

Provision of multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

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

Application by Roseacre Junior School for a new MUGA with 3m enclosing fencing and pathway access at Roseacre Junior School, The Landway, Bearsted, Kent, ME14 4BL – MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012).

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions

Local Member: Mr P Carter

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Roseacre Junior School is located in a residential area off The Landway to the west of Bearsted. Thurnham C of E Infant School is located to the east of the school site, beyond which is Roseacre Lane. An aerial photo and location map showing the location of the site in relation to its surroundings is included below.
2. This application seeks to ease congestion on the school's existing hard play areas and develop the sports facilities at the school by provision of a multi activity games area (MUGA) on the school playing field. Included within the proposal is 3m high fencing and a pathway to the MUGA.

Background

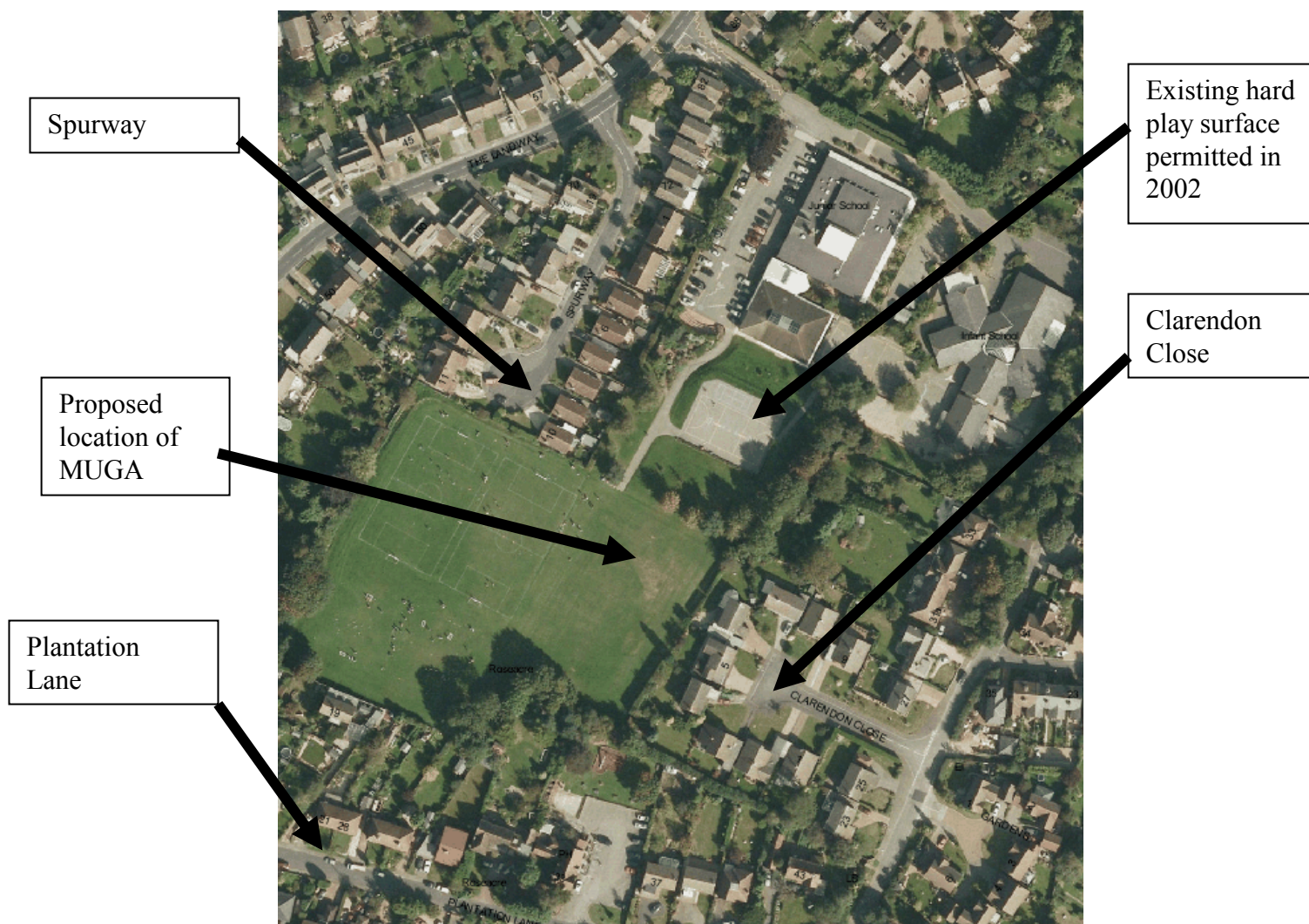
3. The last planning application received in relation to the Roseacre Junior School was in 2005 (MA/05/2319) for a small extension in the north east corner of the school to give more teaching space. In 2004 there was a proposal to convert a courtyard area to teaching accommodation (MA/04/1128) and in 2003 conversion of a storage area to classroom space (MA/03/1412). Of more relevance to this proposal, on 13th August 2002 the Planning Applications Committee decided in favour of a proposal for a tarmac playground area measuring 34m by 24m with 2.4m high green fencing, gates and car parking at the school (MA/02/841). The development can be seen on site located to the north of this proposal.

Proposal

4. The original proposal was to use part of the north east corner of the field for a hard surfaced play area for multi use games activities enclosed with a 3m high fence. To the north there would be a 1.8m wide bitumen macadam footpath between the existing school playground and the proposed MUGA. The MUGA area concerned measured 30m by 33m (990sq.m) and was approx. 7.7m from the fence with neighbouring property to the east in Clarendon Close. However, the location and size of the proposal has been significantly amended in response to neighbour, Parish Council and Sport England comments.

Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

Aerial Photo (2008) showing Roseacre Junior School Playing Field

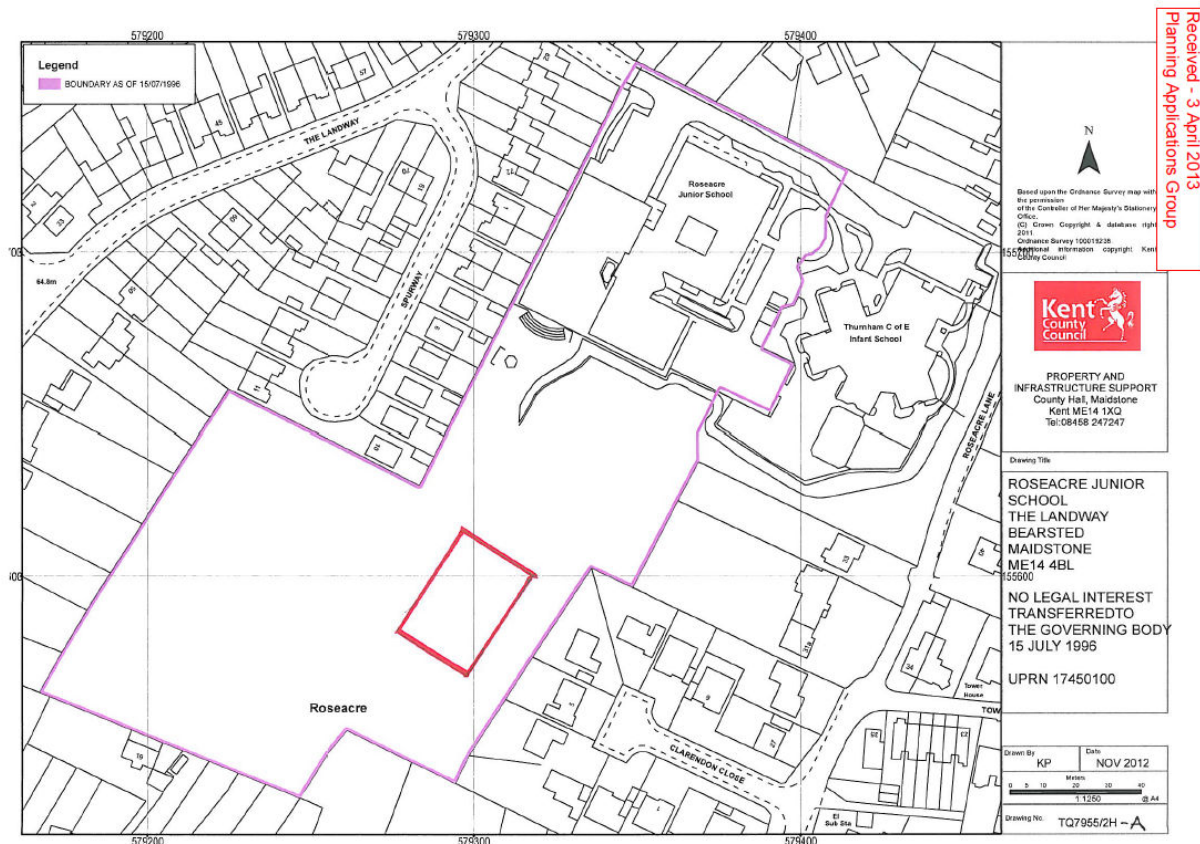


5. The revised proposal is also located on part of the north east corner of the field. However, it is now proposed to be located at a distance of between 13.6m and 14.2m from the boundary with neighbouring property to the east in Clarendon Close and the proposal is located 1m further to the west. The MUGA area concerned has been reduced to 25.1m by 36.7m (921sq.m). The revised proposal is to use the existing path to the west of the proposal with a small extension to the personnel gate in the north west corner of the MUGA fence.
6. The proposal would involve “cut and fill” of the slight slope of the field so that a level surface is created for the MUGA. The MUGA surface would be constructed from porous bitumen macadam and would be marked with lines for the games activities proposed which would be one netball court, two five-a-side football pitches and four mini tennis courts.

Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

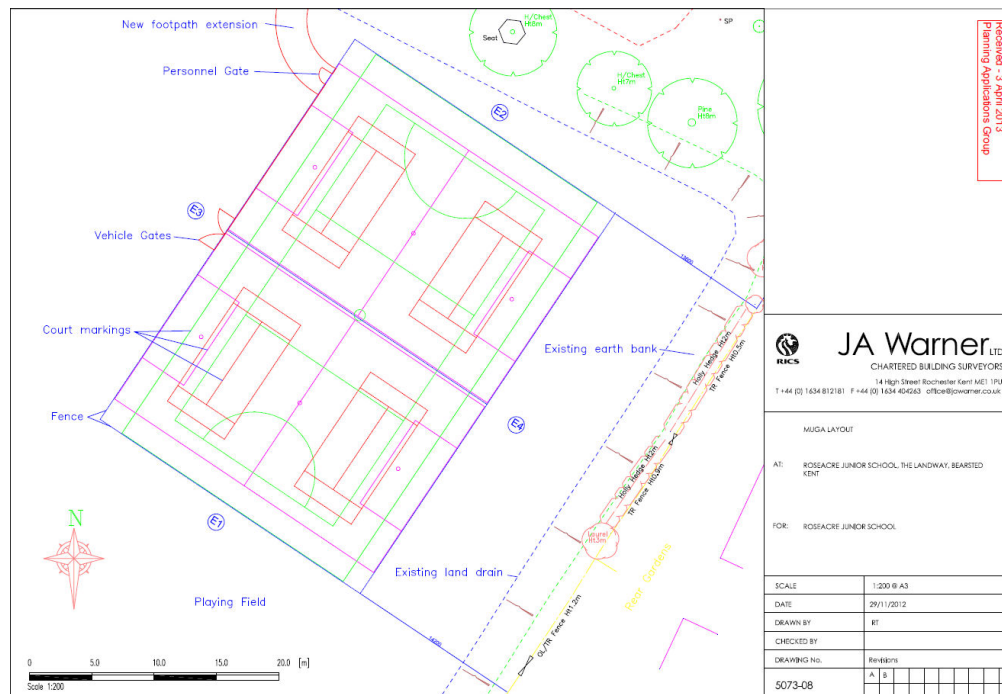
7. It is proposed that the MUGA court would be contained by a 3m high fence which the applicant proposes would be polyester powder coated steel weldmesh between stanchions in dark green colour. There would be a single personnel gate and a pair of gates for emergency and maintenance vehicular access to the west side.
8. The proposal is intended for the School's own use. The hours of use proposed by the applicant are intermittently between the hours of 08:30 and 17:00 during weekdays during term time only. No lighting is proposed.
9. No increase to the existing school roll or teacher numbers is associated with the proposal and the proposal does not include alteration to existing parking or access arrangements at the site.

Location of proposed site



Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

Layout of proposed MUGA



Winter and summer pitch positions proposed



**Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted -
MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)**

View of the proposed location, boundary earth bank, planting and looking toward
neighbouring property in Clarendon Close



View of the proposed location for the MUGA taken from neighbouring property in
Clarendon Close. Looking towards the west of the site



Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

Planning Policy

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

- (i) **National Planning Policy and Guidance** – the most relevant national planning policy guidance is set out in the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** where there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In relation to this particular development proposal the following NPPF guidance is particularly relevant:

Chapter 1 – building a strong, competitive economy
Chapter 7 – requiring good design
Chapter 8 – promoting healthy communities
Chapter 11 – conserving and enhancing the natural environment;

Planning Statement on planning for schools development - where there is commitment for planning to work in a positive manner when dealing with proposals for the creation, expansion and alteration of state-funded schools and that there should be a presumption in favour of the sustainable development of state-funded schools as expressed in the NPPF.

- (ii) **Borough/ District Local Plan / Local Development Framework policies**, are contained in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2000) as saved policies.

Policy ENV22 encourages regard to the visual impact and appearance of the locality and conservation of wildlife habitats in decision making concerning existing open areas;

Policy ENV23 requires consideration to loss of urban open space/recreation facilities, need and alternative provision;

Policy ENV6 encourages the provision of a landscaping scheme as part of development proposals where appropriate.

Consultations

11. **Maidstone Borough Council:** Raises no objections to the original and amended proposals.

Bearsted Parish Council: Objected to the original proposals because of the close proximity of the proposed MUGA to the rear of 4, 5 and 6 Clarendon Close. Their view was that there would be severe detriment to the residential amenities of these properties by virtue of noise, disturbance and visual intrusion. In particular, the proposed 3m fencing only 5m away from very short gardens of 5 and 6 Clarendon Close would in the Parish Council view have an imprisoning visual effect on these properties. Notwithstanding their objection

Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

to the application, the Parish Council would wish conditions to be imposed restricting the use of the MUGA to the hours 0830 to 1700 or dusk, whichever is the sooner on Mondays to Saturdays only with no use on Sundays or Bank Holidays, preventing the use of any flood lighting and restricting the use of the facility to children of only primary school age up to 11 years old. The Parish Council was not opposed to the principle of a MUGA being constructed within the school grounds but considered that it must be located centrally within the school field to be as far away as possible from as many of the surrounding houses as possible.

The Parish Council also raises objection to the revised proposals, whilst appreciating that the revised positioning is an improvement on the original proposal. In their view the proposal is still too close to the rear of 4, 5 and 6 Clarendon Close and in their view would be detrimental to residential amenity by virtue of noise, disturbance and visual intrusion. The Parish Council suggests that the proposal be positioned more equidistant between the residential properties surrounding the playing field. The Council also comments that the proposed position of the MUGA is within one of the best drained parts of the school playing field and that, contrary to what is shown on the application plans, is in the winter location of the school football pitch because it is so well drained and allows matches to be played consistently throughout the winter months. They say that the school field drains from east to west and that some parts towards the west are unusable in the winter because of poor drainage. To maximise use of the entire school field for the benefit of the School and the local community, the Parish Council suggests that the MUGA be positioned within a poorly drained area so that its construction can overcome any existing drainage problems and allow other well drained areas, in particular the proposed location for the MUGA, to remain in current use as a grassed area for activities throughout the year.

Kent Highways and Transportation: Do not wish to raise objection to the proposal. They comment that the proposal is for School use during term time and is not likely to lead to any significant increase in traffic flows.

Sport England: Comments that the provision of a MUGA meeting current design standards would represent the provision of a significant new facility and would outweigh the potential loss of part of the existing playing field. In their view the original proposal had the potential to meet exception E5 of playing field policy and did not wish to raise objection to the application, subject to conditions requiring further details of the design and layout before commencement of the development. However, in relation to the amended proposal Sport England considers that the proposal meets exception E5 of their playing fields policy and has removed their requirement for a condition requiring details of the design and layout of the MUGA to be attached to any decision notice. Sport England states that the proposed (revised) MUGA is in line with Sport England design guidance.

Kent County Council Biodiversity: Comment that the proposed development site comprises short maintained amenity grassland which is unlikely to have a high ecological value and that the proposal is unlikely to affect trees near to the site. Comment that opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged in this case by measures that could be introduced to the wider school site that might provide improved opportunities for wildlife, such as relaxation of the mowing regime at the margins of the site around field boundaries.

Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

Kent County Council Heritage Conservation: Have no comments on the proposal.

Environment Agency: Have no comments to make on the proposal.

Local Member

12. The local County Member, Mr Paul Carter was notified of the original application on 15th January 2013. No comments have been received to date.

Publicity

13. The original application was publicised by the posting of a site notice, and the individual notification of 53 neighbouring residential properties. It has also been advertised on our website. The revised application was further publicised by an additional neighbour notification and by re-notification to 7 neighbouring properties.

Representations to the original proposal

14. In response to the original neighbour publicity, 7 neighbour letters of representation have been received, 6 of which objected to the proposal. Neighbour concerns related predominantly to the location of the proposal and the impacts of the proposal to residential amenity. A number of suggestions were made including reduction and amendments to the proposed MUGA size, location, height of the fence and position of the path.
15. The location of the proposal on the field was queried. One neighbour states that the proposal is on the drier side of the field and to place it there would reduce the area of school field that the children could play on in most weathers. It is suggested by the neighbour that it would be better to place the MUGA on an area of the field where it is frequently wet thus increasing the usefulness of the field. One neighbour notes that the football pitch in main use during the winter is not shown on the submitted plan and that footballers use the east side of the field where it is driest; the two pitches shown on the west side of the plan they say are only fit for practice due to the wet and soft ground.
16. A number of residents in Clarendon Close said that the original proposal was too close to residential properties in Clarendon Close.
17. In relation to the potential impacts of the proposal, there were concerns predominantly about noise, visual impact as well as more general impacts such as on health, ecology, drainage, and concern about the potential for future amendments to the proposal.
18. Neighbour comments in relation to noise were that when compared to the current usage of the field, more children would be concentrated into a smaller area which would impact detrimentally upon neighbouring residents and that this would affect the reasonable enjoyment of properties in Clarendon Close. There were concerns about additional noise from use of the proposed path to the MUGA and that whilst noise from children is expected during school hours between 8am and 5pm during the week, an extension of this time

Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

would be unacceptable.

19. Neighbour comments in relation to the visual impact were that the proposal would change the aspect and outlook of the properties in Clarendon Close. Neighbours considered that the proposed 3m high fence would be unsightly and detrimentally affect the outlook from adjacent properties in Clarendon Close, the Landway and Spurway. Neighbour comments were that the fencing would be clearly visible from downstairs windows and from the garden and that the fence would reduce enjoyment of the garden and the view.
20. There were also neighbour concerns about the impact of lighting and light pollution and about health, ecology, drainage, and the potential for future amendments to the proposal. There was concern that it would reduce the green field area which would not be a general health benefit when compared to grass; the ecology would be affected by the area of hardstanding as it would not be able to fully absorb the rainfall and that it would affect the quality of life for residents of properties adjoining the school field.
21. There were concerns that the proposed hours of use may be increased in the future; that it would cause a reduction in property value; it might be used by external parties; that there should not be any sports in a quiet residential area; that the balls could easily enter property and cause damage and possible injury. It was stated that balls from the school field are already going over garden fences into property in the Spurway causing damage to fencing and plants and neighbour concerns about broken glass.
22. Some neighbours made suggestions for amendments to the proposal, mainly in relation to the size of the MUGA proposal and the height of the fencing. These included suggestions that it could be amended to a single unit MUGA and that by reduction to one MUGA, the football pitch on the east side could still exist.
23. It was suggested that the proposal could be repositioned. It was also suggested that the existing access to the playing fields could be used instead of the proposed new path. It was suggested that a reduced size would allow the MUGA to be situated away from the existing housing; that the fencing is unnecessarily high and could be reduced from 3m to 2m high to improve the application.
24. Some comments about the fencing for the existing MUGA at the site were also received, including that it only has fencing on the sections with a downward slope and that the sections with an earth bank only have a low fence. Another notes that the existing MUGA provided in 2002 originally proposed 2.7m high fencing which was then reduced to 2.4m.
25. Some general comments were also received making suggestions should the proposal be approved. That included restriction of hours to 8.30 to 5pm excluding evenings and until the end of natural light, and also no use on Sundays and that there should be no floodlights, letting and that the facility should be restricted to use by children only. It was suggested that if approved it should only be used by children of Roseacre School and be supervised by school staff.

Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

Representations to the amended proposal

26. In response to the additional neighbour publicity/re-notification, 4 letters of representation have been received.
27. One neighbour no longer has any objections subject to conditions that they would wish to see imposed regarding hours of use between 8.30 am and 5.30pm during term time; use only by pupils from Roseacre Junior School and supervised by school staff: and excluding use of floodlighting.
28. Three respondents maintain objections to the proposal, although 2 indicate that the amended proposal represents a marginal improvement. The objections to the amended proposal include the following:
 - the site plan that was submitted with the proposal was old and did not show the existing area between the school and the green area which includes a hard play area (approved in 2002), large netball and games area and other equipment;
 - the position of the proposal would affect the use of the existing football pitches used by Bearsted Football Club at the weekends during the winter season and that this could result in the need for alternative sites thereby affecting the Community use of the field. It is stated that the position of the proposal should be such that the present major football area towards the east of side of the field should be maintained;
 - that the summer/winter plan used is misleading in that the main football pitch in use for matches is on the east side of the field where it is driest which overlaps the revised MUGA location and that if approved the Community use of the field for matches would be lost;
 - that the two pitches shown on the west side of the plan are only fit for training and practice due to the wet and soft ground. It is suggested that the ideal location to make best use of the whole field would be where football pitch one is shown just past the running track and still giving easy access from the track up to the field or not at all;
 - The proposed location is still too close to the boundary of houses in Clarendon Close;
 - Objection to the increase in volume of noise caused by children being confined in a fenced area. The noise will be greater than that of them playing over the vast area of the playing fields much less densely;
 - Objection to the visual impact to all properties in Clarendon Close, Landway and Spurway adjoining the school playing fields of 3 metre fencing;
 - Concerns about the future implications for use of the proposal for extended hours by external parties, impacting on quality of life;
 - It is requested that should the proposal be given permission, letting and lighting will be restricted by conditions.

Discussion

29. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in **paragraph 10** above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development

Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore the 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. In my opinion, the key planning considerations in this particular case can be summarised within the following headings:

Need

30. There is strong planning policy support for improvement of school facilities and for local planning authorities to take a positive approach when dealing with such proposals. The purpose of the application is to increase opportunity for sports and play for the pupils at the school, on a hard surfaced area all year round and to ease congestion on the existing hard play surfaces. The proposal is entirely for the School's own use. The children at the school range in age from 7 to 11 years and the current roll is 411 pupils. Fencing is included so as to contain ball activities within the MUGA area and a path is included to connect the MUGA to an existing path to the west and therefore to other parts of the school site.
31. I am therefore persuaded that the School has a need for increased opportunity for sports and play facility at the site whilst reducing the health and safety risks associated with congested play areas. However, in my view, the need for the proposal needs to be balanced against the likely impacts as a result of the location chosen for the proposal. This is considered further below.

Location

32. The principle of location of a MUGA within the school site is in my view generally acceptable and in land use terms akin to the wider school environment. Planning policy seeks to promote healthy communities giving access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation as these make important contributions to health and well being.
33. However, this proposal is located on playing field land also subject to planning policies which seek to protect playing fields from development. The exact choice of location within the playing field in relation to neighbouring property, distance from boundaries and whether the proposal is located in the most appropriate location on the field when considering the site context therefore needs to be considered further to determine whether the proposal could be regarded as a sustainable development. This is discussed further below in relation to location and the potential for significant adverse impacts.
34. Neighbour representations about the choice of location on the field in relation to the ground conditions, drainage, existing pitch layouts and current use of the field pitches for football, challenge the applicant's choice of location within the site for the original and amended proposal. Amendments to the location and dimensions of the proposal have to some extent taken account of this although not all of the concerns have been resolved in the revised proposal. The applicant advised that the originally proposed location of the MUGA in their view makes best use of the space available on the field considering the ground conditions and without compromising the overall available space. The applicant advised that the

Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

proposed location is on the worst ground so that it would enable sports to be played when the ground conditions would otherwise restrict sport activities.

35. The applicant has submitted details of the existing summer pitch locations. There are 3 rounders pitches and a running track on the playing field. The applicant proposes that the rounders pitch that would be affected by the proposed MUGA location could be moved and that the field could accommodate all summer facilities.
36. The existing winter pitch locations submitted by the applicant (drawing 5073-10) indicate that in the winter no pitches are laid out to the east of the field where the MUGA is proposed (two football pitches labelled 1 and 2 are shown laid out to the west of the field). Neighbours question the accuracy of this. The School advises that the west side of the playing field is currently marked up for football and that football is not played on the east side. However, aerial photos of the field show that there have been a number of different pitch configurations on the field over time. For example, in 2007 a pitch was marked up on the east side of the field, but not in 2008 and in 2003 no pitches were marked out. It is therefore noted that at times there has been a football pitch laid out to the east of the field where the MUGA is proposed by the applicant.
37. Whilst the proposal seeks to increase opportunities for sports at the same time it affects land which is or capable of being used as a playing field. The applicant's amendments to the proposal would impact on the area to the east of the field which has evidently been laid out as a winter football pitch from time to time. Planning policy seeks to protect all parts of a playing field not just those that happen for the time being to be laid out as pitches. All parts of the playing field are a resource which may be needed now or in the future and so are afforded the same level of planning policy protection regardless of the current pitch layout. The views of the statutory consultee for planning proposals affecting playing fields, Sport England, are relevant to whether in planning terms it is appropriate to use any part of the school playing field for this proposal, irrespective of how the pitches are currently laid out and what sports activities the field is currently being used for.
38. Sport England has confirmed that the proposal meets exception E5 of their playing fields policy. In their view, the proposed development is for a sports facility which is of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the land as playing field. There have been suggestions from neighbours and the Parish Council that other possible locations on the playing field would be more appropriate and less disruptive to the current playing field layout and uses. However, other locations have not been proposed by the applicant and a decision needs to be made in relation to the application which has been made. Taking account of the views of Sport England and given the amendments to the original proposal, I consider that the impact of the proposal on the existing use of the playing field as a sports facility is therefore acceptable in planning policy terms.
39. However, the location of the proposal in relation to the potential for adverse impacts arising from the proposal needs further consideration.

Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

Potential for impacts as a result of the revised proposal

40. As a result of revisions to the proposal the nearest property would be located between 13.6m and 14.2m from the fence line with rear gardens in Clarendon Close. It is located approximately 17m from the nearest boundary fence line in Spurway. Whilst the revised proposal has attracted fewer neighbour representations than the original proposal, there are still concerns that the revised proposal would be too close to property.
41. The Parish Council considers that a location centrally on the school field as far away as possible from as many of the surrounding houses as possible would be preferable to what has been proposed.
42. In response to concerns regarding the proximity of the original proposal to residential property in Clarendon Close, the applicant advised that they were aware of the proximity of the proposal to the boundaries of nearby residential property but that the location had been carefully considered so as to limit the impact on the school playing field including pitches and to affect the least number of nearby residents as possible and to make the best use of the space available and the ground conditions. The original position of the proposal was chosen by the applicant as it took account of the ground investigations and geotechnical advice received in relation to the whole playing field, allowed easier access to the main school buildings to the north, as well as making best use of the screening from trees on site and from the earth banks at the eastern and northern edge of the playing field. In making revisions to the proposal, the applicant's view was that the originally proposed location would have been the most suitable.
43. In my opinion, the key determining issues in relation to this application are the potential for visual impact and noise related impacts to residential amenity. These are discussed below.

Visual Impact

44. The boundary between the amended proposal and the closest neighbouring property (generally houses) in Clarendon Road to the east of the proposed site is marked by fencing ranging in heights from 0.5m at the north east to 0.9m high and 1.2m high at the south east of the proposal. In front of the fence line there is a range of planting including a Hazel which at the time of the site survey in November 2012 was 4m high, holly hedging 2m high and a Laurel 3m high. To the south of the proposed site there is beech hedging. There are breaks in the hedging and fencing in at least two locations where neighbours currently have gated access onto the open school field. To the east between the Clarendon Close boundary and the school playing fields there is also a perimeter earth bank.
45. The proposal involves cut and fill of the site surface in order to produce a level MUGA surface. The applicant has submitted a site level plan and elevations to show the proposal set between 0.45m and 0.69m below the current ground level. The reduction in ground level achieved by the cut and fill when combined with the earth bank located at the eastern boundary would reduce the visual impact of the proposed fence such that at the eastern boundary the lower section of the fence would be screened by the height of the earth bank. The boundary planting in combination with the boundary fencing would further obscure the visual impact of the proposed fence. The applicant has commented that the location of the

Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

earth bank and boundary hedges is expected to be above the height of the top of the fencing thereby reducing the visual impact of the fence. There is also opportunity to let the boundary planting grow higher. The proposal would however result in views which are very different to the existing openness of the school playing field.

46. To the south of the amended proposal the boundary of the school field with properties in Plantation Lane is well screened by mature trees and vegetation.
47. To the west of the amended proposal the closest residential property is in Spurway, approximately 17m from the proposal. At the boundary with these properties there is a beech hedge line and occasional mature trees. This edge does not benefit from further screening from a perimeter earth bank. Properties in the Landway also back onto the school field. However, views from the boundary with these properties tend to be mostly screened by mature trees.
48. The proposed bitumen macadam hard surface MUGA, which would be marked up to delineate the courts would clearly differ to the existing short maintained amenity grassland that currently exists. Concern has been expressed about the visual impact of the proposed MUGA particularly in relation to the 3m fencing that would surround the MUGA. The applicant does not wish to reduce the height of the proposed fence. The applicant advises that the proposed height of the fence at 3m is normal height for enclosure of a MUGA facility. They expect the location and height of the nearby earth bank (which is between approximately 1m and 1.4m above the current ground level) and boundary hedges at Clarendon Close to reduce the impact of the fence to those residents. The green colour treatment of the fence and the open texture of the fencing proposed has been selected to be less visually intrusive than other possible types of fencing such as chain link fencing.
49. In my view, the potential for change to the views and for visual impact would be mainly to those houses in Clarendon Close and in the Spurway that are nearest to the proposal. Given that the proposal is set at least 13.6m in from the nearest boundary and is in places well screened by existing planting and to the east a perimeter earth bank, in my opinion, the visual impact of the proposed fence could be further screened over time by additional landscape planting, particularly to the east and northwest of the proposal. I am satisfied that this could be secured by imposing planning condition if planning consent were to be given.
50. The proposal does not include floodlighting. A planning condition also could be imposed to exclude the introduction of artificial lighting. Subject to further planting and screening proposals being required, I am satisfied that whilst the proposal would change private views of the playing field, the amended proposal would not be seriously detrimental to visual amenity. Members need to be aware that the protection of privately obtainable views across neighbouring land is strictly not a material planning consideration.

Disturbance and Noise Impacts

51. There is concern that has been raised that the proposal would increase noise impacts from children playing and that the noise would be more concentrated if it is within the proposed MUGA. The School is aware that there are concerns from neighbours about the potential

Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

for impacts arising from the proposal.

52. However, in planning terms the area is an area of urban open recreational space and this use is not incompatible with the location on an existing school site. The proposed hours of use are term time only, when it would be used intermittently throughout the school year, between 08:30 and 17:00 hours (or until the end of natural light if earlier than 17:00 hours) and it is proposed that the MUGA be for supervised School use only.
53. In my view, given the location on an existing school site, there would not be sufficient planning grounds to refuse the proposal in relation to the potential for noise impacts alone, and the potential for noise and disturbance impact on residential amenity which may arise from construction works could be suitably controlled via a condition restricting hours of construction.

Other issues in terms of design, healthy communities and plan detail

54. The applicant advises that the proposal would allow a greater number of pupils at the school to undertake a greater range of sporting activity even when the weather conditions would usually prevent use of the field. They advise that the remaining area of open school field is still also sufficient for the School's sporting activities. In my view the proposal increases the range of opportunities for sports for children at the school whether that be on grassed or on hard surface, that being important also in planning for healthy communities.
55. The proposal is for the School's own use. Neighbours have suggested that the proposal might reduce the current community use of the playing field. However, the applicant advises that the existing letting of the school field for Saturday morning football with Bearsted Football Club only on the marked field pitches would continue as normal.
56. The original proposal dimensions have been amended to respond to Sport England comments about minimum sports pitch and court dimensions for the sports activities originally proposed. The amendments to the proposal reflect the Sport England design guidance and resulted in a reduced overall size of the proposal. This allowed the proposal to be re-positioned on the field. The overall design of the MUGA is considered to be fit for purpose for the sport activities proposed.
57. Concerns of neighbouring residents are that in the future the applicant might seek to increase the hours of operation, or seek artificial lighting or seek wider community use. This is not currently being proposed by the applicant. The planning merits of any such proposals would in any event need to be considered at the appropriate time should such amendments be proposed in the future.
58. The applicant had submitted a site plan that did not show the tarmac playground area permitted in 2002. Whilst not shown on the site plan, the other playing ground area was referred to by the applicant in the supporting information. This report takes account of the presence of the tarmac playground area permitted in 2002. The aerial view on page 2 of this report clearly shows the tarmac playground area.

Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted - MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)

Conclusion

59. Planning policy seeks to promote healthy and inclusive communities. It also seeks to prevent the loss of recreational and open space which can make an important contribution to the health and well being of communities. In this case, taking account of the views of Sport England, I consider that the benefits of the proposed MUGA to sports outweigh the detriment caused by loss of part of the playing field.
60. Securing high quality design and a good standard of amenity is also a core planning principle. The design of the proposal is fit for the intended purpose and meets Sport England Guidance. The applicant has been encouraged to amend the original proposal to take account of local opinion regarding the potential for adverse impacts due to the proximity to housing. As a result, the applicant has put forward an amended proposal, with reduced overall size, located further from the boundary with property in Clarendon Close. That represents an overall design improvement to the original proposal. However, there remain local concerns that the proposal is too close to housing and that consequently there would be potential for adverse visual and noise impacts.
61. However, taking account of the comments arising from statutory consultation, including no objection from Maidstone Borough Council, I consider that the proposal accords with the general aims and objectives of national and local planning policy requiring good design, promoting healthy communities, schools development and sustainable development. The proposal is capable of being further screened by new planting which can be required by planning condition. Although the proposal may lead to part of the school playing field being used more intensively by children taking part in sports activity, this would be intermittent during term time only and during restricted hours with use restricted to the School. The proposal does not include floodlighting. The proposal in my view therefore respects the site context in so far as it is possible in this location and, whilst the views to the open playing field would change, in planning terms this would not be significantly detrimental to the built environment, or to residential and visual amenity. I consider that this proposal accords with the development plan and that there are no material planning considerations that indicate that planning permission should be withheld. I would however recommend the inclusion of various planning conditions and informative.

Recommendation

62. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
- The standard 5 year time limit
 - That the development be carried out in accordance with submitted details
 - Restriction of construction hours
 - Details of temporary construction compound and storage areas
 - Hours of use to be restricted to term time only
 - Restriction to School's own use
 - Restriction to prevent the use of floodlighting at the proposed site
 - Submission of landscaping and planting proposals for the site

**Multi use games area (MUGA), Roseacre Junior School, Bearsted -
MA/13/91 (KCC/MA/0436/2012)**

- Tree protection measures.

63. I FURTHER RECOMMEND THAT the applicant BE ADVISED of the following informative:

- Opportunities should be sought for improving biodiversity at the site.

Case Officer: H Mallett	Tel. no: 01622 221075
-------------------------	-----------------------

Background Documents: see section heading
