

Two storey building, additional car parking and parents drop off area, St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Dover Road, Gravesend - GR/13/146 (KCC/GR/0032/2013)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 7 June 2013

Application by St Botolph's C of E Primary School and Kent County Council for a new two storey building to accommodate eight classrooms inclusive of welfare facilities and 11 additional car parking spaces; creation of a parents drop off area next to the school's main entrance. St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Dover Road, Northfleet, Gravesend (Ref: and GR/13/146 and KCC/GR/0032/2013)

Recommendation: The application be referred to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and subject to his decision planning permission to be granted, subject to conditions.

Local Members: Mrs S Howes and Mr N Thandi

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

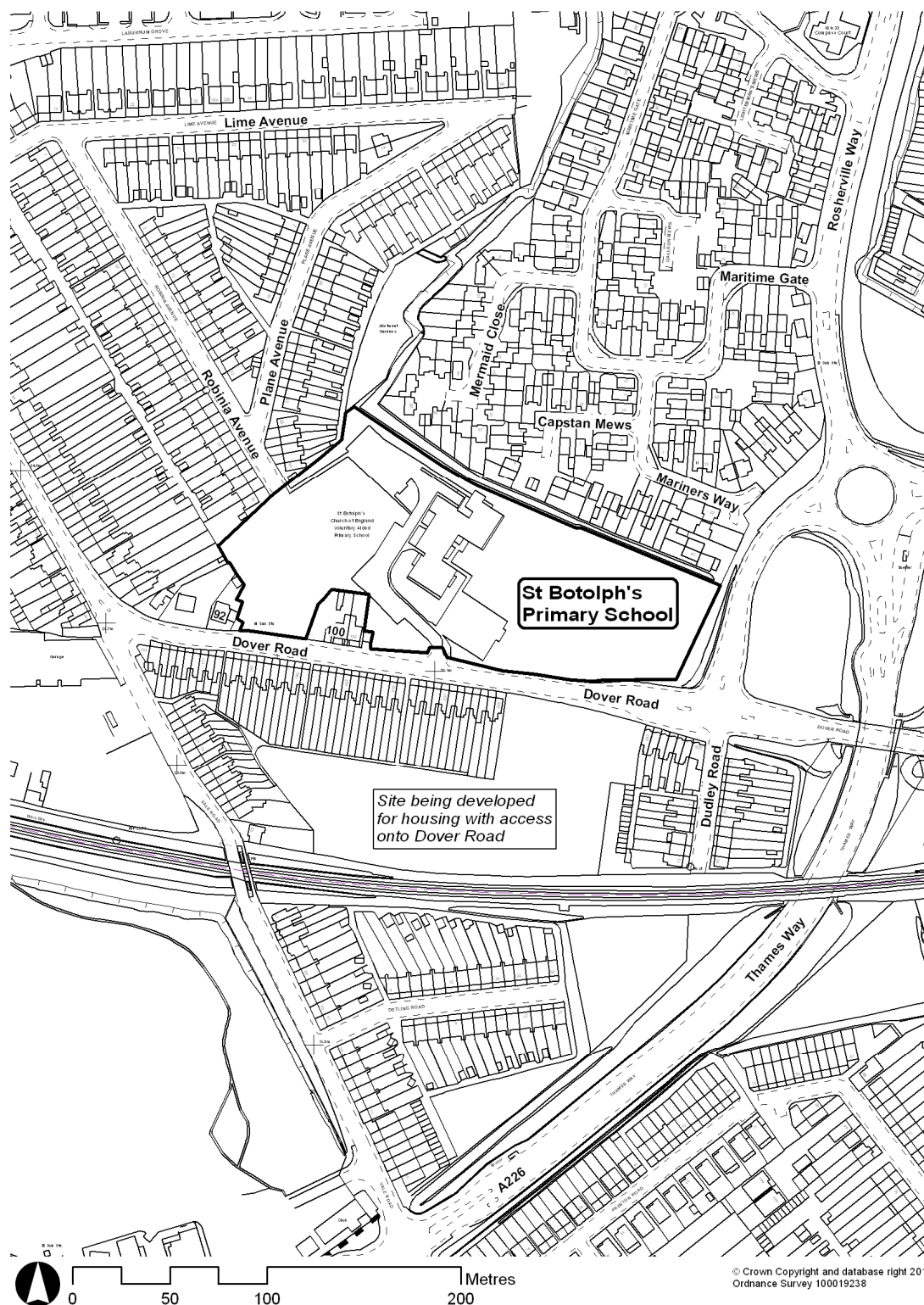
1. St Botolph's C of E Primary School is a co-educational voluntary aided school situated in Dover Road, Northfleet. The site is surrounded by housing to the north, south and west. Most of the housing is terraced properties and a modern housing estate has been built to the north of the school site. A new housing estate has been granted planning permission for some 83 properties at Dykes Pit located opposite the school site with the main vehicular and pedestrian entrance located off Dover Road. Work has commenced on building these new residential properties. To the east of the school site is a slip road to the A226 Thames Way. A site location plan is attached.
2. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site is provided via the main entrance in Dover Road and a pedestrian only access is provided via the back gate entrance in Robina Avenue. The school building is located to the middle of the site with separate junior and infant tarmac playgrounds, a playing field to the southeast, which includes a marked out football pitch and a sports field with markings to the southwest of the site. There are currently 23 car parking spaces located within the school grounds with no dedicated disabled parking space. Access to these parking spaces is restricted to staff and parents/carers with disabilities.

Background and amendments

3. The School has been serving the local community of Northfleet since 1838 when it was originally known as Northfleet National School. It was rebuilt on its current site in 1976 as a single storey brick building and extended in 2012. St Botolph's C of E Primary School is designated as a 1 form entry (FE) school with three infant classes and four junior classes, a separate ICT suite and a large multi-purpose hall. The proposed development is part of the County Council's current Basic Need programme for the expansion of school places across the county. Due to the changing demographics in the area with the increasing birth rate and people relocating from London to the Gravesend area, this has created a demand that requires the school to be changed from a 1FE to a 2FE. The County Council as Education Authority has a statutory duty to provide school places for these children. The additional accommodation proposed within this planning application will enable the school to be housed within a permanent

**Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend
(GR/13/146)**

Site Location Plan



Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)



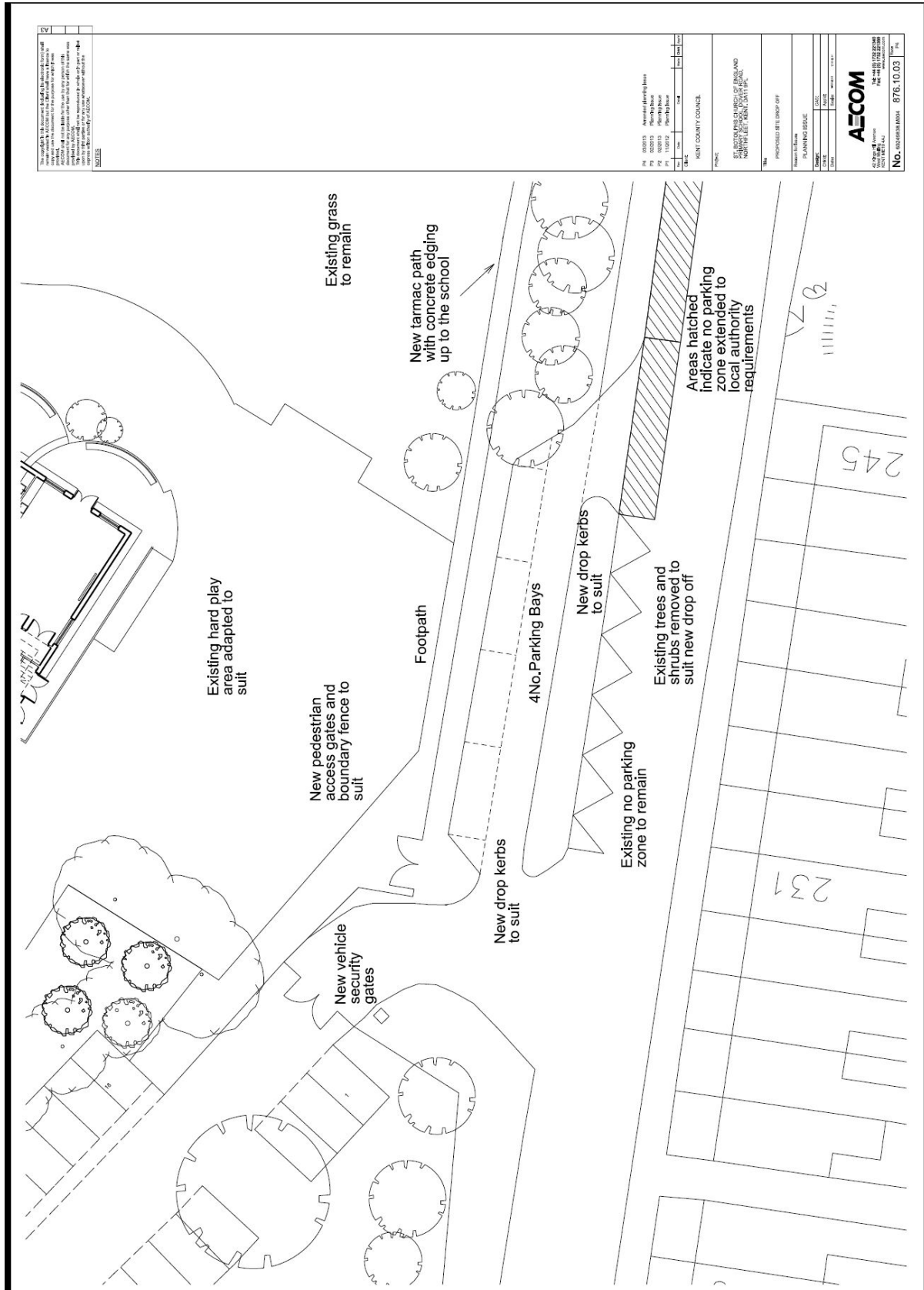
Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)



Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)



Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend
(GR/13/146)



Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)



Item D2



Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)



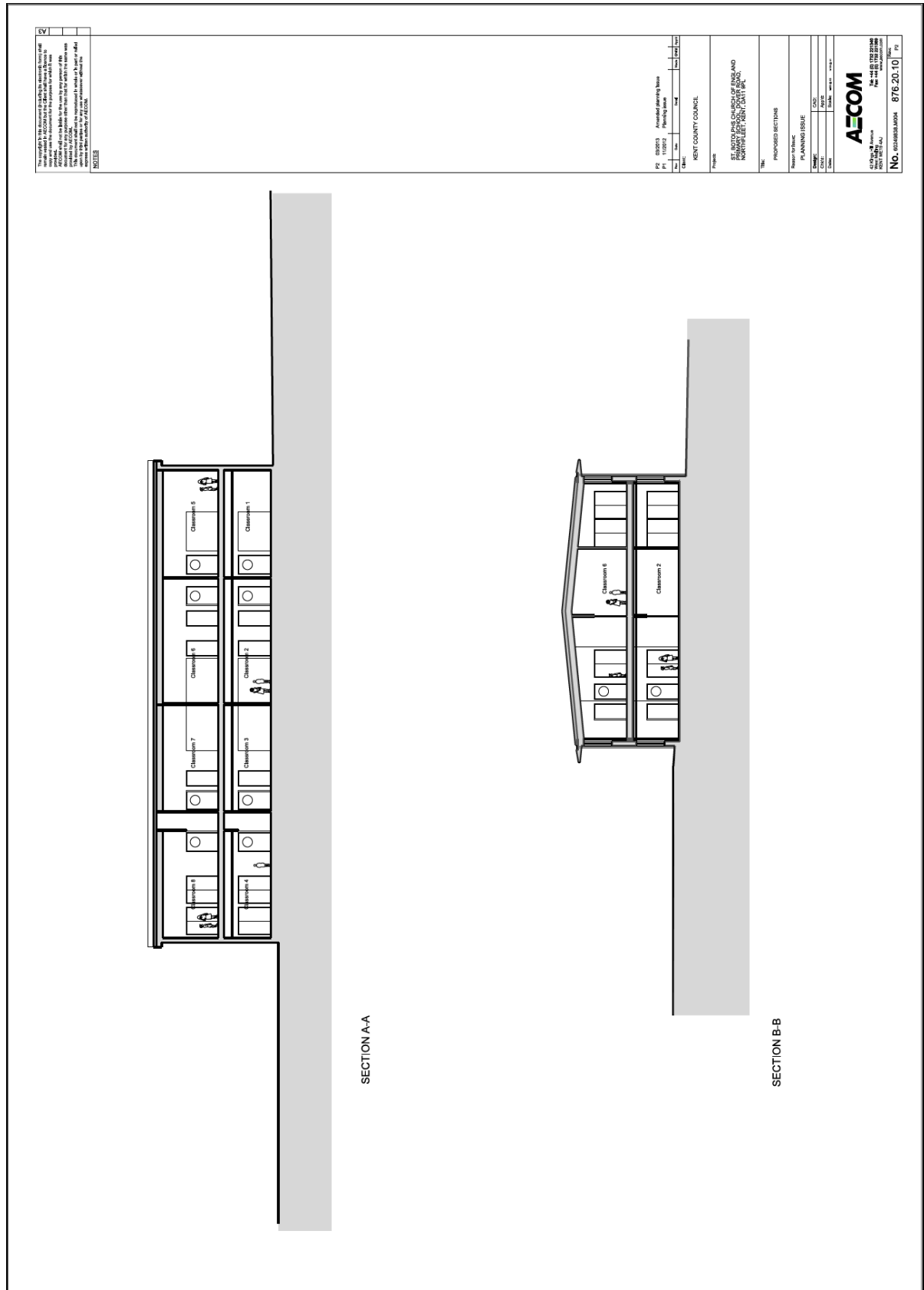
Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)



Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)



Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)



Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

steel framed structure which would be linked to the main school.

4. The School currently employs 33 members of staff which includes midday supervisors and cleaners. Of the 33 staff, there are 10 full time equivalent and the remainder are employed part time. There are also 3 members of staff employed by the School's catering contractor. Of the 33 members of staff, 25 drive to school on a regular basis. There are currently 23 parking spaces at school within the school grounds and access is restricted to staff and parents/carers with disabilities. There is very limited parking available in the roads adjacent to the school as it is surrounded by terraced housing which generally has no off-street parking available. Parking and congestion are already a major cause of local concern at school peak times.
5. The Kent Commissioning Plan 2012-2017, produced by the Education Authority and setting out how it is intended to meet the demand for school places, forecasts Reception Year pupil numbers to continue to increase and to outstrip the actual number of available places. The School currently has 210 pupils and with effect from September 2012 it is planned to begin an expansion programme to become a 2 form entry with the pupil admission numbers increasing from 30 to 60 pupils. By September 2018 it is expected that the School will have a roll of 420 pupils. For each additional class of 30 pupils that is added to the school, two additional members of teaching staff will be appointed and it will also be necessary to appoint additional premises staff and midday supervisors. It is expected that by September 2018 the School will have approximately 50 members of staff. The Kent Commissioning Plan 2012-2017, produced by the Education Authority and setting out how it is intended to meet the demand for school places, forecasts Reception Year pupil numbers to continue to increase and to outstrip the actual number of available places.
6. When this application was originally submitted, the proposal was for the parents drop off area to be located between property numbers 92 and 100 Dover Road. The school has a section of land that fronts onto Dover Road and it was proposed to create an entrance and exit behind a row of mature conifer trees, with an area for up to 4 vehicles to be able to park and drop off children. An internal footpath was also proposed to link the drop off area to the school's main entrance. However the proposed location of this drop off was met with objection from local residents due to it being proposed opposite the terraced housing in Dover Road and the fact that a number of on-street parking spaces would be permanently lost in the creation of a new entrance and exit off Dover Road. (A list of all the objections can be read in paragraph 15). A petition was also received that objected to creation of the drop off area. The petition stated that Dover Road is already a notoriously busy main road, with only enough room to have one car come up or down the road due to existing level of on-street parking. The residents objected to the potential loss of up to 12 parking spaces whilst the drop off would only create space for 4 off-street parking spaces. A revised drop off location is now proposed as part of the amended planning application, and this is located to the east of the main vehicular and pedestrian access to the school, incorporating the access as the entrance to the drop off. It is still planned that the drop off area would provide parking for 4 vehicles.
7. Two further representations were received from residents who live to the north of the school site objecting to the proposed location of the two storey building being located too close to their properties and thus blocking out light in their gardens. Due to the properties in Capstan Mews being located on a lower elevation as the land falls away

Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

along the north boundary, the school grounds are slightly higher than these properties and the residents were concerned that the two storey building would feel more like a three storey building. The original location of the building was proposed approximately 20 metres away from this northern boundary. The application has therefore been amended to take into account these concerns and the new footprint of the building has now been repositioned some 10 metres further south into the site, so now it is proposed to be some 30 metres away from the nearest garden boundary in Capstan Close.

8. As part of the original planning application, proposals were also included to increase the size of the existing school hall and staff room, as both are substandard in size. The Kent County Council Design Brief states that for schools with more 10 classes, a second large space is required to be used for activities such as dance and drama. It is therefore proposed that the existing hall should be extended with a single storey infill to the adjacent courtyard and a sliding folding partition installed to provide flexibility to separate the area when required. However it has been agreed that this element of the original planning application could be carried out as Permitted Development, as both the hall and staff room extension is below the maximum floorspace of 100sqm that can be carried out as Permitted Development. Therefore this element of the original planning application has been withdrawn as part of the amended planning application. It is the amended proposal that will be discussed throughout this report.

Proposal

9. The amended planning application proposes a standalone 2 storey extension to the southeast elevation of the school, to provide 8 no additional classrooms with associated storage, cloak area and toilets and an outside learning area. The extension would be linked to the existing school buildings via a new corridor at ground floor level. External play areas are planned off the classrooms located on the ground floor. An additional 10 car parking spaces are proposed plus the widening of an existing parking space to make it a disabled parking space, bringing a total of 33 staff parking spaces at the school, plus one disabled parking space.
10. The amended planning application also proposes a parents drop off area, to be located off the existing vehicular and pedestrian entrance to the school and providing a total of 4 parking spaces. An internal footpath off Dover Road is also proposed to the southeast of the school site, which is proposed to alleviate pedestrian traffic from the existing main vehicular and pedestrian entrance

Planning Policy

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

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England and as guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications. It does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However the weight given to the development plan policies will depend on

Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

their consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the development plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

The NPPF contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development, identifying 3 overarching roles in the planning system – economic, social and environmental, which are considered mutually dependent. Within the over-arching roles there are 12 core principles that planning should achieve. These can be summarised as:

- be genuinely plan-led;
- a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places people live their lives;
- proactively drive and support sustainable economic development;
- secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity;
- take account of the different roles and character of different areas, including protecting Green Belts, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities;
- support the transition to a low carbon future, taking account of flood risk and coastal change and encourage the reuse of existing resources and the development of renewable energy;
- contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution
- encourage the effective use of land by reusing brownfield land, providing that it is not of high environmental value;
- promote mixed use developments;
- conserve heritage assets;
- manage patterns of growth to make fullest use of public transport, walking and cycling; and focus significant development in locations which can be made sustainable; and
- take account of strategies to improve health, social and cultural well being, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

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

- consideration of whether opportunities for sustainable transport have been taken up and safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people;
- achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- the protection provided for open space, including playing fields;
- the great importance that the Government attaches to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities, and that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools; and
- conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

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.

(ii) Development Plan Policies

The adopted **1994 Gravesham Local Plan 1st Review (Saved Policies)**

Policy T1 The Local Planning and Highway Authorities will consider the impact on the transport system and on the environment of traffic generated by new development and will wish to ensure that all proposed developments are adequately served by the highway network.

Policy P3 Proposed developments are expected to make provision for vehicle parking in accordance with the Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards, as interpreted by Gravesham Borough Council.

Policy LT3 Seeks the protection of playing fields.

Consultations

12. **Gravesham Borough Council:** Raised objection to the planning application as originally submitted. The comments are as follows:

"Whilst the need for the expansion of the school is acknowledged and principle of development is considered acceptable subject to referral to the Secretary of State due to the playing field loss, it is considered that the shortfall of 18 parking spaces would result in an unacceptable level of overspill parking into the street, exacerbating congestion at pick up and drop off times. No adequate justification has been given as to why pre application advice given by the County Council's Highways Officer has not been followed. Further, the proposed drop off space will have inadequate turning circles and offer poor standards of visibility for vehicles egressing and accessing the site amongst cars parked on Dover Road. The proposal is therefore considered contrary to Gravesham Borough Council policies T1 and P3, by virtue of creating an unacceptable highway safety hazard and it is recommended that the scheme is amended to overcome these concerns."

Upon receipt of the amended details Gravesham Borough Council raised no objection, subject to the following comments:

"Following the submission of amended plans relating to the lay-by location, position of new school building and construction of the hall/staff room under permitted development, attention is drawn to a recently approved application (GR/10/0166) for major residential development at Dykes Pit. As part of this application it is understood that a pedestrian crossing point (dropped kerbs) to serve the school was required as part of a Section 38 Agreement (Highways Act 1980) with the Highway Authority. This work is to be completed prior to the first occupation of the dwellings at Dykes Pit. The proposed development the subject of this application may well conflict with a pedestrian

Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

crossing point agreed and so its location may need to be reconsidered by KCC Highways. Owing to the progress of the Dykes Pit development it is recommended that discussions regarding the re-location of this pedestrian access point take place at the earliest opportunity. Attention is drawn to the management of the drop off area which may be used by non-school related vehicles if left unchecked. The Council also draws attention to the need for any re-marking of the road to be subject to a TRO procedure which, it is acknowledged, is a matter for KCC Highways and Transportation.

Notwithstanding the above issue, the initial concerns regarding the position of the drop off area have been overcome by its re-location. It is considered that the repositioning of the new building further from the northern boundary and lowering the roof will have considerably less impact on neighbouring residential properties to the north. Whilst the Council are aware of concerns from Sport England regarding the loss of playing fields, on balance, the benefits in terms of education provision, design and the overall retention of play space within the scheme are considered to outweigh the perceived loss."

Kent County Council Highways and Transportation: Raised no overall objection and comments as follows to the application as originally submitted:

"There is currently no on-site parking for parents and this would remain the case. There would however be some additional space for the extra staff parking requirements within the ground. My understanding is that the School is concerned about parking problems at the start and end of the school day and the drop off lay-by has been proposed to try to respond to these problems. I also understand that it would be extremely difficult to create more drop off and pick up parking spaces within the site without a serious impact on the School's playing field. It would also appear that the School is promoting the encouragement of more parents to walk to and from the School via the Travel Plan Action Plan. Within the limits of the very constrained site, it would appear that the School is using its best endeavours to mitigate the impact of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

In terms of design of the new lay-by, an amendment would be required which would make manoeuvring in and out of the bays a bit easier but this can be looked at the detailed design stage. This lay-by will not form part of the public highway and will be managed by school staff to make the most efficient use possible of the four bays. The proposed hatched markings could not be used in this location and suggest that, initially, white bar markings are used to identify the length of road where parking should not take place during time when the lay-by is being used. This would avoid the formal Traffic Regulation order and hence avoid the need to be prescriptive about specific times of the day and weeks of the year when access was in operation and thus allowing the residents to make the maximum use of on-street parking available outside school hours. However this would rely on both parents and residents parking considerately, as the markings have no legal standing. If the School experiences problems, such as the gates being obstructed, the options of formal parking restrictions could subsequently be explored at the School's expense. This would either be the use of additional 'School Keep Clear' markings as are used to protect the main entrance or double yellow lines."

Upon receipt of the amended details Kent County Council Highways and Transportation raised no objection in principle, subject to the following comments:

Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

"There are a number of minor detailed points to be dealt with in due course, such as the location of the dropped kerbs, extent of the parking restriction, boundary of adopted public highway and extent of footway along the back of the drop off parking bays, but I would confirm that I would have no objection to the principle of the application. I recognise that this will not resolve all the concerns about the traffic generated by the proposed extension to the school, but would appear to be the best that could be achieved without major reduction of the school's playing field it play area."

Kent County Council Landscape Officer: Has raised the following concerns to the original planning application:

"There is no information provided to be able to make a comment on the proposals from a landscape point of view."

Upon receipt of the amended details Kent County Council Landscape Officer supports the application, subject to the following comments:

"The issues at this site are primarily concerned with tree removal and replanting. From a landscape point of view, it is important to get the appropriate species and location correct. However there is still some outstanding information about the specific detail of the tree removal and replanting, some of which has not been provided. Therefore further information is required covering species, source, location of saplings to be planted as mitigation and visual impact information."

Kent County Council Biodiversity Officer: Has raised no objection, subject to the following comments:

"I am satisfied with the results of the ecological survey which has been submitted and require no additional information to be provided prior to determination. Conditions covering roosting, foraging and commuting bats; lighting to be designed to have minimal impact on bats and replacement trees planted to replace the trees lost as a result of this development, to be added to any planning permission."

Sport England: Raised objection to the planning application as originally submitted. The comments are as follows:

"Sport England objects to development which would lead to the loss of all or part of a playing field, or which would prejudice its use, should not normally be permitted because it would permanently reduce the opportunities for participation in sporting activities. The proposed two storey classroom block would appear to be sited on an existing area of open space and mature trees. This area is therefore incapable of accommodating a playing pitch or part thereof. However the proposed new outside learning area would significantly encroach onto an existing playing field. Locating this aspect of the proposed development on the existing playing field would prejudice the use of the playing field and prevent the existing football pitch from being rotated. In the light of this, Sport England objects to the proposal because it is not considered to accord with any of the exceptions on Sport England's playing field policy."

Upon receipt of the amended details Sport England maintains its objection to this planning application, for the following reasons;

Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

"The proposed two storey classroom block and surrounding hard standing area would appear to be sited on an existing area of open space, mature trees and part of the existing playing field. Therefore this aspect of the proposed development would significantly encroach onto an existing playing field. Locating this aspect of the proposed development on the existing playing field would prejudice the use of the playing field and prevent the existing football pitch from being rotated. Should Kent County Council be minded to grant planning permission for the development then in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009 and the DCLG letter of 10 March 2011, the application should be referred to the National Planning Casework Unit."

Environment Agency: Raised objection to the planning application as originally submitted. The comments are as follows:

"There is a possibility of contamination at this site because of the previous use (landfill). The applicant noted this in the application form but has not submitted a preliminary contamination risk assessment. The Environment Agency's Groundwater and Contaminated Land specialist would like to object to the application based on a lack of information."

Upon receipt of the amended details the Environment Agency raises no objection, subject to the imposition of conditions covering the following;

- No development to take place until a scheme to deal with the risks associated with the contamination of the site shall be submitted and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority;
- No occupation of any part of the permitted development shall take place until a verification report demonstrating completion of works set out in the approved remediation strategy and the effectiveness of the remediation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority, and
- No infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground is permitted other than with the express written consent of the County Planning Authority.

Local Members

13. The previous local County Members, Mr Leslie Christie and Mr Harold Caske were notified of the application on 14 February 2013 and on 23 April 2013 regarding the amended planning application. Due to the County Council elections which took place on 2 May 2013, the local County Members for this division changed. Mrs Sue Howes and Mr Narinderjit Thandi were accordingly notified on 8 May 2013.

Publicity

14. The original application was advertised by the posting of site notices and the notification of 72 neighbouring properties. An advertisement was placed in the Kent on Sunday on 17 February 2013. Due to a number of objection letters received to these proposals, the planning application was amended and on this occasion 77 neighbouring properties were notified of the amended application. All the neighbours who wrote in to the original application, as well as the owner of the petition, were notified of the amendments. None of these neighbours or the owner of the petition have written back on these amendments and so it can therefore be assumed that their original objections have been addressed and are no longer relevant to the amended proposals.

Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

Representations

15. 10 letters of representation have been received in objection to the application as originally submitted, as well as a petition containing 58 signatures. The main points of objection can be summarised as follows:

- The drop off would result in taking away valuable parking spaces away from local residents.
- Unless the drop off provides enough parking spaces for all the parents then it is a total waste of time and money.
- Too few parking spaces in Dover Road as it is without taking away more.
- Not enough parking as it is without losing a large section for the drop off.
- An added danger of the drop off is that it would cause a backlog of traffic from parents trying to get in to collect children.
- The drop off would result in cars queuing to get into this area thus obstructing other users of the road, especially as cars would be arriving at the school from both directions.
- School children who walk to school would have to walk across all the queuing cars trying to get into the drop off.
- Dover Road is a busy road with only enough room for one car to come up or down due to all the on street parking.
- The new proposed housing development opposite the school site would bring added problems as the residents and visitors will try to park out on Dover Road.
- Would someone be employed to manage the traffic jam that would occur in Dover Road when the traffic starts to gridlock?
- The drop off would result in the demolition of part of the school wall and the loss of 12 car parking spaces.
- The proposed 8 new classrooms would accommodate 240 extra pupils with reduced on street parking outside, a drop off and collection for 4 cars would not be able to cope at school opening and closing times when parents leave their cars and collect their children.
- The school infrastructure would also be compromised by the proposed increase in the number of pupils.
- The disruption caused by the proposed building works to the education of the students within the school remains a grave concern for the majority of parents.
- Space for communal play, sport and social events would be significantly reduced while pressure on other shared learning environments such as the computer room would be increased.
- Do not want the trees removed for the drop off as it affords privacy to the properties either side of the drop off.
- It is unclear how the drop off would work in the afternoons when it is only 4 spaces.
- Proposed development would block out what little sunshine that there is in my garden.
- The bank between my property and the school is already one storey high and a two storey building on top of that would result in a building as high as a three storey building right next to me property.

16. One letter of representation has been received on the amended proposals for the site. The main points of concerns can be summarised as follows:

Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

- Assume that the drop off will be one way with traffic turning right into the entrance will block traffic travelling from the east along Dover Road
- The exit from the drop off will be virtually opposite the entrance to the new housing estate being built.

Discussion

17. In considering this proposal regard must be had to Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 11 above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore this proposal needs to be considered in the context of Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. In summary, the relevant planning policies, as well as strongly supporting provision of education facilities, promote sustainable development, seek a high standard of design, have regard to local context, the amenity of nearby properties and the surrounding area, seek to protect playing field land and require adequate access and parking.
18. This application has been reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee following the receipt of an objection from Sport England and local representations. The main issues relating to this application are siting & design, tree loss and landscaping issues, Sport England's objection and transport issues.

Siting and Design

19. As mentioned in paragraph 15 above, two objections had been received from residents who live to the north of the school site to the proposed location of the new two storey building. The original location of the building was proposed approximately 20 metres away from this northern boundary. However, as the school site is located on slightly higher ground than the properties to the north of the school, the residents considered that the proposed two storey extension would look like a three storey extension, taking into account the level difference. There was a concern of loss of light in the neighbouring gardens as well as an element of overlooking from the new building.
20. The application has been amended accordingly to take into account these comments and the new building has been repositioned some 10 metres further south into the site, so now being approximately 30 metres away from the nearest property boundary in Capstan Close. This distance is greater than the widely recognised minimum separation distance of 21 metres for house to house windows of habitable rooms. Please note that in this instance, the measurement provided is to the garden boundary of the property and so the distance to the properties in Capstan Close and thus the windows is actually greater than quoted. The roof of the proposed two storey building is also to be of a shallow pitch to further minimise the overall ridge height. The roof finished is also now proposed to be a single ply membrane to achieve a minimum pitch and further reduce the ridge height. Furthermore landscaping can also be improved along this northern boundary to provide more shielding of the two storey building from these residential properties.
21. It is proposed that the standalone two storey extension would be added to the southeast elevation of the school, complete with a corridor at ground floor level that will link it to the remainder of the school buildings. It is proposed to provide eight additional

Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

classrooms with associated storage and cloak areas, together with additional toilet facilities. The building is expected to be a steel frame construction over piled foundations, cavity brick/block envelope with brick details to match the existing school building, complete with contrasting blue/grey soldier course detail to window cill and heads. Windows and doors are to be aluminium framed units powder coated finish in white. Aluminium guttering and rainwater down pipes are proposed, finished in white. The roof, as already mentioned, would be a single ply membrane to achieve a minimum pitch and further reduce the ridge height.

22. Overall I consider that the revised siting and layout of the proposed development are acceptable in planning terms taking into consideration the school being located on slightly higher ground than the properties to the northern boundary and surrounding neighbouring properties. I also consider that the proposed design of the building, including the scale, form appearance and materials, would be appropriate and acceptable. I would not therefore raise a planning objection to the proposal on grounds of design, siting and layout subject to the considerations below.

Tree Loss and Landscaping Issues

23. The application proposes the removal of twelve trees to accommodate the proposed new building and drop off area. One tree is a Category A (most worthy of retention) and five trees are a Category B and the remainder classified as a Category C or below, are proposed to be removed. The County's Landscape Officer has concluded that the proposed tree removal is acceptable under the circumstances, but from a landscape point of view it is essential to get the appropriate species and location correct.
24. In mitigation for the loss of trees on the site, no details of the proposed landscaping scheme, in terms of species or location, have been provided. I would recommend that should the application be granted planning permission then a landscaping scheme, dealing the proposed species and their location be submitted and approved by the County Planning Authority, be made a condition of any decision. I would also advise that the planting to the northern boundary of the school site, in the vicinity of the two storey building, be investigated and measures put in place to increase the level of landscaping, if deemed necessary. I would further recommend that the completion of the proposed landscape scheme to be carried out within the first planting season following occupation of the development, be made a condition of any decision. I would therefore not raise any objection to the application on landscape grounds, subject to conditions covering amongst other matters, the provision of a proposed landscaping scheme; a review of the existing planting along the northern boundary of the school site in the vicinity of the proposed building and replacement planting should there be any failures within the scheme and tree protection measures during construction for the remaining trees on site.

Sport England Objection.

- 25 Sport England objected to the planning application as originally submitted on grounds that the proposed outside learning areas would significantly encroach onto the existing playing field and would prejudice the use of the playing field and prevent the existing football pitch from being rotated. Sport England continues to object to the application as amended on a similar basis. It is acknowledged that there would be some encroachment onto the usable part of the playing field mainly from the hard surface play area outside the new building which links up to the existing playground to the south.

Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

This means that the existing marked out pitch would have to be moved eastwards but this would be without reducing it in size and with room for run-off area. In response to the objection the applicant has provided the following response which has been sent to Sport England for its further consideration:

"The proposed location of the classroom block does not affect the existing playground and associated hard court to the southeast of the main building, which would be retained as existing. Although the total area of the playing fields to the east of the site will be reduced, the existing junior football pitch would be maintained within the same grass area, relocated to suit. The existing playing fields to the west of the main school building are unaffected by the proposals.

The existing marked football pitch is located to the east of the school and oriented west north west to east south east, as depicted on the planning drawings. The proposed location for the marked football pitch is in the same orientation but relocated to the east. The existing school playing fields and school boundaries to the playing field are such that it is not possible to rotate the orientation of the football pitch through 90 degrees as the site boundary is too restrictive. The proposed build and consequentially revised location of the football pitch is inconsequential of this fact.

Irrespective of the planned development, the existing marked football pitch cannot be rotated through 90 degrees.

The proposed drop off point to the south east of the main building accommodates a currently unused area of trees and sloping grassland along the southern boundary of the existing playing fields and does not affect the usable grass play areas and sports pitches to the east of the site. A new footpath is proposed to run along the south eastern boundary, which is along the perimeter of the playing fields on what is currently light vegetation and not usable grass play area.

The proposed new parking areas within the school site would occupy existing soft landscaped areas that are not currently used by the school and are too small to be of any beneficial use other than ornamental.

The area of playing fields following the proposal would be 8995m² which exceeds the DfE requirement of 8400m², and all existing sports pitch facilities would be retained."

26. A response to the above comments has not been received prior to completion of this report and any comments received subsequently will be reported verbally at the committee meeting. If Sport England continues to maintain its objection to the application and Members are minded to grant planning permission, the application would need to be referred to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for his consideration.
27. In my view, this is a relatively minor encroachment onto the usable part of the playing field that has to be balanced against the need for the development and wider benefits to the community of this education facility. The substantial part of the playing field would remain unaffected by the development where it would still be possible to accommodate the same size football pitch with space around it. The fact that it could not be turned through 90 degrees is no change from the current position. In my view, the use of the playing field would not be adversely affected either for formal sports or indeed more informal recreation. I do not therefore consider there is any basis for a planning

Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

objection on the grounds that the development would lead to unacceptable loss of playing field land or would affect the ability of the School to use the playing field.

Transport Issues

28. As mentioned in paragraph 6 above, a drop off area for 4 vehicles was proposed between property numbers 92 and 100 Dover Road. Due to all the objections received about its proposed location along Dover Road, an amended site has been proposed under the amended proposals. The new drop off area has been relocated to the east of the existing main vehicular and pedestrian entrance, therefore utilising the existing main entrance for ingress and creating only one additional vehicle exit and minimising the impact on the highway. The amended proposal still provides a single lane drop off area with parking for up to four vehicles at one time. This would be open with collapsible bollards to prevent residents' parking and is to be managed carefully by the School. Additional signage and road markings within the drop off area are proposed to prevent residents and the public from using the drop off area as a parking area out of school hours. As the main vehicular and pedestrian entrance already has 'School Keep Clear' road markings to either side of this entrance, and so the proposed location of the drop off area will not remove any on-street parking, as no parking is currently allowed along this section of Dover Road. To ensure that the exit from the drop off area is kept clear of parking and that visibility splays are maintained, the 'School Keep Clear' markings will have to be extended. The existing security gate to the main site entrance will be relocated further into the site to accommodate the drop off area and alleviate congestion at this point.
29. Whilst it has been identified that the new drop off area will not alleviate all the congestion problems that the school expansion might bring, it is intended to help reduce such problems by providing some off road parking for parents. However it will be down to the School to manage effectively the drop off area and to ensure that vehicles spend as little time as possible when dropping off their children. The drop off will need to be manned by school staff and to help children out of the car and then to ensure that they get to school safely. This requirement can be included in the School Travel Plan so that the School takes ownership of the drop off area and manages it effectively. There might be an element of queuing but if parents realise that they are unable to get into the drop off area, then may decide to park away from the school site and walk the remaining distance. A new pedestrian gate is also being provided to the south east corner of the school site so encouraging more parents to walk to school or to park further away and walk the remaining distance. The school also has another gate from Robina Avenue, so there are potential three access points to the school site so this should ensure a spread of traffic and pedestrians.
30. The School is also providing additional parking within the school site to alleviate any parking problems that might be caused by staff parking. Through the workings of the School Travel Plan, the school can encourage new school staff to walk or car share, which a proportion of staff already embrace these measures.
31. The issue raised by Gravesham Borough Council about the Section 38 Highways Agreement with the developer of Dykes Pit will be addressed by KCC Highways and Transportation, to ensure that any works carried out in providing a dropped kerb crossing is co-ordinated and is not affected by the proposed drop off area. This is something that can be covered as an informative to any planning consent given.

Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend (GR/13/146)

32. Overall I am satisfied that the School has made effort to provide a road drop off area for parents to drop off their children safely and increased the number of staff car parking spaces within the school site. The School is also proposing an additional footpath link to the school site from Dover Road, thus separating the pedestrian flow into the school. An existing footpath to the rear of the school site from Robina Avenue already provides another pedestrian point to the school which is located away from the main entrance. I would therefore not raise any objection to the application on landscape grounds, subject to conditions covering amongst other matters such as the location of the dropped kerbs, extent of the parking restriction, boundary of adopted public highway and extent of footway along the back of the drop off parking bays.

Conclusion

33. In summary, I consider that, subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, this proposed development constitutes sustainable development, with an appropriate standard of design and layout, which would not have significantly detrimental effects on the sporting facilities at the school, landscaping, residential amenity or upon the local highway. In my view, the development would not give rise to any significant material harm and is in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies, as well as the National Planning Policy Framework. I am aware of no material planning considerations that indicate that the conclusion should be made otherwise.
34. However I recommend that various conditions be placed on any planning permission, including those outlined below. However, given the Sport England objection, should Members support my views expressed in paragraphs 25 to 27 above and decide against refusal of this application, the County Planning Authority is required to consult the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government at the National Planning Casework Unit and not grant planning permission until the Secretary of State has first had opportunity to consider the application. The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009, requires that the Authority may only proceed to determine an application once the Secretary Of State has had an opportunity to consider whether or not to call in the application for his own determination.

Recommendation

35. I RECOMMEND that the application BE REFERRED to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and SUBJECT TO his decision, PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
- The standard time limit;
 - The development carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
 - The submission of details of all materials to be used externally;
 - A scheme of landscaping, including details of species, source, location of saplings to be planted as well as mitigation and visual impact information be provided, and hard surfacing, its implementation and maintenance;
 - Investigate the landscaping to the northern boundary of the school, near to the proposed extension;
 - Measures to protect trees to be retained;
 - Mitigation measures for potentially roosting, foraging and commuting bats;
 - Lighting to be designed to have minimal impact on any bats;

**Two storey building at St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Gravesend
(GR/13/146)**

- Development to accord with the recommendations of the ecology survey;
- No tree removal during the breeding birds season;
- Planting replacement trees for the ones lost as a result of the development;
- Hours of working during construction to be restricted to 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;
- Measures to prevent mud and debris being taken onto the public highway;
- Construction management plan, including access, parking and circulation within the site for contractors and other vehicles related to construction operations;
- Details to be submitted and approved, including location of dropped kerbs, extent of the parking restriction, boundary of adopted public highway and extent of footway along the back of the drop off parking bays;
- A scheme to deal with the risks associated with the contamination of the site shall be submitted and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority;
- A verification report demonstrating completion of works set out in the approved remediation strategy and the effectiveness of the remediation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority;
- No infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground is permitted other than with the express written consent of the County Planning Authority;
- An informative is added to any planning consent that any works carried out providing a dropped kerb crossing as part of the Dykes Pit housing development is co-ordinated and not affected by the proposed drop off area.

Case officer – Lidia Cook	01622 221063
---------------------------	--------------

Background documents - See section heading
--