources area and ancillary accommodation, enabling the provision of an additional classroom within the existing building, alongside provision of new ramp to front entrance at Ethelbert Road Primary School, Ethelbert Road, Faversham, Kent, ME13 8SQ – SW/12/884 (KCC/SW/0180/2012)

Recommendation: Permission be refused.

Local Member: Mr T. Gates

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The application site falls within the grounds of Ethelbert Road Primary School, Faversham. Ethelbert Road is a small primary school located to the south of Faversham town centre, close to London Road (A2). The school is positioned on a small plot of land (approximately 0.24ha) surrounded by residential properties, with a single point of access off Ethelbert Road to the north. The main school building fronts onto Ethelbert Road to north-west of the plot, with a car park (approximately 6 spaces) and rear access to the north-east, main hard play space to the south, and a small modern classroom building positioned to the rear of the school adjacent to the western boundary. The site is enclosed by a traditional brick wall to the south, east and west. The school building is constructed in a Victorian style and dates from the early twentieth century. A typical elevation consists of yellow stock bricks interspersed with stone work, with double height sash windows under steeply pitched tiled roofs, featuring distinctive gable ends. The building forms an important part of the character and history of the area, although it is not formally listed.
2. The application site falls within the school grounds and consist of 3 small areas of hard standing (totalling approximately 120m²) positioned immediately to the north-west, west and south-east of the main building. It is noted that the proposed locations to the north-west and west of the school are positioned close to the boundary wall shared with adjacent residential property. The areas identified are currently used for pedestrian circulation space, access and storage, with the area to the south east currently accommodating a wooden shed.
3. The Primary School currently consists of 7 year groups totalling 164 pupils from September 2012 with approximately 20 (full time equivalent) members of staff.

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4. The application site falls within the built-up area of Faversham as defined by the Swale Borough Local Plan Proposals Map. The school grounds are also within a Groundwater Vulnerability Zone overlying a Major Aquifer, as defined by the Environment Agency. There are no other site specific designations, although more general development plan policies are set out in paragraph (10) below.

Background

5. Ethelbert Road School changed its status in September 2008 from an Infant to a Primary School. At the time the Infant School had a planned admission number (PAN) of 37 children across 3 year groups with an approximate total of 111 pupils. An additional 52 nursery children were also accommodated on site within a private nursery school (163 pupils in total). Following the change in status in 2008 the Primary School had a PAN of 15 pupils across 7 years. Due to local demand for school places, in 2011 the Primary School was officially expanded to a full 1 form-entry school (with a PAN of 30 pupils allowing for up to 210 children in total). Following this decision the school roll is currently expanding as the smaller year groups move through the school and the full planned admission of 30 pupils start from the reception year. As previously indicated, a total of 164 pupils are attending the School from September 2012.
6. The increase in the number of classes and pupils has been achieved to date through the relocation of the privately run pre-school away from the site (relocating 52 children), and through the use of additional teaching spaces provided within existing extensions to the original school building. These extensions include a single storey art classroom building that was permitted to the rear of the main school in 2010 (under reference SW/10/288), and an extension to the west of the main school (permitted under SW/02/1228) which (at the time) provided special needs facilities including therapy space, office, storage and toilets. In more recent years this space has been used to provide additional teaching space.

Proposal

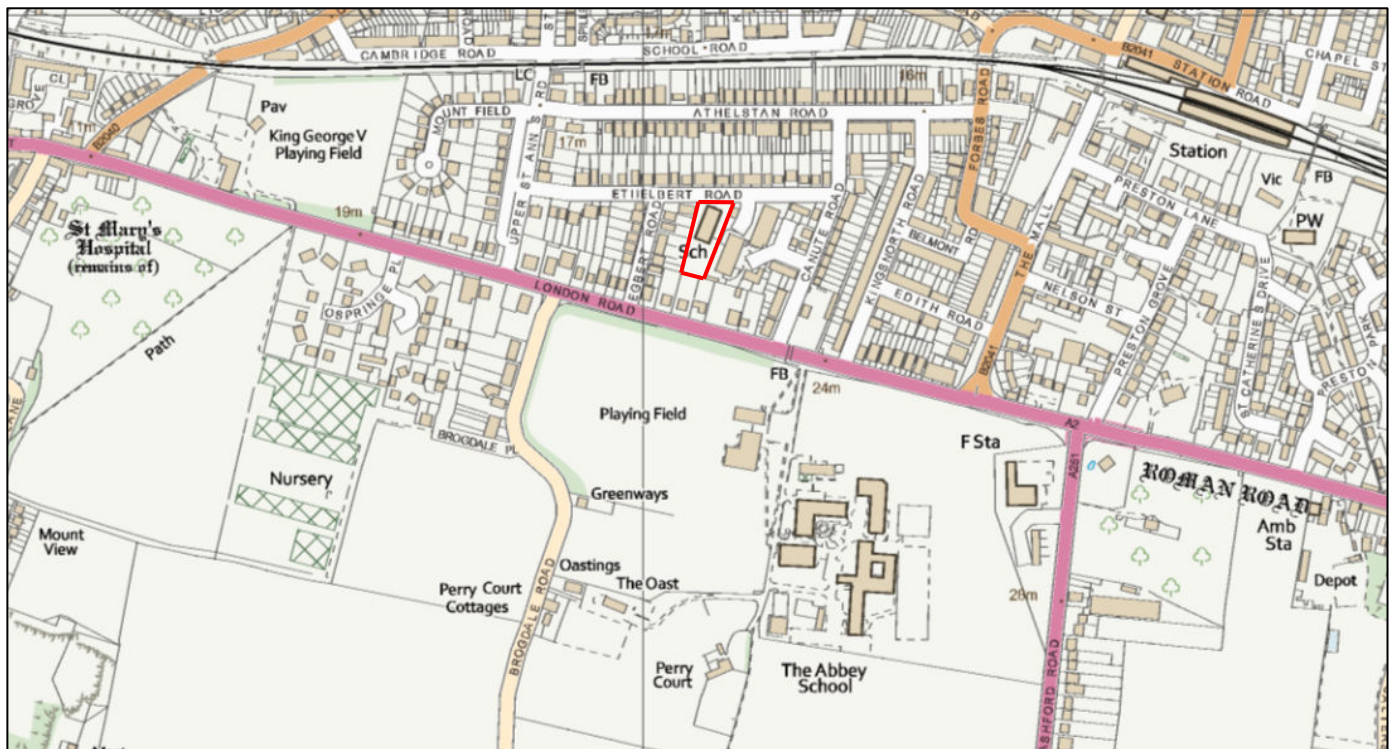
7. The application proposes the construction of 3 separate single storey extensions to the main school building with a new ramp to the front entrance. The first extension proposed to the north-west corner of the main building (fronting onto Ethelbert Road) would accommodate a replacement staff room (30m²) and a planning preparation area room (25m²). Immediately behind which is the existing extension permitted in 2002 referred to above. Beyond this (to the west of the main school), the second extension proposed would provide a learning resources room (40m²) by infilling a small courtyard area between the building and the boundary wall. The third extension would be located to the south east corner (to the rear of the school building) and would provide new toilet and care suite facilities (20 m²). A total of 115m² of additional floorspace would be created by the proposed development.
8. The provision of new accommodation would enable existing floorspace within the main building to be remodelled. The revised internal layout (which on its own does not require planning permission) would provide additional toilet facilities and allow an existing undersized teaching area to be expanded to provide a full classroom (49 m²). This extended teaching space would bring the total number of full classrooms available within the school to 7 (6 rooms within the main school and 1 within a small building to the rear).

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9. The design of the proposed extensions would reflect the architecture of the main school building, duplicating existing features and external materials. This would include: matching brickwork, composite stone banding and coping, gauged brick arches over external openings and timber sash windows. The design approach proposed for the front extension for the new staff room (facing the street) extends the existing façade to the west, re-creating the pitched roof line with gable end adjacent to the site boundary. Behind which the extensions proposed to the side and rear of the main school building would feature timber sash windows with parapet walls and composite stone copping above a flat roof. New window openings are also shown to the west elevation of the existing extension permitted in 2002, to compensate for light lost as a result of the extensions proposed immediately to the north and south of this part of the school building.

Site Location Plan

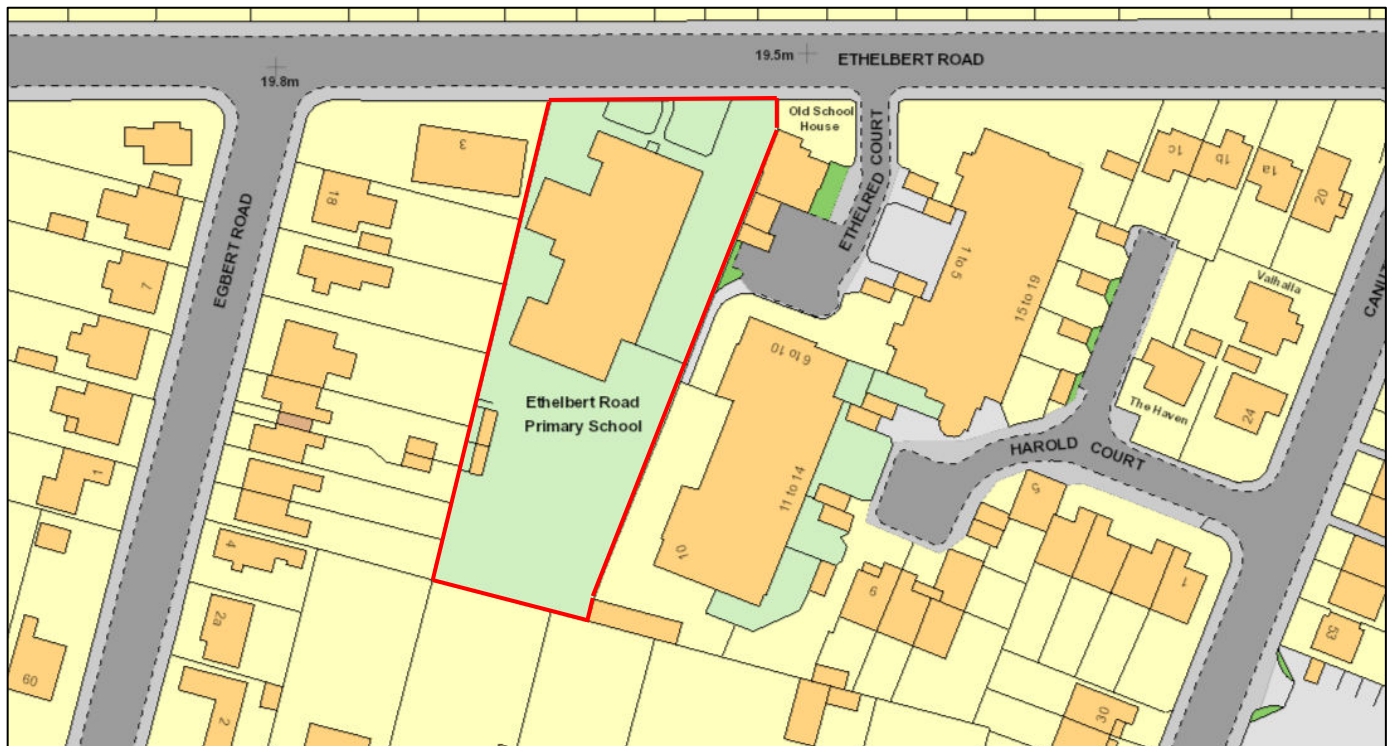


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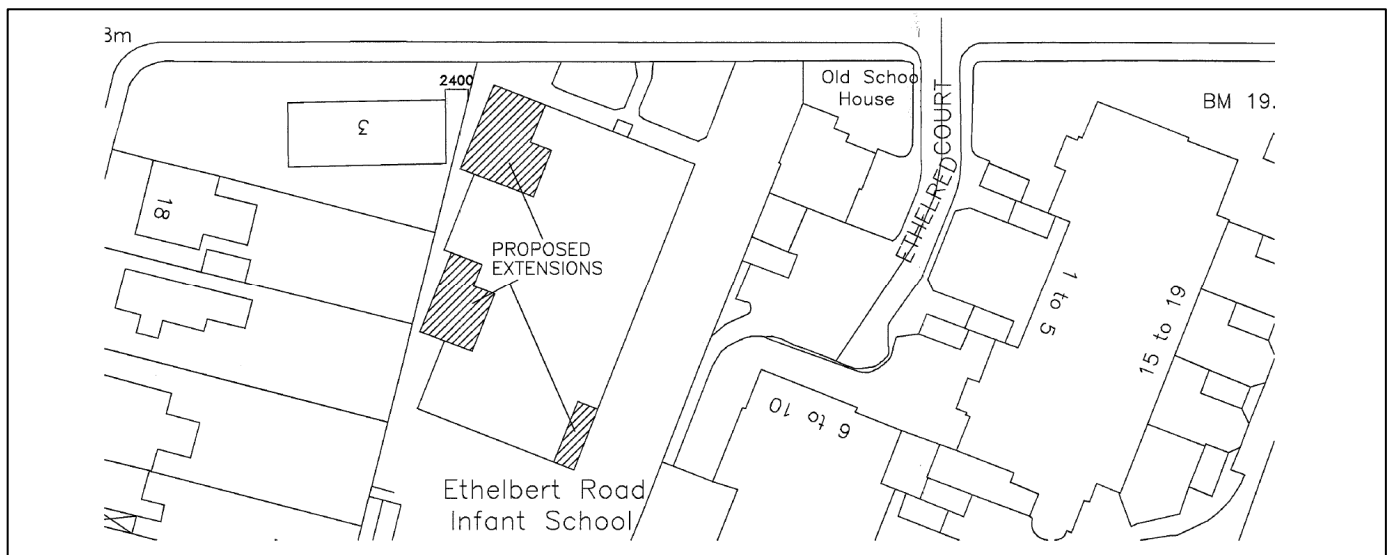
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Existing Block Plan

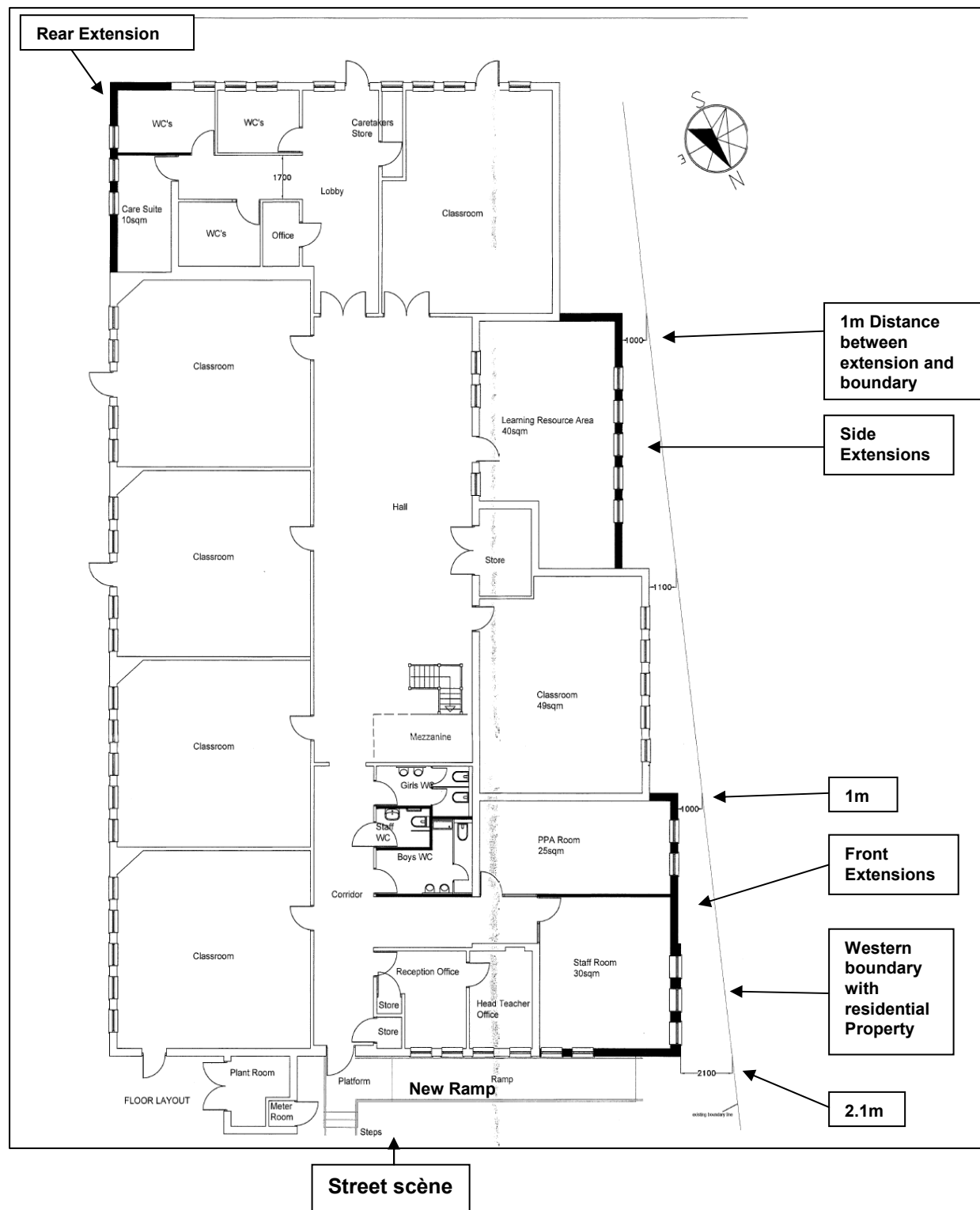


Proposed Block Plan



Appendix 1 to Item D2 **Three single storey extensions to main school building at Ethelbert Road Primary School, Faversham – SW/12/884 (KCC/SW/0180/2012)**

Proposed Floor Plan



Three single storey extensions to main school building at Ethelbert Road Primary School, Faversham – SW/12/884 (KCC/SW/0180/2012)

View south east from Ethelbert Road showing location of front extension - school building (left) and residential property at 3 Ethelbert Road (right).



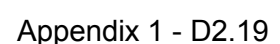
View south from Ethelbert Road showing location of front extension including the relationship with adjacent residential property at 3 Ethelbert Road (right) and existing extension permitted in 2002.



View north west from rear playground toward main building showing proposed location of rear extension.



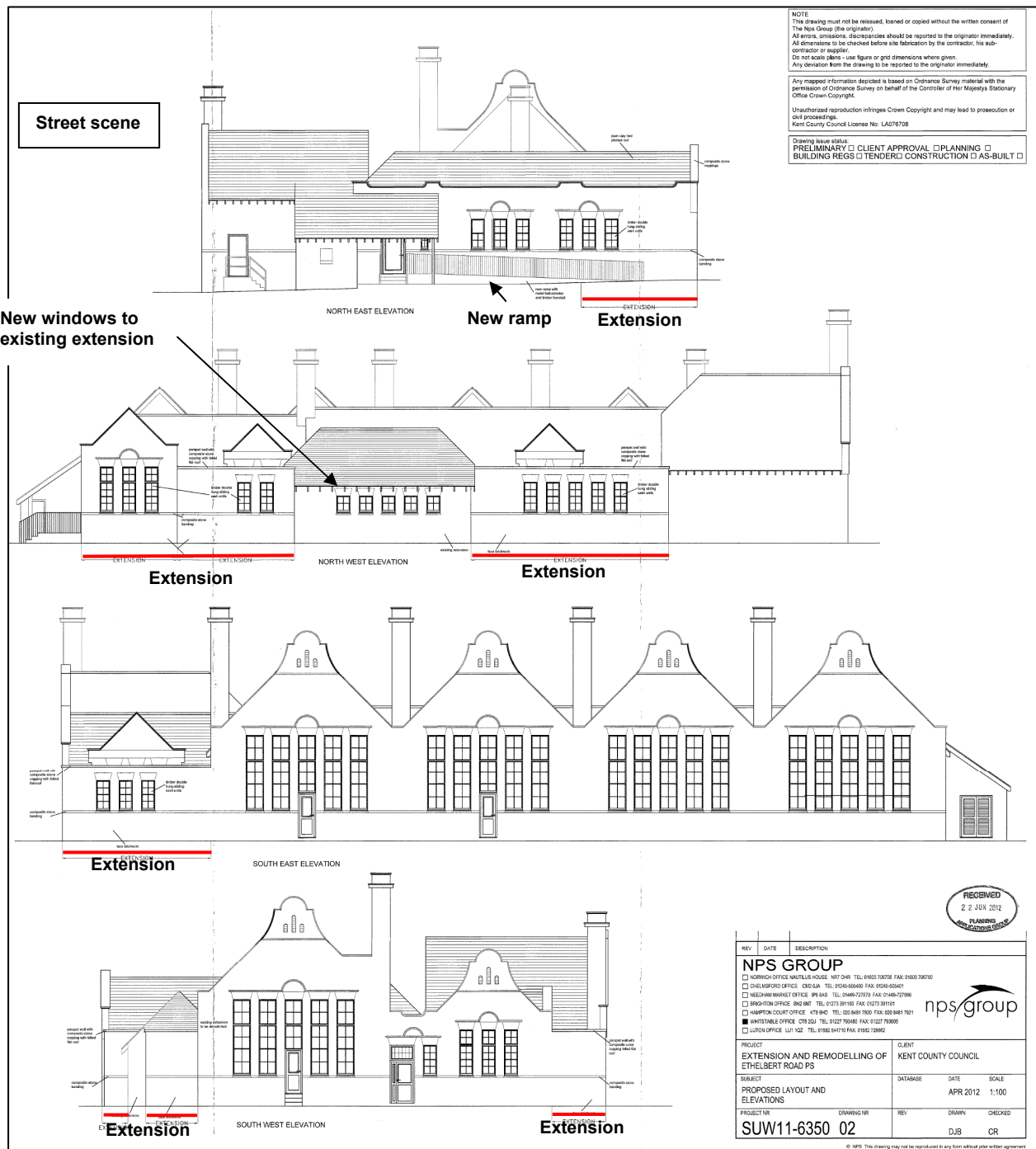
Existing Elevations



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Three single storey extensions to main school building at Ethelbert Road Primary School, Faversham – SW/12/884 (KCC/SW/0180/2012)

Proposed Elevations



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Planning Policy

10. 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 contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development, identifying 3 overarching roles in the planning system - economic, social and environmental, which are considered 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 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

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solutions rather than problems. It states that those determining applications should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

(ii) The South East Plan (2009):

- Policy SP3 Seeks to focus development within urban areas to foster access to services and avoid unnecessary travel.
- Policy CC1 Seeks to achieve and maintain sustainable development in the region.
- Policy CC4 Seeks new development to adopt sustainable construction standards and techniques.
- Policy CC6 Seeks sustainable and distinctive communities that respect the character of settlements and landscapes, and achieve a high quality built environment.
- Policy NRM1 Seeks to maintain and enhance ground water quality through the avoiding adverse effects of development on the water environment.
- Policy BE1 Seeks new development to help improve the built environment with design solutions relevant to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place.
- Policy S3 Seeks to ensure the adequate provision of pre-school, school, and community learning facilities.

Important note concerning the South East Plan:

Members will 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

(iii) Swale Borough Local Plan (2008) Policies:

- Policy SP1 In meeting the development needs of the Borough, proposals should accord with principles of Sustainable Development, including minimising impact on the environment, ensuring provision of community infrastructure, supporting existing local services, and a high quality of design that respects local distinctiveness.
- Policy SP2 Requires development proposals to protect and enhance the special features of the visual, aural, ecological, historical, atmospheric and hydrological environments of the Borough and promote good design in its widest sense.
- Policy SP7 Seeks the provision of new community facilities and services.

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- Policy FAV1 Within the Faversham Area, amongst other matters, conservation of the historic and natural environment is the prime and overriding consideration. In this context the policy seeks to enhance the role of the market town to support its own local needs, to set scales of development that reflect local needs and environmental character, and to raise the standard of the environment through high quality design, and the protection, enhancement, and management of environmental resources.
- Policy E1 Development proposals should, amongst other matters, seek to reflect the positive characteristics of the locality; protect and enhance the natural and built environments; be well sited and of a scale, design and appearance that is appropriate to its location; cause no demonstrable harm to residential amenity and other sensitive uses.
- Policy E2 Requires development all development proposals to minimise and mitigate pollution impacts.
- Policy E19 Seeks development to be of high quality design that responds positively to creating safe, accessible, and attractive places; enriching the qualities of the existing environment by promoting local distinctiveness and strengthening the sense of place; appropriate to its context in respect of scale, height and massing; making best use of texture, colour, pattern and durability of materials; and achieving flexibility to respond to future changes in use, lifestyle and demography.
- Policy E20 The Borough Council expects proposals to integrate security and safety measures within their design and layout.
- Policy E24 Requires extensions to existing buildings that are high quality design, in scale (by height and massing) in relation to the building's surroundings, maintain or enhance the character of the street scene, preserve architectural, landscape, or nature conservation features of interest and protects residential amenity.
- Policy C1 Supports proposals for new or improved community facilities, where proposals would meet an identified local need in an accessible location; and supports proposals that would help maximise the use of existing public and private community services and facilities.

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Consultations

11. **Swale Borough Council – no objection**, subject to the development commencing no later than 3 years from the date of planning permission.

Faversham Town Council – no objection, supports the expansion of this school to a full primary.

Environment Agency – no comment, the Agency has assessed the application as posing a low environmental risk, directing the applicant to its best practice guidance.

Kent Highways and Transportation – no objection to the proposal in respect of highway matters

In response to the application and the objections received from local residents Kent Highways comments can be summarised as follows:

Kent Highways appreciate that the total number of pupils attending the school would be able to rise if the proposed extension were permitted, however this appears possible merely due to an existing classroom being enlarged to compare with the other classrooms at the school. The proposal would not affect the numbers of classes at the school, and the number of teaching staff would remain the same, although it is expected that support staff will reduce slightly. As parking provision required for primary schools is based upon staff numbers, and this would not increase with the current application, there would be no requirement to seek additional parking provision.

Kent Highways note that whilst local residents may have concerns over parking at the beginning and end of the school day, with parents dropping off or collecting their children, this is an existing situation that only occurs over a relatively short period of the day. On- street parking is allowed in the immediate area surrounding the school, and the saturation of parking demand at those times just means that availability is less, and vehicles may have to park further away than they would desire to find a parking space. Any increase in parking demand as a result of this proposal is unlikely to be significant, and would be absorbed into the surrounding streets.

Local Member

12. The local County Member for Faversham, Mr T. Gates was notified of the application on 25 June 2012.

Publicity

13. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice, and the individual notification of 22 neighbouring properties.

Representations

14. In response to the publicity, 2 letters of representation have been received from neighbouring properties objecting to the application. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:

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- Objects to the expansion in number of pupils that would attend the school; notes that the school roll has risen in recent years from a half form-entry (*approximately* 105 pupils + 52 nursery pupils) to a proposed 1FE primary school (210 pupils). Draws attention to the steady increase in the school roll from 69 pupils in 1997.
- Objects to the potential increase in vehicle movements that would accompany an expansion of the school roll, including associated parking and access problems generated by parents using the surrounding residential roads.
- Considers that an increase in vehicle movements would have an undue impact on the public highway and in turn residential amenities, through the number and volume of movements generated on a daily basis.
- Raises concern about the number of vehicles already parking in the street in connection with evening events taking place at the school.
- Raises concerns that the size of the school roll is becoming too large for the space available on site, including the communal facilities like outdoor playground space, school hall and the toilet facilities available.
- Highlights the findings of a 2003 Ofsted report (prepared when 91 pupils attended the school) which raised concern that the main hall only provided adequate space for physical education for the number of pupils at that time.
- Points out that the provision of the large art room extension in 2011 impacted on the amount of outdoor play space available within the site.
- Raises concern about footballs and other objects travelling from the playground over school wall into neighbouring residents gardens, is concerned that the proposed expansion of the school would only intensify this issue;
- Raises concerns about loud music played during outdoor lessons and break times impacting on residential amenities.

Discussion

15. The application seeks planning permission for 3 small extensions to Ethelbert Road School, including a new pedestrian access ramp. The application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of 2 letters of representation received from nearby residents objecting to the application, primarily on highway grounds and the capacity of the school to accommodate an increase in pupil numbers. Please see paragraphs (11) and (14) for details of the representations received.
16. In considering this proposal, regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies and Government Guidance outlined in paragraph (10) above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, National Planning Policy Framework, other Government Guidance and any other material planning considerations arising during the consideration of the application.
17. In my opinion, the main determining issues in this particular case can be summarised by the following:
 - design and layout;
 - highway considerations; and
 - other relevant planning considerations.

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Design and layout

18. Swale Borough Local Plan Policies FAV1, E1, E19 and E24 seek new development within the Faversham area that conserves or enhances the built environment through high quality design that reflects local distinctiveness and is appropriate to its context in terms of scale, height, massing and appearance, and that causes no material harm to residential amenity.
19. The design approach proposed in this instance seeks to reflect the character of the main school by picking up on key features and materials. The most visually prominent of the three extensions fronts onto Ethelbert Road in a location that would have an impact on the appearance of school within the street scene. The proposals extend the existing façade approximately 6m to the west, recreating the fenestration and roof line with materials to match the existing building. The detailing proposed would include stone work, feature brickwork and double hung sliding sash windows. To the front of this elevation, the new pedestrian access ramp proposed to the main entrance includes a metal balustrade and timber handrail. The extensions behind this front elevation, proposed to the side and rear of the school, would adopt a smaller scale flat roof construction set behind parapet walls with composite stone copping to reflect the detailing on the main building.
20. In my opinion, the visual appearance of the proposals would be sympathetic to the existing built development, the design responds positively to the style and character of the school building, and conserves the local distinctiveness. Subject to a condition requiring the submission of external materials for approval, I have no reservations over the design approach in terms of the external appearance and am satisfied that this aspect of the development would accord with the relevant development plan policies.
21. However, notwithstanding the above, I draw Members' attention to the layout of the proposals in relation to the western site boundary and residential properties beyond. Due to the limited space available within the school grounds, the proposed layout would see two of the extensions constructed close to the existing site boundary wall. The proposals allow for a side passageway between the building and the wall to be retained, which narrows at the closest point to approximately 1m wide. The proposed layout generally reflects the building line adopted by an existing side extension permitted in 2002, and is not dissimilar to the degree of separation achieved between the surrounding residential development. I am content that the scale and mass of the extensions reflect the character of the main school building. However, in my opinion, the key consideration in this case is the proximity, scale, height and massing of the proposals in relation to the adjacent residential properties.
22. Whilst I note that the development would include a number of new facing windows, I am satisfied that the proposals (including the new windows proposed within the existing extension) would not have a material impact on the privacy of adjacent residential properties. In particular, views from the proposed ground floor openings to the west would be largely screened by the boundary wall, which would be retained as part of the development, and by planting to the rear of the gardens that back onto the site. However, Members will note that the property at 3 Ethelbert Road (directly adjacent to the front extension) is oriented such that a flank elevation faces the school. This elevation has one facing window to a second storey room. Given this window's height above ground, it is likely that the neighbouring property would overlook rooms within the proposed development, as opposed to the other way around.

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23. The elevation to elevation distance between the proposed front extension and 3 Ethelbert Road would be approximately 2.5m at the closest point, widening out to approximately 3.5m nearer to the street. As can be seen in the photographs above, this residential property is a bungalow that includes a loft extension. The house contains a facing window to a first floor room to the east of the property, below which is a garage. A number of roof lights increase light to the interior of the building.
24. The north-west corner of the extension proposed to the front of the school grounds includes a double height gable end mirroring the existing roofscape. The height of this gable end would reach 6.5m at the ridgeline at less than 2m from the shared boundary. This part of the proposals would be adjacent to the drive way and the north east corner of 3 Ethelbert Road and has the potential to overshadow the adjacent property. Behind the pitched roofed element of this extension, a flat roof above the proposed planning preparation (PPA) room would rise up to approximately 3.7m in height (including the parapet wall) at 1m from the boundary and directly adjacent to the side wall of 3 Ethelbert Road.
25. Due to the proportions and massing of the proposed front extensions and the proximity to the adjacent bungalow I have reservations that the development could have an undue impact through overshadowing, a potential loss of light and an overbearing sense of enclosure. I also note that due to the proximity of the buildings, daylight reaching rooms within parts of the proposed extensions and existing school building would be restricted. Whilst it is not a planning consideration and therefore not a matter for the Planning Applications Committee, the proposed close proximity of the buildings each with window openings could also present a fire spread issue, which would need to be addressed under Building Regulations should permission be granted.
26. Members will note that no objections have been received from Swale Borough Council, Faversham Town Council or neighbouring residents on design grounds. Whilst there have been no objections received concerning the design of the development, including from the nearest neighbouring occupier, it is still important to safeguard the amenities of both present and future occupants of neighbouring properties. The layout of 3 Ethelbert Road is such that only one habitable room is located directly adjacent to the shared boundary; the space below is occupied by a garage. Whilst this layout would serve to minimise the potential for a loss of light to the interior of the house, due to the proximity and size of the extension proposed, the development would still have the potential to overshadow the property, particularly the facing window, potentially skylights to the eastern end of the roof and the area fronting the house.
27. Whilst the overall design of the extensions is considered acceptable and performs positively against the development plan policies in place, in my opinion, the layout of the development in relation to neighbouring property is misconceived and too close given the height and mass of the extension proposed. On this basis I consider that the development would be contrary to Swale Borough Local Plan Policies E1, E19 and E24, which seek development that is well sited and of a scale, height and massing that is appropriate to its location, and causes no material harm to residential amenity. Taking the above into consideration, on balance, I am inclined to raise an objection to the layout of the development as proposed.

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Highway considerations

28. The objections received from nearby residents include concerns about the increasing school roll and the potential for an associated increase in congestion generated on the public highway network during peak times. The objections received highlight that any increase in pupil and/or staff numbers could exacerbate highway impacts which in turn could have a detrimental effect on residential amenities. The highway issues raised include perceived access and parking problems on the surrounding roads at the start and end of the school day, as well as during any evening use of the school site.
29. Representations received from residents highlight the change to the status of the school, from an infant to a primary school, that took place in 2008, and the subsequent expansion in the overall number of pupils attending the site over the intervening years. It should be noted that the current school roll (as of September 2012) is 164 pupils; this is not dissimilar to the numbers of pupils that attended the site prior to 2008, only that the make up of pupils is slightly different. Pre 2008 approximately 100 pupils attended the Infant School with a further 52 children attending a privately run nursery that shared the accommodation. This private nursery was subsequently relocated off site, which released space to accommodate the expansion of the Primary School. It should be noted that the school is in the process of a gradual expansion up to a total of 210 pupils with a planned admission number of 30 pupils per year. Whilst these changes may in the future slightly increase the number of people attending the site above previous levels, the decision to accept this change has long since been adopted by the Education Authority and does not form part of the current proposals.
30. The current application seeks to ease pressure for space within the school building by providing ancillary accommodation, such as a staff room and learning resources area, which would support the overall education use. The extensions do not provide for additional classroom space; should the current application be refused there would no reduction in numbers of people attending the site, now or in the future. It is noted that the applicant plans to re-organise the internal layout of the existing building to provide a 7th classroom by expanding an existing room within the main school used to teach smaller groups to provide a full classroom space. This arrangement would bring the number of classrooms on site up to the number needed to support a 1 form-entry primary school. However, these internal works do not require planning approval and could be carried out irrespective of any decision on this application.
31. Notwithstanding this, Kent Highways and Transportation has commented on the application including the objections received from local residents. The Local Highway Authority raises no objection to the application in respect of highway matters, confirming that the congestion and demand for parking on the public highway generated by the enlarged school roll is unlikely to be significant, and could be absorbed into the surrounding streets without an unacceptable impact in highway terms.
32. In response to the objections received concerning the application the headteacher has confirmed that the School are currently working with Kent Highways and Transportation to update their Travel Plan. The headteacher highlights that the vast majority of pupils (85%) walk to and from school on a daily basis or attend breakfast and after school club, which serves to stagger the start/end to the school day reducing congestion. The headteacher also points out that an expansion of the local residential parking permit scheme into nearby roads has potentially caused commuters to now park in Ethelbert, Canute and Egbert Roads which may have increased local residents awareness of on

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street parking issues. The headteacher has confirmed that the School does have some evening functions including regular community use of the school hall. I am led to believe that the existing community uses do not generate significant demand for parking. The headteacher does acknowledge that occasional school events, like performances or parent/teacher meetings, do generate on street parking in the evenings, and she has undertaken to encourage more parents to walk to these events.

33. The above information is helpful in responding to local residents concerns, however, on the basis that the application does not directly enable an increase in the number of staff and/or pupils I do not consider that there are grounds to sustain a material planning objection to the proposals in respect of highway matters.

Other planning considerations

34. The application site overlies a principal aquifer, which means groundwater would be at risk from activities on site. The Environment Agency has indicated that the application poses a low environmental risk and that subject to the applicant following its best practice guidance the development would be acceptable in this location. Should planning permission be granted I recommend an informative drawing the applicant's attention to the Agency's guidance.
35. An objection received from a nearby resident raises concern that the shared facilities within the school buildings and grounds, like the assembly hall, toilet facilities, and external playground space, would not be adequate to support the expanding school roll. Whilst this clearly is a practical consideration, I do not consider it to be material from a land use planning perspective or grounds to consider refusing the application. The proposed extensions would result in a small reduction in available play space, however none of the extensions are excessively large (in terms of floorspace) and none are located on areas that form part of the main playground. In my opinion, this issue is more a site management consideration for the Education Authority and the School's Governing Body to reassure themselves on.
36. In response to this point the applicant has confirmed that the available playground space would be adequate for 210 pupils. The School currently staggers lunchtimes between key-stages 1 and 2 children. The headteacher acknowledges that the school hall does not provide adequate space to teach the full physical education curriculum, and for many years the School have used alternate arrangements in nearby Faversham Gym and Abbey School. The headteacher confirms that the school hall is considered large enough for whole school assemblies and lunchtime use, even for 210 pupils. It is noted that the extensions proposed seek to provide additional ancillary accommodation that enables the provision of new facilities to support the school curriculum, such as a new learning resources area and staff preparation space and accommodation, alongside the provision of additional toilet facilities. The applicant confirms that the new toilet facilities will meet the needs of the children and staff.
37. A neighbouring resident has also raised concern over amenity impacts resulting from the number of footballs and other objects that find their way into local residents gardens as a result of the use of the playground. Alongside reservations about the use of loud music during outdoor lessons. The letter received raises concern that any increase in pupil numbers could exacerbate these issues through the intensification of the use of the play space. Both of the above considerations are site management issues that would need to be addressed outside of the planning process. The headteacher has confirmed

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that in response to previous complaints playtime supervision has been increased and the School will continue to work with residents in response to any ongoing concerns.

Conclusion

38. In concluding, I note that the application has attracted objections from neighbouring residents concerning the potential expansion of the school roll. As set out above, I do not consider that this issue is a key material consideration for the current application, as the extensions proposed would not directly provide for an increase in classroom space. The facilities proposed would provide ancillary accommodation that would support delivery of the curriculum as opposed to enabling an expansion of the school. The decision to allow the ongoing expansion of this primary school was taken by the Education Authority and the School Management Team in 2011 and can not be revisited as a result of the current application.

39. I consider that the external appearance of the proposed extensions would be acceptable, in preserving the character and appearance of the surrounding built environment and the street scene. However, given the concerns over the layout of the front extension in relation to the adjacent residential property I am unable to conclude that the development would have no adverse impacts on residential amenities.

40. Whilst the benefits of the proposed development to this community facility are an important consideration, on balance, taking into account the provisions of the Development Plan and material considerations raised during the processing of this application, I recommend that planning permission be refused in this instance on the grounds set out below.

Recommendation

41. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE REFUSED, on the following grounds:

- The proposals, by reason of siting, scale and proximity to the boundary, would have a detrimental overbearing and overshadowing impact upon adjacent residential property at 3 Ethelbert Road, to the detriment of the residential amenities of this property. The proposal is therefore considered contrary to Policies E1, E19 and E24 of Swale Borough Local Plan.

Case Officer: James Bickle	Tel. no: 01622 221068
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Background Documents: see section heading
