

Proposed expansion of Langton Green Primary School, Tunbridge Wells – TW/14/154 (KCC/TW/0018/2014)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 25 March 2014.

Application by Kent County Council Property & Infrastructure Support for the extension and internal reconfiguration of existing school buildings providing two classrooms, provision of a stand-alone teaching accommodation block providing four classrooms & associated toilets, removal of existing modular classroom, and car park and access improvements including car parking provision within the village hall car park at Langton Green Primary School, Lampington Row, Langton Green, Tunbridge Wells – TW/14/154 (KCC/TW/0018/2014).

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr John Davies

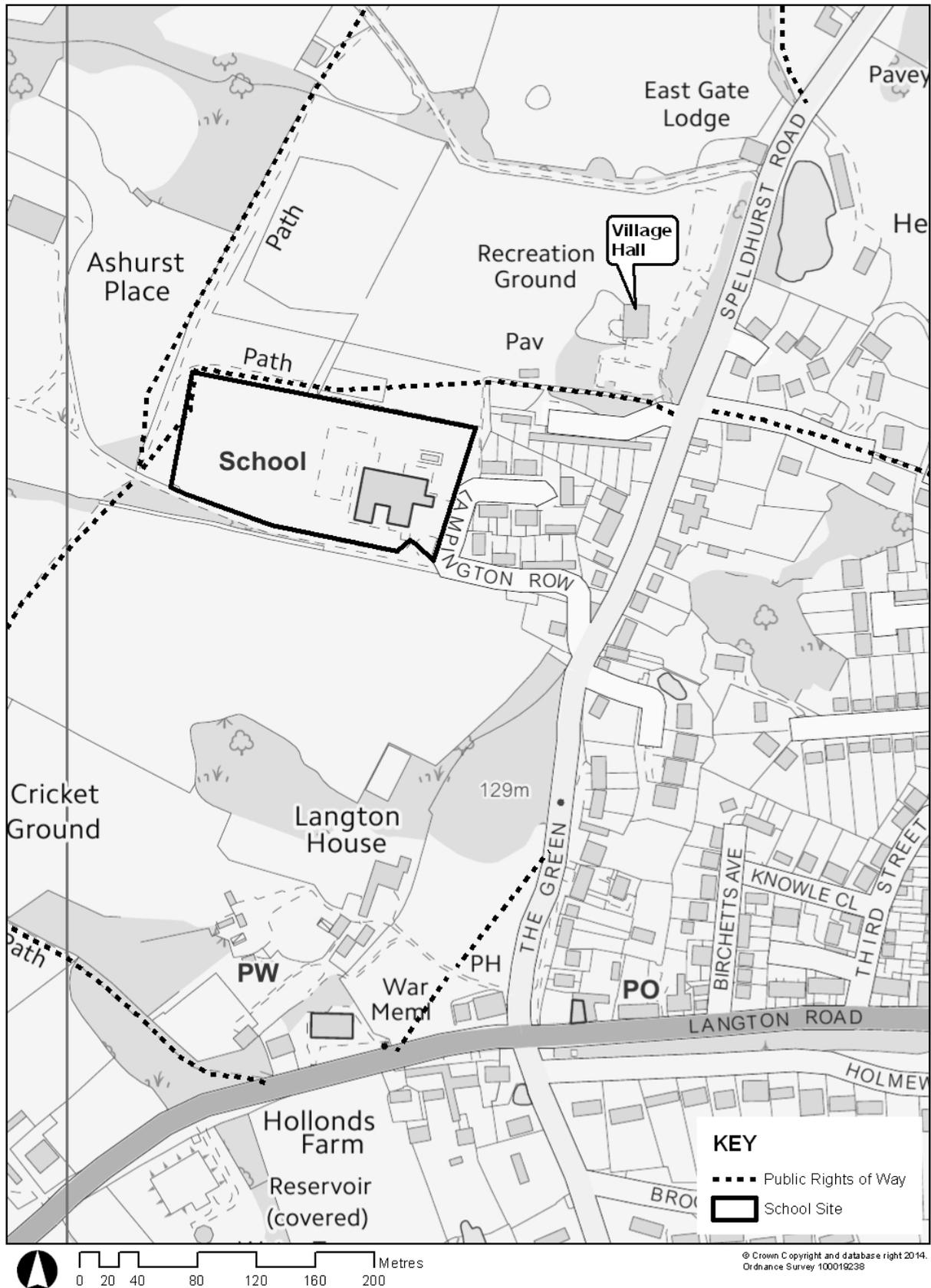
Classification: Unrestricted

Site/Relevant Planning History

1. The village of Langton Green is located approximately three miles to the west of Tunbridge Wells town centre, with the village lying predominately to the north of the A264 (Langton Road). The Primary School is located to the north west of the village, accessed via Lampington Row, a residential cul-de-sac which is accessed from Speldhurst Road. The school buildings are located in the eastern half of the site, adjacent to the built development of the village. The western half of the site, which is school playing field/open space, and land to the north of the existing school building is designated as being within the Metropolitan Green Belt and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
2. To the north of the school site lies the Village Recreation Ground and Village Hall. A Public Right of Way runs across the south of this site, joining with a footpath adjacent to the school's eastern boundary, which links Lampington Row (and the wider village) to the recreation ground beyond. The Village Recreation Ground, also within the Green Belt and AONB, is accessed in the main (all vehicular access) via Speldhurst Road/Winstone Scott Avenue, with the Village Hall and associated hard surfaced and grasscrete overflow car parking located to the east of the area. To the east of the access to the Recreation Ground lies the boundary of a Conservation Area.
3. The existing school building is single storey, with the main access to the building located on the southern elevation, and pedestrian and vehicular access to the school site located to the south eastern corner of site, accessed via Lampington Row. The main school building is in an average condition, with some elements requiring maintenance and modernisation. Planning permission was granted in June 2011 for the provision of one three bay cedar clad modular classroom at the site, located to the immediate south west of the main school building (TW/11/855). That application was considered by Members of the Planning Applications Committee on the 14 June 2011. Apart from that, development at the site has been limited in recent years, with applications for a canopy and a small front extension approved in 2009 under delegated powers. The internal and external circulation around the school is less than ideal and does not contribute to the easy movement of pupils around the school, and also restricts natural surveillance.
4. In light of the site's Green Belt designation, this application has been advertised as a Departure from the Development Plan. *A site location plan is attached.*

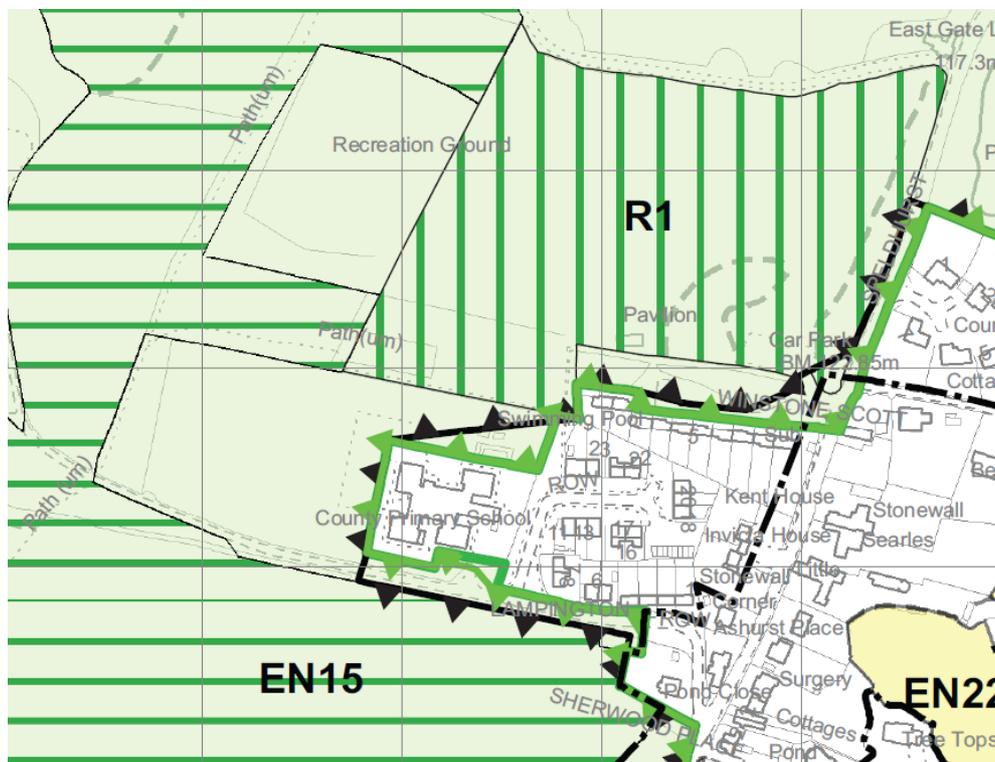
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Site location plan



Proposed expansion of Langton Green Primary School, Tunbridge Wells – TW/14/154 (KCC/TW/0018/2014)

Policy designations



Extract from Tunbridge Wells Local Plan Inset 7- Langton Green
 Metropolitan Green Belt - Denoted by shading edged by lighter triangles
 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Denoted by black triangles
 Conservation Area boundary – Denoted by dot and dashed line

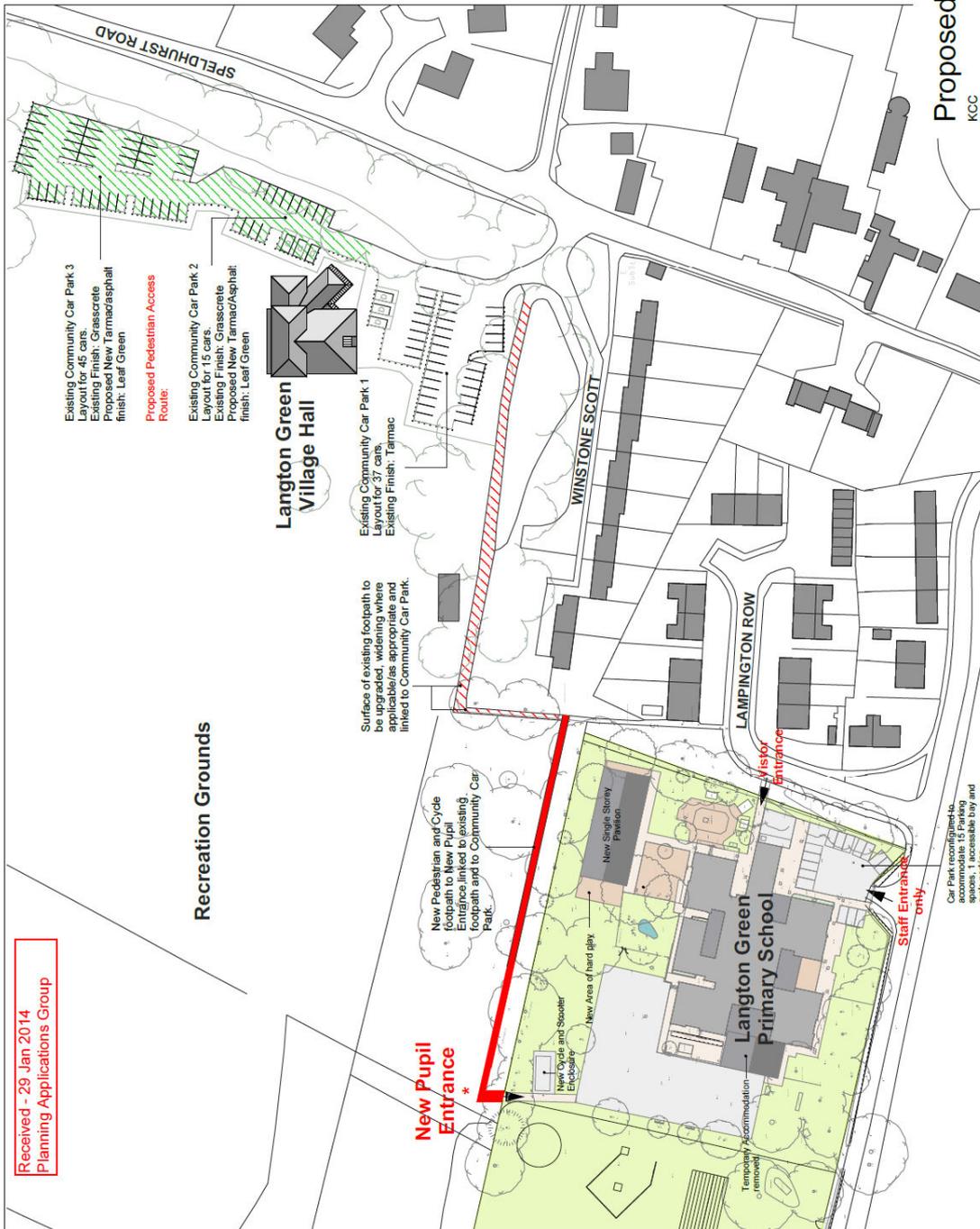
Background and Proposal

5. This application has been submitted by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure Support and is part of the countywide Basic Needs Programme. The application proposes the extension and internal reconfiguration of the existing school buildings providing two classrooms, an extended school hall and improved internal staff and teaching facilities, and the provision of a stand alone teaching 'pavilion' providing four classrooms and associated toilet and ancillary facilities. The modular classroom on site, referred to above, would be removed, replaced by the two classrooms in the school extension. The proposals would provide the accommodation required to expand the school from 1 form of entry to 2 forms of entry (FE).
6. The internal reconfiguration of the school, and extensions to provide two classrooms and enlarge the existing hall, would simplify the internal layout, and enable classes to be grouped according to year. The two new classrooms would be located to the south west of the existing school building, upon part of the footprint of the modular building to be removed. Unlike the modular building, however, the two classrooms would be linked to the main school building. The single storey classroom extension would be clad in western red cedar, as the existing modular classroom is, and would have a flat roof and fenestration similar to that of the existing school building. The hall extension, to the north of the school building, within an internal courtyard, would also be clad in cedar, with high level glazing to provide natural lighting to the hall. Two further infill extensions to the existing school are proposed, one to the southern elevation, which would extend

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Proposed site plan showing school and village hall

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Proposed Site Plan

KCC
Langton Green Primary School
20 November 2013 15394 - LGR-SBR-TP-002_01
SCALE: 1:50 @ A1: 1:100 @ A0
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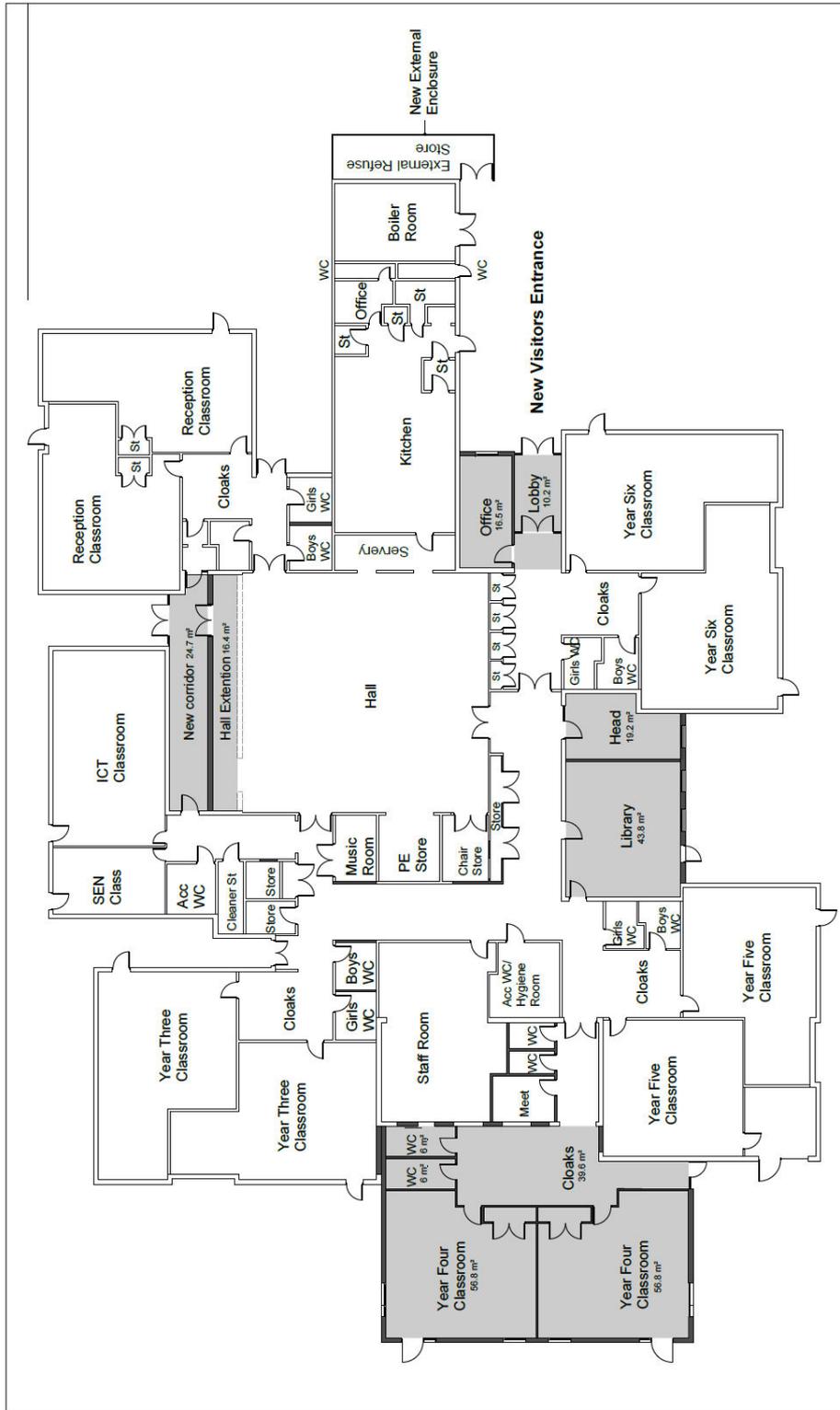
01
TP-002

Item D3 Proposed expansion of Langton Green Primary School, Tunbridge Wells – TW/14/154 (KCC/TW/0018/2014)

Proposed floor plan showing extensions and alterations to the existing building

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Ground Floor Plan

01
TP-100

Proposed Floor Plans

KCC
Langton Green Primary School
30 November 2013 15:34 • LGS-SRP-TP-100
SCALE: 1:100 @ A1:1:200@A3
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Proposed elevations showing extensions and alterations to the existing building

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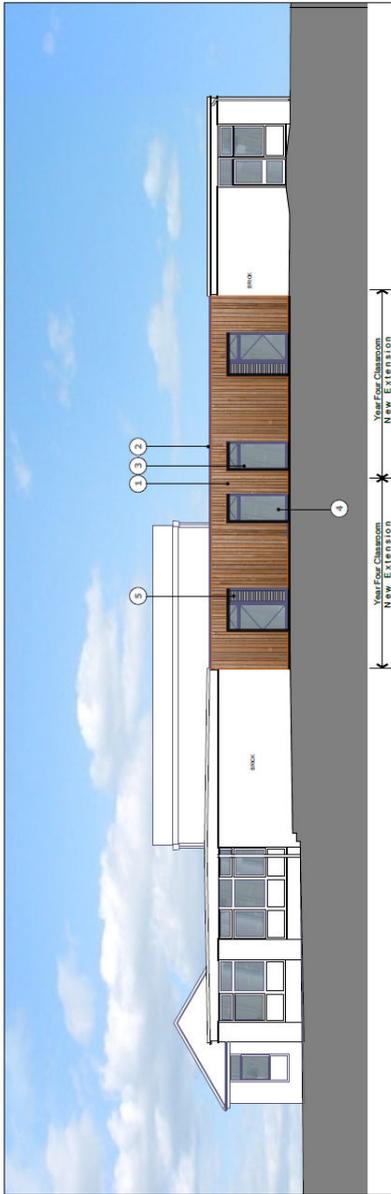
North Elevation

01
TP-301

- 1 Western Red Cedar timber rainscreen cladding
BCL Timber Cladding Systems
- 2 PVC Aluminium cladding and RWPs
RAL 7016 - Anthracite grey
- 3 PVC Aluminium window and door system
Kawneer or similar
- 4 Strong Brighton Suncood 7040
Ridgeway Glass
- 5 PVC Aluminium Louvre system
Kawneer or similar
- 6 Western Red Cedar timber cladding
Coated with UV Resistant Lacquer - in a
tile and miss pattern
- 7 Evicore Resincoat Cladding panels:
Cave/Oriental Green
Marley Element
- 8 Single Ply Roofing Membrane

Materials Key

00
TP-301



West Elevation

02
TP-301

**Proposed Elevations
Materials**

KCC
Langton Green Primary School
20 November 2013 1534 - LGR-SBC-TP-301
0 5 10 15m SCALE 1:100 @A1
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Proposed elevations showing extensions and alterations to the existing building

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South Elevation

01
TP-300

- 1 Western Red Cedar timber rainscreen cladding
BCL Timber Cladding System - vertically fixed
- 2 PVC Alu-Mechanics cladding and RWPs
RAL 7016 - Anthracite grey
- 3 PVC Aluminium window and door system
Kawneer or similar
- 4 Slating (Langton Sunood 75x12)
Plunged Gable
- 5 PVC Aluminium Louvre system
Kawneer or similar
- 6 Western Red Cedar timber fence
Coated with UV Resistant Lacquer - in a
tile and moss pattern
- 7 Synthetic Rainwater Cladding panels:
Olive/Olive Green
Merley Blatt.
- 8 Single Ply Roofing Membrane.



East Elevation

02
TP-300

Materials Key

**Proposed Elevations
Materials**

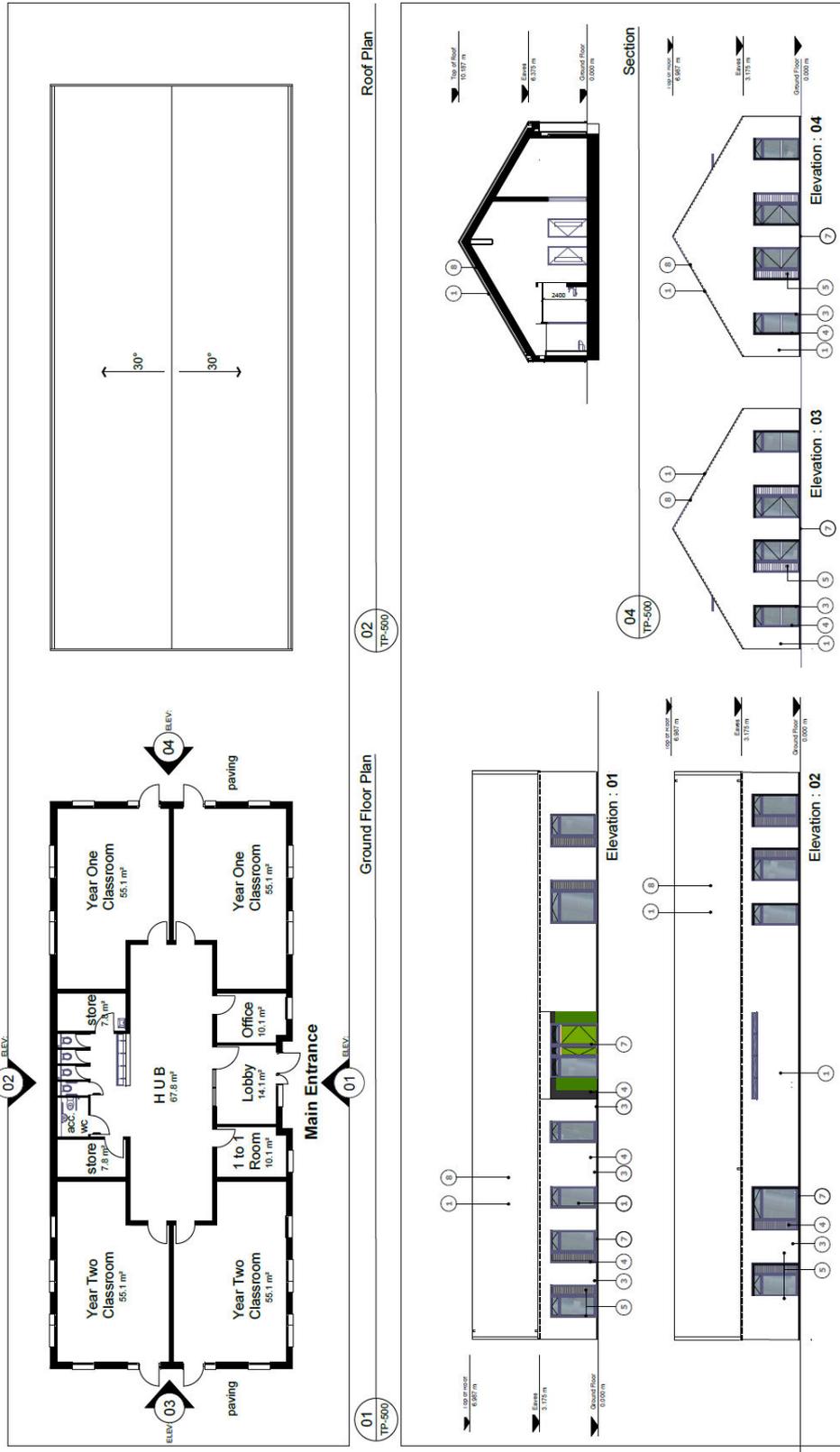
KCC
Langton Green Primary School
20 November 2013 1534 - LGR-SBC-TP-300
© Scott Brownrigg Ltd SCALE 1: 100 @ A1

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Proposed floor plan and elevations of new pavilion

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- Elevations**
- 1 Western Red Cedar timber rainscreen cladding - fitted with Resistant Lagger - vertically fixed
 - 2 PVC Aluminium coping and RWFs
 - 3 PVC Aluminium window and door system - RAL 7016 - Anthracite grey. Coated with UV Resistant Lagger - in a flat and mesh pattern.
 - 4 Glazing Pilkington Suncool 70/40; Pilkington Glas.
 - 5 PVC Aluminium Louvre system - RAL 7016 - Anthracite grey. Kawneer or similar.
 - 6 Western Red Cedar timber fence - fitted with UV Resistant Lagger - in a flat and mesh pattern.
 - 7 Equitone Rainscreen Cladding panels: Olive/Oriental Green; Marley (flat).
 - 8 Single Ply Roofing Membrane.

Proposed Pavilion

KCC
Langton Green Primary School
5th November 2013 15:04 - L04-SBC-TP-502_01
SCALE: 1:100 @ A1: 200gA3
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and convert the existing entrance area to provide a library and office space, and a further small infill extension to the east, creating a new entrance lobby and office. An existing pedestrian access in the eastern site boundary (currently used by Reception pupils only) would be opened to provide a new visitor access, which would link with the proposed new entrance to the school.

7. The stand alone teaching accommodation, referred to by the applicant as the 'pavilion', would be a single storey structure located to the north east of the school site, to the north of the existing school building, on an area of informal grass play space. The building would provide four classrooms, in addition to a central hub space, toilet facilities, storage rooms and office space. The main entrance to the building would be on the southern elevation, facing into the school site, and would link with the existing school via proposed hard play areas and footpath links. The single storey 'pavilion' would have a pitched roof finished with a single ply waterproof membrane covered with cedar rainscreen cladding, and would be approximately 7 metres at ridge height. The walls of the building would be red cedar clad, to match the proposed extensions to the existing building, with grey aluminium framed windows and doors. A small area of hard play is proposed at each end of the building, with direct access from all of the four classrooms.
8. The applicant advises that during the initial study it became apparent that the expansion of the school, and the consequent increase in staff and pupil numbers, needed to be addressed. The applicant advises that Langton Green Primary School currently has 273 pupils on the school roll, with an anticipated increase over the next 5 years to 420 pupils in September 2019. The staff levels, I am advised, would increase accordingly, from 9 full time and 29 part time, to 19 full time and 29 part time. The applicant considers that the only way to alleviate the congestion currently experienced in Lampington Row is to 'radically address the access to the school'. With many existing parents already parking in the Village Hall car park and using the Public Right of Way to then walk to the school entrance on Lampington Row, the applicant considered it a logical progression to promote this route and refocus the pedestrian access to the school away from Lampington Row.
9. The existing school main access for staff, pupils and visitors is from Lampington Row, for both vehicles and pedestrians, with a side pedestrian access gate for reception pupils only. It is proposed that the existing main access be maintained, but restricted to access to the staff car park only. The staff car park would be extended, reconfigured and resurfaced as part of this proposal to provide 14 formally marked out car parking spaces. No access would be available for parents to drop off and/or collect pupils, with the main entrance for pupils being relocated to the northern site boundary, approximately half way along the boundary, adjacent to the schools existing main playground. An existing gazebo and the playground would provide parents waiting space, and new cycle and scooter parking is proposed. The existing pedestrian access on the eastern boundary, currently used by reception pupils only, would be retained as a visitor's pedestrian access only.
10. To facilitate use of the new pupil access point, a new footpath would be provided within the Recreation Ground, running parallel to the school's northern site boundary, and linking with the existing footpaths that run between the Village Hall car park and Lampington Row. The existing footpaths would also be widened and resurfaced as part of this proposal, providing a safe traffic free route from the Village Hall car park to the schools new pupil entrance. The applicant has agreed with Speldhurst Parish Council that the School can use the Village Hall car park for parking associated with the school, including 14 spaces for staff parking, and the applicant has agreed to surface the

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existing grasscrete overspill car parking areas to provide additional year round parking that can be used in all weathers. The existing grasscrete car parks are often unavailable for use due to inclement weather and muddy conditions.

11. The Village Hall car park currently has 37 marked car parking spaces that are hard surfaced. In addition, two overspill car parks, which are finished in grasscrete, offer an additional 63 spaces, although only 18 of those are regularly available, with the remaining 45 often being cordoned off to prevent use due to the poor quality of the surface. It is proposed to surface the two overspill car parks with a green tarmac. This would ensure that the additional 63 spaces would always be available for use, bringing the total capacity of the village hall car park to 100 hard surfaced car parking spaces.
12. Trees on site and those adjacent to the Village Hall car park and footpath link to the school have been surveyed. I am advised that the development would not result in the removal of any trees on the school site and, that as a result of the car park resurfacing and pedestrian links, 4 saplings would be relocated, and one tree removed as recommended (due to it being classified as dying/dead). With regard to the ecological implications of this application, the applicant has undertaken the appropriate surveys which have identified the presence of Great Crested Newts in the pond habitat adjacent to the existing school and the proposed 'pavilion' building. The applicant has advised that they are fully aware of the requirement to apply for a protected species licence with regard working in proximity of Great Crested Newts, but due to legislation, that licence cannot be applied for until the planning process is complete.

The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, Green Belt Statement, Transport Assessment, School Travel Plan, Ecological Report, Bat Survey Report, Great Crested Newt Survey Report, Tree Survey of the Village Hall Car Park, and Langton Green Primary School Tree Survey. .

Planning Policy

13. 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 the Government attached to Green Belts, with the fundamental aim of Green Belt Policy being to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in (amongst other designated areas) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.
- 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) **Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan (2006)**

Policy EN1 - Seeks all proposals to be compatible in nature and intensity with neighbouring uses and not cause significant harm to character and amenities of the area in terms of daylight, sunlight, privacy, noise or excessive traffic generation. Seeks the design of the proposal to respect the context of the site and not cause significant harm to residential amenities.

Policy TP1 – Requires a transport assessment and travel plan to accompany proposals for new or significantly expanded schools. These documents may also be required in support of development which would otherwise be unacceptable due to the level of traffic that would be generated.

Policy TP5 - Vehicle parking in connection with development proposals will be restricted to the maximum necessary having regard to local highway conditions. Kent County Council's Vehicle Parking Standards, adopted by the Council, will be applied to such development proposals.

(iv) **Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy (July 2010):**

Core Policy 2 – There will be a general presumption against inappropriate development that would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt, or which would conflict with the purpose of including land within it. Any new development should accord with the national planning provisions of the NPPF.

Core Policy 3 – Promotes sustainable modes of transport, and requires development proposals which would have significant transport implications to be accompanied by a transport assessment and travel plan showing how car based travel can be minimised.

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Core Policy 4 – The Borough Council's built and natural environments (including its biodiversity interests) will be conserved and enhanced, including the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Core Policy 5 – The Borough Council will apply and encourage sustainable design and construction principles and best practice. Developments should also be of high quality design, creating safe, accessible, and adaptable environments, whilst conserving and enhancing the public realm.

Core Policy 8 – Supports the provision of leisure and community facilities.

Core Policy 9 – Development must conserve and enhance the landscape, heritage and biodiversity assets of Royal Tunbridge Wells, including the surrounding Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to secure its special character in the long term.

Core Policy 14 – The countryside will be protected for its own sake and a policy of constraint will operate in order to maintain the landscape character and quality of the countryside.

Consultations

14. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council comments as follows:

“No objection is raised to the proposed new buildings subject to KCC consideration and appraisal of the documents submitted, in particular those relating to ecology, transport assessment and representations received.

The Borough Council does not consider that the application should be determined until an application has been submitted and approved by the Borough Council to vary condition 7 of TW/06/00789 to allow the parking area shown as Community Car park 1 to be used as part of the school.”

Speldhurst Parish Council recommends approval of the application, provided planning consent is granted to tarmac the additional car parking areas, and subject to Speldhurst Parish Council being involved with the School in the development, maintenance and ongoing revision of the School Travel Plan.

Kent County Council Highways and Transportation raises no objection and comment as follows:

“Staff Parking

From September 2019 when the school is fully occupied, the number of staff will increase from 38 to a total of 48 (19 full time and 29 part-time). The staff parking provision will total 28 spaces. In addition to the 14 on-site spaces, the applicant states that it has been agreed with Speldhurst Parish Council that at least 14 parking spaces will be available in the community centre car park for Langton Green Primary School staff to park during term time. KCC parking standards set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG4), advises for primary schools, a maximum of one space per member of staff with an additional 10% for visitors. It

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is assumed visitors will use the community centre car park and will generally visit outside school pick up and drop off periods. This should be included in the School Travel Plan. The School has confirmed that one staff regularly cycles, 5 staff walk and a few staff car share. A figure should be established for the number of staff car sharing and potential for more staff to car share should also be addressed in the travel plan. Assuming 4 staff car share, a total of 10 Staff will not be driving to school. This means that currently 28 of the 38 staff drive to work with 14 able to park on-site leaving 14 staff potentially parking on public highway. In 2019 38 of the 48 staff will drive to work with at least 28 staff parking spaces provided, this leaves a maximum of 10 vehicles parking on public highway which is an improvement on the current situation.

Pick up/drop off arrangements

From 2019 the number of children attending the school will increase from 273 to 420. From the current pupil roll of 273, there are 195 families which equates to 1.4 pupils per family. In 2019 there will be 300 families, an increase of 105. The percentage of children that come to school by car is 45%, so 195 and 300 families would generate 88 and 135 vehicles to school respectively. The number of vehicles to school will therefore increase by 53% in 2019. The current parking provision at the community centre totals 53 marked spaces, in 2019 this will increase to 98 spaces. It can be reasonably deduced that development proposals will reduce impact on the highway in terms of on-street parking. This is further supported by the proposal to locate the pupil and visitor entrance so it is accessible via the footpath from the community centre parking areas. Travel plan targets to increase the number of pupils walking to school from 72 to 114 by 2015 and to reduce the number of children being driven to school alone from 127 to 82 would further reduce the number of children travelling to school by car.

On-street parking

Moving the pupil and visitor entrance should make the community centre car parking area the easiest location for picking up and dropping off children as opposed to Lampington Row and other residential roads. However, perceived delay getting in and out of the car park would mean some parents will continue to park on street. Parking on Lampington Road will be further reduced by the provision of at least 14 additional staff parking spaces in the community centre car park.

Travel Plan targets

There is a risk and concern that the targets set in the Travel Plan will not be met. Meeting the targets will heavily depend on engagement and determination of the staff, Governors and parents. The monitoring and review process for the Travel Plan lacks detail but is nonetheless welcome.

Recommendation

Whilst there are some concerns, including about the additional traffic generated by the development proposals, there is no reasonable basis to deem the development impact severe and therefore an objection is not warranted.”

The County Council’s Biodiversity Officer comments as follows:

“Great Crested Newts (GCN)

Low numbers of GCN were recorded within the school pond and as works will be impacting GCN habitat within 50m of the pond there will be a need for mitigation

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to be carried out prior to works starting to ensure no GCN are injured or killed by the proposed works.

A map has been submitted providing the following information:

- The habitat which will be retained and undisturbed during the proposed development works
- The which will be enhanced as a result of the proposed development
- Confirmation that the fish will be removed from the pond and it will be managed as wildlife pond.

As there is only a low population within the site we are satisfied that sufficient information has been provided to ensure the GCN population will be maintained. If planning permission is granted we recommend that as a condition a detailed mitigation strategy is submitted for comments prior to works starting on site.

Bats

No bats were recorded roosting within the site but low numbers of bats were recorded foraging and commuting within the site. As such we recommend that any additional lighting proposed for the school is designed to minimise the impact on foraging/commuting bats.

Breeding Birds

There is suitable habitat within the site for breeding birds and all nesting birds and their young are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). We recommend it is removed outside of the bird breeding season (March – August inclusive). If that is not possible an ecologist must examine the site prior to works starting and if any nesting birds are recorded all work must cease until all the young have fledged.

Enhancements

The ecological scoping report has made recommendations for ecological enhancements to be incorporated in to the site. Details of what enhancements will be incorporated in to the site and where must provided as a condition of planning permission.”

The County Council’s Landscape Officer is satisfied with the submitted Tree Surveys and their findings, but states that the survey for the car parking area is missing a topographical survey and does not, therefore, comply with the British Standard. However, provided the footprint of the car parking to be resurfaced is the same as the existing grasscrete area, and that all the measures/conclusions outlined within the Tree Reports are followed, no objection is raised. However, concerns are raised over the proposed green colour finish of the car park. It is suggested that this should be reviewed.

The High Weald AONB Unit states that the development does not appear to directly affect the components of natural beauty identified by the High Weald AONB Management Plan. While there are some local visual impacts, particularly the additional car parking at the village hall, the Unit do not consider these to be significant or to have major impacts on the AONB.

The County Council’s Conservation Architect no comments received to date.

Public Rights of Way no comments received to date.

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Environment Agency no comments received to date.

The County Council's School Travel Plan Advisor makes a number of comments on the submitted Travel Plan, including a need to place more emphasis on how the school would encourage use of the Village Hall car park, and the need to list issues the school may face as a result of expansion, and outline how they plan to deal with those issues. A revised School Travel Plan should be submitted within 6 months of the date of the planning decision to address these matters, amongst others.

Local Member

15. The local County Member, Mr John Davies, was notified of the application on the 17 January 2014.

Publicity

16. The application was publicised by the posting of 3 site notices, advertisement in a local newspaper, and the individual notification of 54 neighbouring properties.

Representations

17. To date, I have received 6 individual letters of representation from local residents. I have also received a letter of representation from the 'residents of Winstone Scott Avenue and Lampington Row, with attached petition signed by 34 residents. A copy of that letter and petition is appended to this report

A summary of the main issues raised/points of objection is set out below:

Highways/Access

- Parents drive dangerously and park inconsiderately in local roads, which is a nuisance to residents, blocks driveways, and is very dangerous;
- The expansion would attract more cars onto the local roads around the school, especially as pupils would be coming from a wider catchment area and from outside the village;
- Lampington Row is a narrow residential cul-de-sac, which teachers also park in all day, in addition to chaos at peak school times;
- Winstone Scott Avenue is used by parents, meaning grass verges are churned up, access is blocked, and residents can not park near their homes;
- Parents currently park in Lampington Row, Winstone Scott Avenue and the Village Hall car park. These roads and the car park are already at full capacity;
- Local roads cannot accommodate additional traffic, many are single lane width, or already congested and double parked;
- It is noted that the pedestrian access to the school would be relocated to encourage people to use the Village Hall car park. Whilst in agreement with this, residents strongly suggest this is already being done (to capacity) and its is because there is no space within the Village Hall car park that parents overspill in Lampington Row and Winstone Scott Avenue;
- Although tarmacing the overspill car park would provide additional spaces in the Village Hall car park, alleviating the current situation, the number of cars will only increase if the expansion gets approved;

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- Increased use of the Village Hall car park could result in queuing back onto Speldhurst Road, as the access is narrow (for safety reasons). Consideration should be given to making the existing access an 'entry only' and creating a new 'exit' point onto Speldhurst Road from the rear of the car park;
- With the Village Hall car park, Lampington Road and Winstone Scott Avenue at full capacity, parents will park on Speldhurst Road, creating further access and safety issues;
- Local roads will also have to cater for increased staff parking;
- Parents should be prohibited from parking in Lampington Row, and parking at the Village Hall would need to be enforced. Traffic/Community Wardens should direct parents and challenge inconsiderate parking. Prohibitive signage should also be provided;
- It is understood that additional parking is proposed as part of this application. However, there will never be enough to cater for all the parents, and they will continue to park in local roads;
- There is no safe crossing area near the Village Hall car park entrance, which is where the majority of children who walk to school cross. There is a crossing patrol at the end of Lampington Row, but there is no pavement between the Village Hall car park and the crossing;
- The Village Hall car park can barely cope now, yet alone with additional use. The car park also caters for the Village Hall users and the pre-school;

General Matters

- The pond area near the proposed development has a colony of Great Crested Newts. By law a licence must be obtained to work on the site;
- There are many schools in Tunbridge Wells that have capacity to accommodate additional pupils, but parents choose schools in other areas of the town;
- The Transport Assessment states that the school would primarily serve local residents. This is incorrect, many pupils do not live in Langton Green, and this would be made worse by an expansion;
- There are many other good schools in the area that need more support from local government to raise standards and improve reputation. Why waste money building new classrooms in an already congested location, when that money could be spent at other schools;
- Infrastructure wise, the school hall is already too small to support lunch/assemblies;
- Noise and pollution from parents cars means residents can not open windows or go into their gardens;
- Noise from the school is already unbearable; these plans would only increase the chaos.

I have also received a letter of representation from the Langton Green Charitable Trust.

A summary of the main issues raised/points of objection is set out below:

- The provision of 20 spaces for school staff vehicles in the Village Hall car park is excessive and would prevent public parking. The School should provide adequate parking within their grounds;
- Concerned about the safety aspects of an increased mix of pedestrians, push chairs and vehicles, especially at peak school times.
- Would emergency vehicles have adequate access at peak school times;
- Hall bookings would be affected by a lack of available parking, with a subsequent loss of bookings.

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Discussion

18. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 13 above. Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 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 new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. Issues of particular relevance include impact upon the Metropolitan Green Belt and wider landscape, highway implications and access, and whether the development is sustainable in light of the NPPF.
19. In this case the key determining factors, in my view, are the impact upon the local highway network, the local protected landscape and the Green Belt, and the policy support for the development of schools to ensure that there is sufficient provision to meet growing demand, increased choice and raised educational standards, subject to being satisfied on amenity and other material considerations. In the Government's view the creation and development of schools is strongly in the national interest and planning authorities should support this objective, in a manner consistent with their statutory obligations. In considering proposals for the creation, expansion and alteration of schools, the Government considers that there is a strong presumption in favour of state funded schools, as expressed in the National Planning Policy Framework and reflected in the Policy Statement for Schools. Planning Authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling such development, attaching significant weight to the need to establish and develop state funded schools, and making full use of their planning powers to support such development, only imposing conditions that are absolutely necessary and that meet the tests set out in Circular 11/95.
20. Policy EN1 of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan, and Core Strategy Policies SP2 and SP4, seek to conserve and enhance the environment and require development to be well designed and respect its setting. This is particularly relevant to this development site which is identified within the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan as being within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The application site is also within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Core Policy 2 of the Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy seeks to resist inappropriate development within the Green Belt, unless justified by exceptional circumstances. Core Policy 4 also states that the distinctive character of the AONB and its setting will be conserved and enhanced. Reference is made within Core Policy 2 to the NPPF. The NPPF states "as with previous Green Belt Policy, inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances". The NPPF does not explain in any detail what 'very special circumstances' means, but does go on to state "very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations". Any built development within the Metropolitan Green Belt could affect the openness of it and would be contrary to planning policies. On this basis the development proposed must be considered as a departure from the Development Plan, and has been advertised as such. The need, or otherwise, to refer the application to the Secretary of State for determination will be considered and assessed in the following section of this report

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Green Belt and wider landscape considerations

21. The NPPF, section 9, paragraph 80 states that the Green Belt serves five purposes:
- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;
 - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The NPPF goes on to state (paragraph 89), that local planning authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt, but lists a number of exceptions to this assumption. One such exception is the extension or alteration of a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Although the proposed extensions and stand alone 'pavilion' are of a similar scale and massing to that of the original building, in terms of being single storey, the provision of an additional 6 classrooms, and associated amenity spaces, cannot be considered to be a proportionate addition in this regard. The development is therefore, in my mind inappropriate and needs to be considered accordingly.

22. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and it is for the applicant to demonstrate why permission should be granted. Such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt and whether or not there are very special circumstances that would warrant setting aside the general presumption against inappropriate development. Although it should be noted that no objections have been raised to this application on Green Belt or AONB/wider landscape grounds, the appropriateness of the development must be considered. The applicants have accepted that the development is, by definition, inappropriate and have, therefore, set out the planning policies relevant to the development and have provided what they consider to be a case of very special circumstances.
23. First, it should be noted that the 2 classroom extension, hall extension and two smaller infill extensions to the front of the school building are all outside of the Green Belt and AONB. The standalone four classroom 'pavilion' building, and the car parking resurfacing works with associated footpath links, are the elements of this application that are within the defined boundaries of the Green Belt and the AONB and it is, therefore, these aspects of the proposal that will be considered in this section of the report.
24. The applicant states that extensions to the school are necessary to provide adequate educational facilities to meet the demand of the locality. The publication of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2012-2017 provided forecasting that clearly indicated that demand in the Langton Green designated area was exceeding the number of places available, with an additional 30 spaces per year group required. Permanent extensions in Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) were therefore considered necessary. I am advised by the applicant that in considering options for locating the additional places, it is firmly of the view that school places should be provided local to the demand. Although some local residents have objected to the application on the ground that pupils come from outside of the village, the applicant has advised that that is inaccurate as the primary reason for the increase in school capacity is to provide accommodation for residents of Langton Green. In recent years, the school has not been able to accommodate all pupils from within Langton Green and, although

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there would be space for pupils from outside of the village, the majority would continue to be from within the village catchment area.

25. The prospect of a reversal of demand has also been considered by the applicant but, as the future pupils already live within the area, the applicant considers that any such change would have to relate to a sudden out migration of young families. There is no evidence that this is likely to occur, or that the demand for new residential development is to decline. The applicant states that there is a basic demand from the population for Primary School education. There is a duty on the Education Authority to meet that demand and it is reasonable, in the case of state funded primary provision, that this be located fairly close to the homes of the pupils where that is practicable. The applicant considers this need to be a very special circumstance, which they consider should override the presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt.
26. In addition to the need outlined by the applicant above, it should be noted that the NPPF and the Policy Statement 'Planning for Schools Development' (August 2011), fully support the creation and development of state funded schools. The Statement requires Local Authorities to apply a presumption in favour of the development of state funded schools, and states that the Secretary of State will attach significant weight to the need to establish and develop state funded school when determining applications that come before him. This strong Policy support further expands on the case provided by the applicant, and in my view constitutes part of the case of very special circumstances to be considered in the determination of this application. However, other matters must also be considered, such as the siting of the development and its impact on the openness of the Green Belt, and the impact of the development of the functioning of the Green Belt.
27. The proposed expansion of Langton Green Primary School would be contained within the existing grounds of the school, with no expansion of the boundaries required to accommodate the space requirements associated with a 2 form of entry school. In order to minimise the impact of the development on the functioning and openness of the Green Belt, the 4 classroom 'pavilion' building proposed would be sited in an underused area of the site to the north east of the existing school building. The development would be as close as practicable to the edge of the built confines of Langton Green, which also marks the boundary of the Green Belt. The proposed development would not extend beyond the existing building line, and would not encroach into the open areas of the site, resulting in a compact grouping of buildings. The low ridge height of the single storey four classroom 'pavilion', with its cedar covered pitched roof, would also aid in reducing the impact of the development on the openness and functioning of the Green Belt, and the character and appearance of the wider landscape beyond.
28. In considering the proposal, it is also important to note that the Village Hall car park is within the Green Belt and AONB. The car parking is, however, already in situ, and due to its one dimensional nature, the resurfacing of the car parking would not, in my view, impact on the functioning of the Green Belt. However, with regard to the AONB, the tree belt adjacent to the car park is a feature which contributes to the character and appearance of the AONB. It is essential that that tree belt is retained, and the County Council's Landscape Advisor has confirmed that provided the resurfaced car park follows the exact footprint of the existing grasscrete surface, and that the recommendations within the submitted Tree Surveys are adhered to, no objection is raised as the tree belt would not be adversely affected. However, the Landscape Advisor does not consider the green tarmac proposed would be appropriate in this AONB location, and that a black surface would be preferable, or an alternative to tarmac. However, as consultation has been carried out proposing a green finish, and no

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objections from other consultees have been raised on that basis, it would not be appropriate to propose an alternative finish without consultation with the Parish Council as landowners, and other key consultees. I therefore consider that, should permission be granted, details of the surfacing material and colour finish should be submitted pursuant to condition to enable further consultation and consideration to be given to this matter. Subject to the conditions outlined above, I do not consider that the resurfacing of the car park would have a detrimental impact on the landscape character of the AONB, the physical openness Green Belt, or the wider landscape in general.

29. Overall, I accept the applicant's assessment and application of Green Belt Policy as set out in the submitted documentation, and I have considered this in the context of the amended policy following publication of the NPPF. The development is inappropriate development for the purposes of Green Belt consideration and is, therefore, by definition potentially harmful. Nevertheless, in my view, the considerations summarised above are sufficient collectively to constitute very special circumstances capable of outweighing harm, in this particular case. Furthermore, I accept that the particular siting and design of the proposals has been carefully considered to help mitigate and minimise the impact of the development on the functioning and openness of the Green Belt. The proposed layout represents the option which strikes the best balance between minimising physical intrusion into the Green Belt and providing sufficient accommodation and facilities to enable the School to deliver its educational requirements and operate successfully. Accordingly, I do not consider that an objection on Green Belt grounds would be warranted in this particular case. In addition, I also do not consider that the development as proposed would separately adversely affect the character and appearance of the AONB either.
30. The Town and County Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009 states that inappropriate developments within the Green Belt should be referred to the Secretary of State for determination if the floor space to be created is 1000 square metres or more, or if the development, by reason of its scale or nature or location, would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt. In considering this application, and taking into account the matters discussed and addressed above, I do not consider that the scale, nature or location of this development would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt. In addition, the development is under the 1000 square metre threshold. For these reasons, I do not consider that this application needs to be referred to the Secretary of State for determination in this instance.

Siting and Design

31. Having accepted the siting of the proposed facilities in Green Belt terms, the siting must also be considered in terms of residential and local amenity. It should be noted that I have not received any objections to the siting or design of the development as proposed. The design of the proposed 2 classroom extension, hall extension and infill extensions to the front of the school are appropriate for the site, and would be visually unobtrusive due to the location and choice of materials to match the existing. With regard to the 4 classroom 'pavilion', the building would be single storey, with a timber clad pitched roof, finished in cedar weatherboarding to tie in with the materials proposed for the smaller extensions around the school site. The development would be of a scale and height appropriate for the location, and would be located in an area of the school site which is both logical in terms of school management and appropriate in terms of landscape and visual amenity matters. However, in order to ensure that the materials palette does not vary from that as submitted I consider it appropriate, should permission be granted, to impose a condition requiring the materials to accord with the details

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provided within the planning documentation and shown on the application drawings. Subject to that, I consider the design of the proposed development to be acceptable.

32. The 'pavilion' building would be approximately 16 metres at the closest point from the side elevation of the closest residential property. The main access to the new classroom building would be from the south, facing existing school buildings, minimising potential disturbance from those accessing the building. The side elevation of the 'pavilion' would incorporate areas of glazing, and doors leading to the external hard surfaced play area. However, due to the single storey nature of the building, existing boundary fencing and planting, and the fact that local properties are side onto this area of the site, I do not consider that the amenity of neighbouring residents would be adversely affected in terms of overlooking and loss of privacy.
33. A local resident has expressed concern over noise resulting from the expansion of the school, with regard to noise associated with traffic and parents parking (to be discussed later in this report), and noise from the school itself. With regard to the pavilion building proposed, this would be sited on an area used for outdoor play at the moment, albeit informal play on grass. However, the building itself is designed to be fully compliant with Building Bulletin 93 acoustic requirements, which ensure stringent noise breakout performance. Use of the building would therefore not, in my view, result in a loss of amenity with regard to noise. However, a small area of hard play is proposed to each end of the pavilion building, although the area of hard surfacing at the eastern end of the building is more of an access/pathway, and would not, in my view, be sufficient enough in size to be used for informal play. It would, I suggest perhaps be used occasionally for some outdoor teaching, but informal play during break times would be on areas of existing playground in the school site, and on the proposed hard play to the west of the 'pavilion'. It should be noted that outside play is only for short periods throughout the day, on weekdays only, and for limited months of the year, and is not therefore a constant source of noise. In addition, the number of pupils at the school would increase incrementally year on year, and would not double in one go. The annual increase in pupils, and the noise associated with that would, in my view, not be detectable over and above the existing. In light of this, I do not consider that the proposals would generate additional noise sufficient enough to have a detrimental impact of the amenity of local residents. I therefore see no reason to refuse this application on the grounds of the building materials proposed, siting and/or design.

Landscaping and Biodiversity

34. As detailed in paragraph 12 of this report, tree surveys have been undertaken and submitted with this application, one covering the Primary School site, and the other the trees adjacent to the Village Hall car park and proposed pedestrian route additions and upgrades. The reports confirm that the proposed development would not result in the removal of any trees within the school site, and would not adversely affect the tree belt adjacent to the Village Hall car park (discussed earlier in this report). However, one tree to the west of the car park would be removed in accordance with the report recommendation (diseased/dying/dead), and 4 saplings would require relocation to accommodate a pedestrian route to the west of the resurfaced car park. The County Council's Landscape Advisor is satisfied with the proposals as submitted, and I consider that the applicant has taken all reasonable steps to minimise the impact of the proposals on trees in the vicinity, many of which are impact to the character of the AONB. Should permission be granted, I consider that it would be appropriate to require the development to be undertaken in accordance with the conclusions and recommendations of the submitted Tree Surveys to ensure the adequate protection of trees to be retained.

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35. With regard to ecology, an Ecological Survey Report, Bat Survey Report and Great Crested Newt Survey Report have been submitted in support of this application. Low numbers of Great Crested Newts were recorded within the school pond, which is adjacent to the proposed four classroom 'pavilion'. The applicant is aware of the protected status of the Great Crested Newts, and has sought professional advice. However, it is not intended to affect their environment long term, so the applicant is only required to manage and protect the species throughout the duration of construction. Outline mitigation proposals have been submitted for consideration, and the County Council's Biodiversity Officer is satisfied with the level of information provided at this stage. However, should permission be granted, a detailed mitigation strategy would be required pursuant to condition, to be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of any works on site. In addition, the applicant is aware of the requirement to apply for a Protected Species Licence, and an application to Natural England has been prepared and will be submitted upon the determination of this application.
36. With regard to other ecological matters, the County Council's Biodiversity Officer is satisfied with the information provided. However, should permission be granted, conditions of consent should be imposed requiring that the development is undertaken in accordance with the recommendations and precautionary measures as detailed within the submitted Ecological Survey Report. Biodiversity enhancement measures are also recommended, and I consider that details of what enhancements would be incorporated in to the site, and where, should be provided pursuant to condition, should permission be granted. Subject to the conditions above, I am satisfied that the development would not have an adverse impact on Protected Species and wider ecological matters.

Access, parking and highway issues

37. Having accepted the proposed development in terms of siting, design, and impact on the Green Belt, the AONB, and wider landscape, it is now important to consider the implications of the expansion of the school in terms of impact on the local highway network. Local residents, including the Langton Green Charitable Trust, have raised objection to this application on the basis that the proposals would exacerbate current highway and parking issues associated with the school, impacting upon the amenity of local residents in the surrounding area.
37. As outlined in paragraph 5 of this report, this application is part of the county wide Educational Basic Needs Programme, and is proposing to provide sufficient accommodation on site to accommodate a full 2 form of entry (2FE). At present the total number of pupils at Langton Green Primary School is 273, with pupils at the school aged from 4 – 11 years old. The current total number of staff employed at the school is 38, 9 full time and 29 part time. This application seeks to expand the existing primary school from 1FE to 2 FE, which would increase pupil numbers from the current 273 to approximately 420. However, such growth would be incremental year on year with overall pupil numbers at this school predicted to rise by 30 per year until reaching 420 by 2019. To accompany the pupil increase, it is proposed that a total of 48 staff would be employed, and increase of 10 full time staff over the existing.
38. This application has met with local objection on the basis that the local highway network already struggles to accommodate traffic associated with the school, and that on street car parking by parents and staff is dangerous, inconvenient, and causes chaos at peak school times. However, in this instance the applicant accepts that the existing access

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arrangements are not acceptable and has proposed access changes and mitigation which should not only address and improve the existing situation, but accommodate the incremental increase in pupil numbers over the coming years.

39. First, and most importantly, the applicant is proposing to completely change the pupil access point from being via Lampington Row to being via a new gated access in the school's northern boundary, accessed from a new footway link in the recreation ground. Lampington Row is a narrow residential cul-de-sac, which cannot reasonably accommodate an increase in traffic associated with the school. The existing situation is already verging on unacceptable due to the school staff parking on-street, in addition to local residents, and the volume of traffic associated with school pick up and drop off. Therefore, the applicant is proposing to change the school's access arrangements, making increased use of the existing (and proposed to be improved) Village Hall car park.
40. It is proposed that the existing main access on Lampington Row be maintained, but restricted to access to the staff car park only. The staff car park would be extended, reconfigured and resurfaced as part of this proposal to provide 14 formally marked out car parking spaces. The existing pedestrian access on the eastern boundary, currently used by reception pupils only, would be retained as a visitor's pedestrian access only. No access would be available at this side of the school site for parents to drop off and/or collect pupils. All pupil access would be via the proposed new entrance in the northern site boundary, and an existing gazebo and the playground would provide parents' waiting space, and new cycle and scooter parking is proposed here.
41. To facilitate use of the new pupil access point, a new footpath would be provided within the Recreation Ground, running parallel to the school's northern site boundary, and linking with the existing footpaths that run between the Village Hall car park and Lampington Row. The existing footpaths would also be widened and resurfaced as part of this proposal, providing a safe traffic free route from the Village Hall car park to the schools new pupil entrance. The applicant and Speldhurst Parish Council have entered into an agreement whereby the School can use the Village Hall car park for pupil pick up/drop off, parent parking, and 14 staff car parking spaces, provided the County Council resurface the existing grasscrete overspill car parks with an all weather surface. The Village Hall car park currently has 37 marked car parking spaces that are hard surfaced and an additional two overspill car parks which offer an additional 63 spaces, although only 18 of those are regularly available, with the remaining 45 often being cordoned off to prevent use due to the poor quality of the surface. It is proposed to resurface the two overspill car parks with a green tarmac, although final details of the finish would be required pursuant to planning condition to address the concerns of the County Council's Landscape Advisor (see paragraph 28). However, regardless of colour finish to the surfacing, the car park would be surfaced in an all weather finish should permission be granted, as required by Speldhurst Parish Council. A condition of consent would require the car parking to be surfaced prior to occupation of the new accommodation on the school site. This would ensure that the additional 63 spaces would always be available for use, bringing the total capacity of the village hall car park to 100 hard surfaced car parking spaces.
42. First, with regard to staff car parking, the applicant has agreed with Speldhurst Parish Council that at least 14 parking bays would be available for staff of Langton Green Primary School within the Village Hall car park. Added to the 14 staff parking spaces within the onsite car park, a total of 28 car parking spaces would be provided. Currently, staff do park on Lampington Row, and other local roads, as there is insufficient parking on site. This exacerbates issues with traffic at peak school times. However, as noted by

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Kent County Council Highways and Transportation, the School has confirmed that currently one staff member regularly cycles, 5 staff walk and a few staff car share. Assuming 4 staff car share, a total of 10 staff do not drive to school at this time. This means that currently 28 of the 38 staff drive to work with 14 able to park on-site leaving 14 staff potentially parking on the public highway. In 2019, assuming the same travel patterns, 38 of the 48 staff would drive to work. With at least 28 staff parking spaces provided, this would leave a maximum of 10 vehicles parking on public highway which, as noted by the Highways and Transportation advisor, is an improvement over the existing situation. In addition, the 14 spaces within the Village Hall car park is a minimum, and it could be that additional spaces are provided over time. In addition, School Travel Plan targets would also encourage staff to use more sustainable modes of transport, including car sharing, with the potential that by 2019 fewer staff than the 38 predicated above would actually drive. However, the increase in staff numbers would be incremental, and initially all staff would be able to park either on site or within the Village Hall car park, which is a vast improvement over the current situation.

43. With regard to parents parking in local roads, and the ability of the local highway network to accommodate an increase in traffic associated with the expansion of the school, the comments made by Kent County Council Highways and Transportation should be given due consideration. It is proposed that the number of children attending the school will increase from 273 to 420 by September 2019. Highways and Transportation confirm that from the current pupil roll of 273, there are 195 families which equates to 1.4 pupils per family. In 2019 there would be 300 families, an increase of 105. The percentage of children that come to school by car is currently 45%, so 195 (existing) and 300 (proposed) families would generate 88 and 135 vehicles to school respectively. The number of vehicles to school would therefore increase by 53% in total by 2019, although this would be an incremental increase year on year. The current parking provision at the Village Hall totals 37 marked hard surfaces spaces, with additional overspill. Should permission be granted, that overspill parking would be resurfaced to provide a total of 100 marked hard surfaced spaces. Highways and Transportation confirm that it can, therefore, be reasonably deduced that the development proposals would reduce impact on the highway in terms of reducing on-street parking. School Travel plan targets to increase the number of pupils walking to school from 72 to 114 by 2015 and to reduce the number of children being driven to school alone from 127 to 82 would further reduce the number of children travelling to school by car.
44. A reduction in on street car parking is further supported by the proposal to locate the pupil and visitor entrance so it is accessible via the existing and proposed footpath links from the Village Hall car park. Moving the pupil and visitor entrance should make the Village Hall car parking area the easiest location for picking up and dropping off children as opposed to Lampington Row and other residential roads. However, perceived delay getting in and out of the car park could mean that some parents would continue to park on street. However, there would be no staff parking on Lampington Row as a result of the application, and on street car parking by parents would be significantly reduced. This would improve the current situation, and should reduce the amount of noise, disturbance, inconvenience etc. experienced by local residents, even with an expansion of the school.
45. It has been suggested that an additional 'exit' point be provided from the Village Hall car park onto Speldhurst Road, and that the access into the car park is not sufficient to accommodate the increased number of vehicles that would be using it. However, the number of car parking spaces at the Village Hall is not increasing, the applicant is merely resurfacing the existing. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and the Highway

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Authority would therefore have assessed the suitability of this access at the time of approving that application and, in addition, Kent County Council Highways and Transportation have no concerns over the capacity of the entrance/exit point. With regard to the provision of a new exit point, the applicant advises, and I agree, that due to ecological, arboricultural, AONB and highway constraints this has not been proposed. In addition, Kent County Council Highways and Transportation do not consider an additional exit point to be necessary. I therefore consider the existing access to the Village Hall car park to be acceptable, and see no reason to refuse the application on this ground.

46. Safety around the Village Hall car park access has also been raised with regard to crossing Speldhurst Road. However, the School have confirmed that the recently employed Traffic Crossing Officer would be relocated to the entrance of the Village Hall car park/recreation ground to tie in with the local footpath network, and to further encourage parents/pupils to not access the school via Lampington Way but to use the new footpath links to the pupil access point. I therefore consider that this matter has been adequately addressed by the applicant.
45. Speldhurst Parish Council have raised no objection to this application, subject to the resurfacing of the car parking (discussed above) and subject to being involved with the School in the development, maintenance and ongoing revision of the School Travel Plan. The County Council's School Travel Plan Advisor has commented on the submitted Travel Plan and considers that the Plan needs to place more emphasis on how the School would encourage use of the Village Hall car park, and needs to list issues the school may face as a result of expansion, and outline how they plan to deal with those issues. Therefore, should permission be granted I consider that a revised School Travel Plan should be submitted within 6 months of the date of the planning decision to address the matters raised above, prepared in negotiation and conjunction with Speldhurst Parish Council.
46. Kent County Council Highways and Transportation conclude that whilst there are some concerns about the additional traffic generated by the development proposals, there is no reasonable basis to deem the development impact severe and therefore an objection is not warranted. In particular, it needs to be borne in mind that all schools generate traffic and often some parking on the public highway, but unless that constitutes a severe risk to road safety then that is not a reason to withhold planning consent. I consider that the applicant has provided more than adequate mitigation in terms of parking provision and access changes to accommodate the increase in vehicles associated with the expansion of the school. In my view, the development as proposed would significantly improve the existing situation with regard to on-street car parking, in addition to addressing the implication of the expansion. Kent County Council Highways and Transportation are satisfied that this proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the local highway network, and raise no objection on that basis. I therefore see no reason to refuse this application on this ground, subject to the imposition of conditions requiring the Village Hall car park to be resurfaced prior to occupation of the new accommodation on the school site, and the submission and implementation of a revised/updated School Travel Plan within 6 months of the date of the permission.
47. Lastly, you will note from paragraph 14 and the views of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council that they consider an application should be submitted to the Borough Council to vary a condition of consent on the approval notice for the Village Hall (TW/06/00789) to enable the car parking to be used by the school. However, this application is essentially covering such a submission, as it is seeking approval for the Village Hall car park to be

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used by the school. The car park would still be available for use by other users of the village hall and the recreation ground, and the Parish Council are satisfied with this arrangement. In addition, it should be borne in mind that the school only operate from Monday to Friday, and in term time only, and that none of the Village Hall car park would be for exclusive use by the school only. Use by the Village Hall users would not, therefore, be precluded.

Construction matters

48. Given that there are neighbouring residential properties, if planning permission is granted it would, in my view, be appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of construction to protect residential amenity. I would suggest that works should be undertaken only between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays. It is also good practice on school sites for contractors to be required under the terms of their contract to manage construction traffic/deliveries to minimise conflict with traffic and pedestrians at the beginning and end of the school day. I consider it appropriate that details of how the site access would be managed to avoid peak school times should also be included within the Construction Management Strategy.
49. I consider it appropriate that details of a full Construction Management Strategy be submitted for approval prior to the commencement of development. That should include details of the methods and hours of working, location of site compounds and operative/visitors parking, details of site security and safety measures, lorry waiting and wheel washing facilities, details of how the site access would be managed to avoid peak school times and details of any construction accesses. 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.
50. In addition to the above, should permission be granted, conditions of consent would ensure that dust, mud on the local highway network, and other matters associated with construction, would be mitigated as far as reasonably possible so as to minimise disruption to local residents.

Conclusion

51. This proposal has given rise to a variety of issues, including the need for very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the impact of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt. However, I consider that very special circumstances have been demonstrated in this particular case for overriding Green Belt policy constraints in terms of the education need for additional school accommodation to cater for pupils resident in Langton Green, and the design and siting of the development with regard to minimising the visual impact on this part of the Green Belt, and its functioning. Nor do I consider that the proposed development would have any significant impact on the landscape character of the AONB. In addition, subject to the imposition of the conditions outlined throughout this report, I consider that the proposed development would not have a significantly detrimental impact on the local highway network or residential amenity, and would accord with the principles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF. Therefore, subject to the imposition of conditions, I am of the opinion that the proposed development would not give rise to any material harm and is otherwise in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies and the guidance contained in the NPPF. Therefore, I recommend that permission be granted subject to appropriate conditions

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Recommendation

52. 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;
 - external materials to match those specified within the application documentation;
 - details of the surfacing and colour finish to the Village Hall car park;
 - Village Hall car parking to be resurfaced prior to the occupation of the new accommodation on the school site;
 - tree protection measures and the development to be undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of the Tree Surveys;
 - the development to be undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of the Ecological Scoping Survey;
 - submission of a detailed mitigation strategy for Great Crested Newts prior to the commencement of the development;
 - submission of details of ecological enhancements;
 - submission of a revised School Travel Plan within 6 months of the date of this permission, its implementation and ongoing review. This document is to be prepared in liaison with Speldhurst Parish Council, and should include mechanisms for ongoing liaison in the future;
 - 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;
 - the submission of a Construction Management Strategy, including the location of site compounds and operative/visitors parking, details of site security and safety measures, lorry waiting and wheel washing facilities, and details of any construction accesses & management of the site access to avoid 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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Proposed expansion of Langton Green Primary School, Tunbridge Wells – TW/14/154 (KCC/TW/0018/2014)

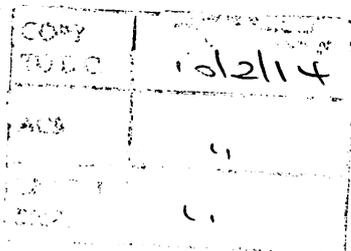
Appendix 1

Petition received 10 February 2014 with 34 signatories from occupiers of Winstone Scott Avenue and Lampington Row.



Planning Applications Group
First Floor, Invicta House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 1XX

From residents of Winstone Scott Avenue and Lampington Row
Langton Green
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN3



9 February 2014

Dear Sirs

Planning Application No. KCC/TW/0018/2014

We thank you for your recent letter dated 22 January, whereby you notified us of the planning application regarding the extension of Langton Green Primary School.

We have looked at the proposed application and wish to make the following comments for your consideration in respect of this planning application.

We understand that there is a great need for additional school places in Kent and as a result consideration is being given to increasing the intake of pupils at a number of schools in the area. Whilst we note there may be a need for additional school places in Langton Green, we query whether proper thought has been given to the on-going parking / traffic issues that will undoubtedly be exacerbated by such an expansion of the school.

As local residents, we encounter personally on a daily basis (during term time) the current issues that there are with school traffic.

At the moment, parents use the recreational ground car park, Lampington Row and Winstone Scott Avenue when dropping off and collecting their children.

We understand that there are 34 marked spaces in the recreational ground car park, with an additional 61 spaces in an overspill car park.

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At the current time the first part of the overspill car park is fully utilized by parents (with the other overspill car park being closed off). Lampington Row and Winstone Scott Avenue are also used to full capacity. We note from the Transport Assessment Report dated 9 December 2013 that upon carrying out a study of the parking in the Recreational car park they found *'a maximum of 65 cars... [parking]... within the village car park area; 12 vehicles more than the marked spaces with 5 more than the 16 spaces in the overspill car park and 7 more than the 37 spaces in the tarmac car park'*. This highlights that there is already a parking issue on the basis that Winstone Scott Avenue and Lampington Row are already being used to capacity.

Due to the inadequate number of parking spaces available, it currently results in:

- parents parking where they should not perhaps park (whether in the car park or on grass verges on the residential roads surrounding the school and, blocking drives etc.);
- difficulty for local residents trying to park near their property; and
- grass verges being churned up and looking unsightly.

It is the former of these points that we believe often results in children being put in danger and creating difficulty for other motorists. Several averted incidents involving cars and children have been witnessed by local residents.

We note that one of the main reasons being put forward for the relocation of the main entrance of the school is to encourage people to use the recreational car park. Whilst we are in agreement with this, we would strongly suggest that this is already being done (to capacity) and it is principally because there is inadequate parking that there is such a large overspill into Lampington Row and Winstone Scott Avenue.

Whilst it is noted that this parking problem would be alleviated now by the additional spaces that will become available were the additional overspill car park to be tarmacked (creating an additional 45 spaces), the number of parents and therefore cars wanting to park will only increase if the expansion gets approved and where will these parents park? The roads will also have to cater for an increase in the number of staff at the school. The survey that was carried out and is referred to in the Transport Assessment Report notes that there were 112 cars on the Thursday morning drop off and 121 cars when pupils were collected from the school. This number of cars exceeds the number of spaces in the Recreational car park (with both overspill car parks being

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taken into account at 98) and this is before the expansion has taken place! It should also be borne in mind that the car park also caters for those using the village hall and the pre-school, again adding to the number of car parking spaces required.

The proposal that there is no access directly into the school from Lampington Row, when parents are dropping off and collecting children, will not stop parents from parking there as it is still so close to the school and there is a public footpath from Lampington Row which leads round the side of the school and will join (we assume) the new proposed footpath to the new main entrance.

So where will parents park when the recreation ground car park, Winstone Scott Avenue and Lampington Row have been exhausted? The only obvious place is down the Speldhurst Road? This will in turn, we believe,

- create problems with traffic on the Speldhurst Road as the road is not wide enough to accommodate this and have cars being able to pass in both directions;
- cause there to be difficulty accessing the recreational ground car park;
- cause safety issues for parents trying to get their children into and out of their cars on the Speldhurst Road; and
- cause safety issues for those parents and children seeking to make use of the public footpath that runs across Speldhurst Road (between Winstone Scott Avenue and the private road opposite it's entrance) when walking to school, as visibility will be reduced.

Another issue we would like to highlight is regarding the use of the larger overspill car park. At the current time there is not a backup of cars on the Speldhurst Road, but this could very well occur with an increased number of vehicles trying to make use of the car park. The Transport Assessment Report has highlighted that the recreational ground car park access point is only wide enough for one vehicle to pass through at a time. We believe this should continue as it reduces the speed of the cars and therefore increases the safety of the children. However this could lead to long delays and tail backs if there are at least another 45 cars involved. We would strongly suggest that consideration be given to making the access point into the Recreational car park an 'entry' only and have an 'exit' point onto the Speldhurst Road from the rear of the car park. This would not only hopefully improve the flow of cars in and out of the car park, but make it safer for the children as they would know which way cars were likely to approach from when crossing the car park and using the footpath

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which leads in front of the entrance to the car park. It would also help residents and other users of Winstone Scott Avenue as there are often problems with users of the recreational ground car park ignoring the fact that there is a yield marking on the road when leaving the car park.

Whilst it is a good idea to have a school travel plan to encourage children to get to school by other means than being driven by a parent, we would suggest that due to work commitments and after school clubs there will always be a large proportion of parents who will drive. We would also point out that whilst there is a suggestion in the Transport Assessment Report that a Walking Bus from the Recreational car park to the school would *'enable parents to drop-off/collect children and leave the car park quickly to ensure parking space turn around occurs than if they [were to] take/collect their children to/from the school gates direct and occupy the spaces for much longer'* this is not a reality. A lot of parents would want to see their children safely into the school gates and spend time chatting with other parents.

Finally, there is already traffic congestion on the Langton Road. This will only increase with the number of cars turning onto The Green from Langton Road to reach the school. Due to the residents parking on the road and parking for the small business which are very near this junction, it will only cause greater problems in the future.

Yours faithfully

(please see pages 5 & 6)