

**6 classroom extension, hall extension, and 16 car parking spaces at St John's CofE Primary School, Grove Green, Maidstone – MA/13/898 (KCC/MA/0132/2013)**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 17 July 2013.

Application by Kent Council Children Property and Infrastructure Support for the construction of a 6 classrooms extension, hall extension, internal alterations, and the provision of 16 additional car parking spaces, a grass-crete access road to the side and rear of the school and additional hard play space, at St John's CofE Primary School, Provender Way, Grove Green, Maidstone – MA/13/898.

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

**Local Member:** Mr Paul Carter

**Classification:** Unrestricted

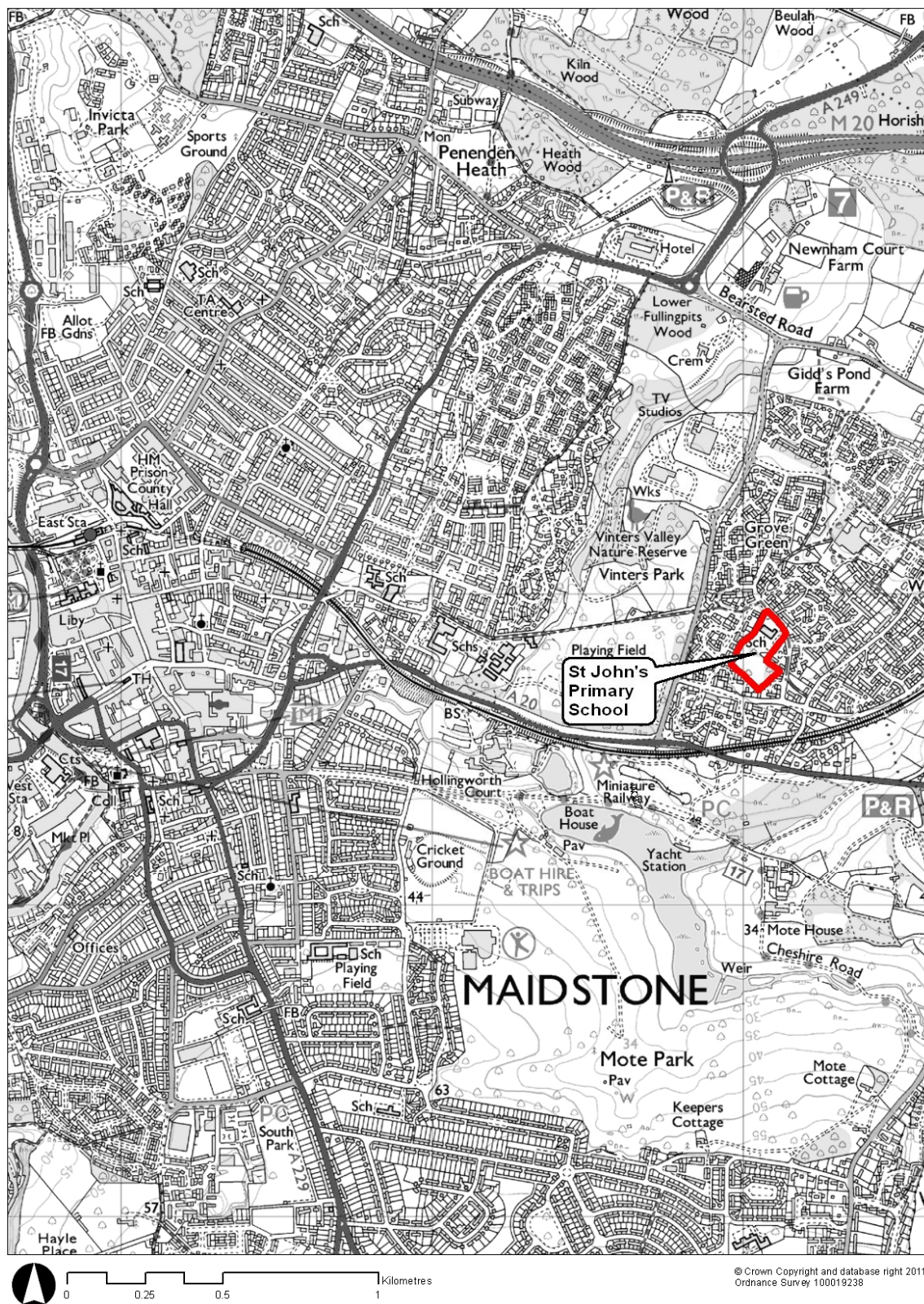
**Site**

1. St John's CofE Primary School is a well established and high achieving primary school serving the Grove Green estate, which lies to the east of the town of Maidstone. The school is accessed via Provender Way, a main route through the Grove Green development. The application site is approximately 2.45ha in total, and is entirely bound by residential development, with facing properties in Provender Way to the north, and a number of small residential 'closes' to the south, east and west. Built in 1987, the Primary School has undergone minor alterations in recent years, and has had a 2 classroom extension in 2008 to replace temporary mobile accommodation on site. Consisting mainly of mono-pitched roofs with shallow falls finished in copper and dark red/brown facing brickwork, the single storey school building has a contemporary appearance. The school building also hosts a joint Anglican and Methodist church congregation on Sundays, as well as the usual activities associated with a primary school during the week.
2. The school building is located to the north of the site, with playing fields extending to the south. Landscaping is well established, with many of the trees on site planted when the school was originally constructed. Hard play areas wrap around the building from the reception class onto a larger tarmac area, incorporating play equipment, located immediately to the south of the building. There are no Listed Buildings on the site, or in close proximity to it, and the site is not within a Conservation Area, or subject to any other Development Plan designations. A Public Right of Way runs along Provender Way, to the north of the site boundary.

*A site location plan is attached.*

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Wider Location Plan





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**Site Location Plan**



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### Item D2





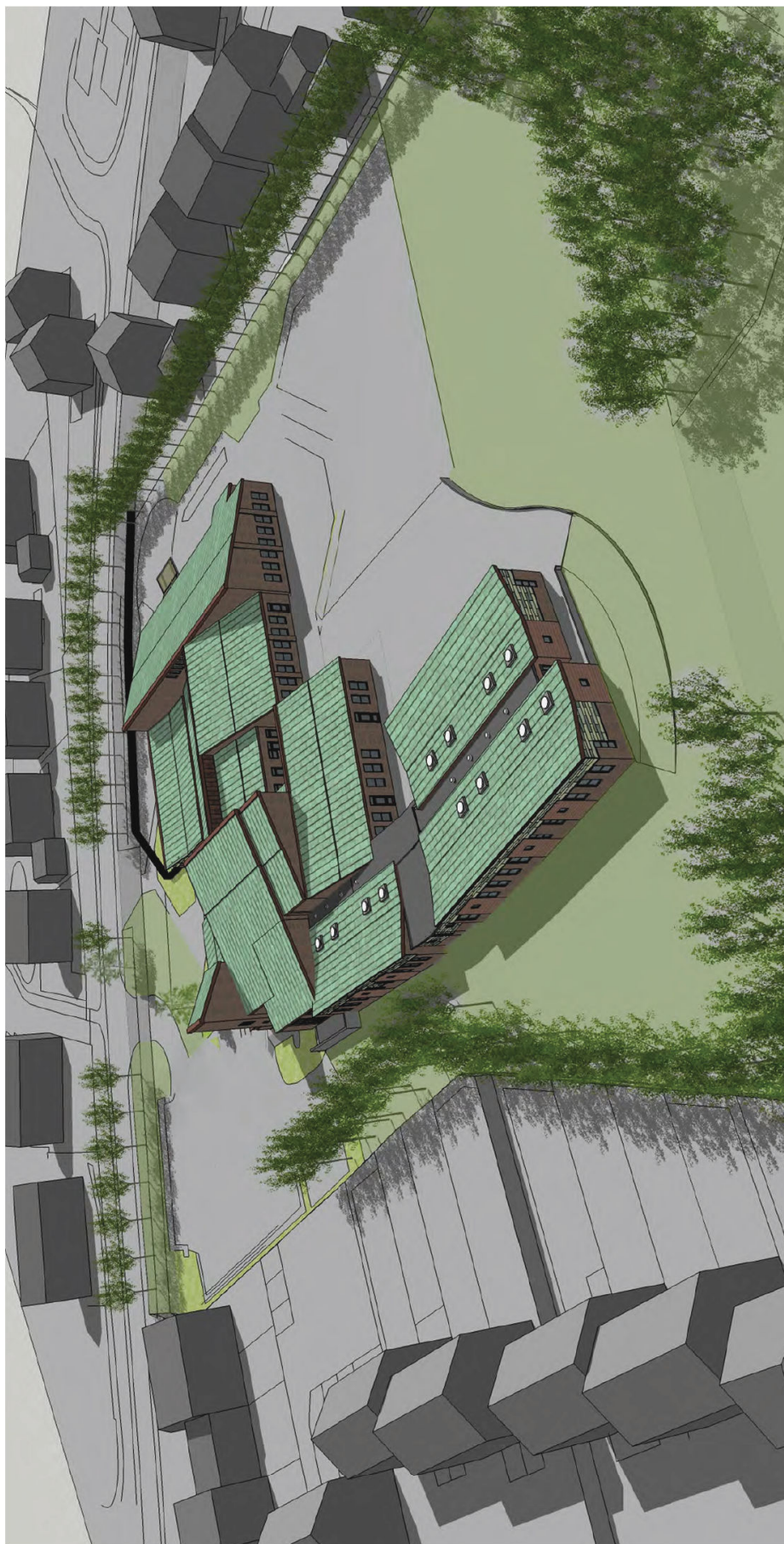
## Item D2

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St Johns Maidstone  
Phase Two - Two Form Entry Extension - 12-064/151 - A  
April 2013



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**Background**

3. The applicant advises that currently there is an increasing demand for school places in the Bearsted/Weaving/Grove Green area, as is the case in many urban and rural areas across Kent. St John's CofE Primary School has recently attained Academy status and has been designated for expansion to a 2FE school. Although the County Planning Authority would not normally process planning applications for development at this type of Academy school, the development proposed is part of the County wide Basic Needs Programme, funded and promoted by Kent County Council. As the County Council is the applicant in this particular case, the County Planning Authority was deemed to be the appropriate determining Authority.
4. This application proposes the second phase of building works on the site to complete the accommodation required for the 2FE expansion. The first phase of the development was considered by Members of the Planning Applications Committee on the 13 March 2013, and planning permission was subsequently granted. That application, consent reference MA/13/15, proposed a 2 classroom extension to the front of the school, with associated internal alterations and a new playground area. That phase of the development is currently under construction.

**Proposal**

5. This application has been submitted by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure Support and proposes the construction of a 6 classroom extension, hall extension, internal alterations and the provision of 16 additional car parking spaces, a grass-crete access road to the side and rear of the school, and additional hard play space. The application would provide 675m<sup>2</sup> of additional floor space, which in conjunction with the phase 1 development currently under construction, would provide the floorspace necessary to accommodate a 2 Form of Entry.
6. Due to the single storey nature of the existing primary school building, the extension proposed is also single storey. The applicant advises that a key aspect of the design was to make use of an under used area of the school site, between the existing school building and the western site boundary. A narrow floor plan was developed to ensure that the addition of an extension here would not block access to the rear of the school, or affect the vegetated site boundary. The southern end of the classroom extension is angled at 10 degrees, to increase the distance between the development and neighbouring residential properties which back onto the site. The angle in the floor plan also provides relief to the western elevation, which would otherwise be a long straight line. Internally, the extension would accommodate a hall extension, 6 classrooms with associated storage and WC facilities, and a specialist resource room.
7. The proposed extension would be of a timber frame construction, with facing brickwork to match the existing school building, and light weight high level cladding panels in various muted shades of green. The roof is proposed to be finished with a single ply membrane, with welded joints, coloured and textured to replicate copper, to match the existing building. The applicant advises that due to the current high level re-sale of copper, its use would not be possible within the building budget. The 'wing' or 'V' shaped roof design allows roof plant to be located along the centre of the roof, whilst not being visible when viewed from the ground.
8. A Transport Assessment has been submitted in support of this application. Reference is made to the original feasibility design of the scheme, which included a drop off area



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within the school site. Further discussion and research led to the conclusion that such a facility was unnecessary as it is considered (by the Applicant and their Transport Consultant) that the existing drop-off procedure on Provender Way is functioning efficiently. This matter will be discussed in more detail later in this report (see paragraph 19). However, the additional space made available by the removal of the drop off bay from the application prior to submission has been used to provide additional parking facilities within the school site. The site currently has 25 car parking spaces, 4 of which would be lost due to the remodelling of the layout. 16 new spaces are proposed, taking the total to 37, two of which would be disabled bays. The 10 covered cycle parking spaces provided under phase 1 would be retained on site, but relocated.

9. An additional 900m<sup>2</sup> of 'hard' surfacing is proposed, including an extended hard play area to the east of the proposed extension and to the west of the existing playground, and a grass grid access path. The access path is proposed to run from the car parking area at the front of the school to the playing fields at the rear, located between the site boundary and the proposed extension. The access would be used by gang mowers for maintenance of the playing fields, and would also provide access to the rear of the school for fire tenders.
10. A total of 4 trees would be affected by the construction of the extension to the rear of the school, although these trees would not be removed. The layout of the remodelled and extended car park has taken into account the location of several mature trees, although 4 trees would require removal. Three of these have, however, already been significantly reduced as part of the enabling works for the construction of phase 1.

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

**Planning Policy**

11. The following Guidance/Statements and Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of the application:
  - (i) **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** March 2012, sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning application but does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However the weight given to development plan policies will depend on 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).

In determining applications the NPPF states that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

In terms of delivering sustainable development in relation to this development proposal, the NPPF guidance and objectives covering the following matters are of particular relevance:

- consideration of whether the opportunities for sustainable transport have been taken up and safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people;

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- achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
  - 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
- (ii) **Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development** (15 August 2011) which sets out the Government's commitment to support the development of state-funded schools and their delivery through the planning system.
- (iii) The adopted **Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000:**
- Policy ENV6** In appropriate cases the Borough Council will require a landscape scheme, including surfacing and boundary treatments, to be carried out as part of development proposals.
- Policy EN26** Planning permission will not be granted for development affecting any Public Right of Way, unless the proposals include either the maintenance or the diversion of the Public Right of Way as a route no less attractive, safe and convenient for public use.
- Policy CF9** The Borough Council will seek to ensure, where appropriate, the providers of educational facilities to make provision for dual use of facilities in the design of new schools and will encourage the dual use of educational facilities (new and existing) for recreation and other purposes. Development proposals which incorporate dual use will be permitted except where the increased level or duration of activities is incompatible with local residential amenity.
- Policy T13** Refers to appropriate parking standards.
- (iv) **Maidstone Local Development Framework: Core Strategy (2011) Public Consultation Policies**
- Policy CS1** Seeks new development to be focused within and next to Maidstone's urban areas and infrastructure to be brought forward in a timely way to provide for the needs arising from development.
- Policy CS3** Seeks development within the urban boundary of Maidstone that contributes positively to the locality's distinctive character.
- Policy CS6** Seeks sustainable design and development that responds positively to and maintains local distinctiveness and townscape.
- Policy CS7** Seeks to guide the location of development in order to reduce the need for private transport and maintain highway safety, and ensure the highways, public transport, walking and cycling needs arising from development are satisfied.



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**Consultations****12. Maidstone Borough Council** comments as follows:

“The need for the additional accommodation is accepted. Though encroachment of the grounds is taking place, the area remaining still looks that the site is left with a viable playing field area.

The key impact will be on the houses close to the west site boundary but the submitted plans show an existing tree belt retained along this boundary. The site in general looks to be generally well enclosed by trees.

The linked monopitch buildings have a low profile and low height. Taking into account their distance from the boundary with intervening tree screening, and that they are overshadowed by the bulk and height of the existing school building/s, the impact of the additional built mass appears nominal.

In design terms, given the low profile of the buildings in what appears to be a relatively well screened site, it appears unlikely that they impact on the street scene or outlook of adjoining houses. As such no objection is identified on design grounds subject to the boundary trees being safeguarded and supplemented by additional screening where appropriate.

Regarding the parking area, as the proposed area is already used for vehicle parking and circulation, the laying out of a more formal space allowing for parking of additional vehicles is considered acceptable, subject to boundary planting where the site abuts adjoining houses being made denser.

As such NO OBJECTION is raised to the submitted details, subject to conditions imposed requiring additional boundary landscaping.”

**Boxley Parish Council** wishes the application ‘be approved’.

**Kent County Council Highways and Transportation** raise no objection to this application, subject to the imposition of conditions regarding the provision of parking, loading/unloading and turning facilities on site for vehicles associated with construction, wheel washing facilities, and the provision and permanent retention of the car parking, covered cycle parking and turning/loading/unloading areas as shown on the submitted plans.

**The County Council Transport Planner (Schools)** confirms that the submitted School Travel Plan meets the criteria required by the County Council.

**Environment Agency** has no objection to the application, and no further comments to make.

**Public Rights of Way Officer** no comments received to date.

**Local Member****13. The local County Member, Mr Paul Carter, was notified of the application on the 15 May 2013.**

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**Publicity**

14. The application was publicised by an advertisement in a local newspaper, the posting of 3 site notices and the individual notification of 43 neighbouring residential properties.

**Representations**

15. To date, I have received 2 letters of representation from local residents. A summary of the main issues raised/points made is set out below:

Highways/Access

- Existing car parking and highway problems will be made worse by the expansion of the school;
- Disappointed that a drop off area within the school site is not proposed;
- Parents park in local roads, which is a nuisance to residents, blocks driveways, and is very dangerous;
- Parents need to be 'educated' in responsible parking, and road safety;
- Double yellow lines should be introduced on the corners of local roads to prevent parking in these areas, maintaining visibility;
- The behaviour and attitude of some parents towards local residents is poor and not neighbourly. A little common sense and courtesy is required;

General amenity matters

- Trees within the school site/along the site boundary need to be reduced in height;
- Boundary fencing should be replaced;
- Questions whether the building would be close to residential properties, in which case considers it could be imposing.

**Discussion**Introduction

16. This application seeks planning permission for the construction of a 6 classroom extension, hall extension, 16 additional car parking spaces, a grass create maintenance/fire access road, and additional hard play space, at St Johns CofE Primary School in Grove Green, Maidstone. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies referred to in paragraph (11) 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 and highway issues, and general amenity impacts.
17. In this case the key determining factors, in my view, are the impact upon the local highway network and local amenity, 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



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considers that there is a strong presumption in favour of state funded schools, as expressed in the National Planning Policy Framework. 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.

Access and highways

18. Some local residents have expressed concern regarding this application on the grounds that the increase in staff and pupils would exacerbate existing highway and access problems. As outlined in paragraph 14 of this report, local residents are disappointed to note that a drop-off area within the site is not proposed, and are frustrated by parents parking inconsiderately in local roads. This application was accompanied by a Transport Assessment and a School Travel plan, and the highway and access implication of the application have been considered and addressed in detail by Kent County Council Highways and Transportation, who raise no objection to the development subject to the imposition of conditions. However, the points raised by the local community need to be considered and discussed.
19. First, with regard to the provision of a pick-up/drop-off facility within the site, it should be noted that at the feasibility stage, such a facility was included in the scheme which would have provided 6 spaces for drop off and collection. Space for a larger facility on the school site is limited as the school has a constrained frontage area with level differences, some areas of school playground and, in addition, the loss of further trees would be undesirable. Kent County Council Highways and Transportation (the Highway Authority) do not consider that the provision of a 6 space pick-up/drop-off is appropriate or necessary at this site, and therefore the facility was removed from the scheme design prior to submission of the planning application. The Highway Authority considers that the provision of the pick-up/drop-off area would lead to the introduction of traffic movements by parents within the site which could potentially conflict with pedestrian movements. In addition, the relatively short site frontage and limited space available within the site could have led to cars queuing onto Provender Way, creating more congestion than is currently the case. In addition, the Highway Authority considered that the provision of an area within the school site where pupils could be dropped off and picked up would not encourage parents to use more sustainable modes of transport. Highways and Transportation have also advised that the local Police Community Support Officer, and the School itself, recommended that the pick-up/drop-off area was removed from the scheme due to concern regarding potential vehicle and pedestrian conflict within the school site, in this particular case.
20. The decision not to include the pick-up/drop-off area within this application is therefore, supported by the Highway Authority. I also consider that the potential negative impacts of the facility would not outweigh the positives, and see no reason to refuse this application on the ground that a pick-up/drop-off facility is not provided on site. In addition, the decision not to provide such a facility has enabled the applicant to use the space on site to provide additional car parking for staff and visitors. As outlined in paragraph 8 of this report, St John's Primary School currently has 25 car parking spaces on site. This application proposes to remodel the car park, resulting in the removal of 4 of the existing spaces, and the provision of 16 new spaces, taking the total on site to 37, including 2 disabled bays. 10 covered cycle spaces would also be retained on site.

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21. The revised car parking layout would result in the removal of 4 trees, and this aspect of the proposal will be discussed later in this report. The Borough Council would also like to see additional planting between the car park and neighbouring properties and, again, this will be discussed below. With regard to car parking provision however, Kent County Council Highways and Transportation consider that sufficient spaces are provided to accommodate the increase in staff associated with the expansion, and also confirm that the car park is laid out to the required standards with regard to size of spaces, aisle widths and turning areas. I therefore consider that the provision of a total 37 parking bays is acceptable. However, should Members be minded to permit, I would wish to impose conditions regarding the provision and permanent retention of the car parking, covered cycle parking and turning/loading/unloading areas as shown on the submitted plans.
22. Although it is recognised that parents of pupils do park on the local highway, which can be a nuisance for local residents, Kent County Council Highways and Transportation are of the opinion that this proposal would not significantly increase on-street car parking over and above the existing. Unfortunately, parents parking in local roads is an issue associated with all schools and, although considered by some local residents to be dangerous and a nuisance, in this instance Kent County Council Highways and Transportation do not consider it to be a highway safety concern. Congestion at peak school times is for a limited period, and although this causes inconvenience and delays to through traffic, particularly for local residents, the Highway Authority confirms that it has not resulted in a road safety problem. I am advised that there have been no injury related crashes within the last 3 year period along Provender Way and, in addition, the Highway Authority consider local roads are sufficiently wide enough here to accommodate parking without causing obstruction. In addition, the School Travel Plan has been updated and includes initiatives and incentives to encourage more walking to school, and the Highway Authority expect the expansion of the school to lead to additional pedestrian movements, as local children should gain places here, within walking distance, rather than schools further afield.
23. With regard to the behaviour of a small number of parents, who may park irresponsibly, blocking drives and reducing visibility for other road users, and in some instances being rude to local residents, this is not a matter which the Planning Authority can control. However, the County Council's School Travel Planner and the School may be able to provide information to parents explaining the importance of safe parking and general highway safety. This is an important message that the School should relay to parents, in addition to the need to consider local residents when parking. The updated School Travel Plan meets the criteria required by the County Council, and includes a mechanism for ongoing monitoring and review. The County Council's School Travel Planner is in the progress of launching an electronic system which would enable the Travel Planner and individual Schools to update and monitor progress towards achieving School Travel Plan Targets within the time frames specified. This should ensure the ongoing increase in pupils travelling to school by more sustainable modes of transport, reducing reliance on the car, and subsequently easing pressures on the local highway network.
24. This application also proposes the construction of a grass-crete access road to the side of the school, enabling access from the car park to the playing fields at the rear. This 'road' would be used by gang mowers and emergency vehicles only. Given the grass-crete surface proposed, and the infrequent use of the route, I am satisfied that this element of the development is acceptable.

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25. In considering the above, and in light of the views of the Highway Authority, I consider that subject to the imposition of conditions regarding the provision and permanent retention of the car parking, covered cycle parking and turning/loading/unloading areas as shown on the submitted plans, that the development would not have a significantly detrimental impact overall on the local highway network. I therefore see no justification to refuse the application on this ground.

Design, siting and massing

26. Development Plan Policies promote high quality design, sustainable development, and significant improvements to the built environment. Although no objections to the design and general principle of the proposed development have been received, it is important to discuss these matters to ensure that the proposal is in accordance with the general design principles expressed in Development Plan Policies. The proposed single storey extension would be located to the rear of the existing school, to the west of the main building, and would provide an additional 675 m<sup>2</sup> of floor space. A local resident queried the distance between the proposed extension and their property, which the applicant estimated to be 37 metres. Due to the angle of the proposed building, the boundary line of the school, and the angle of adjoining properties, the distance between the proposed building and local properties would vary, but the boundary is well screened with mature trees, and the school extension has been designed in such a way as to reduce its visual impact, with a low roof profile and a good degree of separation from the site boundary. Although a local resident did question whether the boundary trees could be reduced in height, and new fencing provided (due to the state of repair of the existing), this is not a matter to be considered in the determination of this application. In addition, it is important to note that the boundary trees offer significant screening between the school and local properties, and its removal and/or reduction may not be considered acceptable by others.
27. I consider that the proposed location of the classroom extension would not be particularly prominent from surrounding residential properties and the scale and massing as proposed is, in my opinion, appropriate and acceptable, complementing the existing school buildings. The location of the extension also links well with the existing building on site, with only minor internal alterations needed to modify the space to meet the accommodation requirements of the School.
28. The extension has been designed to respect the individual design features of the existing school building. The proposed 'V' shaped wing design roof would be finished in a single ply membrane, with welded joints, coloured and textured to replicate the copper of the existing building, with facing brickwork to match the existing and high level cladding panels in various muted shades of green. In my view, the extension would complement the existing school, and would read as part of the original building when completed. Subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the submission and approval of all materials to be used externally, I consider the design of the building to be acceptable and in accordance with Development Plan Policies.

Landscaping

29. The car parking layout as proposed would result in the removal of 4 trees, 3 of which are acers, and one a willow. It should be noted that three of these trees have been heavily pollarded as part of the phase 1 construction programme. However, the trees to be removed are internal to the school site, and their removal would not detract from the character of the site or the street scene, and would also not reduce boundary

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screening. I therefore have no objection to the removal of the trees as proposed. However, I do consider that replacement tree planting should be provided elsewhere on site to compensate for the loss, and the Borough Council would also like to see additional planting between the car park and neighbouring properties. I therefore consider it appropriate in this instance to require details of a scheme of landscaping and replacement tree planting to be submitted pursuant to condition, should permission be granted. I also consider that details of tree protection methods, to protect trees to be retained from construction activities, should be submitted pursuant to condition in order to ensure retained trees, particularly those to the western site boundary, are not damaged or adversely affected by the development.

**Construction**

30. 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.
31. In addition, I consider it appropriate that details of a Construction Management Strategy be submitted for approval prior to the commencement of development. The strategy should include details of the methods of working, location of site compound and operative/visitors parking, details of site security and safety measures and details of any construction accesses and lorry routing. Such a Strategy would cover all of the matters that Highways and Transportation required to be conditioned with regard to construction. Therefore, 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.
32. In addition to the above, should permission be granted, conditions of consent would ensure that dust and mud on the local highway network, and other matters associated with construction, would be mitigated as far as reasonably possible so as to minimise disruption to local residents.

**Conclusion**

33. 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. 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 effect on the local highway network or local 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.



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**Recommendation**

34. 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;
- a scheme of landscaping, including replacement tree planting, and additional screening to the west of the car park area, its implementation and maintenance;
- measures to protect trees to be retained;
- no tree removal during the bird breeding season;
- the provision and permanent retention of the car parking, covered cycle parking and turning/loading/unloading areas as shown on the submitted plans;
- 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 access, parking and circulation within the site for contractors and other vehicles related to construction and demolition operations, and a restriction on traffic movements at peak school times;
- 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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