

Extension to provide 2 classrooms, outreach room and 2 additional parking spaces – St Mary CEP School Lamberhurst - KCC/TW/0374/2013 (TW/14/00132)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 9th April 2014.

Application by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure for proposed extension to school to accommodate a 1FE school including a 2 classroom extension at first floor level, storage and additional toilet plus outreach room and toilet facilities on the ground floor level and 2 additional parking spaces, Pearse Place, Lamberhurst, Tunbridge Wells TN3 8EJ - KCC/TW/0374/2013 (TW/0014/00132).

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions

Local Member: Mr. A King.

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Lamberhurst is located south east of Tunbridge Wells and west of Cranbrook. The village is within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
2. St Mary's CEP School is located in a residential area to the south of Lamberhurst village between Town Hill and Spray Hill. The main entrance and vehicular access lies to the south off Pearse Place, a residential cul de sac. To the south east of the school, there is a public footpath (WT387) which runs between the village centre and Pearse Place and between Sand Road and Spray Hill.
3. The school is adjacent to and outside of the Lamberhurst Conservation Area which is to the west of the site. The nearest listed building is approximately 50m to the north west of the site at The Vicarage. The site is in an elevated position and the land rises up towards the south west boundary beyond which the land continues to rise steeply. The existing school is a purpose built single storey detached building set on two levels. This proposal concerns an extension at the first floor level and an outreach room at ground floor level which would add to the overall footprint of the building at the site. An additional terrace area and car parking facilities is also proposed to the north west of the existing building.
4. The site is bounded on the north, east and west by dwellings and to the south by the school playing fields.

Planning History

5. The existing school building was built to replace the outdated Victorian School located off the A21 in School Hill and was permitted in October 2004 (TW/04/35). Outline planning permission for a new primary school had existed on the site since 1974, although at the time of the 2004 planning application, part of the site had been developed for housing including the land occupied by numbers 43-61 Pearse Place.

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6. In the earlier Committee report for the planning application for the relocation to the Pearse Place, site, it highlighted that it was a requirement of the Education Authority to show how two additional classrooms could be accommodated at the site if ever there was future demand. The plans at the time showed the location proposed on the playground area although the two additional classrooms were not part of the permission being sought at that time. Whilst this current proposal does not involve use of the playground area, it does involve classroom accommodation meeting identified demand.
7. It is also noted that there was to be a review of parking following completion of the relocation of the school to Pearse Place with £2000 to be set aside covering a Traffic Regulation Order in the event that permanent parking restrictions needed to be introduced.

Background

8. The current school is designed as a 2/3rd Form Entry school accepting 20 reception children a year. It currently accepts more than this and in 2013 is understood to have accepted 29 reception children. The expansion of the school is considered by the applicant to be required in order to provide sufficient reception places for the Tunbridge Wells Rural area. According to the applicant, the school is currently heavily subscribed with all places being filled in the reception year. The application is accompanied by an education justification which details the Kent Commissioning Plan 2012-17 forecast for increased demand for primary school capacity throughout the Plan period. To manage the increased demand for additional primary school places in Tunbridge Wells Rural the County Council proposed the permanent enlargement of this school by an increase to the reception intake from 20 to 30 children taking the proposed total capacity of the school from 140 places to 210 places. It proposed that the school would admit 30 reception pupils per year from September 2014. The statutory consultation process has taken place and the County Council has confirmed the decision to expand the primary school. This application seeks to provide classroom and extended hall facilities for the expansion of the school roll and additional car parking space for the additional teaching staff that would be required.
9. The project proposal is aligned to the KCC ambition to ensure that every child will go to a good school where they will make good progress and can have fair access to school places as set out in “Bold Steps for Kent”.

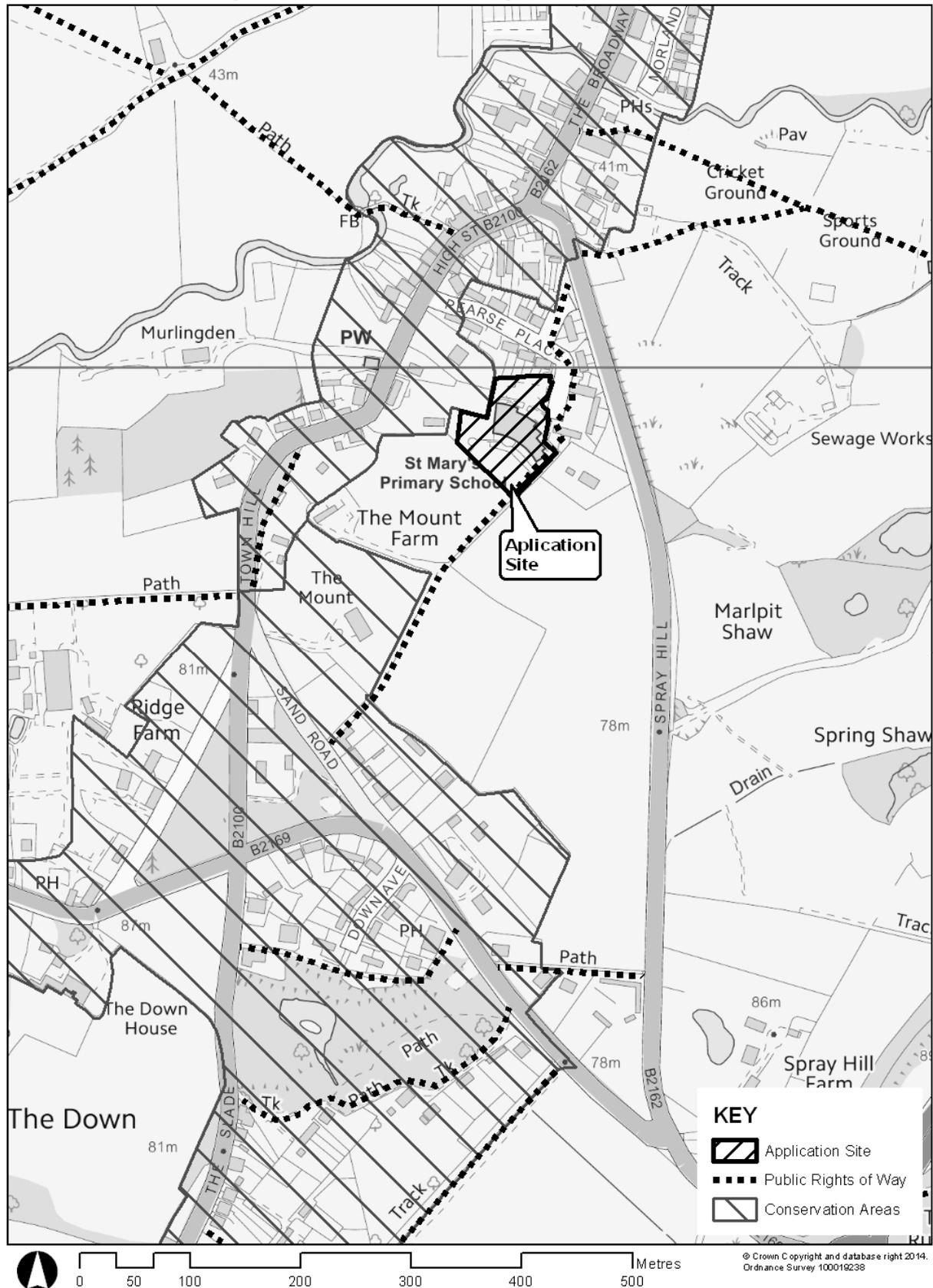
Proposal

10. The proposed 2 classroom extension is located to the north of the existing school at the front of the school building, sited at first floor level directly above the staff area. This part of the building is lower than the main school building. The materials proposed are vertical hardwood boarding to the external walls and a cedar shingle pitched roof and aluminium windows to match the existing building. It is proposed that there would be painted steel column supports at ground floor. The proposed extension measures 16.72m wide by 11.82m deep and the height of the proposed extension would sit below that of the existing hall at the site. The applicant has provided 3-D images of the approach to the school from Pearse Place.

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Location of St Mary's CEP School Primary School



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Proposed ground floor plan



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Proposed first floor plan



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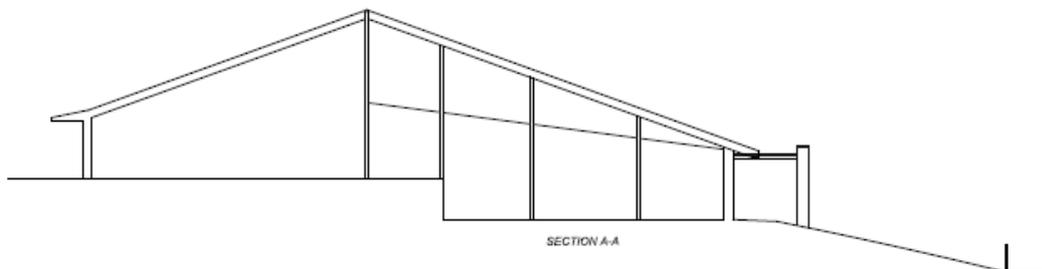
Existing front elevation



Proposed front elevation



Existing section A-A



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View of existing approach to school from Pearse Place



Design Impression showing Pearse Place approach



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Design impression showing school entrance approach



Planning Policy

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

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 applications 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:

- *Supporting a prosperous rural economy by promoting the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages*
- *Promoting sustainable transport*
- *Achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity*
- *That great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools;*
- *The promotion of healthy communities;*

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- *Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, including protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and giving great weight to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONB.*

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

Borough/ District Local Plan / Local Development Framework policies are contained in the Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy Development Plan Document adopted June 2010 and the Local Plan 2006 Saved Policies

Tunbridge Wells Local Plan 2006 Saved Policies:

Policy LBD1 – seeks to control development outside the limits to built development.

Policy EN1 – provides general development control criteria for all proposals for development requiring compatibility with neighbouring uses and proposals that do not cause significant harm to the amenities or character of the area or excessive traffic generation; and to not cause significant harm to the residential amenities of adjoining occupiers. It supports proposals that respect the context of the site.

Policy EN5 - concerns development within or affecting the character of a Conservation Area and seeks to ensure that proposals would be in sympathy with the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and not result in the loss of trees, shrubs, hedges or other features important to the character of the area within which the proposal would be situated.

Policy EN13 - concerns the protection of trees and woodland unless the removal of one or more trees would be in the interests of good arboriculture practice, or the desirability of the proposed development outweighs the amenity value of the protected tree.

Policy EN16 - seeks to protect groundwater and other water resources including systems for the disposal of surface waters and to ensure that new development has adequate provision for foul and surface water drainage.

Policy EN25 – seeks to ensure that proposals for development outside the limits to built development to have minimal impact on the landscape character of the locality, have no detrimental impact on the landscape setting of settlements, and for extensions or alterations to existing buildings to respect the local building style and materials and have no significant adverse impact on the form, appearance or setting of the building and respect the architectural and historic integrity of any adjoining buildings.

Policy CS2 – allocation of land for primary school provision.

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Policy TP1 – concerns the provision of Transport Assessments and Travel Plans for schools development.

Policy TP4 – concerns the highway capacity for new development and requires consideration of the safe and free flow of traffic and safe use of the road for others.

Policy TP5 – seeks to ensure that there is adequate vehicle parking in connection with development proposals having regards to the Kent County Council's Vehicle Parking Standards.

Policy TP9 – provides cycle parking standards.

Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2010) Policies:

Core Policy 1 - gives priority to developments on allocated land and release of previously developed land within the limits to built development.

Core Policy 3 – Requires proposals with significant transport implications to include transport assessment and travel plan to show how car based travel can be minimised. Encourages sustainable modes of travel.

Core Policy 4 - encourages the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB and the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and special regard to their settings.

Core Policy 5 encourages the sustainable design and construction of new developments taking account of water resource efficiency, water protection and flood risk, and the minimisation of waste creation and disposal throughout lifetime of development. Seeks high quality design and safe, accessible, legible and adaptable environments, conserve and enhance the public realm.

Core Policy 8 - seeks to maintain and improve capacity and quality of community facilities.

Core Policy 14 restricts the location of new development in accordance with CP1 and encourages community facilities to meet local needs. Encourages development that maintains local distinctiveness and non motorised modes of transport will be encouraged.

In addition, there is supplementary planning guidance concerning renewable energy, the Lamberhurst Conservation Area, the High Weald AONB and on design which also form material planning considerations.

Consultations

14. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council: Raises no objections to the original proposals subject conditions concerning mitigation measures as set out in the Travel Plan and adequate parking provision.

Lamberhurst Parish Council: Supports the proposal but has concerns regarding traffic management and parking along Pearse Place with associated disruption to residents.

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The Parish Council would like to see conditions imposed concerning working hours and deliveries and to minimise disruption to residents whilst works are in progress.

Environment Agency: Regards the proposal as having low environmental risk and raises no comments on the proposal.

Kent County Council Biodiversity: Have provided advice in relation breeding birds and vegetation removal.

Kent Highways and Transportation: Raises no objection to the proposal subject to conditions to secure a revised School Travel Plan and to ensure that the additional car parking spaces proposed are provided. Requests an Informative concerning highway approvals, consents and establishing the limit of the highway boundary.

Kent Highways and Transportation School Travel Planner: Has provided advice in relation to travel plan action targets and monitoring and review and keeping the community up to date with initiatives.

Kent County Council Heritage Conservation: Raises no adverse comments.

Public Rights of Way: No comments received.

Southern Water: Requests and Informative providing advice to the applicant on the requirement for a formal application for a new connection to public sewerage, sewerage capacity check and appropriate connection points and requests a condition concerning provision of details of foul and surface water sewerage disposal.

Local Member

15. The local County Member is Mr Alex King who was notified of the application on 16th January 2014. No comments have been received to date.

Publicity

16. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice and the individual notification of 50 neighbouring properties. It has also been advertised on our website and in the Kent on Sunday.

Representations to the proposal

17. In response to the neighbour publicity, 3 letters of representation were received, from a resident in Pearse Place, Town Hill and Old Town Hill. All concerned the traffic implications of the proposal and parking and congestion issues, particularly within Pearse Place at the start and end of the school day with concerns also about inconsiderate parking across resident's drives and emergency access within Pearse Place. There are also concerns about additional traffic within Lamberhurst and Town Hill. One representation was concerned about an increase in numbers of children from distant areas. One comment received also suggested that there had been problems associated with flooding to the school and houses in the immediate proximity.
18. Neighbour representations also make a number of suggestions. One concerns provision of a new road between the A21 and the school with a suggestion that one had originally

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been proposed when the school had first been planned. Another suggests that something realistic has to be offered in the form of controls to minimise the increase of vehicles delivering children to the school and keeping these to an area that causes the least disruption. There is suggestion that Pearse Place should be a “no go” area for parents delivering their children to school by car leaving Spray Hill as an easily accessible and suitable access and there is a suggestion that an entrance to the school could be created off Spray Hill. There is also a comment that local authority policy should be to restrict vehicle movements whereas here there can only be a further increase in vehicular traffic to the detriment of essential road users and a suggestion for the Planning Committee to attend the site to note the existing situation at the opening and closing of school before any additional numbers are added.

Discussion

19. This application is being reported to the Planning Application Committee as a result of the 3 neighbour representations received to the revised proposal. In considering this proposal, regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in **paragraph 13** above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
20. Therefore the proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. In my opinion, the key planning considerations in this particular case relate to the need for the extension building and whether it is in the right place, of the right design type and whether the likely impacts as a result of the proposal have been satisfactorily addressed, in particular, the highways impacts and landscape and heritage impacts given the location within the AONB and the proximity to the Conservation Area. These issues are considered below within the headings of need, location and potential for impacts.

Need

21. The purpose of this application is to provide classroom accommodation for additional pupils at the school. The school currently has a planned admission number of 140 children, although there are currently 161 pupils at the school. The proposal would provide facility for a one form entry school increasing the entry numbers in Reception from 20 to 30 children per year and taking the total school roll to 210 pupils. If permission is granted the applicant proposes that one form entry intake would start from September 2014.
22. The NPPF considers that a key facet of delivering sustainable development is promoting healthy communities and as part of this attaches great importance to ensuring sufficient choice of school places to meet demand. It advises that local planning authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools and to work with schools promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted. The Government’s planning statement “Planning for Schools Development” (August 2011) also concerns the sufficient provision to meet growing demand for school places, increased choice and opportunity and raising educational standards. There is strong planning policy support for the improvement of school facilities and for local planning authorities to take a positive approach when dealing with such proposals. That includes the adaptation and improvement of existing school facilities.

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23. I am persuaded that the School has a general need for this proposal given the information provided within the application. However, that needs to be balanced against the likely impacts, including that relating to additional traffic as a result of the proposal. This is considered further below.

Location

24. The school, which is on a relatively new site having only been permitted in 2004, is located within the High Weald AONB. It is also located Outside the Limits to Built Development, although the site had been safeguarded in the Adopted Tunbridge Wells Local Plan allocated for educational use. TWBC Policy EN25 requires consideration of the impact of developments outside the limits to Built Development on the landscape character of the locality and to the landscape setting of settlements. It also requires extensions or alterations to existing buildings to respect the local building style and material and have no significant adverse impact on the form, appearance or setting of the building and respect the architectural and historic integrity of any adjoining buildings.
25. This proposal to meet increased demands for school places is therefore at an existing site within the AONB where the principle of use of land for primary school education has already been established. Planning policy requires adequate consideration to the location within the AONB. In particular, core policy 5 which seeks the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB. The site is also adjacent to the Conservation Area. The proposed design therefore needs to take account of the location within the AONB and the location adjacent to the Conservation Area and be sensitive to the site context and surroundings in order to minimise the impact of the development and not compromise the objective of protecting and enhancing the valued landscape of the AONB and to ensure that the proposal does not give rise to any significant adverse impact. The NPPF advises that great weight should be given to preserving landscape and scenic beauty within the AONB. Development policy CP4 also requires special regard to the setting of the AONB. The NPPF advises that impacts between any aspect of the proposal and the Conservation Area as a heritage asset should be avoided or minimised and that any harm to the significance of the heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In my view the design concept for the proposed development has taken the location next to the Conservation Area and the AONB into account and would not therefore result in significant harm. The design concept respects the building style and materials used within the original building and the wider site context. Taking into account comments received from TWBC, Heritage Conservation and that there have been no adverse comments regarding design and appearance of this proposal to the form, appearance or setting of the building nor significant adverse impact to views toward the proposal from the Lamberhurst Conservation Area, or within the AONB, I conclude that the design does not give rise to any significantly adverse design impacts in this location.
26. Given the national policy support for schools development and the location of this proposal within an established school site, I consider that the proposal in this residential area on the edge of Lamberhurst would not be inappropriate, subject to consideration of whether the impacts as a result of the proposal are acceptable in this location and that the potential for any undue adverse impact has been minimised. This is discussed further below.

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Potential for impacts - highways and traffic

27. In my opinion, one of the key determining issue in relation to this application is the visual impact given the location within the AONB and adjacent to the Conservation Area and the potential for highways impact.
28. Vehicle access to the school is via Pearse Place which is a residential street and cul de sac. The road is single carriageway with enough room for two vehicles to pass however this is restricted when vehicles are parked in the road. There are white line road markings only at the road entrance on the first 26 metres from the junction with Town Hill. There do not appear to be any road markings establishing parking restrictions in Pearse Place near to the school.
29. As required by development plan policies TR1 and CP3, the applicant has submitted a Transport Statement and School Travel Plan. These recognise some of the issues described by the neighbour representations received with regard to congestion and the impacts to amenity in Pearse Place as a consequence of children being picked up from school. Some of this congestion is attributed by the applicant to parked vehicles within the road reducing the number of passing places along with an influx of vehicles in both directions. It was noted by the applicant that parents park also in Town Hill and the High Street in Lamberhurst causing further parking congestion within the village. The Transport Statement also notes inappropriate parking and also that parents had parked in zones specifically designed for residents of Pearse Place, in particular a parking area signed "residents only" which was at full capacity with parents also using it as a turning point. Potential hazards to road users as a result of inappropriate parking and manoeuvring was also acknowledged by the applicant although records indicate that there have been no accidents for the area surrounding the school site for the past 3 years.
30. There are currently 20 parking spaces at the school (including one for drivers with impaired mobility) and 20 FTE teaching staff. The proposal would result in one additional teacher and two additional spaces are being proposed as part of this application thus providing sufficient parking for staff working at the site. The applicant also proposes an increase to the number of cycle spaces at the site and that 210 pupils would require 4 cycle parking spaces to be provided which the applicant proposes can be done through the School Travel Plan. I am therefore satisfied that saved Policy TR5 and TR9 concerning parking and cycle provision has been satisfied with the parking provision included within the proposal.
31. There are no proposals to change the exit and entrance to the school. The school does not provide any on site pupil drop off and collection facilities and the applicant states that there is no scope to do so because of land constraints. There is no public transport serving the school and approx 2/3rds of pupils are currently driven to school, the remainder walk. The school is well served by footpaths linking the school to residential areas within the village. PROW (WT387) runs alongside the school providing access from the south of Lamberhurst to the B2162 within the centre of the village and a further PROW (WT379) provides access from the north of the school of the sports ground to the north east.
32. The applicant's Transport Statement has established that parents also use several locations to drop off and collect children including at Spray Hill, and good pedestrian links exist to the school. However, a pupils' hands-up survey established that currently 61.4% of children are dropped off at the main school access or on Pearse Place. The

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Transport Assessment concluded that the capacity in Pearse Place needs to be lower than this and proposes that the School Travel Plan implementation would alleviate the traffic situation.

33. Despite the difficulties described at school pick up time in Pearse Place, the applicant's Traffic Statement concludes that with worst case scenario (i.e. assuming 100% attendance rate, all staff and pupil trips taking place within the same peak hour) an increase to 210 pupils on the roll from 161 currently at the site, without the influence of the School Travel Plan, would not be expected to have a significant detriment on the local highway network.
34. The applicant concludes that given road safety data and no incidents in the last 3 years that there are no road safety implications as a result of the proposal and that given the additional trip data the proposal is unlikely to have severe impact on the highway network such as to warrant a refusal of the planning permission. They further consider that the potential for impact would be further reduced by implementation of the School Travel Plan with measures to manage and reduce the number of pupils that are driven to and from the school by parents and to use sustainable travel modes and to manage the impacts from the school pick up and drop off period.
35. The NPPF suggests that the Travel Plan is a key tool to facilitate sustainable development in relation to transport issues and development plan policies TP1 and CP3 support this. The School Travel Plan measures proposed in this case concentrate on three key areas where significant improvements can be concentrated. There are currently two alternative access points to Pearse Place for drivers to the school which are via Spray Hill and Sand Road, although the Sand Road access point is currently less well used. One of the actions is to make greater use of these alternative access points, and to promote these through Sand Road/Spray Hill awareness weeks (whereby frequent users of Pearse Place are individually contacted and asked to use alternative access routes for a week and report back on their experiences); occasional rewards (eg ice lollies) for users of these routes; extending the school hours and/or staggering the gate times for different years to help spread the traffic over a longer period. School hours are 8.45 to 3.20pm with a breakfast club from 8am and a variety of clubs until 4.30 or 5pm. Another Travel Plan action is to facilitate increased car sharing, recognising that there are empty seats that can be used on the school run. The third key initiative is improved awareness of traffic problems through parental questionnaires, monitoring and start of year travel awareness packs.
36. The School Travel Plan includes other general goals concentrating on road safety awareness and cycling proficiency. In the longer term, the School would like to improve the Spray Hill access point to make improvements to the desirability as a walking route. The School wishes to divert a significant amount of the Pearse Place traffic to Spray Hill and intends to work through the Parish Council with this.
37. One neighbour representation received related to the number of children coming to the school that travel from homes well outside the catchment area. The School Travel Plan indicates that the majority of pupils come from within a 2 mile radius of the school, although historically a cluster of families came from the centre of Tunbridge Wells because of pressure on places in Tunbridge Wells. The School expects this trend to diminish and includes data indicating that in September 2014 applications exceed the 20 places currently available with pressure on places from those within 1.6 miles from the school. It is understood that the school serves the immediate locality of Lamberhurst Quarter, The Slade, Hook Green, Bayham and Kilndown. In the 2013 Reception intake,

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29 pupils were accepted, (14 of which were siblings), 24 live less than 2.2 miles from the school, 4 live up to 3.6 miles and 1 sibling from a family of 3 pupil's lives 6 miles from the school. In my view this indicates that the school is also serving a local catchment.

38. The three neighbour representations received concern congestion impacts of this proposal. The Parish Council whilst supporting the proposal also indicates serious concerns regarding traffic management and parking along Pearse Place and associated disruption to residents. The planning application provided information which recognises these impacts of the existing school. Notwithstanding the congestion impacts experienced in Pearse Place, the applicants conclude that the proposal is unlikely to result in a severe impact and with the introduction of Travel Plan actions the applicant expects the situation within Pearse Place to be alleviated. TWBC do not object to the proposal subject to parking provision being deemed appropriate by the KCC Highways Authority and mitigation measures as set out in the Travel Plan.
39. Kent Highways and Transport is the statutory consultee in relation to highway matters. The Highways Authority does not object to the proposal. Their view takes into account that the School already have increased numbers at the school (161) and that the proposed development would result in a further 49 children with one additional member of staff bringing the staff numbers to 21. They consider that using the recent figures of existing patterns of travel contained within the School Travel Plan submitted with the proposal, there would be likely to be an increase in the order of 20 additional parent cars at the school start and finish times as a result of the development. The Transport Statement submitted indicates that there would be a 10% modal shift from car use and the Travel Plan targets should support this shift. That would reduce the number of additional vehicles as a result of the proposal to the order of 12.
40. Given that the school is well served by footpath links and has alternative access points that can be made better use of, and that there is scope to facilitate and improve car sharing, I consider that this shift from car use is not unrealistic although would need to be supported by a more robust Travel Plan including more detailed actions and monitoring specifications. I consider that these aspects can be dealt with by condition requesting submission of an updated revised Travel Plan with subsequent annual review.
41. One of the neighbour representations received suggests that the Planning Committee visits the site at peak times. However, the issue of congestion and parking is one that is common to many schools and is often a concern considered by the Planning Committee in relation to school development proposals. In this case, I consider that the applicant has acknowledged and realistically described the impacts of congestion at the existing site, and these represent the issues also described by neighbours. The impacts have therefore been included within the Transport Statement and addressed via the School Travel Plan by the inclusion of realistic measures to minimise and manage the increase of vehicles delivering children to the school. However, these are not to the extent of making Pearse Place a "no go" area for parents delivering their children to school by car. I am however satisfied that an Informative can be used to require the limits of the highway boundary in Pearse Place to be clearly established as requested by the Highways Authority. The increased use of Spray Hill as suggested by one neighbour is also included within the Travel Plan actions to make greater use of alternative access points.
42. A number of suggestions in respect of highways issues in the neighbourhood have been made by local residents in their representations to the proposal. I consider that

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neighbour suggestions for provision of a new road between the A21 and the school and a new entrance to the school off Spray Hill, given the Kent Highways and Transport advice, would not currently be considered to be necessary in planning policy terms in order to make the development acceptable in order to mitigate against the likely highway impacts of this relatively small scale development. However, I am satisfied that the applicant can be encouraged by way of an Informative, to work with the local community in so far as is possible with regard to parking and highways matters and in the further revision of the School Travel Plan in order to encourage future proactive planning.

43. The proposal is likely to give rise to impacts as a result of construction work resulting from this proposal although these would be temporary whilst the work is being undertaken. The applicant would need to ensure that any potential for conflict between the school function is minimised along also with the potential for impact of construction traffic on the surrounding roads and residential amenity. The applicant states that there would be no HGV traffic waiting on the highway and that all construction traffic would be accommodated on site. They also state that the site would be registered with the Considerate Constructors Scheme and that they would seek to minimise the impact of their works upon their neighbours. I am satisfied the hours of construction work can be controlled by condition and that conditions can be used to control deliveries during the peak drop off and collection hours. I am also satisfied that conditions could be used to control the provision of construction vehicle loading/unloading parking and turning facilities during work on site and for the duration of construction and also the provision of parking facilities for site personnel and visitors on site and for the duration of construction.
44. The NPPF suggests that developments should only be refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe. The information within the application indicates that the impacts whilst already apparent in Pearse Place would not be so severe as to justify refusal of this proposal given the strong policy support for development concerning schools. Development Plan Policies ENV1, TP4 and CP3 also requires consideration of the impacts of traffic and that proposals should not cause significant harm to the amenities or character of the area in terms of excessive traffic generation. Taking into account the level of additional traffic that the proposal would generate and given the statutory consultee comments not objecting to the proposal, I do not consider that the additional traffic at peak times would result in a level of harm sufficient to justify refusal of the proposal given the Travel Plan actions to make greater use of alternative access points and the strong policy support for schools development.
45. I do not therefore consider that the highways impacts from this particular proposal to provide accommodation for 1FE at the school justifies refusal of the revised proposal on highways grounds, when balanced against the strong planning policy support for healthy communities in respect of adequate provision of educational facilities. Given the site context and location, and taking into account the additional staff parking proposed and School Travel Plan actions, I do not therefore consider that the additional highways impacts of the proposal would be unduly detrimental in this location. In particular, the public highway is provided for use by the public, whether as residents, visitors or otherwise, and it is not the purpose of the planning system to restrain such freedoms, unless serious highway safety risk dictate otherwise. However, any future proposals for further development would also need to be considered on their own merits in respect of highway and other impacts.

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Potential for other impacts – Design, biodiversity, sustainability and residential amenity

46. The school site is constrained by the site topography and existing space available within the site. The proposal is in my opinion well sited making use of available space within the site and the design and appearance is in my view appropriate to the location. The design in my opinion respects the style of the existing building as required by development plan policy EN25. The school is generally well screened by existing vegetation although there are views toward the site from Pearse Place and from further afield on the approach to the school from School Hill. The design impacts of the proposed extension have not attracted any neighbour representation or other adverse comment. The proposal has also not attracted any adverse comment in this regard from the Parish Council, TWBC nor KCC Heritage Conservation. Taking this into account, I am satisfied that the proposal respects the site context and character and would not lead to adverse design or visual impacts in this location and accords with the policy requirements of EN1, EN25 and EN5.
47. The first floor extension and outreach room is also in my view well sited in relation to the existing site and also neighbouring residential property, and given the consideration given to prevention of undue overlooking with no new windows facing properties to the east in Pearse Place, and consideration of the impacts of shading from the proposed new roof line to the nearest residential property (approximately 13m from the proposal at 61 Pearse Place), I do not consider there to be any other significantly adverse residential amenity issues as a result of the proposal.
48. The additional car parking bays and cycle rack proposed is to the west of the existing car park at the site, within an area of existing vegetation comprising young trees and shrubs. The additional parking spaces in my opinion would be well located in relation to the existing car parking facility. At the western boundary there is a tall holly hedge line and mature oak growing outside the planning application boundary in a neighbouring property which is within the Conservation Area and provides important landscape value. The applicant has carried out an arboricultural inspection in relation to the trees in the vicinity of the proposed parking bays. Works that would be needed to create the additional parking bays include removal of a section the young trees and shrubs in the proposed parking bay area; hand excavation in an area of root protection zone and root pruning by the supervising Arboriculturalist where appropriate and crown lifting of the off site oak tree to give sufficient clearance over the parking area. In their response to the proposal TWBC does not object to the proposals subject to condition concerning the protection of trees in accordance with the submitted tree protection plan. KCC Biodiversity advise that the removal of vegetation within the planting bed is undertaken outside of the breeding bird season unless the site is appropriately examined by an ecologist for nesting birds prior to works starting. Taking into account our Biodiversity advice I am satisfied that the potential for biodiversity impacts are minimised and with appropriate conditions relating to tree protection measures, I conclude that the Impacts in terms of biodiversity are tree protection are not unacceptable in planning policy terms.
49. In respect of sustainable design and construction TWBC Core Policy 5 encourages the sustainable design of new developments with reference to a number of design principles including encouraging efficient use of water resources, protection of water quality, be located so as to take account of flood risk and flood patterns and to be managed so as to reduce waste creation. Developments are required to be of high quality design creating safe, accessible, legible and adaptable environments.
50. I am satisfied that adequate consideration has been given via the design to lighting and

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energy efficiency, making use of natural ventilation and power conservation, acoustics and materials choice in order to address sustainability considerations for this small scale extension.

51. In terms of taking account of flooding, this proposal lies outside the Environment Agency flood warning area in relation to properties near to the River Teise. It is not located in an area at risk of river flooding and the site has not been identified by the Environment Agency as one which is at high risk of flooding. According to the Environment Agency website, the risk of flooding from surface water in the area is “very low”. However, there have been historic issues concerning surface water flooding in Pearse Place resulting from overland flow which are documented by Kent County Council’s Flood Risk Management assessment as being historical and resulting from overland water flow along the route of a footway/path to the south. These matters were also of concern at the time that the planning application was considered for the school location in Pearse Place and there was a condition imposed on the permission concerning surface water drainage measures also requiring extension of a granular filled trench soakaway across the PROW on the southern boundary of the site. It is also noted that Kent County Council, in the Flood Risk Management Surface Water Management Plan (October 2013) has a long term action to monitor the situation with regard to overland water flow along the route of the footpath and surface flooding. The footpath is located outside of the school site to the south east.
52. The applicant proposes connecting the surface water drainage arising from the proposal to the existing drainage systems. They consider that the additional flows would be minor and that existing systems would easily absorb the levels of increased flow. In addition, Southern Water would require a formal application to be made to them for any new connection to the public sewer and surface water and request that an Informative be used on any permission concerning this. They also request that a condition be attached to any consent requiring details of proposed means of foul and surface water sewerage disposal to be submitted for formal approval. That would include consideration of catchment and capacity of the drainage network and given that there is no objection to the proposal from the drainage undertaker, Environment Agency, TWBC nor Parish Council, and the scale and nature of the proposal, I am satisfied that this matter can be adequately addressed via such a condition in order to ensure that the proposal has adequate drainage provision that does not adversely affect conditions outside the site by further adding to flow or increasing surface water flooding.

Conclusion

53. This proposal seeks to address accommodation needs for proposed school expansion to meet local needs. Planning policy seeks to achieve sustainable development which requires consideration of location, design, need and impacts. The applicant is aware of their contribution to travel patterns and impacts within the locality as demonstrated by the Travel Plan and includes additional staff parking and cycle parking facilities within the proposal.
54. Taking account of the comments arising from statutory consultation, including no objections being received from any of the statutory consultees, I consider that the proposal responds to the site context in so far as is possible within the scope of this proposal and accords with the general aims and objectives of national and local planning policy requiring good design, respecting AONB landscapes and Conservation

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Area objectives and promoting healthy communities, sustainable transport and travel planning and encouraging a positive manner towards schools development.

55. I consider that this proposal accords with the Development Plan and that there are no material planning considerations that indicate that planning permission should be withheld. I would however recommend the inclusion of various planning conditions and informatives.

Recommendation

56. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:

- The 5 year time limit;
- That the development be carried out in accordance with submitted details;
- Implementation of the School Travel Plan actions with submission of a revised travel plan within 6 months of the date of the permission and subsequent annual review;
- Provision and retention of 2 additional vehicle parking spaces before the premises are occupied;
- Provision of the additional cycle parking shelter;
- Requirement to submit prior to construction works details of the proposed means of foul and surface water sewerage disposal for approval by the Planning Authority in consultation with Southern Water;
- Tree protection measures in accordance with the Tree Protection Plan submitted;
- Biodiversity measures concerning the removal of vegetation and protection to breeding birds;
- Restriction of construction hours to between 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday , 0900 and 1300 Saturday with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays;
- Restriction of construction vehicles delivering materials between the hours of 08:00 to 09:00 and 14:45 to 15:45 Monday to Friday.

I FURTHER RECOMMEND THAT the applicant BE ADVISED of the informatives covering the following:

- Manoeuvrability within the car park; necessary highway approval and consent and establishing the limits of the highway boundary and advising the applicant to contact KCC Highways and Transportation to progress these aspects of the works prior to commencement on site.
- Assistance in the production of a revised Travel Plan can be obtained from Kent Highway Service's Travel Planning Team. The revised Plan should include clear action and target dates with measureable travel mode shift targets detail those with responsibility for taking forward. It should include monitoring and annual review. Discussion with the local community with regard to considering the community suggestions for parking and school travel issues is encouraged along with making use of the websites www.jambusterstpms.co.uk and www.responsibleparking.co.uk
- Discussion to be encouraged with the local community with regard to school travel issues.
- General advice regarding tree protection measures during construction and in order to ensure that the necessary approvals are sought from TWBC with regard to works to the tree located outside the site in the Conservation Area.

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- General advice from the Environment Agency with regard to consents and Southern Water with regard to site drainage and foul and surface water connection.

Case Officer: H Mallett

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Background Documents: see section heading
