

## Proposed expansion of Stone C of E Primary School, Hayes Road, Greenhithe – DA/13/1703 (KCC/DA/0372/2013)

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

Application by Kent County Council, Property & Infrastructure Support for Construction of a new two-storey and part single storey classroom block, incorporating welfare facilities and storage; extension of existing school hall; the provision of a parents drop-off facility and 10 off-site parking spaces; and the provision of 7 additional car parking spaces in the school car park at Stone Church of England Primary School, Hayes Road, Greenhithe – DA/13/1703 (KCC/DA/0372/2013).

Recommendation: permission be granted subject to conditions.

**Local Member:** Mrs Penny Cole

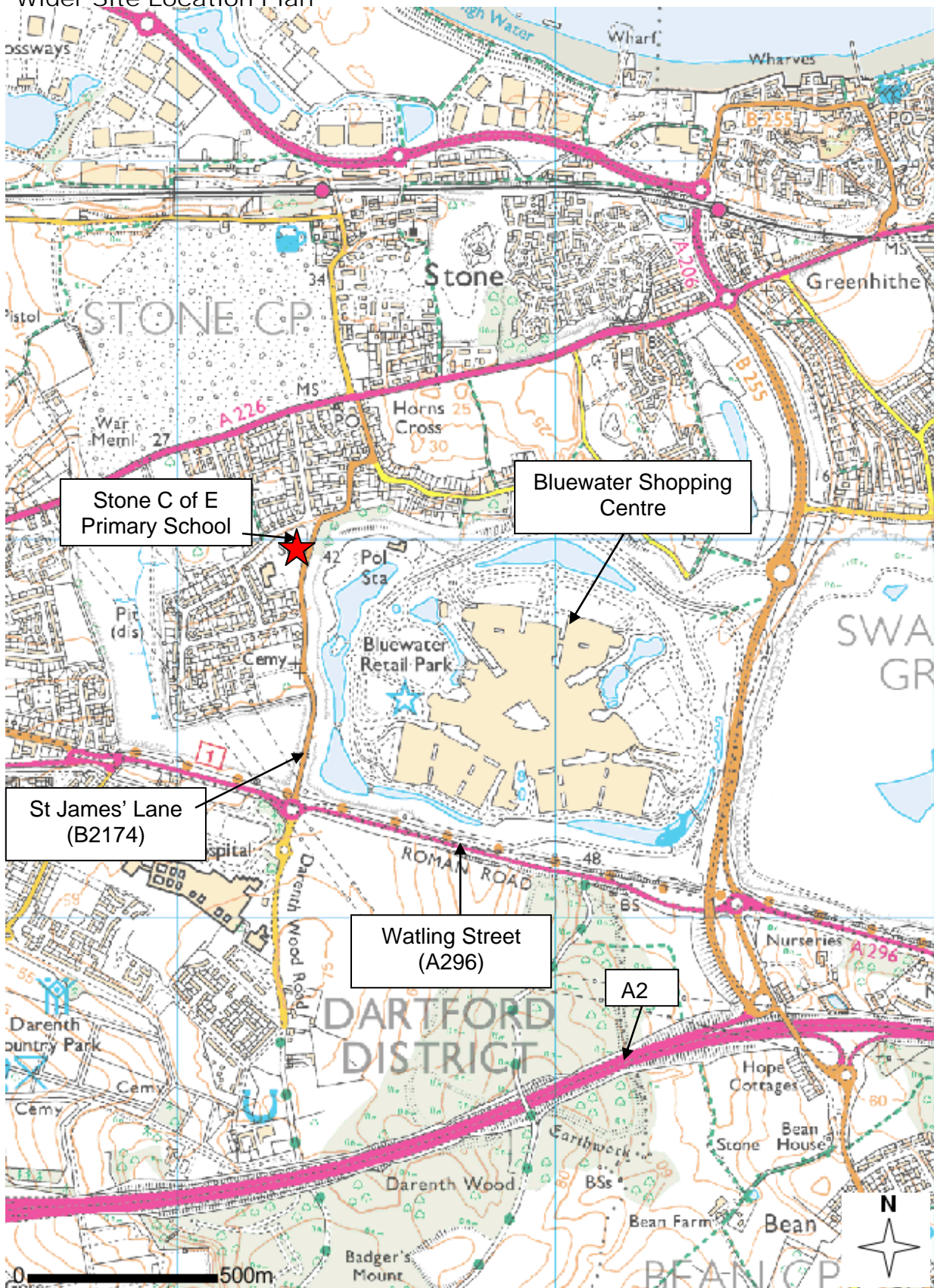
**Classification:** Unrestricted

### Site Description

1. Stone C of E Primary School is located in the village of Stone on Hayes Road, approximately 2km southwest of Greenhithe and 3km east of Dartford. St James' Lane (B2174) runs along the eastern boundary of the site with Bluewater Shopping Centre situated adjacent to the school, to the east. The site is located in a predominantly residential area, with residential properties situated along the western and southern boundaries of the school. Properties to the schools southern boundary are separated by a private access road. Stone Pavilion (a multi-use community facility) is located to the north west of the site. There is a recreational ground and car park associated with the Stone Pavilion located adjacent to the school.
2. The site comprises two buildings of brick construction with the main school building being primarily single-storey with a part two-storey element with flat roof. A standalone single-storey timber framed classroom block with double pitched roof was constructed in 2004. The main hard surfaced playground is located to the south of the site with a smaller playground used by reception class pupils to the north of the site. The school's sports field is located to the north east of the site. The school's pedestrian and vehicular entrances are located on Hayes Road.
3. There are no site-specific Development Plan Policies identified in connection with the application site itself, although general policies are set out in paragraph (15).

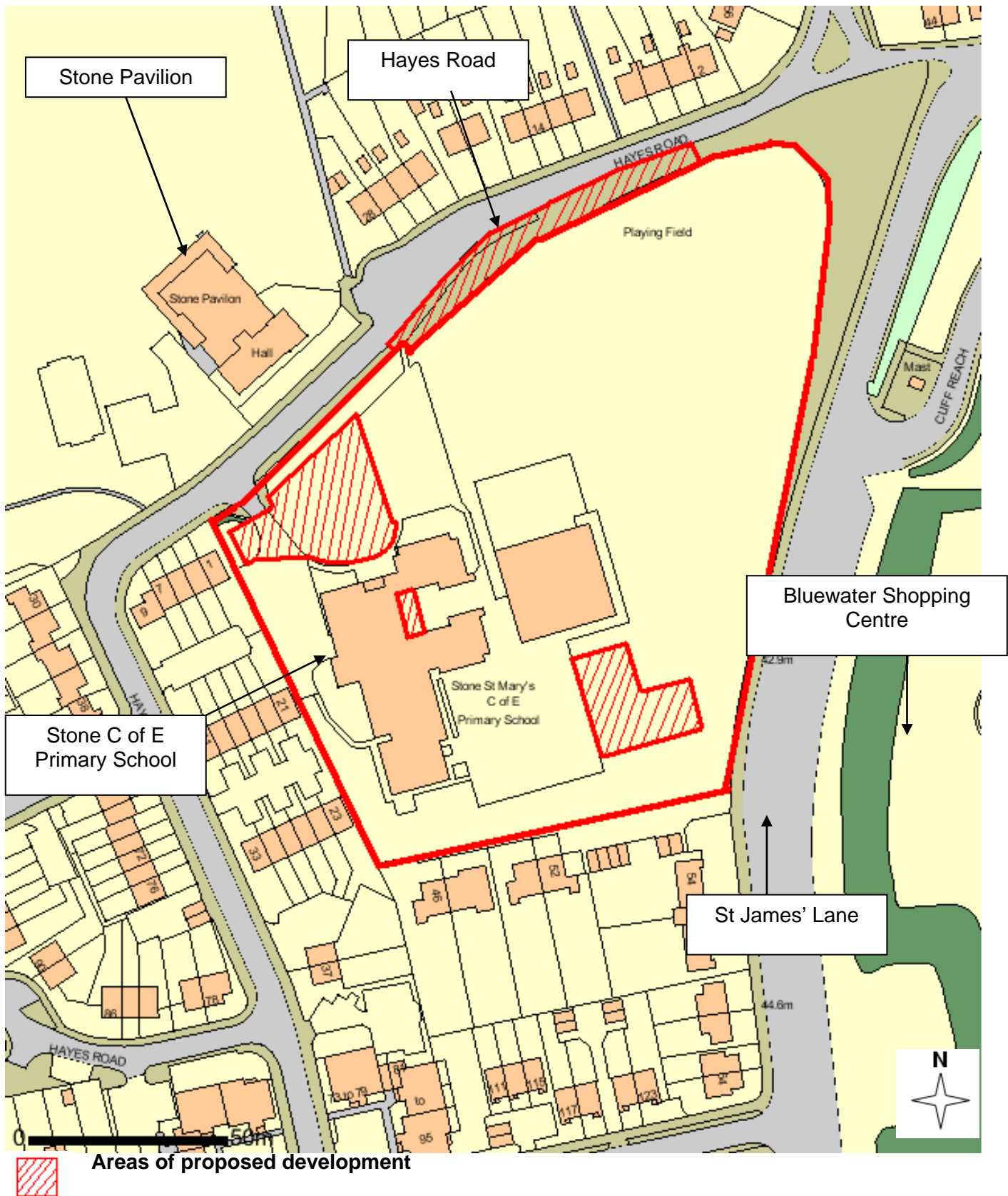
Proposed expansion of Stone C of E Primary School, Hayes Road, Greenhithe – DA/13/1703 (KCC/DA/0372/2013)

Wider Site Location Plan



Proposed expansion of Stone C of E Primary School, Hayes Road, Greenhithe – DA/13/1703 (KCC/DA/0372/2013)

Site Location Plan



Proposed expansion of Stone C of E Primary School, Hayes Road,  
Greenhithe – DA/13/1703 (KCC/DA/0372/2013)

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### Relevant Planning History

4. In recent years, Stone C of E Primary School has been granted planning permission for an application for replacement fencing and gates to the school site (DA/07/183) and an application which included the relocation of an existing mobile classroom; erection of a new single-storey teaching block and ancillary accommodation and adjoining reception playground; the refurbishment of the existing main entrance area; adaptations and extension to existing staff room; Headteachers office and M.I room and the provision of 16 new car parking spaces ( DA/04/266).

### 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 for educational purposes. The applicant states that the Borough of Dartford has seen significant growth in the pupil population over the last few years due to factors including the scale of housing development over the last decade, inward migration of families both from London and other parts of Kent and a rise in the birth rate. This inward migration has been far beyond historic levels and has resulted in a pressure on primary school places across the Borough.
6. The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2013-2018 provides forecasts that indicate an increase in the demand for primary school capacity which shows no signs of reducing over the forecast period. Stone C of E Primary School currently has 428 pupils enrolled at the school. The expansion programme would enable an increase from 2 form entry to 3 form entry with an additional 30 places each year for six years, creating an addition of 202 pupil places. The proposed accommodation would allow for the provision of a total of 630 pupils at the school.
7. The School currently employs 42 full time equivalent (FTE) staff positions who are at the school site on a daily basis. The proposal would lead to an increase of 18 FTE additional staff members, bringing the total members of full time staff to 60. An additional 4 part time members of staff would be employed at the school.
8. The application proposes an extension to the existing school hall, an 8 classroom teaching block with associated facilities; the provision of a parents drop off facility and 10 off-site parking spaces and 7 additional car parking spaces in the school car park. The proposals would allow the provision of accommodation for another form of entry each year thereby increasing Stone C of E Primary School from 2 form entry to 3 form entry. Two existing classrooms would be converted to a small hall and studio space but do not require planning permission.
9. The proposed hall extension would be a single storey construction with single membrane flat roof and brickwork to match the existing school hall. High level windows would be retained to maximise natural daylight to the rear of the school hall and white aluminium double glazed windows would be used on the eastern façade.
10. The proposed classroom block has been designed to be a part single storey, part two storey standalone building with the two storey element being stepped back from residential properties to the southern boundary of the school site. The proposed classroom block would be constructed of brickwork which matches the existing standalone classroom block. It was originally proposed to have a white render external finish to part of the proposed buildings eastern and southern façades. However

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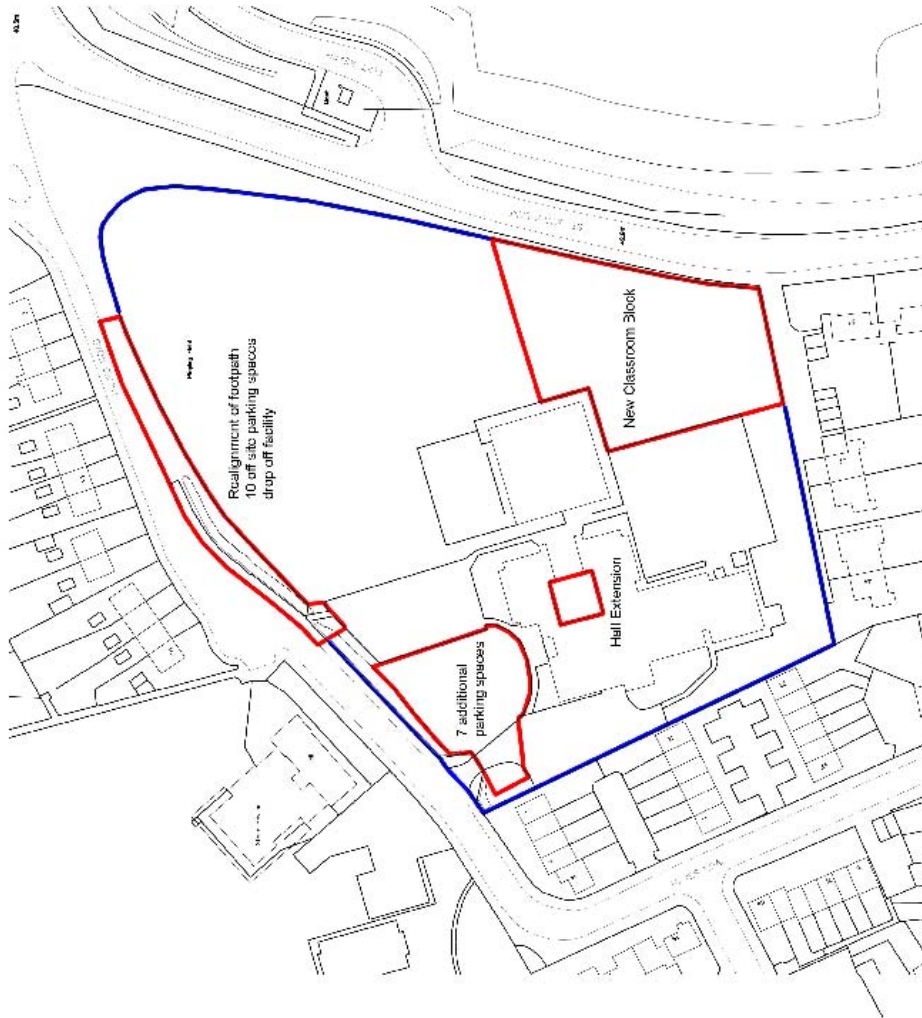
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concerns were raised by a local resident whose property lies to the school's southern boundary that the external finish would not be in keeping with the existing school buildings. Consequently, it is proposed by the applicant that the white render to these elevations is replaced with timber cladding which would be a similar colour to the proposed brickwork. Coloured feature panels are proposed with curtain wall glazing and an opposing angled mono pitched zinc seam roof.

11. The proposed classroom block would be built on an area of land currently designated as soft play which is currently 69% over provided and would still be within requirements for a 3FE school if the proposed classroom block is constructed.
12. Nine trees are proposed to be removed as part of the proposed development; including a single tree on the site of the proposed hall extension, 2 trees within the school car park to allow the rearrangement and provision of 7 additional car parking spaces and 6 trees located on the soft play area where the proposed classroom block extension would be situated. The applicant proposes to replant the trees that would be removed from the proposed hall extension area and proposed classroom block area and replant these along the school's eastern boundary. The proposed classroom block would be connected to the existing school buildings by extending the existing pathways around the perimeter of the proposed building.
13. The application as originally submitted was amended to include a parents drop off facility and 10 off-site parking spaces as part of the development. This facility would be located on Hayes Road, adjacent to the north of the school playing field. To accommodate the proposed parking spaces, the footway would be realigned, making use of an existing grass verge which runs along the footway. The parking bays would be available for use by parents during the start and end of the school day and typically limit parking in these spaces to 30 minutes. That would be controlled through the implementation of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to restrict vehicles parking and waiting in the bays during specified times. The applicant has agreed to pay a financial contribution to KCC Highways and Transportation to pursue a TRO as a separate application to the planning process.
14. The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement setting out the potential impact the proposed expansion of pupil numbers would have on the surrounding local highway network. Through the successful adoption of the School's Travel Plan, the applicant's transport consultant concludes that this will help to mitigate the traffic impacts of the proposed development. The proposed parents drop off facility and 10 off-site parking spaces along Hayes Road have been proposed to mitigate the current and potential future congestion issues along Hayes Road. In light of concerns raised by statutory consultees and local residents, the proposal was amended to include an additional 7 car parking spaces within the school car park for the use of staff and visitors.

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Proposed Site Plan



subject to site survey and I.a. approvals

**Stone St. Mary's Primary School**

number: 3483/P01 B location plan | date: nov 2013 | scale: 1:1000 | am: gve



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Proposed expansion of Stone C of E Primary School, Hayes Road, Greenhithe - DA/13/1703 (KCC/DA/0372/2013)

Existing and Proposed Block Plans



existing block plan

proposed block plan



subject to site survey and i.a. approvals

**Stone St. Mary's Primary School**  
number: 3483/P02 A block plans | date: nov 2013 | scale: 1:500 | dm: gve

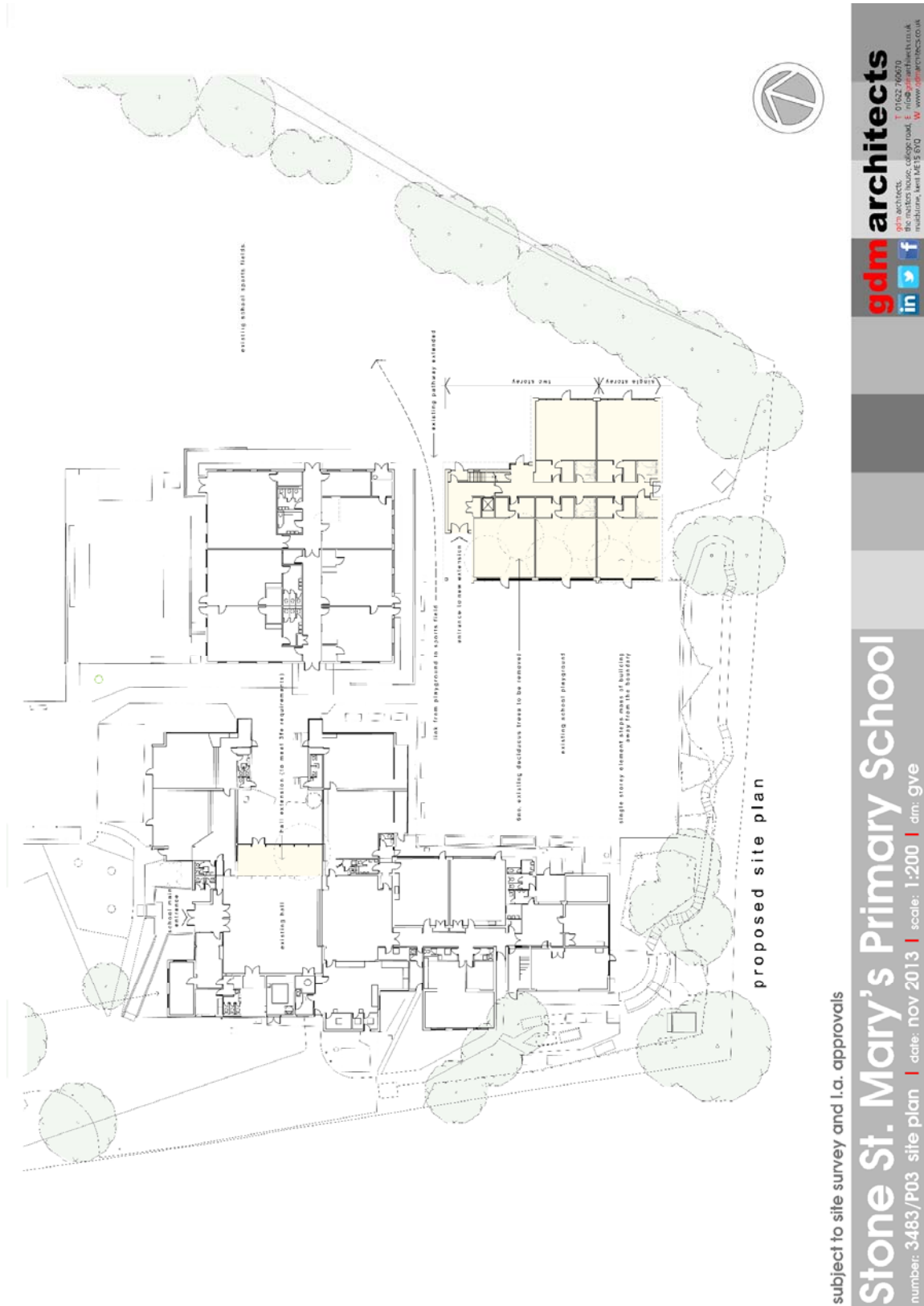


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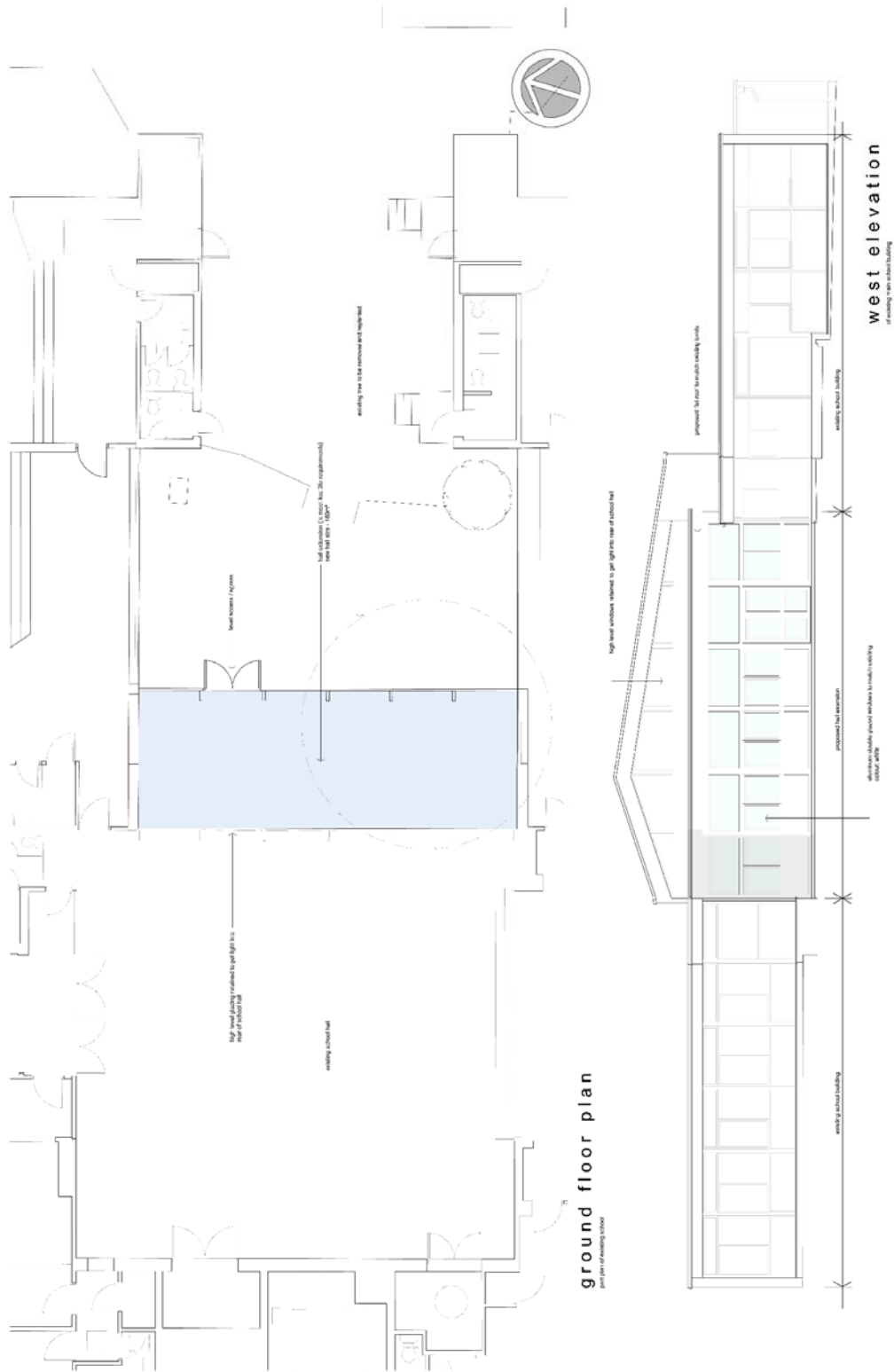
Proposed Floor Plan of Hall Extension and Classroom Block





Proposed expansion of Stone C of E Primary School, Hayes Road, Greenhithe - DA/13/1703 (KCC/DA/0372/2013)

Proposed Hall Extension Floor and Elevation Plans



subject to site survey and I.A. approvals

**Stone St. Mary's Primary School**

number: 3483/P09 | hall extension | date: nov 2013 | scale: 1:50 | dir: gve



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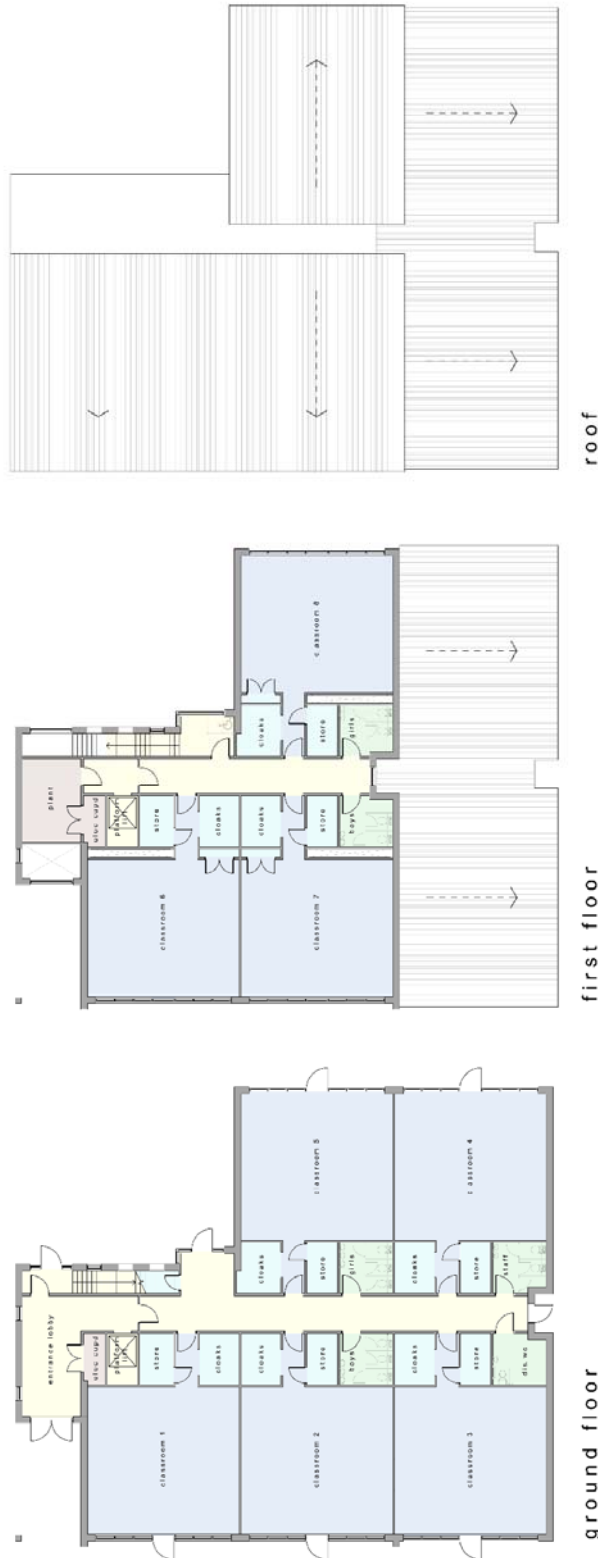
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Proposed expansion of Stone C of E Primary School, Hayes Road, Greenhithe - DA/13/1703 (KCC/DA/0372/2013)

Proposed Floor and Roof Plans - Classroom Block



subject to site survey and i.a. approvals

**Stone St. Mary's Primary School**

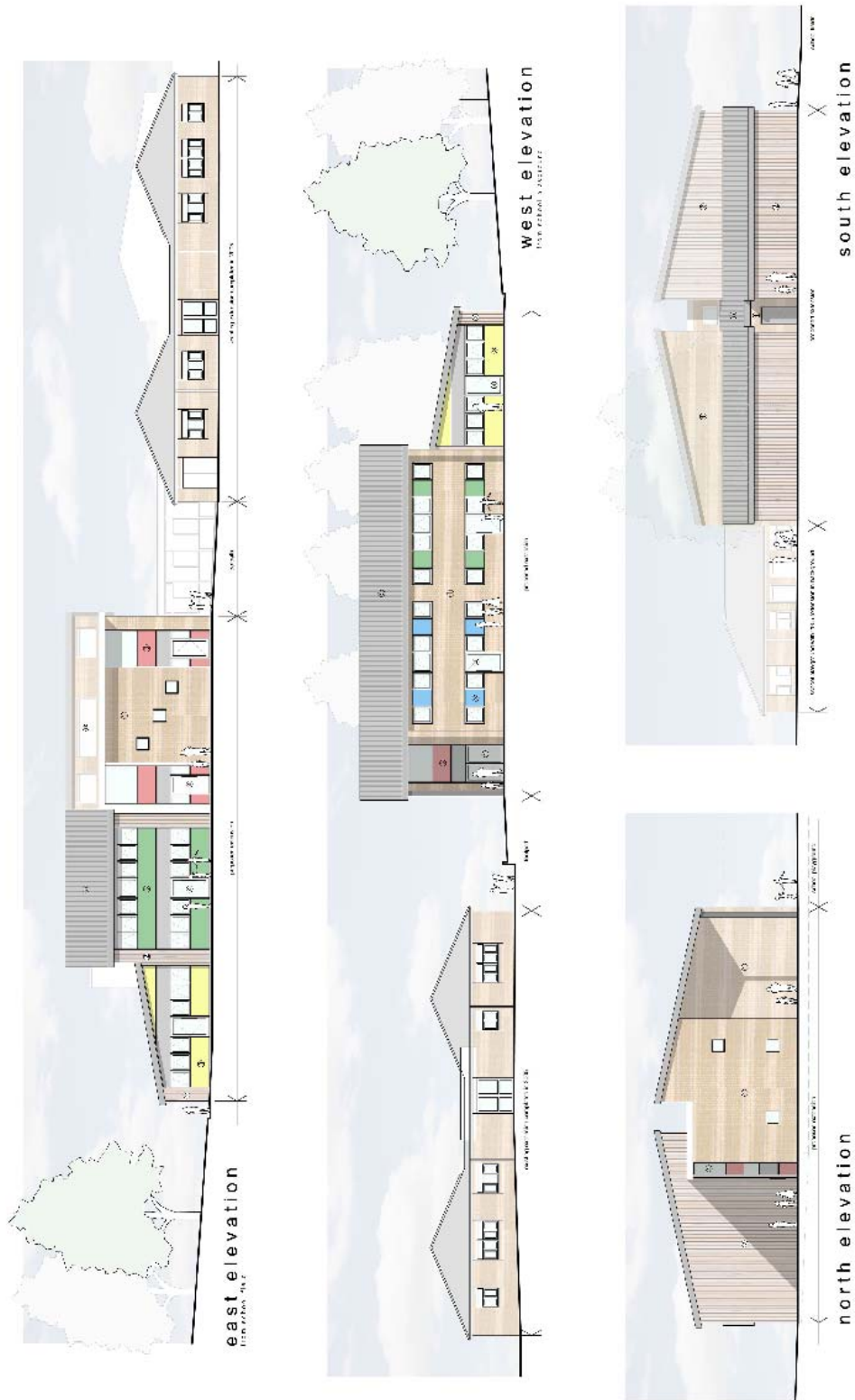
number: 3463/P04 proposed plans | date: nov 2013 | scale: 1:100 | dm: gve

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Proposed expansion of Stone C of E Primary School, Hayes Road, Greenhithe – DA/13/1703 (KCC/DA/0372/2013)

Proposed Elevations Plan – Classroom Block



subject to site survey and I.A. approvals

**Stone St. Mary's Primary School**

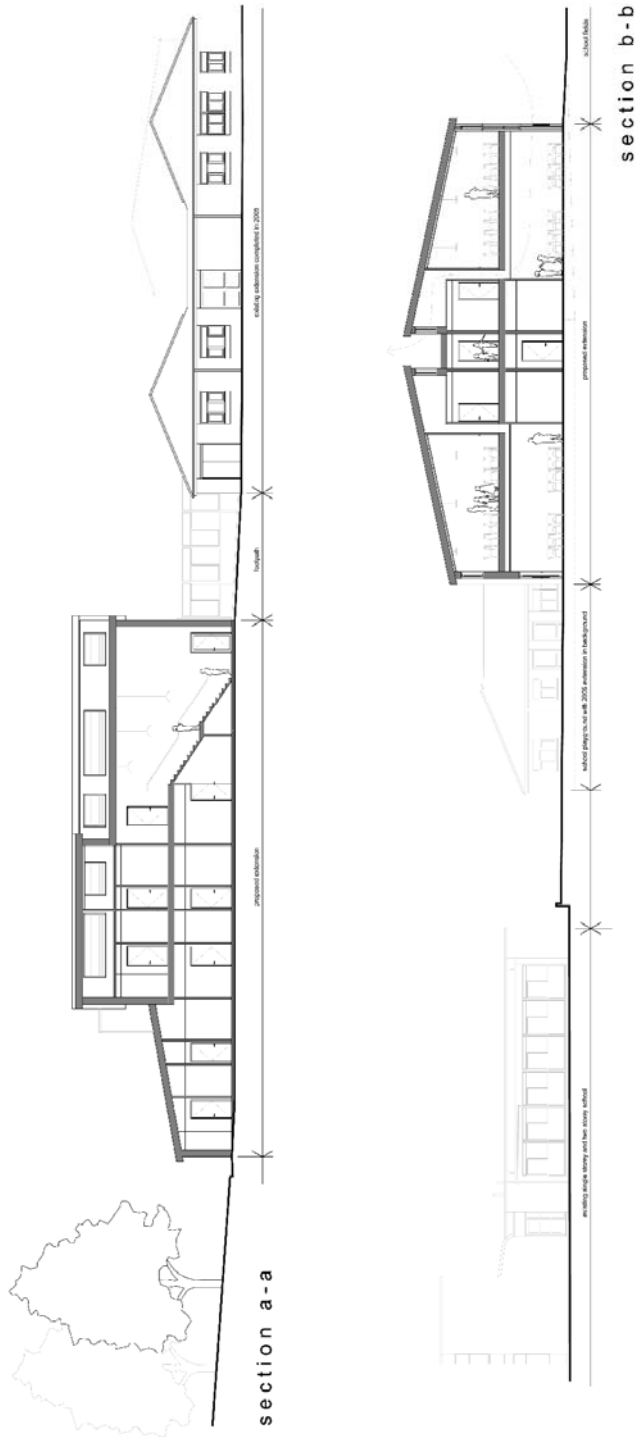
number: 3483/P05 proposed elevations | date: nov 2013 | scale: 1:100 | dm: gve

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Proposed expansion of Stone C of E Primary School, Hayes Road, Greenhithe - DA/13/1703 (KCC/DA/0372/2013)

Proposed Sections - Classroom Block



materials key

- ① brickwork to match previous school extension
- ② white colour render
- ③ coloured panels (red, blue, green, yellow)
- ④ double glazed aluminium frame windows/doors colour grey
- ⑤ metal beam structure
- ⑥ ventilation louvre

subject to site survey and i.a. approvals

**Stone St. Mary's Primary School**

number: 3463/P06 proposed sections | date: nov 2013 | scale: 1:100 | dm: gve

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Proposed expansion of Stone C of E Primary School, Hayes Road, Greenhithe – DA/13/1703 (KCC/DA/0372/2013)

Proposed Views of Proposed Classroom Block from School Field



1 perspective view from school field



subject to site survey and I.A. approvals

**Stone St. Mary's Primary School**

number: 3483/P07 proposed views | date: nov 2013 | scale: 1:100 | dnr: gve

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Proposed Views of Proposed Classroom Block from Entrance & School Playground



2 perspective view looking at entrance



3 perspective view from school playground

subject to site survey and I.A. approvals

**Stone St. Mary's Primary School**

number: 3483/P08 proposed views | date: nov 2013 | scale: 1:100 | dnr: gve

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## Planning Policy Context

15. 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 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;
- achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- the great importance that the Government attaches to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities, and that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools; and that
- Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement and to development that will widen choice in education; and

(ii) **Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development** (15 August 2011) which sets out the Government's commitment to support the development of state-funded schools and their delivery through the planning system.

(iii) The adopted 1995 **Dartford Borough Council Local Plan (Saved Policies)**:

**Policy B1** Development proposals should be appropriate for the location and should not have a detrimental amenity impact on the local area. A high standard of design should be implemented in proposals with layout, materials, adequate infrastructure, access and parking taken into consideration.

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- Policy B12** Archaeological sites will be preserved and protected.
- Policy RT15** Development proposals involving the loss of educational open space will not normally be permitted where the open space is important to the environment and amenity of the area in which it is situated, or where the use of the site meets an important local need.
- Policy S6** Development proposals should conserve and improve the existing built environment and a high quality and standard of design shall be achieved in new development.
- Policy T18** Traffic regulation orders will be made where practicable to prohibit or restrict the use of through traffic in sensitive environmental areas or on roads.
- Policy T19** Development proposals should be appropriately related to the highway network and not generate volumes of traffic in excess of the capacity of the highway network.
- Policy T23** Development proposals should include adequate off-street parking facilities.
- Policy T27** Development proposals shall make adequate provision for pedestrians.

(iv) **Dartford Borough Core Strategy (2011)**

- Policy CS21 Community Services:** Ensure the effective provision of community services.
- Policy CS22 Sports, Recreation and Culture Facilities:** Appropriate existing sport facilities will be protected.
- Policy CS23 Minimising Carbon Emissions:** Development proposals shall ensure reductions in energy use through design and layout of development
- Policy CS25 Water Management:** Development proposals shall ensure that the quality of surface and groundwaters is protected and enhanced.
- Policy CS15 Managing Transport Demand:** Development proposals which generate additional traffic should use measures to encourage sustainable patterns of travel including travel plans and Car Parking Supplementary Planning Document.

- (v) **Dartford Car Parking Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted July 2012)**  
 Recommendation that schools should have a parking standard of 1 space for every 15 pupils for employees and 1 space per 2 classes for visitors.

(vi) **Sport England Planning Policy Statement: Policy on planning applications for development on playing fields**

- Policy P1** Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of any part of playing field unless specific exception criteria can be met.

## Consultations

16. **Dartford Borough Council** – Objects to the proposal in its original and revised format on the grounds that the proposed development does not provide sufficient additional car parking spaces in line with the Borough Council's Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document. The Borough Council has requested that a minimum of 22 additional parking spaces should be provided at the site. It should be noted that Dartford Borough Council did consider additional car parking options 1 and 2 for the provision of 14 and 22 spaces respectively within the school car park which were proposed by the applicant's agent. The Borough Council would have considered either car parking option 1 or 2 to be acceptable. However the school governors considered that implementing either option 1 or 2 would have a detrimental impact on the provision of playing field land on the school site which is already undersized. Consequently, a third car parking option; the provision of 7 additional car parking spaces was proposed which the Borough Council wishes to maintain objection to, considering that the revision does not overcome its original concerns.

**Stone Parish Council** – Objects to the proposal on the following grounds:

“The Council is acutely aware of existing daily problems on surrounding roads, particularly Hayes Road, by traffic generated from existing school places. This includes triple-parking, parking on zig-zag lines, parking over residents' drives and entrance barriers to neighbouring properties. At 3pm, Hayes Road is virtually impassable and this has a detrimental effect on visitors to community facilities, and residents of Hayes Road. As such, the Council feels that the additional traffic generated by this application will be completely unsustainable.

Opposite the school's main entrance sits Stone Pavilion, a multi-use community facility providing a significant number of weekly activities for local residents and which is also used extensively by local businesses for conferences, training and meetings. The income the Council creates from the hire of this facility supplements the annual budget and enables the Council to keep tax rises to a minimum, however there have been a number of times that patrons of the facility have been seriously affected by school traffic which has, in a few cases, resulted in the decision to choose an alternative venue due to aggravation encountered when trying to access the facility. As such, the Council has grave concerns about the detrimental impact on business which it is felt will be brought by additional traffic generated by this application.

Although the School has tried a number of initiatives to discourage journey by car for those living in close proximity or encourage an informal one-way system around Hayes Road, the problem continues to be significant and raises concerns over the School's ability to positively influence further exacerbation from increased traffic.

The Council's Chairman and Parish Clerk were invited to an informal meeting ahead of application submission where traffic/parking problems were discussed and emphasis was made about the proposed application addressing existing problems through an alternative access, introduction of a drop off zone, or amendments to parking, however there is a complete omission of reference to either parking or traffic generation in the application documents which is of great concern. Omission of such significant points cannot form the basis of a credible application.



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Review of the application suggests it would also generate the need for additional parking spaces for staff or visitors yet there is no reference to such provision.

Following discussion with local residents, the Council is aware only a small number of properties on Hayes Road have been formally consulted. We understand 2-28 Hayes Road and 42 and 44 St James Lane have not been formally consulted on this application, yet these properties will be directly affected by the additional traffic generated by this proposal. *[Note that following amendments to the application to include the parents drop off facility and 10 off-site parking spaces, Neighbour Notification letters were sent out to these properties].*

The Council does acknowledge the need for additional school places and supports achievement of this through sustainable means, however it is felt that this application, in its current form, is not sustainable and is likely to have an adverse effect through traffic generation and the effect on local business significant enough to warrant refusal.

A site visit for KCC Planning Committee Members should also be required for school-expansion applications to ensure Members observe the existing situation to provide first-hand knowledge of the likely impact of up to a further 210 cars attempting to access the school”.

*As stated previously, amendments have been made to the original application as submitted including the proposed parents drop off facility with 10 off-site parking spaces with more recent amendments proposing an additional 7 parking spaces within the school car park. Following consultation on the parents drop off facility with 10 off-site parking spaces, Stone Parish Council adds that the revised application does not mention the Stone Pavilion facility which they state is in constant use by community groups and private hirers at various times of the day and evening and a potential increase in volumes of traffic generated as a result of the proposal could cause conflict with users of this facility, local residents and other businesses within the immediate vicinity. Following consultation on the revised proposal to include an additional 7 car parking spaces within the school car park, the Parish Council wishes to reiterate all their original comments (as stated above) and add that they consider the provision of spaces is inadequate.*

**Kent County Council Highways and Transportation** –Raises no objection to the application. Following amendments being made to the size of the off-site parking bays KCC Highways and Transportation consider that the off-site parking bays are now of a reasonable size for vehicles to manoeuvre in and out. They note that as the parking bays would be located on the public highway, a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) would need to be implemented to restrict waiting in the bays to typically 30 minutes during the hours at the start and end of the school day, to enable parking to be available for parents to drop off and pick up their children. Consequently, the TRO would allow Dartford Borough Council Parking Attendants to enforce any parking restrictions that may take place. Staff parking should not take place in these bays and they would be expected to park off-site but not in locations that would restrict traffic flow on Hayes Road at the busy times.

KCC Highways and Transportation consider that although the expansion of the school would put additional pressure on parking in Hayes Road, the creation of 10 roadside parking bays near the school entrance and the measures referred to in the School Travel Plan (such as car sharing and a Walking Bus) would play a key role in mitigating the potential impact of increased levels of traffic. As the expansion of the school progresses, the School Travel Plan would require updating and review and should

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encourage responsible driving and parking on the public highway by parents. Methods which are mentioned in the School Travel Plan including a 'name and shame' policy used to report individuals who persistently park irresponsibly indicates that the School are aware of the current and potential problems and would intend to take action to address them.

KCC Highways and Transportation raise no objection to the application subject to the implementation of conditions including the provision of the proposed off-site parking bays; the updating of the School Travel Plan and the use of vehicle cleansing and wheel washing equipment during construction to prevent mud and other debris being deposited on the public highway. Additionally, subject to planning permission being granted for the application, an informative requiring the provision of £3,000 from the applicant to pursue a Traffic Regulation Order to control the use of the off-site parking bays would be appropriate.

Following consultation on the revised proposal to include an additional 7 car parking spaces within the school car park, KCC Highways and Transportation consider that the revised layout to the existing car park provides a compromise between maximising car parking spaces without encroaching on the school playing field. It is noted that the car parking provision at the School is currently below levels that would be desirable and it is accepted that this would put additional demand on off-site parking. KCC Highways and Transportation appreciates the confirmation from the Headteacher of the school that staff would not be permitted to park in the proposed off-site parking bays which would be dedicated to parent parking and would park off-site.

In summary, KCC Highways and Transportation state the following:

“Overall, I recognise that the expansion of the school will cause more congestion on Hayes Road at the start and end of the school day, and that the staff, parents, and local residents will be obliged to cope with the consequences of this. However, the alternative would appear to be to create additional on-site parking for both staff and parents by removing a substantial part of the playing fields. In these circumstances, I would consider that the management of the parking of the staff and parents, and the promotion of sustainable transport through the updated School Travel Plan, will be the keys to dealing with the additional demand, and I would not wish to raise an objection to the application.”

**The County Council's School Travel Plan Advisor** – provides various comments on the content of the School Travel Plan and suggests updates that should be made in the next review.

**Environment Agency** – originally objected to the proposed development on the grounds that there was insufficient information to demonstrate that the risk of pollution to controlled waters is acceptable as the site lies on the chalk formation classified as a principle aquifer and is in Groundwater Source Protection Zone 3. Further information including a Ground Investigation Report and Stage 1 Desktop and Walkover Study were submitted resulting in the Environment Agency withdrawing their objection subject to the implementation of two planning conditions including the submission of a remediation strategy if any contamination not previously identified is found to be present on site and no infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground without prior approval from the County Planning Authority.

**County Archaeologist** – raises no objection, subject to the imposition of a condition

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requiring the applicant to submit details of a programme of archaeological work prior to commencement of the development. This is due to the application site being located in an area of potential archaeological interest. Therefore it is possible that proposed development works may disturb archaeological remains.

Local Member

17. The County Council Local Member Mrs Penny Cole was notified of the original application on the 23 December 2013 and subsequent amendments to the proposal on 4 March 2014 and 6 May 2014. Mrs P Cole commented on the addition of a proposed drop off facility offering her support to this element of the proposal.

Publicity

18. The application was publicised by the posting of 2 site notices at the vehicular and pedestrian entrances to the school located on Hayes Road. The individual notification of 27 neighbouring properties was carried out as part of the original consultation with a further 18 neighbouring properties notified with the addition of the proposed drop off facility. 9 neighbouring properties including 7 local residents who made representations were notified of the amendments to the proposal to include 7 additional car parking spaces within the school car park.

Representations

19. I have received 8 letters/emails of objection to the proposal to date. The main points of objection are summarised as follows:-

Access, Parking and Highway Safety

- Concerns regarding the current levels of traffic along surrounding roads and the safety implications that this currently creates and the belief that the school expansion would exacerbate the problem;
- No provision for increased levels of traffic has been made for the initial staggered increased intake of pupils in September 2013;
- Concerns regarding vehicles being driven dangerously and parents parking in local roads and blocking driveways which is a nuisance to local residents and has caused damage to their vehicles;
- The behaviour and attitude of some parents towards local residents in relation to parking issues is reportedly poor and can be aggressive.
- Hayes Road effectively becomes a single lane during school peak hours due to vehicles being parked 4 or 5 cars deep where the road widens and vehicles parked on the opposite side of the road;
- Concerns regarding lack of access for emergency service vehicles when cars are parked on both sides of Hayes Road;
- Request to relocate the pedestrian entrance and proposed parents drop off facility to St James' Lane;
- Concern that the new intake of pupils would not be local to the area so would be driven to the school;
- Vehicles parked on 'School Keep Clear' yellow marking which is dangerous for pupils and parents;
- The parking needs to be improved before the school is extended;
- The lack of additional parking provision for extra staff that will be working at the

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school;

- Query the feasibility of providing additional parking on land the north east of the school site;
- Query the feasibility of negotiating with Stone Parish Council for the use of the car park to the north of the school during school peak hours in term time

Need for the development and impact on the school

- Sympathetic with the need to expand the school but feel the overall impact of the expansion on the area needs to be taken into consideration.

Noise Disturbance and Air Pollution

- Additional pupil numbers would put pressure on and intensify the use of hard play areas causing increased levels of noise;
- The location of the proposed classroom block to the east of the main hard surface playground would enclose the playground increasing levels of noise for residents whose properties lie adjacent to the south of the site;
- Request that double-glazing be installed to properties to the south of the site to mitigate increased noise levels;
- Increased traffic would reduce air quality.

Design

- Consider that the proposed classroom block would be better suited as a single storey building due to its proximity to the school's south eastern perimeter;
- Request that the external finish of south facing façades of the proposed classroom block are in keeping with the existing classroom block and not the white render proposed *[Note that the applicant has revised the external finish of the building, proposing timber cladding to instead of white render to the schools southern and eastern elevations]*.
- Request that multi-coloured panels are not used on the proposed classroom buildings eastern and western elevations as they would not be in keeping with the previous build or main school building;
- Request that there are no overlooking windows on the south facing façade of the proposed classroom block. *[Note from the application drawings that there are no windows located to the southern elevation of the proposed building]*.

General Matters

- Concern regarding trees located to the school's southern boundary which are recognised as offering a noise buffer but due to their height and density of foliage reduce natural light to properties located to the south of the school;
- Request that the trees be sufficiently maintained *[Note the School currently operates a tree maintenance programme and surveys regarding proposed works to the trees and hedges on site are carried out annually]*;
- Request that a tree to the school's southern boundary is removed as its canopy overhangs the private access road and causes an issue with large vehicles using the road;
- Request that fencing to the school's southern and eastern boundary be removed and the area left in a safe and tidy condition which was overlooked when the fencing was replaced *[Note that this has been raised with the applicant]*;
- Request that construction traffic and operatives vehicles do not park or block access to the private road to the south of the school site;
- That service work is not undertaken in the private access road without prior consent from landowners;
- Controls requested on construction hours so as not to inconvenience local residents.

## Discussion

### Introduction

20. The application seeks planning permission for an extension to the existing school hall, an 8 classroom teaching block with associated facilities; the provision of a parents drop off facility and 10 off-site parking spaces and 7 additional car parking spaces in the school car park. The application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of the objections received from Dartford Borough Council, Stone Parish Council and local residents regarding the proposal.
21. In considering this proposal regard must be had to 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 Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations including those arising from consultation and publicity.
22. The main aspects to consider are the issues to do with the design, layout and scale of the development, residential amenity concerns including noise disturbance and impact on air quality and implications of the proposal on the local road network and highway safety considerations. The strong policy support for the development of schools should also be considered 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.

### Design, Layout and Scale of Development Issues

23. The Dartford Borough Council Local Plan (1995) and Core Strategy (2011) promote high quality design and sustainable development. The proposed layout, scale and design of the development should be considered to establish whether the development, as proposed, is acceptable and is in keeping with the existing predominantly residential setting. The layout of the proposed development aims to provide the most feasible option for providing more teaching accommodation to allow for the proposed expansion of pupil numbers at the school. The application documents show other layout options for the proposed development which were investigated by the applicant's architect including an option to construct a single storey extension above the existing standalone classroom block and a large hall extension however this would involve extensive structural alterations and require the use of temporary accommodation during construction. Another option to locate a single storey extension for the proposed classroom block mainly on the soft play area with a small part being sited on part of the

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school's sports field and a small hall extension. However, this would not be considered as being feasible as it would impinge on a section of the sports field, which is already undersized. The option which has been proposed as part of this application is for a part single storey, part two storey classroom block located on the soft play area, to the south east of the site and small hall extension to the existing hall. In my view the proposed layout of the development is acceptable and the most coherent option considered by the applicant's architect.

24. The proposed development has been designed to bring a modern outlook to the school whilst retaining the characteristics of the existing school buildings. This is reflected in the choice of external materials and colour scheme chosen for the proposed development. The proposed classroom block would be constructed of brickwork that matches the existing standalone classroom block with timber cladding to part of the proposed building's eastern and southern façades. The applicant originally proposed a white render external finish to the eastern and southern façades of the classroom block. However, local residents voiced concerns that the large expanse of white render would not be in keeping with the existing school buildings. Consequently, the applicant's architect proposed timber cladding which I consider would complement the brickwork. Concern was also raised regarding the use of multi-coloured panels as part of the external finish to the proposed classroom block; however, I consider on balance these would not be visually intrusive. The boundary of trees and hedges on a bank along the school's southern boundary would also help to provide adequate screening from residential properties. The design of other new school buildings within Kent and elsewhere also feature multi-coloured panel external finishes which help to provide a stimulating learning environment, corresponding with internal colour schemes. Subject to permission being granted, a planning condition requiring the submission of details of external materials prior to the construction of the development could be stipulated.
25. A local resident has raised concerns regarding the scale of the proposed development, considering that a single storey building would be more appropriate due to the proposed classroom block's location on the south east area of the school site. The closest residential properties are located adjacent to the school's southern boundary, separated by a private access road. The south west corner of the proposed classroom block is located approximately 12m from the southern site boundary with the property adjacent to the proposed building separated by the private access road and a row of garages. To limit the perceived scale of the proposed classroom block, the building has been designed with part single storey, part two storey elements. The precedent of two storey construction already exists on the site with part of the main school building located to the south west of the site being of a two storey construction. In my opinion, the scale and massing of the proposed development is acceptable and in keeping with the existing school buildings. In addition the visual impact of the scale of the development would be reduced due to the two storey element being stepped back from the southern boundary. Trees and hedging located on a bank to the school's southern boundary also assist in adequately screening the proposed building from residential properties to the south. Consequently, I consider the design of the building to be acceptable and in accordance with Development Plan policies.

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Access, Parking, Traffic and Highway Safety

26. Dartford Borough Council, Stone Parish Council and local residents have objected to the number of proposed additional parking spaces that would be provided on site as part of the application. Additionally Stone Parish Council and local residents have raised concerns 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, and an inconvenience to local residents, particularly during peak school times.
27. As with other schools, it is recognised that congestion issues exist on the local highway network before and after the school day. The Transport Statement notes that during the start and end of the school day, parents and staff observe an informal one-way system along Hayes Road, driving in an anti-clockwise direction (from east-west) whilst passing the school which helps to maintain the flow of traffic. Vehicular access to the school is via Hayes Road, a narrow residential street subject to a 30mph speed limit. Currently, parking is unrestricted on Hayes Road with the exception of the 'School – Keep Clear' zig-zag markings within the vicinity of the school entrance. Waiting is prohibited between 0800-0930 hrs and 1430-1600 hrs on weekdays. Four parking bays, arranged in a side by side formation are located on the north side of Hayes Road opposite the pedestrian entrance in an extended area of land separated from the highway by dashed lines. This area of land beyond the running carriageway of Hayes Road is used by many parents as an informal parking area with cars parked in the parking bays temporarily blocked in by cars parked in the remainder of the informal area.
28. The Transport Statement submitted as part of the application concludes that the proposed expansion in pupil numbers would generate an additional 18 vehicle trips per day by staff and 97 vehicle trips by parents of pupils. Consequently, the Transport Statement concludes that the implementation of traffic mitigation measures would help to manage the level of impact that the proposed expansion of pupils numbers would have on the local highway network. A parents drop off and pick up facility with 10 off-site parking spaces and 7 additional car parking spaces within the school car park have been proposed as part of this application in order to mitigate the traffic and parking impacts that will result from the expansion of the school.
29. The parents drop off and pick up facility has been proposed as part of the application as it is recognised that a number of parents drop off and pick up children outside the school rather than park and escort pupils into the school grounds. The applicant proposes that the facility would be monitored by school staff, although only Dartford Borough Council Parking Attendants would be able to take enforcement action to prevent the facility being used as a regular parking space. 10 off-site parking spaces located on land which is currently grass verge on the south side of Hayes Road are being proposed as part of this application. The footway on the south side of Hayes Road terminates approximately 50m east of the pedestrian entrance to the school. It is proposed that the footpath is installed along this section of the road and be realigned to accommodate the parking spaces.
30. Kent County Council Highways & Transportation have requested a financial contribution towards pursuing an application for a Traffic Regulation Order to restrict waiting times in the proposed off-site parking spaces, subject to the grant of planning permission. The Traffic Regulation Order to implement waiting restrictions on the off-site parking bays would allow Dartford Borough Council Parking Attendants to monitor the off-site parking bays and take any necessary enforcement action.

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31. The applicant's Transport Consultant considers that car based trips to the school could be reduced through the implementation of an updated School Travel Plan. Various measures have been proposed as part of the School Travel Plan including the setting up of a Walking Bus to encourage pupils to walk to school, car sharing and promotion of sustainable modes of transport. Regular monitoring and review of the School Travel Plan to ensure that targets to reduce car based trips are being met could be addressed via a planning condition. The comments and advice provided by KCC's School Travel Plan Advisor should be taken into consideration in the updated School Travel Plan.
32. There are currently 33 car parking spaces within the existing school car park. The applicant proposes to provide 7 additional car parking spaces within the existing school car park (option 3), creating a total number of 40 spaces. Two additional car parking provision options were considered by the applicant including (option 1) which would create an additional 14 car parking spaces and (option 2) which would create an additional 22 spaces. Both options would involve the relocation of the existing hard surface playground to the north of the school onto the playing field and relocating the sports pitch further east whilst still retaining its existing size. However both of these options would involve the loss of land which is currently designated as school playing field, the provision of which is already undersubscribed on the school site. The school governors did not wish to pursue options 1 and 2 due to the loss of playing field provision. Although Sport England were not consulted on the proposals as a statutory consultee due to none of the development proposals actually being sited on land that forms part of a playing field, it is highly likely given previous experience that car parking options 1 and 2 would generate objections from Sport England over the loss of playing field provision. After consideration, the applicant decided to move forward with an alternative layout to the existing school car park to maximise the number of parking spaces, without losing any hard surface play area or playing field land, creating 7 additional spaces (option 3). Even so, the proposed rearrangement of the car park would require the removal of two trees to accommodate the extra bays.
33. Dartford Borough Council's Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document provides guidance on parking standards within the Borough and indicates levels of parking for new developments that the Borough Council considers to be appropriate. The recommended car parking provision for employees is calculated by the number of pupils attending the school, setting out 1 space for employees per 15 pupils and also 1 space per 2 classes for visitors. Therefore with a total of 630 pupils attending the school, the recommended parking provision for staff would be a total of 42 spaces. Additionally, 11 spaces should be provided for visitors and clients bringing the total number of recommended spaces to 53. It is stated in the Parking Standards Supplementary Document that a Travel Plan and a Transport Statement should accompany planning applications in instances where parking provision falls short of recommended levels to ensure that proposed provision would meet the demand for parking generated by the development. In addition, the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document states that appropriate provision should be made for the picking up and dropping off of pupils which is a measure being proposed as part of this application in the form of a parents drop off facility and off-site parking spaces for the use of parents to drop off/pick up children. There is currently already an existing shortfall of parking provision for employees at the school and although the proposed on-site car parking would not rectify this current situation, KCC's Highways and Transportation advisor considers that additional parking demand for staff could be adequately managed. Although Dartford Borough Council have requested a minimum of 22 additional car parking spaces to be provided, KCC's Highways and Transportation



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advisor considers that measures to encourage sustainable methods of travelling to the site, the provision of 7 additional on-site parking spaces and agreement with the school that some members of staff would have to park off-site would provide acceptable traffic mitigation measures. Furthermore, the proposed development needs to be considered against the community need for additional primary school places.

34. Local residents have queried the feasibility of providing additional car parking spaces on land to the north east of the school. This area of land is not owned by the School or the County Council and an oil pipeline runs underneath this area which would prevent the use of this land for parking purposes.
35. The viability of relocating the pedestrian entrance and proposed parents drop off facility to St James' Lane which runs along the eastern boundary of the school, has been raised by local residents. However following discussions with KCC Highways and Transportation this is not viewed as a feasible option as St James' Lane experiences a greater level of traffic flow, where approaches by vehicles are faster and busier and possible relocation of the pedestrian entrance and drop off facility would transfer parking and congestion problems from Hayes Road to St James' Lane. Concerns were also raised by the Highways Officer that there could be the potential for vehicles to obstruct the emergency access to Bluewater Shopping Centre.
36. Stone Parish Council and local residents have raised concerns regarding congestion on the local road network. The Parish Council own and hire out Stone Pavilion, a multi-use facility which is located to the north of the school, for corporate and social events. The Parish Council considers that the congestion generated by traffic related to the school is an inconvenience to users of Stone Pavilion. However, it should be recognised that increased traffic levels around the surrounding local road network are limited to school peak times, generally limited to a 15-20 minute period, at the start and end of the school day. Additionally, many of the social events that are held at Stone Pavilion would occur in the evenings and weekends when school related traffic would not be an issue. Although traffic generated by the school causes inconvenience and delays to through traffic, this is considered to be a short term impact on local amenity rather than amounting to a wider highway safety concern. Whilst the behaviour of a small number of parents, who have reportedly been rude to local residents in some instances, is understandably a matter of concern and potential distress to residents, driver behaviour and attitude is not a planning land use matter which the Planning Authority can control. Any potential additional traffic on the local road network created by the schools expansion could effectively be managed by the various traffic mitigation measures that are being proposed as part of this application which is a view shared by KCC's Highways and Transportation advisor.
37. Kent County Council Highways and Transportation conclude that the additional vehicle trips generated by the expansion of the school to 3FE would have an impact on the surrounding highway network, particularly Hayes Road. However, the mitigation measures that are proposed by the applicant including the provision of a parents drop off facility, 10 off-site parking spaces, 7 additional on-site parking spaces and the implementation of measures in the School Travel Plan would play a key role in reducing the potential impact on the highway network.
38. Recognition needs to be made when considering this proposal 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. In particular, the public highway is there to be used as such, and it would be quite wrong to

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use the planning system to restrict the use of the public highway by one kind of user in favour of others, especially when the user potentially being demonised is arguably the least frequent user. I consider that the proposed drop off facility, parking and measures in the School Travel Plan would provide sufficient mitigation to accommodate the increase in vehicles associated with the expansion of the school. The updating and annual review of the School Travel Plan would assist in mitigating the potential impacts the proposed expansion in pupil numbers may create. It should also be noted that the expansion of the school would be staggered over six years with 30 pupil places being admitted each year. During the school's staggered expansion, I would expect traffic mitigation measures outlined in the School Travel Plan to be implemented to encourage sustainable methods of travel, greater monitoring of pupil safety through the appointment of a Road Crossing Officer and highway access and parking proposals. Kent County Council Highways and Transportation are satisfied that this proposal would not have an overly detrimental impact on the local highway network, and raise no objection on that basis.

39. My own view is that all schools attract vehicular traffic, and that should not be used as a reason for preventing much needed school accommodation being provided, since the key issue is more about how that traffic is managed and its adverse impacts could be reduced. On balance, I consider that the need to provide adequate sports facilities for pupils as part of their educational development is a key planning consideration and as previously stated, playing field land at this site is underprovided for. The implementation of other possible options for car parking discussed in paragraph 32 would involve the loss of playing field land, further reducing the level of playing field land available to pupils in light of the proposed expansion. Furthermore, Dartford Borough Council's Core Strategy policy CS22 encourages the protection of existing sport facilities and Sport England's Playing Fields Planning Policy Statement strongly encourages the protection of playing field land. Taking the professional advice received from KCC Highways and Transportation into account, I would consider the proposal acceptable in highway terms subject to the imposition of conditions covering the provision of the proposed off-site parking bays; the updating of the School Travel Plan and the use of vehicle cleansing and wheel washing equipment during construction to prevent mud and other debris being deposited on the public highway. Additionally, subject to planning permission being granted for the application, an informative requiring the provision of £3,000 from the applicant to pursue a Traffic Regulation Order to control the use of the off-site parking bays would be appropriate.

#### Noise Disturbance and Air Quality

40. Local residents whose properties are located to the school's southern boundary have raised concerns that the additional pupil numbers and loss of soft play area caused by the expansion of the school would intensify the use of the hard surface playground. It is claimed that the location of the proposed classroom block would act to enclose the playground to the east, preventing noise dissipating. However, it should be noted that the tree and hedge boundary to the southern boundary of the school would act to provide an additional acoustic buffer to any extra noise generated from the use of the playground. Additionally, a private access road separates properties to the south of the site. Overall, I do not consider that there is likely to be any significant negative impact to neighbouring properties as a result of noise disturbance, which would be limited to short periods on those days when the school is operational. Air pollution generated from increased vehicle trips to the site is also a matter of concern for local residents. The School aim to encourage more sustainable methods of travel to the site by a series of measure outlined in the School Travel Plan. I would not consider that increased vehicle

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trips to the school would significantly impact air quality within the vicinity of the school, over and above the existing use of the local roads.

General Matters Raised by Local Residents

41. The majority of general matters raised by local residents (summarised in paragraph 21) are landscaping maintenance issues which have been brought to the School's attention and are not directly related to the proposed development which is the focus of this planning application, albeit the landscaping to the school's southern boundary would act to visually screen the proposed classroom block from properties adjacent to the south of the school site.

Construction

42. Construction management issues have been raised by local residents and I consider that if planning permission is granted it would be appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of construction to protect residential amenity. Given the proximity of the site to neighbouring residential properties, 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.
43. In addition, I consider it appropriate that details of a Construction Management Strategy be submitted for approval prior to the commencement of development. The strategy should include details of the methods 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. Construction access and parking has been raised as a matter of concern by a local resident and I consider that the submission of details relating to the management of construction on site would ensure that residential amenity is protected as well as the safe management of construction on site.
44. In addition to the above, should permission be granted, conditions of consent would ensure that dust and mud on the local highway network, and other matters associated with construction, would be mitigated as far as reasonably possible so as to minimise disruption to local residents.

Archaeology

45. The County Archaeologist has indicated that the school grounds are close to a possible Iron Age settlement which consequently may have archaeological potential. Therefore it is possible that proposed development works may disturb archaeological remains, although the site has previously been disturbed when the school was first developed. Consequently, a condition requesting a programme of archaeological work should be imposed on any planning permission. In my view, this approach is appropriate and proportionate to the development being proposed and is also in accordance with Policy B12 of the adopted Local Plan.

## Conclusion

46. Concerns have been raised regarding the impact of the proposed development on various aspects including residential amenity, design aspects and traffic and highway safety issues. Having assessed each of these areas of concern, in my view, the development would not give rise to any significant material harm sufficient to warrant withholding planning consent. The proposed development is in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies. Notwithstanding the local concerns over traffic congestion and competition for road space with other users of the public highway, I consider that the development is sustainable and in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Policy Statement on Planning for School Development. I consider that, subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, this proposal would not have a significantly detrimental impact on residential amenity, design and layout aspects and traffic/parking issues.

## Recommendation

47. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT to conditions, including conditions covering:

- 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 materials to be used externally;
- a programme of archaeological work to be submitted and approved;
- no vegetation clearance to take place during the bird breeding season;
- control of surface water drainage and infiltration to ground;
- if any contamination not previously identified is found on site, the submission of a remediation strategy to deal with the risks associated with this;
- 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;
- the submission of an updated School Travel Plan within 3 months of the date of the decision notice; its implementation and ongoing annual review.;
- the provision and retention of the proposed parents drop off facility, off-site parking bays and on-site parking bays;
- the use of vehicle cleansing and wheel washing equipment during construction to prevent mud and other debris being deposited on the public highway.

I FURTHER RECOMMEND that the applicant be advised by informative of:

- The applicant be advised that, before the development hereby approved is commenced, the provision of £3,000 shall be provided to pursue a Traffic Regulation Order to control the use of the off-site parking bays;
- The comments and advice provided by Kent County Council's School Travel Plan Advisor in the email received on 11 March 2014 should be taken into consideration in the updated School Travel Plan;

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- The School to look into implementing actions mentioned in the School Travel Plan, including the formalising of the unofficial one-way system along Hayes Road, extending the 'School – Keep Clear' zig-zag markings road markings, negotiating with Stone Parish Council about the possibility of using the car park associated with the Stone Pavilion facility for additional parking; and
- That the applicant be advised that the School Travel Plan should be registered on-line with Kent County Council's School Travel Plan site 'Jambusters' by accessing the following link [www.jambusterstpms.co.uk](http://www.jambusterstpms.co.uk), to assist with the updating, monitoring and future review of the Travel Plan.

Case officer – Hardeep Hunjan
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Background documents - See section heading
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