

SECTION D

DEVELOPMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

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

Item D1

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 10 April 2013.

Application by Kent Council Children Property & Infrastructure Support for the demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms, with associated welfare facilities, and an extension to the school hall, at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford, Sevenoaks – SE/13/488.

Recommendation: permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr Nick Chard

Classification: Unrestricted

Members' Site Visit

1. A group of Planning Application Committee Members visited the application site on the 27 March 2013 to acquaint themselves with the proposals and the issues they raise. See notes in Appendix 1.

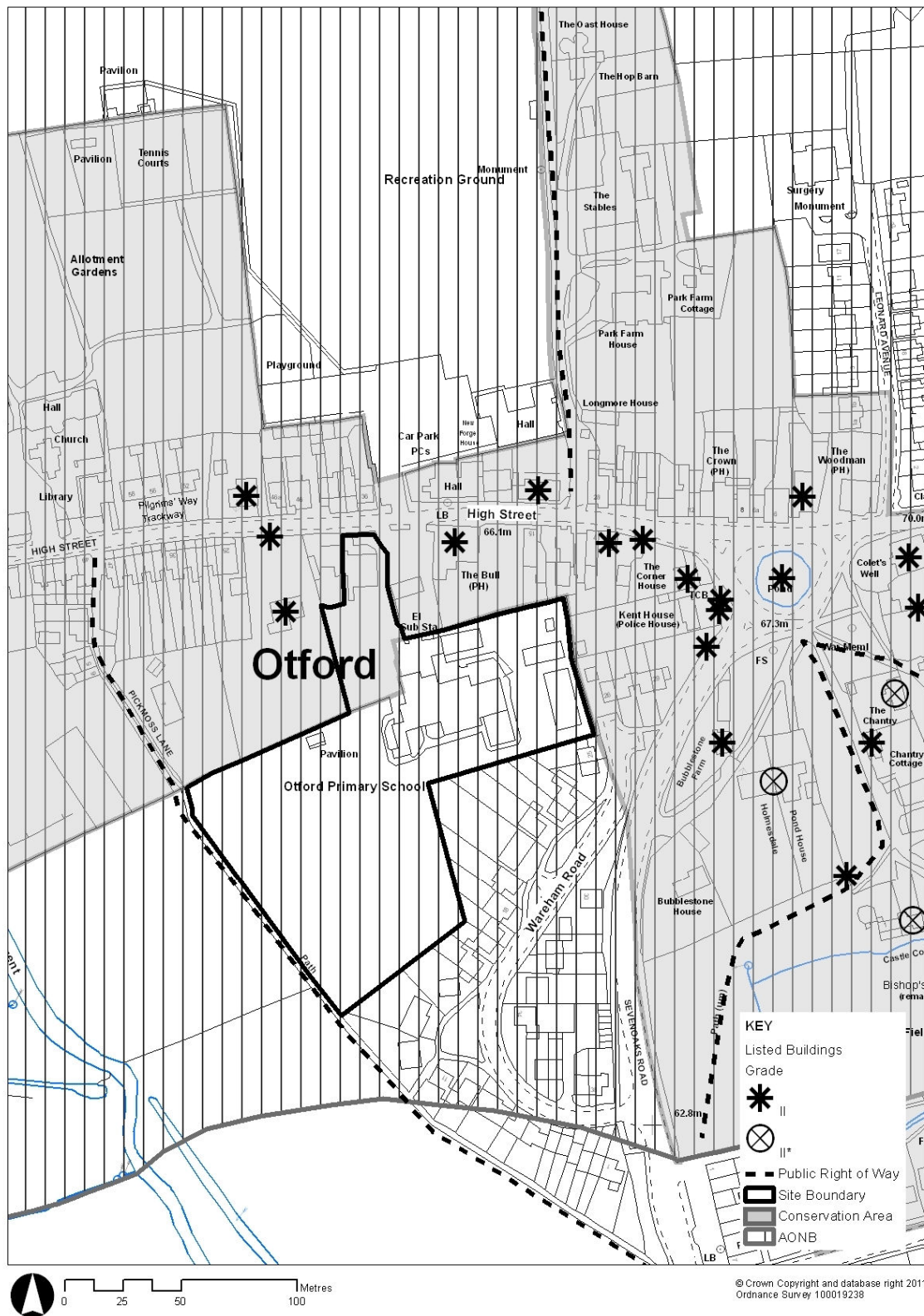
Site Description

2. Otford Primary School is located within the centre of Otford village, accessed via the High Street, the main road through the village centre which links the A225 Sevenoaks Road to the east with the A224 London Road to the west. Otford lies approximately 2 miles to the north of Sevenoaks, separated from the town by open countryside, which is intersected by the M26. The centre of the village of Otford is a designated Conservation Area, the boundary of which runs through the school site and immediately to the east of the application site (the application site is not within the Conservation Area). The school playing fields are designated as Metropolitan Green Belt and the whole of the school site is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A number of Listed Buildings surround the site.
3. The school site comprises two main single storey buildings, one of traditional brick construction built c1890 located on the site frontage on the High Street, and the other being a 1970's system build (SEAC), located to the south of the original school building and its associated playground. Two modular classroom units are also located on site, accommodating four additional classrooms in total. A timber frame detached building also provides a single classroom for the school, and an additional room and outdoor play area which accommodates a private pre-school nursery. Playing fields extend to the south west of the site, beyond which lie open countryside. To the immediate south of the 1970s classroom building residential houses in Warham Road back onto the school site.

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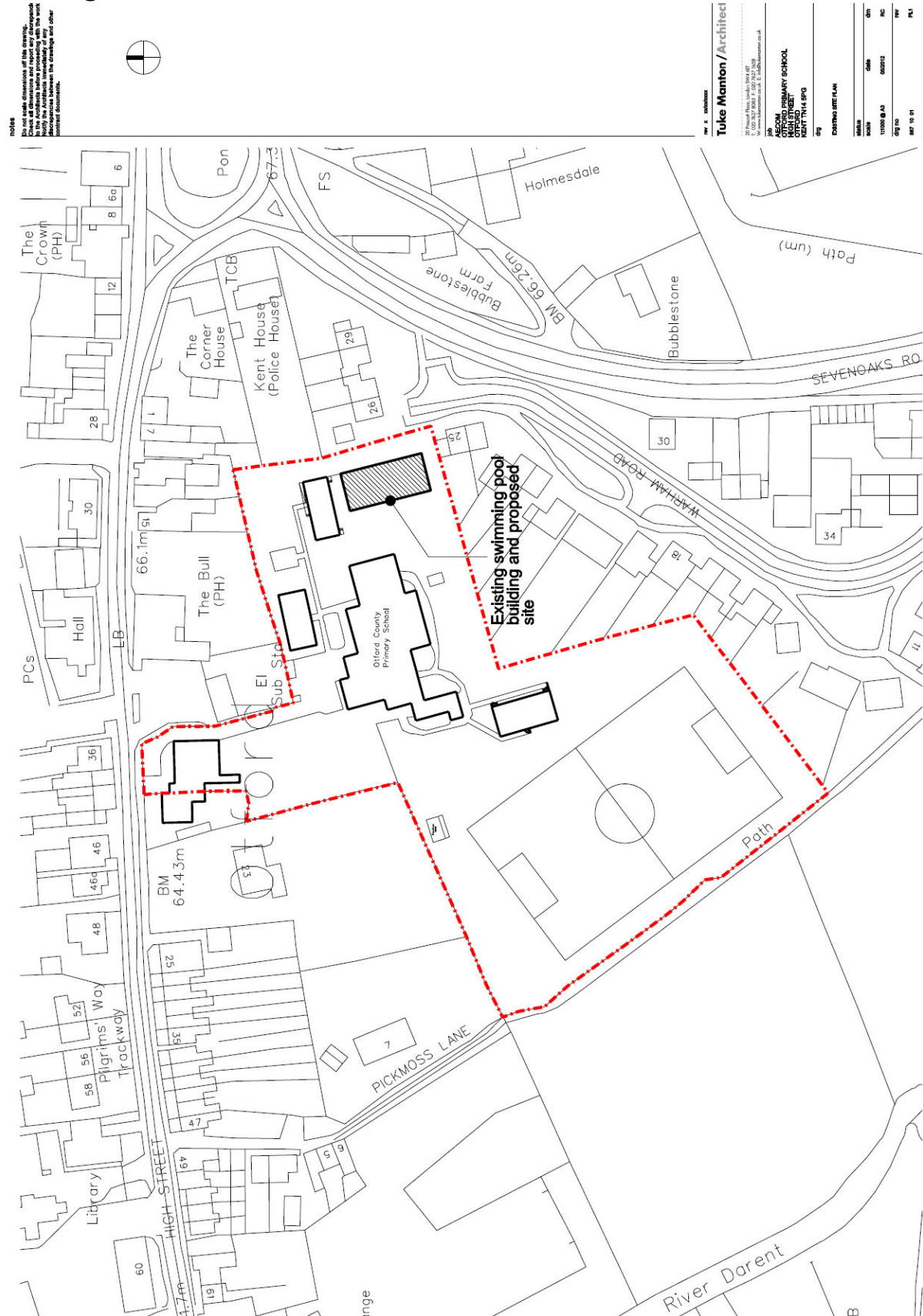
Site Location Plan



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Existing Site Plan



Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

Proposed site plan

Existing path adapted to suit new layout

New perimeter path with planting to building perimeter

Proposed hall extension

The Avenue

The Green

1:1000

06/01/12

Tuke Manton Architects

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

Do not scale dimensions off this drawing.
Check all dimensions and report any discrepancies.
Mark the architect immediately if any
discrepancies are found. Do not change the
drawing documents.

0m 10m

Vegetable garden

Outline of roof above

RWP

Classroom 1

Rooftight above

Entrance

Classroom 2

Rooftight above

Entrance

Classroom 3

Rooftight above

Store

Elec and plant

Store

WC

WC

Cloakroom

Access. WC

One to one teaching area

Canopy over

New tarmac pathway to match existing

300mm gravel edge to building

Grassed area

North arrow

0m 10m

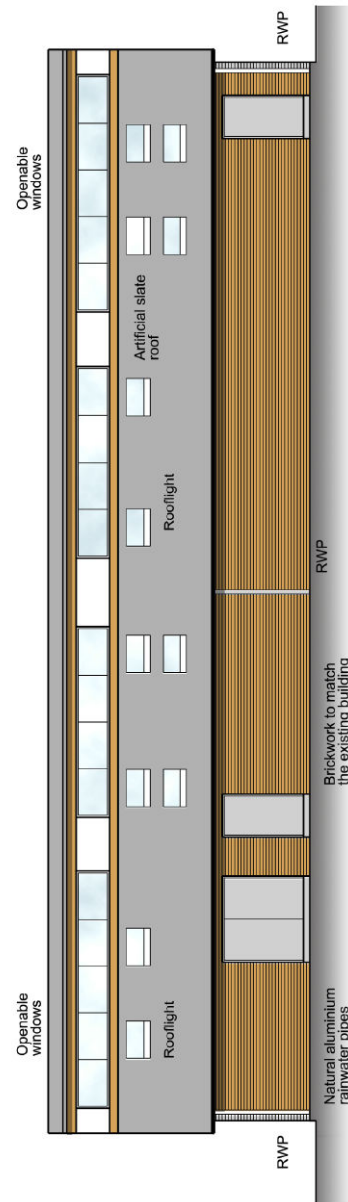
Project Name: OXFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL
Client: OXFORD CITY COUNCIL
Architect: Tuke Mantou Architects
Date: 15/07/2012
Drawing No: 100-01
Scale: 1:500

PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN	
ROOM	PLANNING
DATE	01/11
BY	15/07/2012
NO	100-01
REV	01
BY	15/07

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

notes

Do not scale dimensions off this drawing.
Check all dimensions and report any discrepancies to the Architect before proceeding with the work.
Notify the Architect immediately of any discrepancies between the drawings and other contract documents.



REV P1 SEP7/2012 PLANNING ISSUE
Tuke Manton / Architects

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job

AECOM
OTFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL
HIGH STREET
OTFORD
KENT TN14 5PG

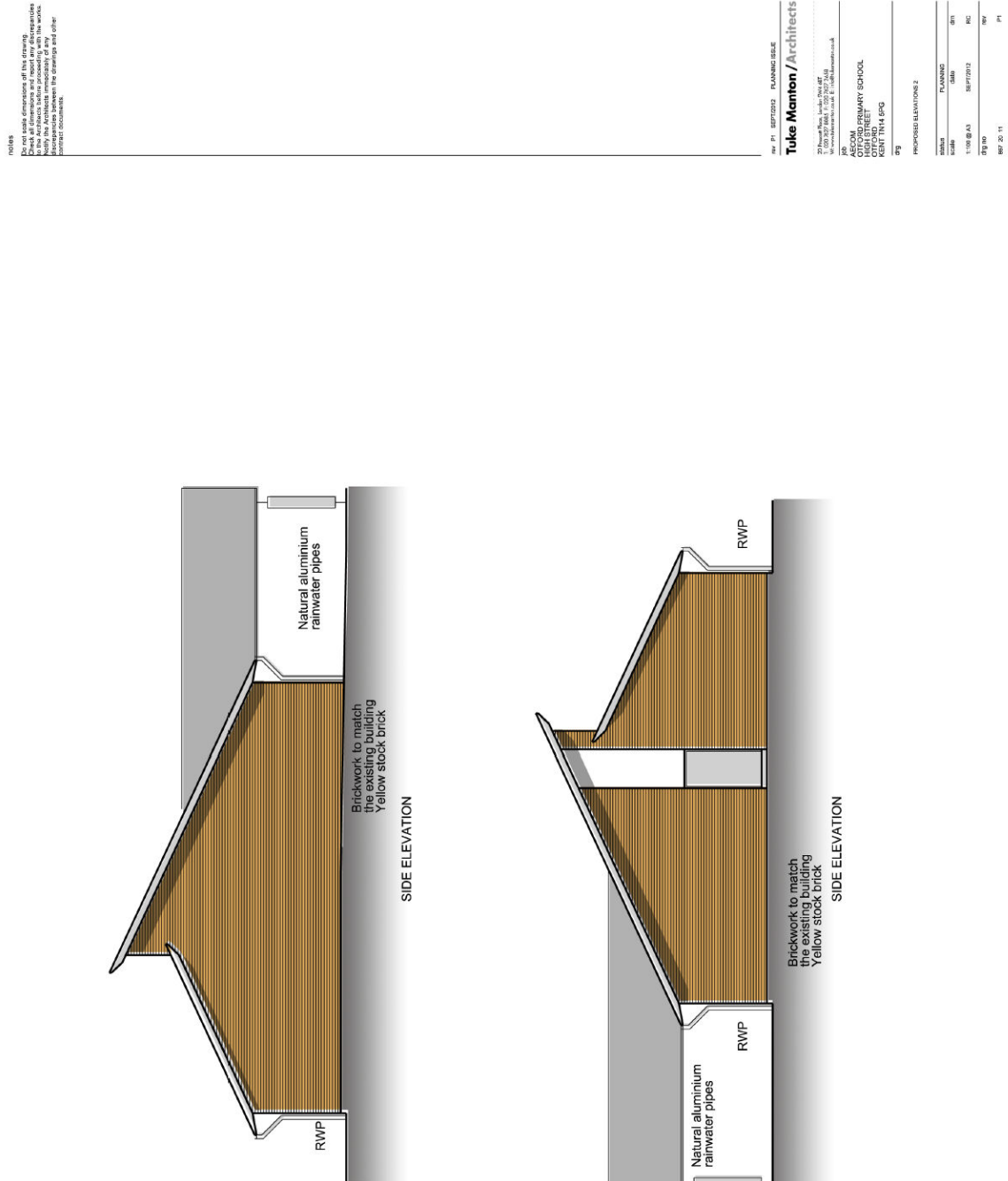
OTF

status	PLANNING	dm
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1:100 @ A3	SEP12/2012	RC
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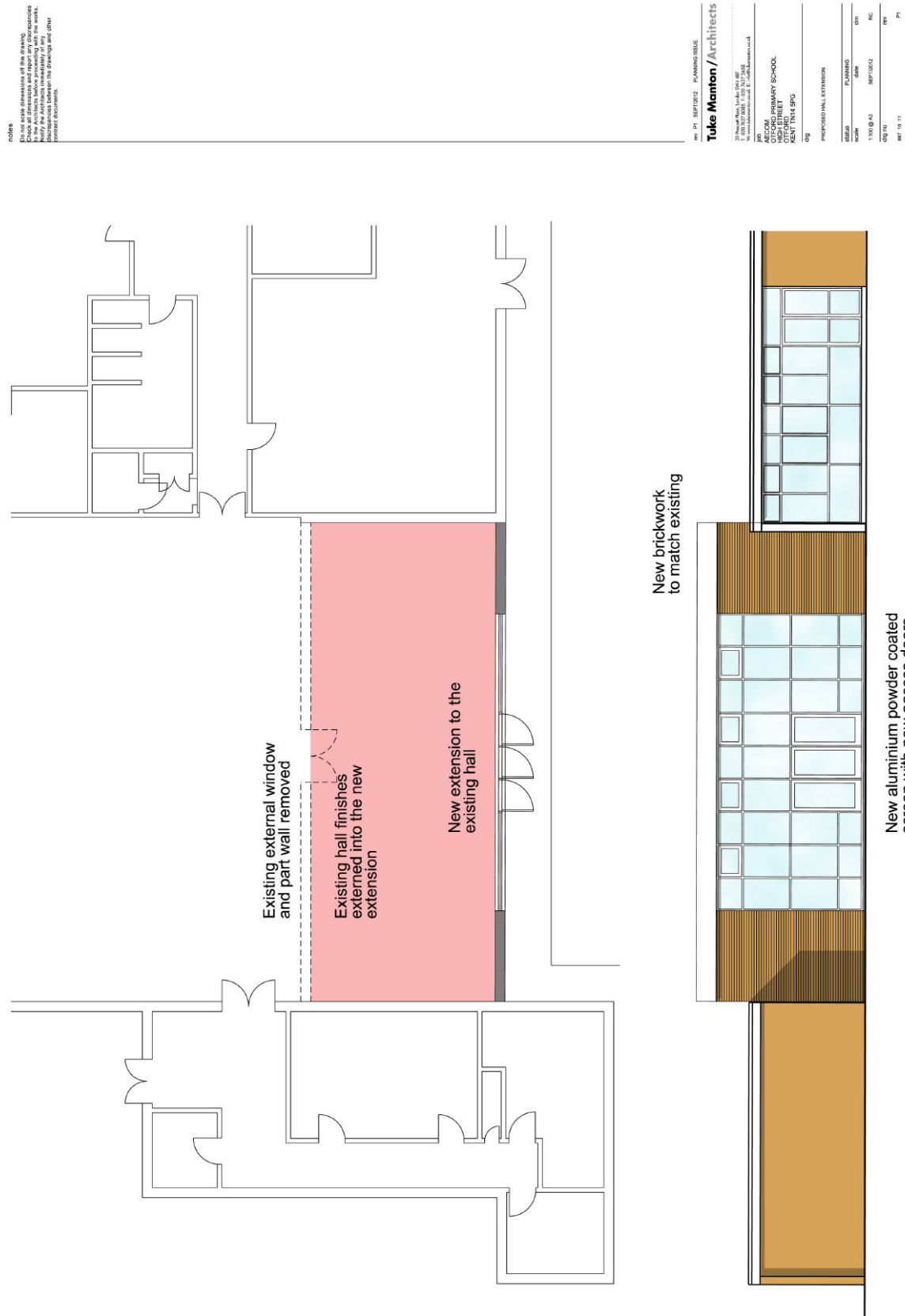
Proposed Elevations (North and South)



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Proposed Hall Extension



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4. To the east of the school site, adjacent to Warham Road, lies a detached aluminium framed swimming pool building. The swimming pool building runs parallel to the eastern site boundary, which consists in 1.2 metre high chestnut paling fencing and an area of hedgerow at this point. The building is currently used for storage only, and is in a poor state of repair.
5. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the school site is via the High Street, controlled by security gates. Parking on site is limited, with a total of twelve parking bays for staff and visitors located to the south east of the access. Otford Village Car Park, which is owned and managed by Otford Parish Council, is located opposite the school, and a zebra crossing on the High Street is located to the east of the school and the Parish Car Park entrance.

A site location plan is attached.

Proposal

6. This application has been submitted by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure Support and is part of the County wide Basic Needs Programme. The application proposes the demolition of the existing swimming pool building and the erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms and associated welfare facilities, and an extension to the existing school hall. The applicant advises that Otford Primary School currently has insufficient teaching accommodation for the current pupil intake numbers. Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) is 60 pupils per academic year, and this has been the case for the last 3 years, and is set to continue. Due to insufficient classroom space on site, teaching spaces currently occupy non teaching rooms, such as a converted kitchen and library spaces. The applicant advises that since the increase in PAN in September 2009, the School has continually reorganised the teaching space available to accommodate the 2 Form Entry intake, including the addition of modular teaching accommodation. However, from September 2013, I am advised that the school will require a further 3 classrooms in total as the pupil numbers level out across all year groups.
7. This application proposed the demolition of the existing swimming pool building, and the erection of a three classroom building upon the same footprint, re-using the existing foundations. The proposed building would also accommodate toilet and cloakroom space, and a new covered entrance would be provided to the western elevation, which would be the only element of the building which would extend beyond the footprint of the existing swimming pool. The school hall is also proposed to be extended to meet the minimum requirements set out in Kent County School Design Brief October 2011, and the DfE Guidelines for the Primary School Accommodation, for a 2FE Primary School.
8. The existing detached swimming pool building is located along the eastern boundary of the school site, which also marks the boundary of the Conservation Area, and beyond which lie residential properties in Warham Road. The footprint of the existing swimming pool building is 25.4 metres by 11.7 metres, equating to 297.2 m². The existing building is approximately 4 metres high, and has a simple pitched roof constructed of GRP semi translucent infill panels. A dwarf brick wall and a aluminium frame support the same GRP panels as the roof, forming the walls of the existing building. It is proposed to replace the super structure of the swimming pool building with a timber framed single storey building, approximately 6.25 metres in height. The existing foundations are

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proposed to be retained, and the existing floor slab adapted to cater for the proposed building. The building footprint would, therefore, be as existing, with the only addition being the entrance porch.

9. The timber framed structure would be clad in a yellow stock brick, to match the existing main school building. The roof is proposed at a shallow pitch, finished in artificial slate tiles, with high level clerestory glazing proposed facing towards the east, Warham Road. The high level clerestory glazing, in addition to roof lights, would provide natural light and ventilation to the classrooms, whilst ensuring that windows are not introduced into the eastern elevation to face residential properties. Aluminium door and window frames are proposed to be finished in a mix of grey and white, to provide a colour contrast as required by the Disability Discrimination Act. Fire exit doors are positioned along the south and east elevations of the building, which would be for emergency use only. A small plant room would also be accessed via a door on the eastern elevation.
10. The proposed building would accommodate 3 classrooms for Key Stage 2 pupils, with each classroom providing 60m² of internal floor space, in addition to a resource store and wet area. Storage and cloak areas would be provided for each classroom, in addition to pupil and staff WCs. The building would be accessed via an existing tarmac pathway, linking with the existing school buildings and external play spaces.
11. The main entrance to the proposed building would be on the west elevation, facing an open area of grass amenity space, beyond which lies the main school building. Natural light from windows along this elevation would provide light to the internal spaces, with low cill heights on this elevation to ensure pupils can gain views across the school site. High level clerestory glazing and roof lights are proposed to keep running costs low by providing passive ventilation, with louvre vents to the windows left open at night whilst the building would be secure to allow purging of the internal air. Heating is proposed to be stand alone from the main school building, with an air source heat pump proposed to be installed. The applicant considers that this would provide cost effective central heating via under floor heating.
12. Building Bulletin 99 sets out minimum external space recommendations for Primary Schools. A 1FE Primary School would require 2,500m² of playing field space, increasing to 5,000m² for a 2FE school. The applicant states that Otford Primary School has 8,693m² of playing field space. With regard to hard surface play space, a 2FE Primary School would require 1,030m² under Building Bulletin 99. Otford Primary School has a total of 1170m². It should be noted that the proposed development is upon the footprint of an existing building and would not impact upon playing field or hard play provision. The development would also not result in the removal of any trees.
13. In addition to the proposed classroom extension, it is also proposed to extend the existing school hall. The hall currently provides a floor space of approximately 180m². The applicant states that regulations stipulate a space requirement of 0.45m² per pupil. The existing hall has a capacity for 400 pupils for assembly purposes and, consequently, the school hall is insufficient in size to accommodate all the pupils and staff associated with a 2FE school (420 pupils). DfE advise a minimum hall size of 180m² for a 2FE Primary School, with a further small hall/studio of 80m². This application therefore includes the proposed extension of the existing main hall to provide a further 80m² of floor space. The applicant is proposing to extend through the window/curtain walling elevation to the south of the hall by 5 metres, to meet the building line of the adjacent classroom. The extended hall would appear as existing in

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terms of elevational treatment and design. The extension would cover over an area of overgrown garden and a tarmacadam path.

14. It is not proposed to alter or improve existing vehicular and pedestrian access to the site as part of this application. However, this application is accompanied by a School Travel Plan which sets out how the School manage parking and access, and future intentions for further management, such as the provision of a walking bus. Recently added security gates, with automated vehicle and pedestrian gates, controlled by intercom call points, have vastly improved the school's security.
15. The applicant states that the site compound associated with this development would be located on the area of grass to the west of the existing swimming pool. Temporary access for materials is proposed from Warham Road, where materials would be transferred from delivery vehicles over the boundary fence to the site compound. The applicant states that, where possible, prior notification would be given to the residents of Warham Road in advance of such bulk material deliveries. Work operative vehicles would access the site via the main school entrance on the High Street, and would park on site. Controls would be in place to protect the public and pupils from construction vehicles/activities, and deliveries would avoid peak school times. The build would take approximately 10-16 weeks. The applicant states that all surfaces and boundary fencing would be reinstated on completion, and that additional planting to the boundary with Warham Road would be provided if required.

The planning application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, School Travel Plan and a Transport Assessment.

Planning Policy Context

16. **National Planning Policies** – the most relevant National Planning Policies are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) which 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 three dimensions to sustainable development which create three overarching roles in the planning system - economic, social and environmental. These roles are mutually dependent. Within the over-arching roles there are twelve 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;

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- 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 costal 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);
- Chapter 8 (Promoting healthy communities);
- Chapter 10 (Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change);
- Chapter 11 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment); and
- Chapter 12 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment).

Chapter 11 states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in (amongst other designated areas) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. It goes on to state that planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
- the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
- any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

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

The **Policy Statement on Planning for Schools Development (August 2011)** is also relevant, in so far as it identifies that there should be a presumption in favour of the development of state-funded schools.

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17. Sevenoaks District Local Plan: Adopted 2000:

- Policy EN1 -** Proposals for all forms of development and land use must comply with the policies set out in this Plan, unless there are overriding material considerations. Scale, height, design, layout, retention of important features (such as trees), residential and local amenity, access and parking are just some of the criteria which should be considered in the determination of a planning application.
- Policy EN4A -** Proposals for all forms of non-residential development must make satisfactory provision for the safe and easy access of those with disabilities.
- Policy EN6 -** The Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are shown on the Proposals Map. Development which would harm or detract from the landscape character of these areas will not be permitted.
- Policy EN23 -** Proposals for development or redevelopment within or affecting Conservation Areas should be of positive architectural benefit by paying special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area and of its setting. The design of new buildings and alterations to existing buildings should respect local character, whilst the treatment of external spaces including hard and soft landscaping, boundary walls, street furniture and signs should be compatible with and enhance the appearance of the area
- Policy NR10 –** Proposals for all forms of development should minimise pollution of the environment through the careful design and layout of any buildings or land uses.
- Policy VP1 –** Vehicle parking provision in new developments will be made in accordance with KCC adopted vehicles parking standards.

Sevenoaks District Core Strategy: Adopted February 2011:

- Policy LO7 -** Within the rural settlement confines of Otford development on a modest scale will be permitted where it can take place in an acceptable manner consistent with local character. Within all the settlements covered by this policy new development should be of a scale and nature appropriate to the village concerned and should respond to the distinctive local characteristics of the area in which it is situated
- Policy LO8 –** Seeks to maintain the extent of Green Belt, and conserve and enhance the countryside, including the distinctive features that contribute to the special character of its landscape and its biodiversity. The distinctive character of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting, will be conserved and enhanced.
- Policy SP1 –** Requires all new development to be designed to a high standard, reflect the distinctive local character of an area, create safe, inclusive and attractive environments, incorporate sustainable development principles

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and maintain biodiversity. Account should be taken of guidance adopted by the District Council in the form of Conservation Area Appraisals and Parish Plans, amongst other matters. The Districts heritage assets and their settings, including listed buildings, conservation areas, historic buildings, archaeological remains, landscapes and outstanding views will be protected and enhanced.

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

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

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

Consultations

18. Sevenoaks District Council – comments as follows:

“Due to its height, bulk and design, the proposed building for three classrooms is felt to be detrimental to the character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the neighbouring Conservation Area. This would not be in accordance with policies LO8 of the Sevenoaks Core Strategy, and EN23 and EN1 of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan.

At the request of the ward councillor for Otford, the District Council would also draw the County Council's attention to the concerns raised with regard to the parking/highways issues that have been raised.”

Otford Parish Council – objects to this application on the following grounds: -

- Do the hard play calculations provided include the area used for car parking?
- Air-source heat pumps give rise to noise concerns;
- Access from Warham Road should not be allowed for material deliveries. Any access would cross private land;
- The data used in the Travel Assessment is low quality and inaccurate;
- The conclusion of the Travel Plan is not accepted. The conclusion states that 'overall it has been demonstrated that with continued effectiveness of the Travel Plan and the future proposals for the village car park there are no transport or highway reasons to prevent the extension of the school'. The village car park is owned by the Parish Council, and operated for the benefit of the whole community, and KCC has no say in how the Parish Council should operate it, particularly for the benefit of one sector of users above others.
- It is not clear how pupils will be safely picked up/dropped off by vehicles. Currently, pupils are observed being dropped off from vehicles in the High Street whilst the traffic is halted by the pedestrian crossing, within the zip zag zones;

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- The Parish Council has provided details of possible school pick-up/drop-off areas within the Parish Car Park, which would have to be funded, provided and managed by the County Council and Otford Primary School. However, these options would result in the loss of car parking spaces, and the Parish Council does not consider that they would not solve the existing and proposed problems;
- The Parish Car Park is over used already, and at peak school times, people park in unmarked bays, causing a danger to other users and school pupils;
- The Parish Council is currently carrying out a risk assessment of the car park, and will be meeting with their insurers to discuss this. The Parish Council must take advice from their insurers with regard to risks arising from anticipated additional traffic in the car park, and their overriding concern must be the safety of all users of the car park;
- The Parish Council may have to introduce a control on the numbers of vehicles entering the car park, to ensure the safety of its users;
- It is the responsibility of KCC to provide the necessary safe drop off and pick up areas for the school, not the Parish Council.

Divisional Transportation Manager – comments as follows:

“Parents and teachers using the village car park must do so in accordance with the regulations in force. As such, should a charging system be introduced, those wishing to stay longer than any discretionary period will have to pay, or face being dealt with under any enforcement regime. The planning application must be considered in the light of a 20% increase in pupils, and a minor increase in staff, which does not necessarily represent undue additional pressure on traffic in the village and on the use of the car park.

It is inevitable that some use of the car park will relate to the circulation and turning areas, rather than solely to marked bays. This is typical of how car parks perform during periods of very high demand. Without suggesting that this represents 'the School taking over the car park', it does mean that, through the Travel Plan, the School should take more responsibility for vehicle and pedestrian movements that it generates.

Whilst it may be of some benefit to the village for a new car park serving the school to be built, such a facility is not being proposed, neither is it appropriate to consider a possible location. Should such a proposal come forward, it will have to be supported with appropriate highway and transport information.

It is accepted by Kent County Council Highways and Transportation that during the morning and evening 'school run' periods, the village becomes congested. The actual figures for pedestrian and vehicular traffic flow, vehicle occupancy, turning movements and crossing movements vary from day to day. As such, there is no ability to model the situation, or to prove that the proposed expansion will make it unacceptably worse. Indeed, such situations tend to be self-limiting, with people modifying their behaviour in response to how the daily variations impact on their journeys. For this reason, disputes over the numbers used in the application, and estimates of the impact of Travel Plan measures are not crucial to the overall highway recommendation. There is no realistic prospect of preventing short term congestion, but things can be done to improve safety, manage behaviour and reduce conflict.

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

It is apparent from the representations that the development of the Travel Plan needs to embrace the village community in order to achieve outcomes that not only mitigate the impact of the expansion, but that also address existing concerns. I do not believe that the Travel Plan needs to be agreed before consent is granted, but rather that it should be the subject of a condition with a reasonably challenging timescale for discussion, agreement and submission for approval.

Subject to such a condition being secured and a further condition to ensure that appropriate wheel washing facilities are provided on site prior to the commencement of construction works and for the duration of construction, there are no KCC Highways & Transportation objections to the proposals.”

Environment Agency – raises no objection to the proposal, however requests a condition be attached to any consent requiring the submission and approval of details of a scheme for the disposal of foul and surface waters, and a further condition regarding land contamination.

Kent Downs AONB Unit – views awaited.

The County Council's Archaeological Officer – raises no objection subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the submission of a written programme and specification of works associated with securing the implementation of a watching brief.

The County Council's Conservation Architect – comments as follows:

“I raise no adverse comments to the proposed replacement of the swimming pool building with a block of classrooms and the extension of the existing hall. I note that there are limited windows to the classrooms, other than the high level roof and clerestory lights, which limits overlooking of neighbours. If necessary, further neighbour privacy could be achieved with hedge planting to establish a "green" screen along the eastern side of the site.

The proposed roof is to be covered in man made slate, a material that can achieve a lower roof pitch than tile, which generally requires a steeper roof pitch. Due to the siting of the building adjacent to modern residential dwellings, I consider the use of slate, albeit man made, to be acceptable for the type and design of building. Another nearby building with a slate roof is The Grange, a large 19th century residential property set back from the High Street, which due to its siting is not an inappropriate roof material.

I assume that conditions will be applied for the external materials - roof, wall, window and door fenestration - to be approved prior to commencement of the development.”

Local Member

19. The County Council Local Member Mr Nick Chard was notified of the application on the 16 January 2013. The following written comments have been received:
“I am in broad support of the application having read the Transport Assessment dated 28 January 2013.”
(See the notes of the Members Site Visit in Appendix 1 for further views.)

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Representations

20. The application was publicised by the posting of 3 site notices around the application site, a newspaper advertisement, and the individual notification of 25 nearby properties.
21. At the time of writing this report, 6 letters of objection have been received. It should be noted that one of the objectors is the 'Chairman of the Parish Plan', a document referenced in Sevenoaks District Core Strategy Policy SP1. The main points of objection are summarised as follows:-

Traffic, access, parking and highway issues

- The proposed expansion of the school makes no allowance for the increase in traffic for the dropping off and collection of children, or additional staff parking;
- A problem currently exists around peak school times with regard to parking and congestion. This proposal would exacerbate this dangerous situation further;
- The declared need for additional places at this school is not from the village population but a direct result of the ever broadening catchment area;
- The proposal is supported by a School Travel Plan which is found to be wholly inaccurate and lacking in relevant content in its justification;
- Road use and pedestrian safety are two of the major concerns expressed in the Otford Parish Plan: these are not addressed in the planning application;
- As only half of the school population are within walking distance of the school, and many of those live in local areas where walking to school would be dangerous (as stated in the TA), walking buses would not address the travel needs of the majority of parents. Car use is the only option for them and management of car use is not addressed;
- Even parents who live in the village drive to the school as it is too dangerous to walk due to the volume of traffic, lack of pavements, and inconsiderate parking;
- Traffic congestion and a lack of school parking facilities needs to be addressed within this planning application;
- The Parish Car Park cannot accommodate the slow increase in the size of the school;
- The village is grinding to a standstill, and visitors and local residents cannot use the Parish car park due to the school's use, and therefore local businesses are suffering;
- Local roads are also used for school parking, which creates danger to road users and pedestrians, and is inconvenient to local residents;
- A new school car park should be provided, and a possible site is identified in the Parish Plan;
- The village has reached parking saturation point. If safe access to the school cannot be gained, there is little point in enlarging it. Unless KCC and the School Travel Plan can provide a solution, the residents of Otford, as represented by their Parish Plan, cannot support the further expansion of the school;
- There is simply no more room to park on the streets or designated parking areas in Otford, whether it be an additional 50 or 150 cars, there is no room;
- A number of matters are raised which the local community consider should be addressed in detail within the School Travel Plan, such as the provision of alternative drop off sites within the village. Traffic surveys have been undertaken and submitted by the local community;

Design and Appearance

- The design of the building is totally inappropriate for the surrounding area;

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

- The brick proposed does not blend in with the houses in Warham Road;
- The artificial slate roof does not match local properties, which have tiled roofs;
- The style of the building does not blend with the Otford High Street Conservation Area, the boundary of which is adjacent to the development;

General matters and amenity concerns

- The community applauds the achievements of the school authorities in raising teaching standards over the past year;
- The redevelopment of the swimming pool is a sound use of available space;
- The school has insufficient hard play areas;
- Noise pollution will increase, as approximately 100 pupils will be in an unscreened building just a few metres away from residential properties;
- Security lighting will create light pollution, in addition to that already experienced due to lighting of the school buildings;
- Asbestos surveys should be undertaken before any works commence;

Construction

- Warham Road is a residential cul-de-sac and is totally unsuitable for the heavy vehicles that would be used to deliver materials to site;
- The school has no access on to Warham Road, and the actual boundary between the school and the public road is about 7 metres in length. Every lorry delivering building materials would completely block the drives of 3 residential properties and seriously inconvenience many others;
- Warham Road is quite narrow and has several bends, giving poor sight lines. On street parking by visitors to the village and school parking add to the danger of using this road;
- Should permission be granted, conditions should be imposed to ensure that all construction traffic, including material deliveries, should access the site via the school's entrance on the High Street.

I have also received a letter of objection from Sevenoaks District Council Member, Councillor J. Edwards-Winsor. The main points raised are summarised as follows:

- Although the application documents state that pupil numbers are increasing by only 70, no consideration has been given to the fact that the school roll has been increasing for the past 20 years, and that the site is over capacity;
- Nothing has been done to address car usage and/car parking;
- Alternative parking should be provided, and KCC should compulsorily purchase fields to the rear of the site under the 'exceptional circumstances' rule to enable a 'green' car park to be provided. The Parish Plan refers to such a car park, with vehicular access opposite Bubblestone Road;
- Safety of pupils does not start and stop at the school gate, it also encompasses safe transit to and from the school. Increasing pupil numbers will exacerbate an existing difficult situation;
- Sevenoaks Primary School is also due to expand. Will pupils that live in Sevenoaks leave Otford Primary School when Sevenoaks Primary School expands?
- Deliberately letting the swimming pool decay, and then quoting expensive maintenance and lack of use, is not a reason for redevelopment;
- Asbestos removal needs to be considered;
- The air-source heat pump could create noise that would be a nuisance;
- Is sufficient hard play provided on site?

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

- 30 members of staff at the school drive, but the school only provides 11 car parking spaces. 19 are therefore expected to park on local roads or within the Parish Car Park. This is not an acceptable solution;
- The Travel Plan does not appear to be accurate, and targets such as walking buses have not been implemented;
- The village comes to a crawl at best during peak school times, exacerbated by uncontrolled random use of the zebra crossing;
- Local pavements are very narrow;
- Traffic survey information has been provided, assessing use of the Parish Car Park. Essentially, Otford has reached saturation point with respect to cars and parking;
- The current situation maybe helped by the introduction of a crossing patrol person to supervise use of the zebra crossing;
- The conclusion of the Transport Assessment is flawed;
- This application for the school expansion is the 'straw that breaks the camel's back'. The only solution is to provide a new car park.

DiscussionIntroduction

22. This application seeks planning permission for the demolition of the existing swimming pool building and the erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms, with associated welfare facilities, and an extension to the school hall at Otford Primary School. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies referred to in paragraphs 16 & 17 above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires applications to be 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, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. Issues of particular relevance include access, parking & highway issues, design and appearance, including impact on the Conservation Area and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, general amenity concerns, and construction matters.
23. In this case the key determining factors, in my view, are the impact upon the local highway network and the local landscape, and the policy support for the development of schools to ensure that there is sufficient provision to meet growing demand, increased choice and raised educational standards, subject to being satisfied on amenity and other material considerations. In the Government's view the creation and development of schools is strongly in the national interest and planning authorities should support this objective, in a manner consistent with their statutory obligations. In considering proposals for the creation, expansion and alteration of schools, the Government considers that there is a strong presumption in favour of state funded schools, as expressed in the National Planning Policy Framework and reflected in the Policy Statement for Schools. Planning Authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling such development, attaching significant weight to the need to establish and develop state funded schools, and making full use of their planning powers to support such development, only imposing conditions that are absolutely necessary and that meet the tests set out in Circular 11/95.

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

Access, parking and highway issues

24. This application is part of the County wide Basic Needs Programme, and is proposing to provide sufficient accommodation on site to accommodate a full 2 form of entry (2FE). The applicant advises that Otford Primary School currently has insufficient teaching accommodation for the current pupil intake numbers. Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) is 60 pupils per academic year, and this has been the case for the last 3 years, and is set to continue. Due to insufficient classroom space on site, teaching spaces currently occupy non teaching rooms, such as a converted kitchen and library space. The applicant advises that since the increase in PAN in September 2009, the School has continually reorganised the teaching space available to accommodate the 2 Form Entry intake, including the addition of modular teaching accommodation. However, from September 2013, I am advised that the school will require a further 3 classrooms in total as the pupil numbers level out across all year groups.
25. This application has met with significant objection on the grounds of increased staff and pupil numbers, and the associated increase in traffic. Sevenoaks District Council, Otford Parish Council, the District Ward Member, and a number of local residents, including the Chairman of the Parish Plan group, have expressed their strong objection and concern over the additional traffic that the school expansion would generate. First, it is important to clarify the existing number of staff and pupils at the site, and confirm how many additional pupils and staff would be accommodated on site as a result of this development.
26. The applicant has confirmed that Otford Primary School currently has 342 pupils being taught in 13 classrooms, 2 of which do not satisfy DfE guidelines as they are converted kitchen and library spaces. This application proposes to provide 3 classrooms, 2 of which would accommodate the classes currently being taught in the non standard teaching rooms. The total number of classrooms that would be provided on site as a result of this application would therefore be 14, only one more than existing, providing a total full capacity of 420 pupils. The applicant confirms that in September 2013, the reception class intake would be 60 instead of the usual 30. However 35 year 6 pupils would be moving up to secondary school, giving an increase in pupil numbers on site of 25. The new reception class would accommodate the remaining new classroom, with 2 new members of staff - a teacher and teaching assistant. I am advised by the applicant that of the 60 new reception class pupils, 50% are siblings of pupils already at the school. Over the coming years, the increase in admission numbers will progress through the school years, resulting in a maximum number of 420 pupils, 60 per year group. The applicant considers that the school is unlikely to operate at maximum capacity, and that each year group would more likely contain 55 pupils, a total of 385 pupils over the 7 year groups. That is an increase of 43 pupils over the existing roll of 342, and worse case scenario, a maximum school roll would be an increase of 78 pupils over the existing. However, as previously stated, only 25 additional pupils would be on the school roll this September, 50% of which would already have siblings at the school.
27. Otford Primary School is a village school, with a single vehicular and pedestrian access via the High Street. On site car parking is limited to 12 car parking spaces, and there is no provision of pupil pick-up/drop-off within the site. The village car park, owned and operated by the Parish Council is on the opposite side of the High Street to the school, and is heavily used at peak school times by parents picking up and dropping off pupils. A zebra crossing is near to the school. This application does not propose to provide any additional car parking on site, or provide any facilities for pick-up/drop-off or improved access.

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

28. Objections have been raised to this application on access, parking and highway issues, and a number of matters have been raised which need to be considered and addressed in turn. The matters to be addressed in the following section of this report include:
- provision of additional car parking on the school site;
 - provision of an off site car park;
 - use of the Parish Car Park, and the possible provision of a formal drop-off/pick-up facility within this car park;
 - Transport Assessment conclusions and Travel Plan targets;
 - general conclusions.
29. Before discussing the matters listed above it is important to note the views of Kent County Council Highways and Transportation, as detailed within paragraph 18 of this report. Highways and Transportation accept that during the morning and evening 'school run' periods the village becomes congested, with figures for pedestrian and vehicular traffic flow, vehicle occupancy and crossing movements varying from day to day. It is the opinion of Highways and Transportation that this variation in figures means that there is no ability to effectively model the existing situation, or to prove that the proposed school expansion would make the existing situation unacceptably worse. However, Highways and Transportation consider that such situations tend to be self-limiting, with people modifying their behaviour in response to how the daily variations impact upon their journeys. The Highway Officer advises that, there is no realistic prospect of preventing short term congestion at the school's peak times, but actions can be taken to improve safety, manage behaviour and reduce conflict, such as development of the School Travel Plan to include specific targets. In this particular case, this application must be considered on its own merits and in light of the increase in pupils, which is to be 25 in September 2013, and 53 over the coming years. The Highway Officer considers that this does not necessarily represent undue additional pressure on the traffic in the village, nor on use of the Parish Car Park. In particular, some short term congestion has to be expected and tolerated close to school sites, and it is unrealistic to expect to fully cater for that activity by creating generous parking facilities for such short term use. On the basis of this Kent County Council Highways and Transportation raise no objection to the application.

Provision of additional car parking on the school site

30. It has been suggested by those making representations that additional car parking should be provided on the school site. As previously stated, there is currently capacity for 12 car parking spaces on site in total, and this application is not proposing any increase in car parking, or change in access arrangements. Although Kent County Council Highways and Transportation do not require any additional car parking to be provided on site, this matter has been raised with the applicant. However, as will be discussed later in this report, Otford Primary School only has a total of 1,170m² of external hard play space, excluding 281m² of reception hard play area and an area set aside for the provision of car parking. Under Building Bulletin 99 a 2 FE Primary School requires 1,030m². This leaves a surplus of only 140m², which the School cannot reasonably give up to car parking due to the site layout and the fact that they currently meet only the minimum recommendations. The school does have an over provision of playing field, which could potentially be used to accommodate car parking but the playing fields are within the Green Belt and the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and car parking could affect the layout of sports pitches which could result in a Sport England objection. In addition, access to any such car parking would have to be over the school's hard play area, which would reduce the provision of hard

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

play to below requirements, and could result in vehicle/pupil/pedestrian conflict. There is also an ethical consideration to removing sports and play space for children in favour of parking space for adults, when the school is essentially there for the education of children and there is a limit as to how much space should be taken up by non-curricular activity.

31. In addition to the above, as previously stated, the school only has one shared pedestrian and vehicular access which is restricted in width by an existing school building and adjacent site boundary. The applicant would not want to encourage increased vehicular movements at this access due to pupil safety. In considering the lack of a requirement to provide additional car parking spaces, the constraints of the site, and the information provided above, I do not consider that additional car parking could be provided on site in this instance without compromising the safety of pupils and/or hard play area provision, or attracting resistance from Sport England. .

Off site car park

32. Local objectors, including the District Ward Councillor and the Parish Council, have stated that off site parking facilities should be provided by the County Council to accommodate the existing and proposed traffic generated by Otford Primary School. To ease the pressure on the local highway network and the Parish Car Park, it is suggested that the County Council purchase land to the rear of the school site and provide a purpose built car park for the school. It is suggested that this could be accessed via an existing Public Right of Way which runs from opposite Bubblestone Road. The applicant has considered this suggestion, but confirms that it is not a feasible option at this time. First, the land ownership is unknown, and the financial and programme impact of purchasing the land would present major risks to the development going ahead. Moreover, it is unclear whether the land is available for an alternative use, and the owner is amenable to selling, leasing or volunteering the land for what would be only occasional use. In addition, there is no existing road access to the site, just pedestrian access via a Public Right of Way. Substantial and expensive highway infrastructure works would therefore be required, in addition to any necessary works to the Public Right of Way. Lastly, the land in question is within the AONB and the Green Belt and development of the field in question would extend the built confines of the village and would be contrary to the principles of Development Plan Policy.
33. Kent County Council Highways and Transportation have also commented on this suggested remote car park, and conclude that 'whilst it may be of some benefit to the village for a new car park serving the school to be built, such a facility is not being proposed, and neither is it appropriate to consider a possible location'. Should such a proposal come forward in the future it would have to be supported by appropriate highway and transport assessment information. However, at this time, the provision of additional car parking is not required by Kent County Council Highways and Transportation as a result of this application. I therefore see no justification for the requirement for an off site car parking facility, and consider that such a matter would have to be considered in its own right as a full planning application with appropriate supporting information, including a case of Very Special Circumstances for overriding Green Belt Policy, should a future need be identified, and should the land be purchased for such a purpose. Having considered the information provided above, I see no reason to refuse this application on the grounds that off site car parking is not provided in this instance.

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

Use of the Parish Car Park, and the possible provision of a formal drop-off/pick-up facility within this car park

34. The parents of pupils at Otford Primary School do appear to rely heavily on the Parish Car Park, in part due to its location immediately opposite the school site. The Parish Car Park is already over used, and at peak school times people park in unmarked bays, causing a danger to other users as well as school pupils. The Parish Council have carried out a risk assessment of the car park and have met with their insurers to discuss the results of the assessment. The Parish Council advises that it may have to introduce a charging regime and/or a control on the number of vehicles entering the car park, to ensure the safety of its users. Whilst the Parish Council states that “it is the responsibility of the County Council to provide the necessary safe drop-off and pick-up areas for the school, not the Parish Council’s”, the Parish Council has provided a sketch drawing showing two possible locations within their car park which could be marked out as a formal school pick-up/drop-off area. Its intention is that such a facility would have to be funded and provided by the County Council, and managed very closely by the School to escort pupils through the car park, across the High Street and into the school. It should be noted, however, that the Parish Council does not consider that such a facility would solve the existing and/or proposed problems associated with the school.
35. First, it is important to consider the everyday use of the Parish Car Park. Parents and teachers using the Parish Car Park must do so in accordance with the regulations in force. As such, should a charging system be introduced, those using the car park would have to pay the appropriate charge or face being dealt with under any enforcement regime. It is considered by Kent County Council Highways and Transportation that this application must be considered in the light of the increase in staff and pupils (figures detailed in paragraph 26), and that this increase does not necessarily represent undue additional pressure on traffic in the village and on the use of the car park. Highways and Transportation also state that it is inevitable that some of the use of the car park would relate to the circulation and turning areas, rather than solely to marked bays. That is considered to be typical of how car parks perform during periods of high demand. However, Kent Highways and Transportation do consider that the School should take more responsibility for the vehicle and pedestrian movements it generates, and that this should be addressed through School Travel Plan targets. This will be discussed in more detail later in this report, but should permission be granted, and updated School Travel Plan would be required pursuant to planning condition.
36. The suggested pick-up/drop-off areas that could be provided within the Parish Car Park have been considered by Highway Officers, the applicants and myself, and are not deemed to be appropriate, necessary or acceptable in this particular case. First, as previously noted, Kent County Council Highways and Transportation are not requiring any specific mitigation measures as a result of this application, other than a recommended update and review of the School Travel Plan. However, both of the options suggested by the Parish Council would have resulted in the loss of a small number of car parking spaces, and alterations to the circulation route and car park configuration. Further assessment of the impacts of the layout changes would be required before they could be agreed. Neither option would be viable without an accompanying robust management plan controlling such issues as supervised walking routes through the car park and an appropriate high street crossing patrol facility, plus wider issues such as the availability of the facility during peak school times (i.e. an enforcement regime to prevent parking within the drop off area). Neither option includes a dedicated pedestrian route through the car park, without which the management of pedestrian movements would be considerably more difficult and very likely to result in

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

periodic movement restrictions within the car park for both pedestrians and vehicles.

37. Having considered the above, and bearing in mind that the County Council do not own or have any control over the use of the Parish Car Park, and in view of the fact that Kent County Council Highways and Transportation are not requiring any mitigation in this case, I do not consider that a formal pick-up/drop-off facility could be safely provided within the car park. Whilst we would normally support pick-up/drop-off facilities, and appreciate the Parish Council's constructive suggestions, these particular arrangements are not sufficiently workable nor close enough to the school site to guarantee effective management by School staff. Although I appreciate that use of the car park by parents could inconvenience other users of the facility, the car park is available to the public and its use is managed and controlled by the Parish Council. However, the School do need to take some responsibility for the pedestrian and vehicle movements that it generates, and an updated School Travel Plan should be submitted pursuant to condition, including specific targets for reducing car use and encouraging alternative means of transport. Should permission be granted, that would form a condition of consent.

Transport Assessment conclusions and Travel Plan targets

38. The Parish Council and the local community have questioned the accuracy of the figures contained within the submitted School Travel Plan and Transport Assessment. However, I can confirm that the facts and figures provided in paragraph 26 of this report, with regard to staff and pupil numbers are correct and have been confirmed by the applicant. The traffic counts and surveys within the submitted School Travel Plan and Transport Assessment are considered by some objectors to be incorrect, and local representatives have undertaken their own surveys and submitted the associated data for consideration. However, Kent County Council Highway and Transportation are of the view that during the morning and evening 'school run' periods the village becomes congested, with figures for pedestrian and vehicular traffic flow, vehicle occupancy and crossing movements varying from day to day. It is the opinion of Highways and Transportation that this variation in figures means that there is no ability to model the existing situation, nor does that prove that the proposed school expansion would make the existing situation unacceptably worse, i.e. increased use of the public highway by the public alone is not an argument for imposing an embargo on further development. The key issue is more about how increased traffic can be better managed.
39. The Transport Assessment concludes that 'with continued effectiveness of the Travel Plan, and the future proposals for the village car park, there are no transport or highway reasons to prevent the extension of the school roll'. However, I consider that this statement is clearly flawed as there are no future proposals for the village car park included within this application and, as discussed above, the car park is owned and operated by the Parish Council and is out of the County Council's control. Kent County Council Highways and Transportation have been sent the Transport Assessment, and although have noted its content, have come to a judgement on this application related to safety and congestion matters, and do not believe that there are significant risks associated with either of these highway matters. Highways and Transportation state that the vast majority of schools rely on 'available parking' rather than on site provision for dropping-off and picking-up, and that Otford Primary School unusually has the 'luxury' of a public car park.
40. However, as discussed above, the School does need to take some responsibility for the pedestrian and vehicle movements that it generates, and an updated School Travel

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

Plan should be submitted pursuant to condition, including specific targets for reducing car use and encouraging alternative means of transport. Should permission be granted, this would form a condition of consent. Kent County Council's School Travel Plan Officer is already working closely with the School in the preparation of a revised/updated Travel Plan, and I consider that its submission within 6 months of the date of the permission would be reasonable in this instance. The document would also be subject to ongoing monitoring and review.

General conclusions

41. In light of the above, and the fact that this application must consider only the increase in staff and pupil numbers proposed, and not seek to resolve existing issues with access and parking in the locality, I consider that this application would not have a significantly detrimental impact on the local highway network. Only a relatively small increase in pupil numbers is proposed, and it is estimated that approximately 50% of these additional pupils are expected to be siblings of existing pupils. Kent County Council Highways and Transportation are satisfied that this proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the local highway network, and raise no objection on that basis. I therefore see no reason to refuse this application on this ground, subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the submission and implementation of a revised/updated School Travel Plan within 6 months of the date of the permission.

Design and appearance**Impact on Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Conservation Area**

42. As shown on the site location plan on page 2 of this report, and as detailed within paragraph 2, the application site is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In addition, the school playing fields are within the Metropolitan Greenbelt, and the eastern school boundary, adjacent to the application site marks the boundary of the Conservation Area. For the avoidance of doubt, the application site is not within the Metropolitan Green Belt or the Conservation Area, although views into and out of the Conservation Area could be affected. Sevenoaks District Council raises objection to this application on the ground that 'due to its height, bulk and design, the proposed building for three classrooms is felt to be detrimental to the character of the AONB and the neighbouring Conservation Area'. The District Council therefore considers that the development would not be in accordance with Policy LO8 of the Sevenoaks Core Strategy, and Policies EN23 and EN1 of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan. These policies are outlined in paragraph 17 of this report, and seek to achieve a high quality of design that is of a scale, height and layout appropriate for the locality, protect residential and local amenity, preserve and enhance the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and their settings, and conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the Kent Downs AONB.

Principle of use of the swimming pool site

43. The existing swimming pool building is in a poor state of repair, is not aesthetically pleasing being utilitarian in appearance, and is used by the School for storage space only. In considering the constraints of the site, including the limited hard play space, the layout of the existing buildings on site which limits available space for a new building, surrounding residential properties, the AONB designation, and the fact that the school playing fields are within the Metropolitan Green Belt, to build on the footprint of an existing unused building appears to be a logical and sensible option. In fact, a

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

representation received from the local community states that the 'redevelopment of the swimming pool is a sound use of space'. I consider that by developing on the footprint of an existing building, the proposals minimise the impact on the layout and functioning of the site. It also means that the proposed development is no closer to existing residential properties than the building already in situ. I therefore support the reuse of the swimming pool site in principle, but the design, height and massing of the 3 classroom building proposed needs to be considered.

Design, height and massing

44. The District Council and some local representations have raised objection to this application on the ground of design. However, the existing building is poor quality in terms of design and does nothing to enhance the adjacent Conservation Area, or the AONB. The proposed building is, in my view, a significant improvement over the existing swimming pool building, and is of a design which is not out of keeping with the locality. It should also be noted that views of the proposed classroom building from outside of the school site are limited to those gained from Warham Road, a road which is not representative of the local design and historical characteristics of the Conservation Area. The external materials proposed will be discussed below, but the design of the building has considered the amenity of adjoining residents by only incorporating high level clerestory glazing into the eastern elevation, and has included only emergency exit doors in the eastern and southern elevations. The design of the building would, in my view, be appropriate for the locality and could be said to enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area when considering the poor design of the existing building to be replaced. Whilst the approach to Conservation Areas can also be important in protecting their visual appearance, the new building would not be positioned on any public or conspicuous approach into the Conservation Area, despite being immediately outside it.
45. With regard to the height and massing of the proposed building, the footprint of the proposed classroom building is the same as the existing swimming pool building, apart from a small entrance porch proposed to extend to the west. By re-using the existing foundations, the building would not be any larger in footprint than the existing, meaning that distance from the school boundary and neighbouring properties would not change. However, the existing building is approximately 4 metres in height, whereas the proposed classroom building would be approximately 6.25 metres at the highest point. It should be noted that due to the design of the roof, the lowest element would be closer to Warham Close, with the highest part of the roof situated above the line of clerestory glazing. The proposed single storey building, even at 6.25 metres, would also be considerably lower than the neighbouring two storey residential properties. The applicant has also advised that to lower the height of the building by sinking the building into the ground, additional waste material would be generated as the existing foundations would have to be removed, as well as additional earth removal. Given the constraints of the site, waste would have to be removed from the site via transfer over the boundary with Warham Road. Use of this road (to be discussed in the construction section of this report) needs to be kept to a minimum to reduce the impact on residential amenities. By reusing the existing foundations, the build programme is also quicker and cost savings can be made, which can be spent better elsewhere on the development, resulting in an otherwise higher quality finish and appearance.
46. In summary, therefore, given the fact that the proposed building would be built upon the footprint of the existing swimming pool, and only extended in height by just over 2 metres, I consider the proposed scale and massing of the building to be acceptable. In

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

my view, the development would not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the adjoining Conservation Area, or the Kent Downs AONB, and if anything would be an improvement over the existing pool quality building.

Materials

47. In addition to the design of the building, the materials proposed for the walls and roofing of the development have met with objection from local residents, who consider that the materials do not blend with those used on local properties. First, with regard to the brick, it is proposed to use a yellow stock brick to match the existing buildings on the school site. Although properties in Warham Road are constructed using a red/brown brick, I do not consider that the use of a yellow stock brick would be inappropriate in this instance. By matching the brick to the existing school building, the three classroom building proposed would read as a school building, giving a sense of identity and unity across the school site. Although the proposed building is just outside of the Conservation Area, I do not consider that the use of a yellow stock brick would detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, or have a negative impact on views from the Conservation Area. It should also be noted that views of the proposed classroom building from outside the school site are limited to those gained from Warham Road, a road which is not representative of the local design and historical characteristics of the Conservation Area.
48. Likewise, the applicant is proposing to finish the shallow pitched roof with a man made slate tile. This has again met with limited local objection. However, the County Council's Conservation Architect considers that, due to the siting of proposed building, adjacent to modern residential dwellings, the use of slate, albeit man made, to be acceptable for the type and design of the building proposed. An alternative roof finish at the pitch proposed, such as standing seam metal roofing, would not be appropriate, and a steeper pitch would increase the height, massing and scale of the building, something which the applicant has sought to reduce. The Council's Conservation Architect states that there are local buildings with slate roofs, such as The Grange, a 19th Century residential property set back from the High Street. Although the slate proposed is artificial, I do not consider that its use would be out of keeping with the local area. I also consider that alternative options for the roof material and/or pitch would not be acceptable, and could have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. However, in order to control the development and to ensure a satisfactory appearance, I consider that final details of all materials to be used externally should be submitted pursuant to condition, should permission be granted. Subject to the imposition of this condition, I see no reason to refuse this application on the grounds of the building materials proposed.

Hall extension

49. It should be noted that none of the consultation responses and/or representations received have raised comment or objection to the proposed extension of the school hall. As outlined in paragraph 13 of this report, current guidelines stipulate a floor space of 0.45m² per pupil. The existing hall has a floor space of approximately 180m², providing space for 400 pupils for assembly purposes. The DfE advise a minimum hall size of 180m² for a 2FE Primary School, with a further small hall/studio of 80m². This application therefore proposes an extension of the existing hall to provide a further 80m² of space. The extension would extend the hall a further 5 metres to the south, filling in an existing recess between classrooms either side of the hall. The elevational finish and materials would match the existing, altering the appearance of the southern

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

elevation only slightly by removing the recessed area. I do not consider that the proposed hall extension would have a negative impact on the AONB, the character and appearance of the locality, or local residential amenity, and therefore consider that permission should be granted for this element of the proposal.

General matters and amenity concerns

50. The consultation process has identified a number of general matters and amenity concerns that need to be considered and addressed in the determination of this application. With the exception of construction matters, which will be discussed later in this report, I will address general matters and amenity concerns in the following paragraphs.

Noise pollution

51. Concern is raised over potential noise pollution from the new classrooms building, both in terms of noise from plant, principally the air sourced heat pump, and noise from pupils using the building. First, with regard to noise from plant, specifically the air sourced heat pump, the applicant confirms that the noise level would be 53DbA at a distance of 1 metre. The exact mounting location is to be confirmed, but the applicant advises that the associated plant would be over 10 metres from the boundary, and that beyond 10 metres the plant is not audible. In addition, the plant would run constantly for long periods of time, but would not run often at night, although this could happen due to self managed frost protection. However, in considering that the unit would be over 10 metres from the site boundary, and that beyond 10 metres the units are not audible, I do not consider that the noise generated by the plant associated with the building would have a detrimental impact on the amenity of local residents.
52. With regard to noise generated by pupils using the building, it is important to note that the proposed classroom building would be built upon the same footprint as the existing swimming pool building. However, in designing the building, the applicant was conscious of the potential impact on neighbouring residents, and for that reason there are no windows on the eastern or southern elevations facing local properties. Only roof lights are proposed, to allow natural light and ventilation into the building, whilst protecting the amenity of adjoining residents with regard to overlooking and noise breakout. Doors on the southern and eastern elevations would be for emergency use only. The applicant advises that the building is designed to be fully compliant with Building Bulletin 93 acoustic requirements, which ensure stringent noise breakout performance. In light of the above, I consider that the building proposed would be a significant improvement in terms of noise over that that could be generated by use of the existing swimming pool building, should it be bought back into use. The applicant has considered this matter in the design of the building, and I do not consider that noise generated by use of the building would have a significantly detrimental impact on the amenity of local residents.

Light pollution

53. Local residents have raised concern over the light pollution they experience from existing building on site, and consider that security lighting on the proposed classroom extension could exacerbate the existing situation. The applicant states that “although governed by the requirement to adhere to the design ethos of Secured by Design, there is some potential for the external lighting on the new building to be controlled by motion sensor so that it would only come on when movement is detected”. The applicant also

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

confirms that any lighting would be low level and/or directional lighting, which would minimise any light pollution. I appreciate that motion sensors are not always an ideal solution, but in this instance, in a residential area, it is not appropriate to have security lighting on during the night as it would be a nuisance to local residents, so motion sensors and/or timers could be a viable solution. However, as little detail with regard to external lighting has been proposed, I consider that further details should be submitted pursuant to condition, should permission be granted. The lighting would then have to be installed and maintained in accordance with the submitted details. Subject to the imposition of such a condition, I consider that external lighting of the building can be controlled to ensure that it does not have a negative impact upon local amenity.

Asbestos

54. Local residents and the Sevenoaks District Ward Member consider that asbestos surveys should be undertaken prior to the demolition of the swimming pool building, as it is more than likely due to the age of the building that it contains asbestos. The applicant has confirmed that they are in possession of an asbestos management survey, which identifies locations and types of potential asbestos. The applicant has also confirmed that prior to any works commencing, a full refurbishment and demolition survey would be undertaken, and any asbestos removal required would be carried out under controlled conditions by a competent professionally qualified contractor. I consider that the applicant is taking all necessary and reasonable precautions, and that any asbestos found on site would be removed in the correct manner. I therefore see no reason to refuse this application on the grounds of potential asbestos removal.

Provision of hard play areas

55. Local residents, Otford Parish Council, and the Sevenoaks District Ward Member have expressed concern over the amount of hard play space on site, and suggest that there is insufficient area for a 2 FE Primary School. As outlined in paragraph 12 of this report, Building Bulletin 99 sets out minimum external spaces recommended for Primary Schools. With regard to hard surface play space requirements, a 2 FE Primary School would require 1,030m² under Building Bulletin 99. Otford Primary School has a total of 1,170m², excluding 281m² of reception hard play area and an area set aside for the provision of car parking. In addition, Otford Primary School has 8,693m² of playing field space, well above the 5,000m² recommended for a 2 FE Primary School. It should also be noted that the proposed development is upon the footprint of an existing building and would not impact upon playing field or hard play provision. In light of this, I consider that the site has sufficient hard play space and playing field space for a 2 FE Primary School and, therefore, I am of the opinion that this application cannot be refused on this ground.

Drainage

56. The Environment Agency raises no objection to the proposal, however requests a condition be attached to any consent requiring the submission and approval of details of a scheme for the disposal of foul and surface waters, and a further condition regarding land contamination. Therefore, should permission be granted, conditions would be imposed covering the matters raised above. That would ensure that the development would not result in an unacceptable level of pollution, in accordance with the principles of Development Plan Policy.

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

Archaeology

57. Although the proposed classroom extension is intended to be constructed using the existing foundations of the swimming pool building, the front entrance porch and the extension to the school hall would require the digging of foundations. It is possible that the swimming pool foundations may require some additional support also, so some ground works may be required. The County Archaeologist has concluded that in order to secure the appropriate level of evaluation and mitigation of archaeological potential at the site, a condition of consent be imposed. It is requested that no development takes place until the applicant has secured and implemented an archaeological watching brief. The watching brief shall be carried out in accordance with a written specification which must be approved in writing by the County Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. Therefore, subject to the imposition of the required condition, I do not consider that this proposal would have a detrimental impact on archaeological remains.

Construction matters

58. Local residents and Otford Parish Council have raised concerns and objections to the proposed use of Warham Road for the delivery of materials to the site. As outlined in paragraph 15 of this report, it is the applicant intention to locate the site compound associated with this development on the area of grass to the west of the existing swimming pool. Access to the compound for site operatives and personnel would be via the main school entrance on the High Street, and would be controlled to protect pupils and members of the public from construction vehicles/activities, with access and deliveries limited during peak school times. However, the applicant is proposing that materials would be delivered to site via Warham Road, where materials would be transferred from delivery vehicles over the 1.2 metre high boundary fence/hedge to the site compound. It is not proposed to create an access here, but materials would be transferred over land currently outside of the applicant's ownership. It is my understanding that the applicant is seeking to purchase the small strip of land between the edge of the highway and the school boundary but, should that not be successful, a licence to cross the land would need to be obtained. The applicant advises that the County Council, as Highway Authority, have been maintaining the strip of land for a prolonged period, and that the County Council has an existing 'deed of right to enter' for gas maintenance purposes. However, this is a matter for the applicant to address, and should they not be successful in gaining rights to cross the land, an alternative option would have to be sought.
59. However, the points of objection raised to the use of Warham Road do not concern the right of access over the land, but the suitability of the road to accommodate the heavy goods vehicles that would deliver materials to the site and the blocking of drive ways and the turning head. With regard to the suitability of the road, concern is expressed that the road is too narrow, with several bends, giving poor sight lines. On-street car parking is also said to exacerbate these matters, and it is suggested that all materials should be delivered to site via the school's main entrance on the High Street. The applicant states that it is their intention to use Warham Road for the delivery of bulk materials, and bulk waste removal if required. The applicant considers that 'due to the confined nature of the site, and the inappropriate access through the site from Otford High Street, it is deemed necessary for Warham Road to be used for bulk deliveries'. It is the applicant's intention to meet with residential representatives prior to any use of Warham Road to discuss the implementation of a condition survey of the road, and to discuss preferred delivery times and dates. The applicant considers that with sufficient

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

liaison with local residents, any inconvenience can be managed and mitigated. The contractor would also be a registered as part of the 'considerate contractor' scheme.

60. Kent County Council Highways and Transportation have assessed the suitability of Warham Road for use by vehicles delivering bulk materials to site, and possible bulk spoil/waste removal. Highways and Transportation note that Warham Road is suitable for refuse freighters and other service vehicles associated with the servicing of residential properties. As such, its use by large/heavy good vehicles is considered acceptable subject to the following:
- i) in connection with a Construction Management Strategy, the contractor would have to assess the maximum size of vehicles that can reasonably use the route; &
 - ii) pre and post construction surveys of Warham Road would be required, and any damage made good at the developers expense.
- The Highways and Transportation Officer further states that, on plan, Warham Road appears to be the only viable route for construction purposes.
61. Having considered the information provided by the applicant, the views of Kent County Council Highways and Transportation, and the fact that the development has a predicted 16-20 week build programme, I am of the view that Warham Road could be used for the delivery of bulk materials and bulk waste removal, if required, subject to the imposition of conditions of consent. First, I consider that the applicant should submit a Construction Management Strategy, which must include, amongst other matters details of the location of the site compound and operative/visitors parking, details of site security and safety measures, details of any construction accesses and lorry routing, details of the size of good vehicles that could safely access and turn in Warham Road and details of the advance consultation that would be undertaken with local residents prior to use of Warham Road. The provision of such a strategy would also address the conditions required by Kent Highway Services with regard to construction activities. Should permission be granted, a Construction Management Strategy would be required pursuant to condition and the development would thereafter have to be undertaken in accordance with the approved strategy.
62. In addition, I consider it appropriate that a condition of consent requires the submission of a pre-construction condition survey of local roads, a post construction condition survey, and that any damage as a result of vehicles associated with the construction of the development be made good within an agreed timeframe. Subject to these conditions, and the applicant undertaking the consultation as agreed, I consider the use of Warham Road for the delivery of bulk materials and limited bulk spoil removal only to be acceptable in this instance.
63. Given that there are neighbouring residential properties, if planning permission is granted it would, in my view, be appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of construction to protect residential amenity. I would suggest that works should be undertaken only between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays. It is also good practice on school sites for contractors to be required under the terms of their contract to manage construction traffic/deliveries to minimise conflict with traffic and pedestrians at the beginning and end of the school day. I consider it appropriate that details of how the site access would be managed to avoid peak school times should also be included within the Construction Management Strategy.
64. In addition to the above, should permission be granted, conditions of consent would ensure that dust, mud on the local highway network, and other matters associated with

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

construction, would be mitigated as far as reasonably possible so as to minimise disruption to local residents.

Conclusion

65. 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, including those that seek to protect the landscape and the local highway network. In addition, the development is in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Policy Statement for Schools (2011). I consider that, subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, this proposal would not have a significantly detrimental impact on the local highway network, the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the local landscape, including the Conservation Area, or residential amenity. In my view the development is sustainable and there are 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

66. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT to conditions, including conditions covering:

- the standard time limit;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- the submission of details of all materials to be used externally;
- details of all external lighting;
- details of an archaeological watching brief;
- submission of a scheme for the disposal of foul and surface waters;
- land contamination;
- submission of a revised School Travel Plan within 6 months of the date of this permission, its implementation and ongoing review;
- tree protection measures;
- hours of working during construction and demolition to be restricted to between 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays;
- construction management plan, including the provision of access, parking and circulation within the site for contractors and other vehicles related to construction and demolition operations, details of the use of Warham Road and local consultation, & management of the site access to avoid peak school times;
- pre construction and post construction road condition surveys, and the making good of any damage;
- measures to prevent mud and debris being taken onto the public highway.

Case officer – Mary Green	01622 221066
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Background documents - See section heading
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Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

Appendix 1**Members' Site Visit Notes**

A Members' site visit was held on Wednesday, 27 March 2013. It was attended by;

KCC Planning Applications Committee: Mr J A Davies (Chairman), Mr C P Smith (Vice-Chairman), Mr R E Brookbank, Mr R F Manning, Mrs E M Tweed and Mr A T Willicombe. Mr N J D Chard was present as the Local Member.

Officers: Mrs S Thompson - Head of Planning Applications Group with Mr J Crossley and Ms M Green; Mr R White (Highways); and Mr A Tait (Democratic Services).

Applicants: Mrs N Caistor (Head Teacher); Mr J Neil (KCC Property Services – Project Manager).

Sevenoaks DC: Mr J Edwards-Winser.

Otford PC: Mr M J Whitehead (Chairman); Mr D G Cracknell; Mr R Shelton (Chair of the Parish Plan Steering Group).

Members were shown the location of the existing swimming pool building which would be demolished and replaced by a new building as well as the existing school hall and the limits of its proposed extension. They also saw the temporary access point from Warham Road where materials would be transferred from delivery vehicles onto the site compound.

Mr White (KCC Highways) said that the Divisional Transportation Manager's response to the consultation had been made purely in the context of the additional number of vehicles rather than in response to current parking and congestion deficiencies. The increase in the number of staff and pupils was not likely to create a significant amount of additional pressure on traffic in the village or in the use of the car park. For this reason, there was no reason to recommend refusal on safety, congestion or parking grounds. This also applied to the Warham Road access point which would not have been able to accommodate a large amount of construction traffic but could cope with the amount envisaged. Nevertheless, the School did need to engage with the local community (particularly the Parish Council) in order to develop a Travel Plan that addressed current ongoing concerns.

Mr Neil (Project Manager) was asked why it was intended that the new building would be 2m higher than the existing swimming pool and whether it would be preferable to drop it by that amount. His response was that the result of lowering the ground level of the new hall would be that a great deal of waste and other materials would otherwise be generated and would need to be removed from the site if this approach were to be adopted.

Appendix 1

Item D1

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of a new building to accommodate three additional classrooms at Otford Primary School, High Street, Otford – SE/13/488 (KCC/SE/0439/2012)

Mr Neil answered other questions by saying that there was asbestos on the boiler house flu which would be bagged and removed. The construction period would be 20 weeks, which would eat into the school term. A Construction Management Plan would be submitted to ensure that the deliveries and removal of materials would not clash with the setting down and picking up periods at the beginning and end of the school day. The reason that the new building would be 2m higher than the existing one was because of the minimum angle of pitch needed for roof covering (taking account of the weight of slates compared to other roof finishes and the height of the classrooms and ceilings.)

Mr Chard (Local Member) said that the local community supported the School and its endeavours. There were, however, local concerns over the travel plan which envisaged pupils walking to school when this was not always practical (on grounds of distance). He added that congestion and parking were chaotic at the start and end of school days and that the parish Council was considering options to manage it – such as charging for use of its car park. Because of these current pressures, there was a local expectation that there would be enlarged parking provision within the school to cope with its expansion. The Travel Plan could be used to identify alternative drop off points for children within the village.

Mr Edwards-Winser (Sevenoaks DC) said that he was concerned that the consultation arrangements had not been robust. In particular, the public meeting arranged by the Education Authority had informed the public that the new building would be no higher than the existing swimming pool. He also noted that SPG4 said that schools should provide 44 spaces for 39 members of staff and that Otford Primary School only had 11.

Mr Whitehead (Otford PC) said that he was astounded that the applicants had not been in a position to let the public know that the new building would be 2m higher than its predecessor – as this was a fundamental design aspect. He also believed that it should not be too difficult for the School to provide a small increase in car parking provision on its land. He disputed the views of Mr White by saying that the Parish Council had carried out a survey and had averaged the number of car parking spaces available at any one time. This gave a figure of 33, meaning that the provision of 2 additional spaces by the School would make a considerable difference.

It was agreed that Mr Edwards-Winser's correspondence on the application would be sent to all Members of the Committee as a separate Appendix to the agenda papers.

END