

Four classroom extension, Queenborough Primary School SW/14/0394 (KCC/SW/0091/2014)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 11 June 2014.

Application by Kent County Council, Property and Infrastructure Support for a 4 classroom extension, new hall, link corridor, additional toilets and TA room, and new playground at Queenborough Primary School and Nursery, Edward Road, Queenborough – SW14/0394 (KCC/SW/0091/2014)

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Ms Angela Harrison

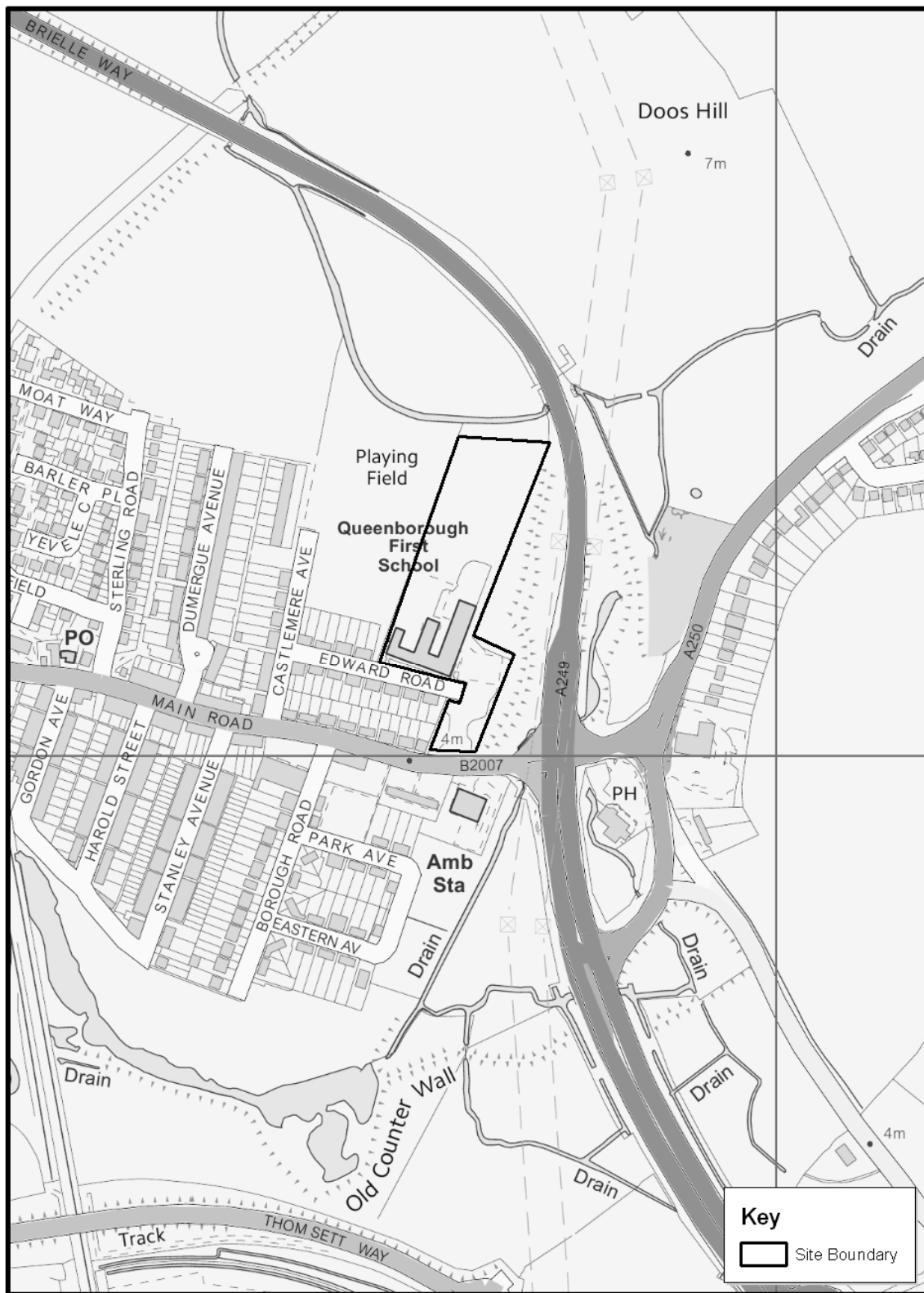
Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Queenborough Primary School lies on the northern side of Edward Road and is predominantly a red brick building under a tiled roof. The original building sits along the road frontage, but slightly back from the footpath and is partially screened by mature landscaping and trees along this boundary. The school has later additions to the rear, some of which are clad with white weather boarding and some are brick with coloured render panels on the elevations. The whole school is a mixture of single, two and three storey elements.
2. To the rear of the school is a large hard surfaced playground, and beyond that the grass playing fields. The nursery building runs along the eastern edge of the school site, and four mobile classrooms are situated at the northern end of the playground by the playing fields.
3. To the west of the school grounds, which are enclosed by 1.8m high black railings, is the King George V Playing Fields. There is a pedestrian access to these playing fields via a footpath along the western boundary of the school from Edward Road, but the fields are also open further to the west from Castlemere Avenue. To the north and east of the school grounds lies the grass buffer zone between the school and the A249 Brielle Way.
4. Both Edward Road and Castlemere Avenue are no-through roads, with hammerheads for turning at the end. The school car park, which provides 31 parking spaces, is accessed from the turning head in Edward Road.
5. Edward Road is narrow with no restriction for the parking of cars on the road. The residential properties here are semi-detached, some with off-road parking. Castlemere Avenue has both semi-detached properties and terraced properties. Access for vehicles to the school from Main Road is via Castlemere Avenue, into Edward Road. Main Road links directly onto the A249 Brielle Way via traffic lights.

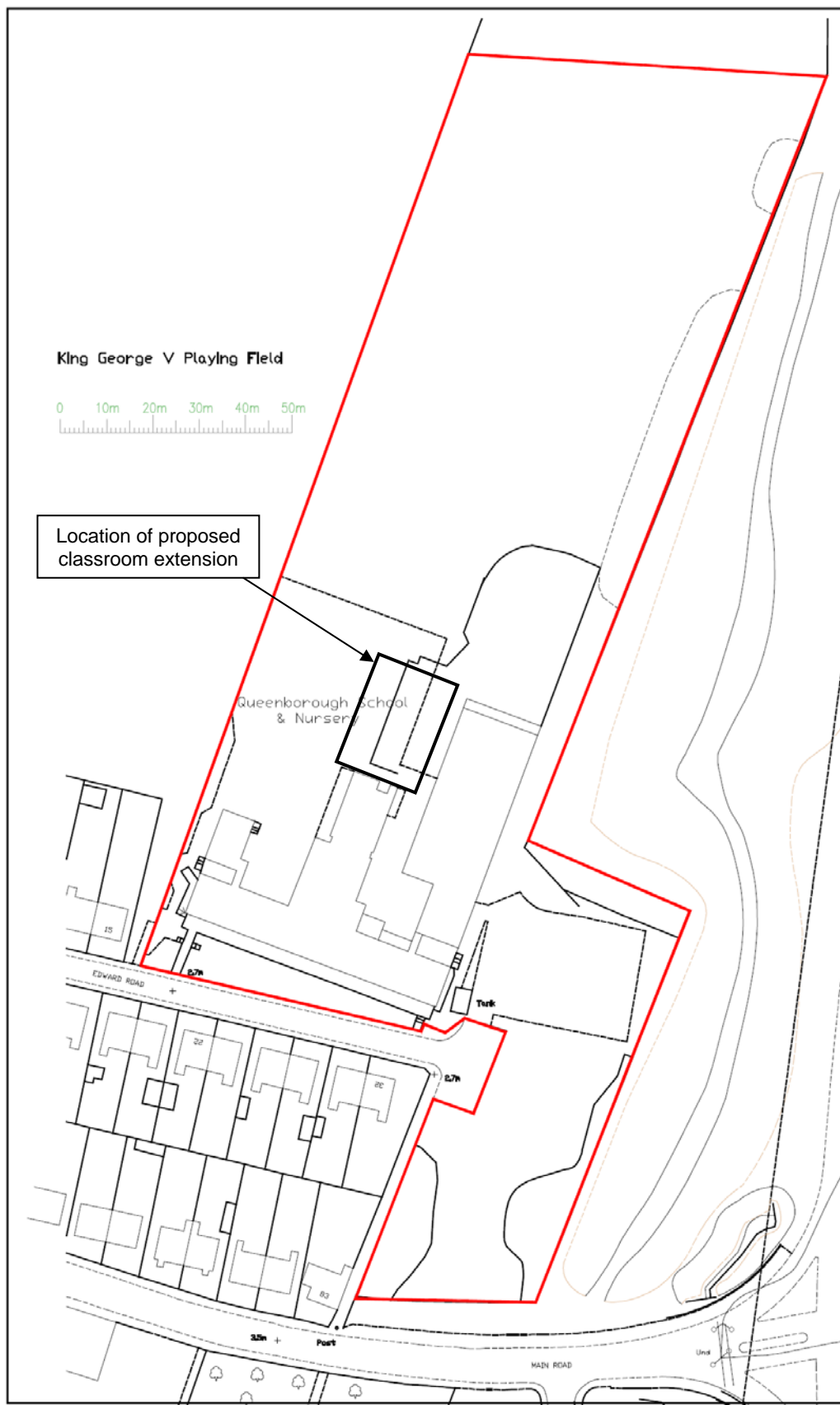
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General Location Plan



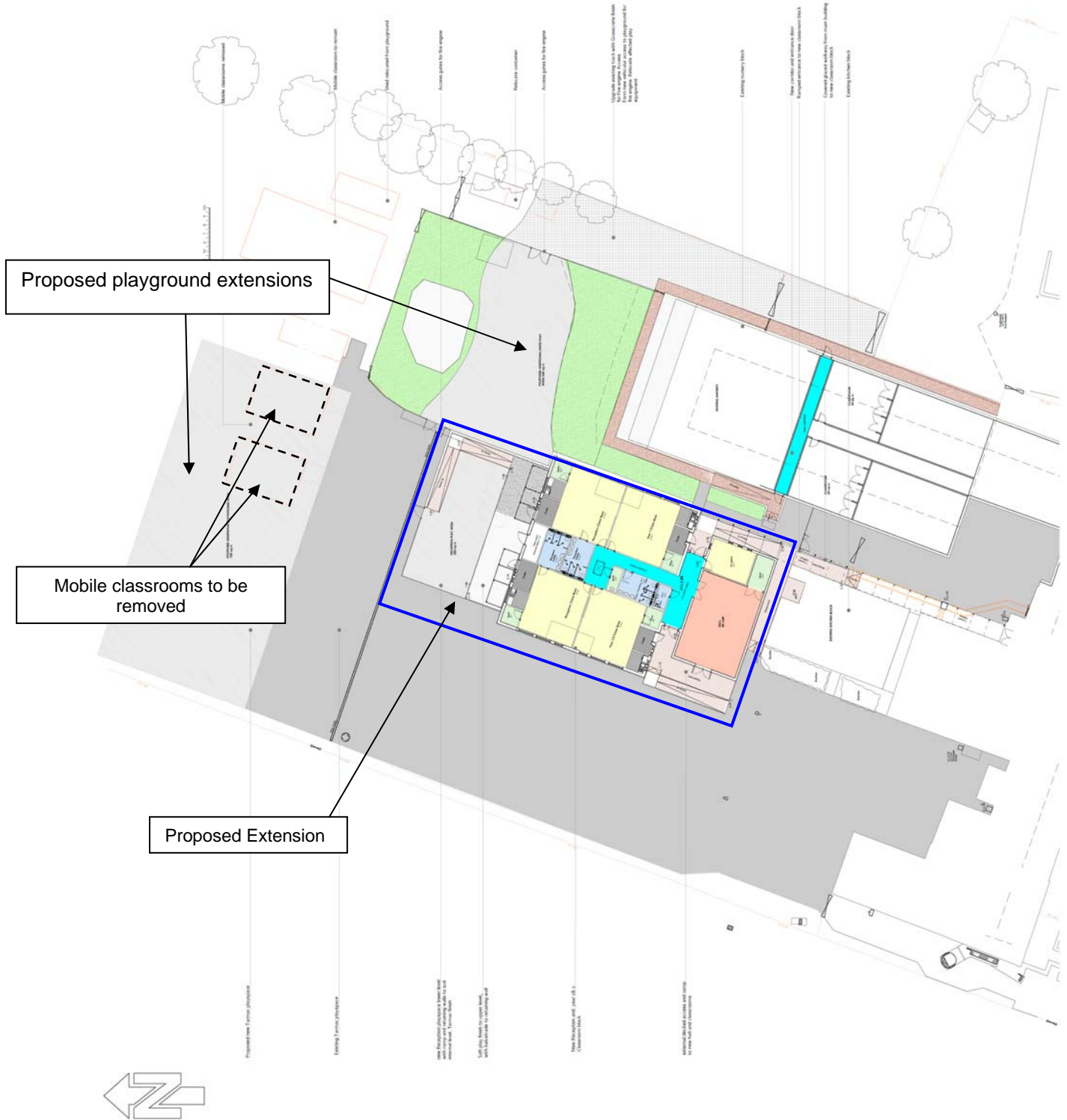
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Location Plan



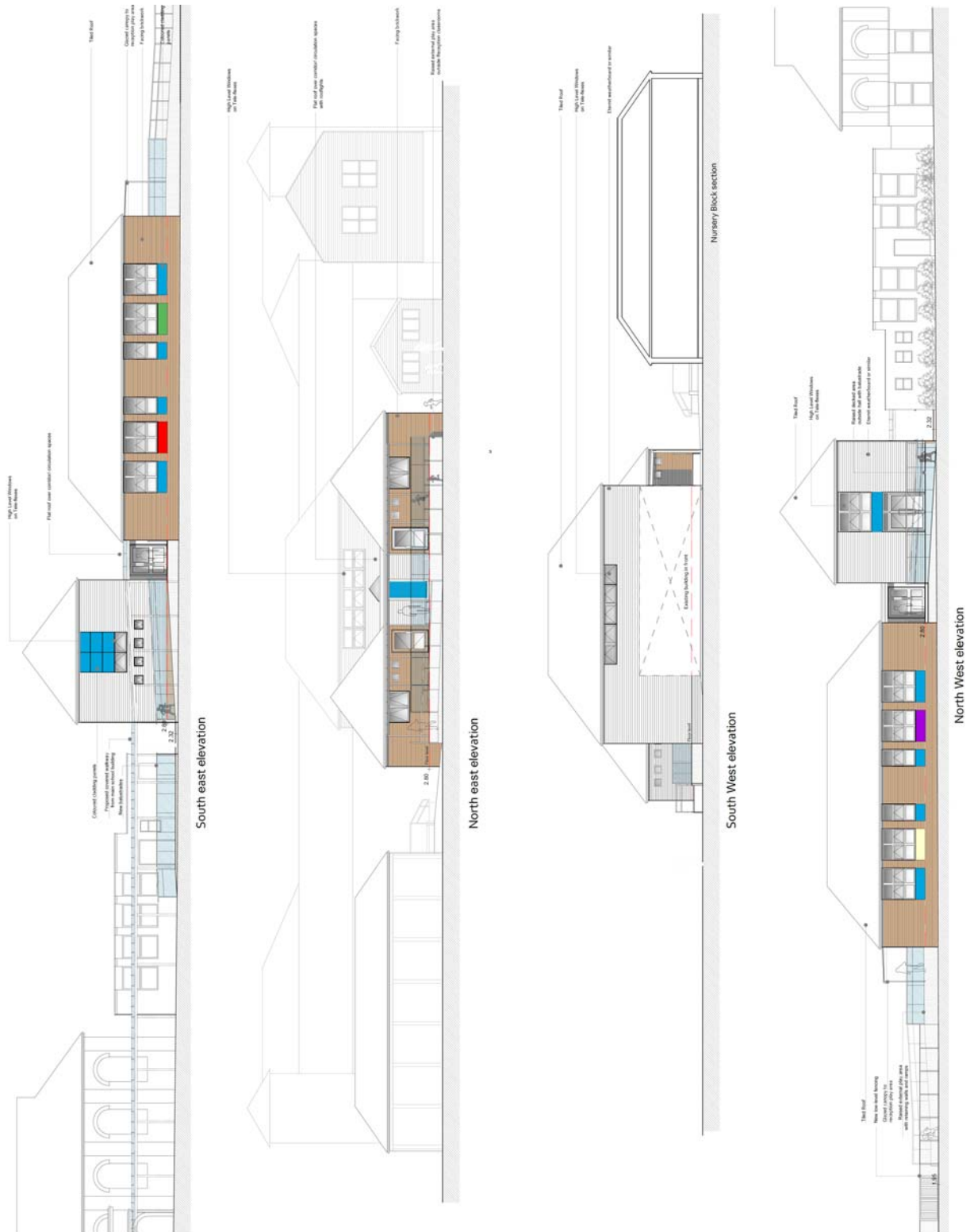
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Site Location Plan



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Proposed Elevations



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Background

6. Queenborough Primary School is a two form entry school (2FE) having changed from a 2FE First School to a Primary School in 2008 as part of the Sheppey Review of Education. The Published Admission Number (PAN) of the school was reduced from 60 to 45 at this time, but with the agreement that the PAN would be reviewed annually because of the growing pupil population numbers. With the agreement of the Governing Body the school has continued to admit more than 45 pupils per year since 2008 in order to provide enough primary school places. A consultation has been carried out as part of the County Council's Basic Needs Programme, to permanently increase the admission number from 45 to 60, and this has been agreed.
7. The increase in the PAN to 60 requires permanent classroom accommodation and facilities to be provided, as the temporary accommodation built when the school changed from a First School to a Primary is undersized and does not allow the PAN to be applied to all year groups. This application seeks approval to provide the accommodation required for that.
8. In addition, due to the pupil population on the Isle of Sheppey continuing to rise, the School has been asked to take a temporary bulge year in this September's intake (school year 2014/2015) to ensure there are sufficient Reception places to meet demand. That will require classroom accommodation for an additional 30 pupils. The existing double mobile classroom would provide this additional classroom accommodation and a separate planning application has been submitted to retain this for a further 5 years. In this second application the School are seeking to retain the two single mobile classrooms for a further 12 months to cover the construction period of the proposed extension being considered here, should it be approved. Once completed these mobile units would be removed.
9. To summarise, Queenborough Primary is already a 2FE school, with pupil numbers ranging between 50 and 60 pupils in each year. The proposed extensions would provide permanent accommodation for these existing classes and result in the removal of two of the existing mobile classrooms from the site. The additional pupil numbers that would be admitted this year (over and above the normal 2FE admission numbers) would be 30 in number, as a result of the bulge year.

Proposal

10. The planning application proposes an extension to the school to provide four new classrooms, with associated storage, cloakrooms and toilets; a new school hall, TA space and storage.
11. The four classrooms are sited in two pairs, with the circulation space and toilets located in between. The classrooms would have a pitched tiled roof, with the walls of brick construction with elements of coloured rendered panels located on the side elevations below the window openings. The two pitched roof elements would be linked in the middle by a flat roof over the circulation space. Projecting out on the north-eastern elevation would be a glazed canopy over the reception external play space.

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12. Located between the existing school buildings and the proposed classrooms would be the new school hall, a double height building also under its own pitched and tiled roof. The walls would be clad with weather boarding, and there would be high level windows on all elevations. Coloured rendered panels would also be included on this building.
13. The extensions would be linked to the existing school buildings via a covered walkway, with a raised deck outside the school hall, an enclosed reception play area, and ramped access from the existing playground into the new buildings. A new element of hard surfaced play space would be created to the north of the existing nursery, and an extension to the existing playground would be created at the northern end of the playground in the location of the two single mobile units. As set out earlier, it is proposed that these would be removed upon completion of the extensions.
14. Finally the existing track which runs along the eastern boundary of the nursery building from the car park would be upgraded with grasscrete to provide emergency access for fire engines, and an access gate into the new playground would be created.

Recent Site History

15. The following applications form the recent planning history for the site:
 - SW02/1188 – The removal of mobiles and temporary classrooms & the construction of a new single storey classroom/nursery extension – Granted 12 December 2002
 - SW/02/1277 – Enlargement of existing internal car park – Granted 06 January 2003
 - SW/06/1299 – Extension to existing toilet block – Granted 13 December 2006
 - SW/07/285 – Enlargement of existing windows – Granted 12 April 2007
 - SW/08/484 – Installation of mobile classroom and extension of existing playground – Granted 10 July 2008
 - SW/09/289 – Proposed 5 bay mobile classroom unit and single bay toilet unit – Granted 26 May 2009

Planning Policy

16. 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 and the **National Planning Policy Guidance** (March 2014), 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.

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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;
 - Achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
 - The great importance that the Government attaches to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities, and that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools.
- (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) **Swale Borough Local Plan 2008:**
- Policy SP1 Sustainable Development:** Proposals should accord with principles of sustainable development that increase local self-sufficiency, satisfy human needs, and provide a robust, adaptable and enhanced environment.
- Policy SP2 Environment:** Development should avoid adverse environmental impact, and where development needs are greater, adverse impacts should be minimised and mitigated.
- Policy C1 Existing and New Community Services and Facilities**
The Borough Council will grant planning permission for new or improved community services and facilities, and particularly those that include provision for wider public use.
- Policy E1 General Development Criteria:** Proposals should cause no demonstrable harm to residential amenity and other sensitive uses or areas; reflect positively characteristics and features of the site surroundings; and protect and enhance the natural and built environments.
- Policy E19 Achieving High Quality Design and Distinctiveness:** Development proposals should be of a high quality design and respond positively to design criteria.
- Policy E21 Sustainable Design and Build:** Proposals should incorporate sustainable design and build measures into the detailed design of new development in its use of siting, design, materials and landscaping.
- Policy T1 Providing Safe Access to New Development:** Proposals which cause unacceptable impacts of the capacity of the highway network or on highway safety will not be granted planning permission.
- Policy T3 Vehicle Parking for New Development:** Requires appropriate vehicle parking for new development in accordance with the adopted

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Kent County Council parking standards.

Policy T4 Cyclists and pedestrians: Requires cycle parking facilities for new development in accordance with the Kent County Council cycle parking standards.

- (iv) The draft **Swale Borough Local Plan ('Bearing Fruits')** (August 2013) also contains broadly similar policies on transport, parking, design and general development criteria, but these policies currently carry very little weight, given their draft status.

Consultations

17. **Swale Borough Council's** comments will be reported verbally once the application has been considered by their Planning Committee on 5th June.

Biodiversity Officer raises no objection to the scheme subject to the mitigation measures outlined in the Ecological Appraisal being implemented.

Environment Agency (Kent Area) raise no objection.

Queenborough Town Council were consulted on 27th March 2014. No comments received to date.

Kent County Council's Highways and Transportation raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions covering the following aspects:

- Precautions being taken to prevent the deposit of mud on the public highway
- Provision being made on site during construction for the loading, off loading and turning of operatives and construction vehicles.
- Details for on-site parking for site personnel, operatives and visitors to be agreed prior to the commencement of development, and retained throughout construction.
- The submission of a revised School Travel Plan prior to the development being brought into use.

Local Member

18. The local County Member, Ms Angela Harrison was notified of the application on 27 March 2014.

Publicity

19. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice at the entrance to the school, and the individual notification of 24 residential properties.

Representations

20. In response to the publicity, 5 letters of representation have been received. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:
- In favour of improvements to brilliant school but with concerns
 - Concern over works traffic access during construction

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- Edward Road is narrow with no passing places
- Congestion already occurs at school drop off and pick up times
- Will work be done during the school holiday period?
- Needs new access to Main Road otherwise very difficult for residents
- More pupils will result in more traffic in Edward Road
- The area cannot cope with more children and the traffic that would be generated
- Residents are trapped in homes or unable to return home during drop off and pick up times due to inconsiderate parental parking across driveways
- Damage occurs to residents cars in Edward Road from pupils
- Parents use residents driveways to park on and wait for children
- Verbal abuse occurs from parents towards residents
- School needs a very big car park and turning facilities or new access onto Main Road
- During drop off and pick up times there would be no way for an emergency vehicle to access Edward Road
- Suggest one way system for cars entering Edward Road but leaving via a new road
- Current access at Castlemere Avenue will be further impacted by an increase in pupil numbers.

Discussion

21. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 15 above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore 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.
22. This application is being reported for determination by Members of the Planning Applications Committee following the objections of neighbouring residents. In my view the main issues to consider are whether the design and layout of the extensions are acceptable, any impact on residential amenity from the physical form of the proposed extensions and the traffic and parking impacts arising from the proposal.

Design and Layout

23. The proposed extensions are of a simple brick and tile design, and both elements incorporate pitched roofs. They would be attached to an existing flat roof element of the school, and would be easily read as later additions to the school, however, the proposed design picks up elements of the existing school to provide some form of cohesion amongst the whole school.
24. The use of coloured render panels would reflect the coloured panels on the existing building to which this element would be attached and would add interest to the design of the classrooms, and is therefore considered appropriate.
25. The heights of the extensions would relate well to the existing school buildings. The classrooms are single storey in height and of a similar scale to the nursery extension previously added to the school. The proposed hall has a higher ceiling height to allow for indoor sports, but again is of a comparable scale to the other two storey elements on the school.

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26. The proposed extensions would be sited on an area of existing hard surfaced playground. To compensate for this loss a new area would be created by extending the playground further north into the area currently occupied by the two single mobile classrooms, and the edge of the grass playing fields. Furthermore a new hard surfaced area would be created to the north of the nursery. The proposed reception classes would be provided with their own enclosed play space, located in the same area. The school benefits from a large hard surfaced playground at present and it is considered that the overall provision, with the extensions proposed would be acceptable in providing an appropriate amount of play space.
27. The encroachment of the hard surfacing onto the edge of the grassed playing fields would not result in the loss of any useable space for sports provision, due to the existing siting of the mobile classrooms in this area.
28. The extension of the access road running from the car park alongside the nursery building would be constructed with grasscrete and would therefore retain the green appearance of this section of the site. The access road would only be used for emergency vehicle purposes.
29. The overall size and design of the extensions are considered appropriate, in keeping with the existing school, and would not result in any visual harm to the wider area, in accordance with Policies E1 and E19 of the Swale Borough Local Plan.

Amenity Issues

30. The proposed extensions to the school are located on part of the existing playground, and relate well to the existing buildings on the school site. The extensions are well screened from the residential properties on Edward Road by the existing school, and I consider that the physical structures would have no significant detrimental impact on the amenity of the occupiers in these properties.
31. Whilst the protection of privately obtainable views is not a material planning consideration, the proposed extensions would be visible across the King George V playing fields from the properties in Castlemere Avenue, but at such a distance I consider again, that they would have little impact on the occupiers of these properties.
32. In terms of the physical structures it is therefore considered that the proposals would accord with Policy E1 of the Swale Borough Local Plan.
33. The main amenity issues concerning the occupiers of neighbouring properties relate to highway and parking issues discussed below.

Highway and Parking Issues

34. The application has been supported by the submission of a Transport Assessment (TA) which has been considered by the Highways and Transportation Advisor. By assessing the existing travel modes for pupils attending the school, the TA has calculated the likely increase in vehicle trips that would be associated with the increase in pupil numbers associated with this school extension (i.e. the bulge class of 30 pupils). It concludes that there would be an additional 9 vehicle trips in both the am and pm peak hours for school traffic, allowing for the proportion of car sharing with siblings and friends that is expected.

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35. Given the level of vehicular activity and parking that is already associated with the school, the Highways and Transportation department have concluded that the anticipated impact would not be significant and would not be detrimental to highway safety. The roads surrounding the school (Edward Road and Castlemere Avenue) are already at saturation point for parking and the current demand has spread beyond these roads to include parts of Main Road and Queenborough Hall car park. There is more capacity at these locations to absorb any additional parking demand, considering only 9 additional vehicles are forecast.
36. The School has an existing Travel Plan in place, which would be required by condition to be updated to reflect the increase in pupil numbers associated with this application. As part of this it is recommended that the School promotes the use of other nearby residential streets for parental parking as informal 'park and stride' facilities which would help the current congestion experienced in both Castlemere Avenue and Edward Road itself.
37. There would be an additional 2 members of staff employed at the school in association with this extension (one Teacher and one Teaching Assistant for the bulge year class), however the current school parking facilities comply with the Kent Vehicle Parking Standards and an increase in this provision is therefore not required.
38. The Transport Assessment states that a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) would be applied for to introduce 12 metre corner protection double yellow lines at the junction between Main Road and Castlemere Avenue and Castlemere Avenue and Edward Road, to alleviate congestion from inappropriate parking at these junctions and allow for better through flow of traffic. The TRO is an aspiration for a measure that will help the situation, but it should be noted that the acceptability of the proposal does not require the TRO, and its failure to be implemented would not therefore present a case to refuse the application.
39. It is clear that the school traffic in the morning and afternoon peak times causes an amenity issue for the residents of properties in both Edward Road and Castlemere Avenue. As discussed above it is considered that the proposed double yellow lines would help alleviate some of the congestion at the junctions. Furthermore it is considered that these two roads are already at saturation point for parking and that the School would need to be proactive in suggesting alternative 'park and stride' locations for parents to park, which will be incorporated into the School Travel Plan.
40. The objections received queried whether an entirely new access to the school could be created from Main Road; or a route through Edward Road and out onto Main Road could be considered. Both options have been considered, but neither were deemed acceptable. The entirely new access from Main Road would be likely to result in queuing back onto the A249 junction because of 'right-turners' wanting to enter and likely on-site parking congestion overspill. Queuing on the A249 would attract objections from the Highways Agency on safety grounds. The option to route through Edward Road and out onto Main Road was considered more likely to *increase* the amount of traffic passing through Edward Road, which would also be deemed unacceptable.
41. It is proposed that the works would predominantly take place during the school holidays, however for any works that may occur during school term time, the use of a Construction Management Plan would be required to ensure conflicts with school traffic and residents are avoided. This issue has been further addressed below and would be covered by condition.

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42. Whilst it is acknowledged that the parking and traffic issues associated with the proposed extension are the issues causing most concern for the residents near the school, the anticipated increase in traffic movements are considered to be acceptable for the highway network and, subject to the highway related conditions suggested, no objection is raised to the scheme from a Highway point of view. The proposals are considered to accord with Policies T1 and T3 of the Swale Borough Local Plan.

Other Matters

Construction

43. Given that there are neighbouring residential properties, if planning permission is granted it is considered appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of construction to protect residential amenity (Monday to Friday between 0800 and 1800; Saturday 0900 to 1300; and no operations on Sundays or public holidays). It is also considered 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.
44. Should permission be granted a condition requiring the submission of a full Construction Management Strategy prior to commencement of development is considered appropriate. That should include details of how the site access would be managed to avoid peak school times, details of the methods and hours of working, location of site compounds and operative/visitor parking, details of site security and safety measures, lorry waiting and wheel washing facilities and details of any construction access.
45. In addition to the above, should permission be granted, a further condition to ensure that dust and mud are not deposited on the highway would also be considered appropriate, to minimise disruption to local residents.

Biodiversity

46. The application has been supported by the submission of an Ecological Appraisal covering flora, birds, mammals (bats, water voles, badger and hedgehog), amphibians (great crested newts and toads), reptiles and invertebrates. Additional information was submitted in April which reported on the additional survey work that was required for reptiles and amphibians, including the great crested newt. Kent County Council's Biodiversity Officer has considered the information submitted and confirmed that the proposals would not have any adverse effect on any of the species assessed, subject to the precautionary mitigation detailed in the report being carried out. Such mitigation includes, for example, that construction should be undertaken during spring/summer months to avoid disturbance to roosting birds; that lighting is directed away from surrounding boundary vegetation and marshland; and that works should be undertaken with care in case any hedgehogs, toads etc that are found during construction can be relocated to a safe area. Such mitigation could be covered by condition if consent was granted.

Flood Risk

47. The proposed development lies at the boundary of Flood Zone 2 and 3a and the application has been supported by a Flood Risk Assessment. This concludes that

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through the application of the Exception Test the proposed development is considered appropriate within Flood Zone 3a; that the proposed development would not increase the flood risk vulnerability of the site and only represents a minor increase in the impermeable area on the site.

48. The floor area of the extension has been set at 2.8m to match the floor levels of the most recent extension on the site and shallow ramps provide access from the proposed rooms to the external play spaces.
49. The scheme is therefore considered to be acceptable in relation to potential flood risk and accords with Policy E1 of the Swale Borough Local Plan.

Conclusion

50. The application has been considered on its own merits and in the light of the NPPF, the Planning for Schools Development Policy Statement and the Development Plan, and comments received raising concerns about the scheme. The proposed development is considered to be in keeping with the existing school and its surroundings from a design point of view. The extensions would be sited in close proximity to the existing school buildings, such that they would have little additional visual impact on the surrounding area. In addition it is considered that the extra traffic generated as a result of the increase in pupil numbers would not result in an unacceptable impact on the highway network or residential amenity, and would accord with the principles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.
51. Therefore, subject to the imposition of conditions, I consider that the 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, the Planning Statement and the guidance contained in the NPPF, and that permission should therefore be granted.

Recommendation

52. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
 - the standard 5 year time limit;
 - the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
 - the submission and approval of details of all construction materials to be used externally;
 - measures to be taken to prevent mud and debris being deposited on the public highway;
 - hours of working during construction to be restricted to between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays or Bank Holidays;
 - the submission of a Construction Management Plan, providing details of access, parking and circulation within the site for contractors, site personnel and other operatives & management of the site access to avoid peak school times;
 - the submission of an updated School Travel Plan prior to occupation, its implementation and on-going review;
 - The development being carried out in accordance with the precautionary measures, recommendations, and mitigation works detailed in the submitted Ecological Appraisal and supplementary information;

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- The removal of the two single mobile classrooms within 1 month of first occupation of the extension.

53. I FURTHER RECOMMEND that the following INFORMATIVES be added:

- With regard to the requirement to prepare and submit a revised School Travel Plan pursuant to the condition above, it is advised that you register with Kent County Council's Travel Plan Management system 'Jambusters' using the following link <http://www.jambusterstpms.co.uk>. Further information and advice can be obtained from the County Council's Transport Planner (Schools), Annette Bonner, who can be contacted at mytravelplan@kent.gov.uk. Jambusters is a County Wide initiative aiding Schools in the preparation and ongoing monitoring of School Travel Plans.
- A formal Traffic Regulation Order application should be made to Kent County Council for the introduction of corner protection (12m double yellow lines) at the junction between Main Road and Castlemere Avenue and Catlemere Avenue and Edward Road.
- Account should be taken of the Environment Agency's advice relating to waste hierarchy, which can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69403/pb13530-waste-hierarchy-guidance.pdf
- That the potential for biodiversity enhancements should be explored.

Case Officer: Helen Edwards

Tel. no: 01622 221055

Background Documents: see section heading
