

SECTION D  
DEVELOPMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Background Documents: the deposited documents; views and representations received as referred to in the reports and included in the development proposals dossier for each case; and other documents as might be additionally indicated.

**Item D1**

Five classroom extension, new hall, and provision of drop-off facility at Oakfield Lane Primary School, Dartford – DA/14/19 (KCC/DA/0326/2013)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 10 September 2014.

Proposed erection of a new 5 classroom block extension and a new hall, including the demolition of the existing hall and former air raid shelters, provision of a new drop-off point for parents and the erection of an external covered walkway to part of the extension at Oakfield Lane Primary School, Oakfield Lane, Dartford - DA/14/19 (KCC/DA/0326/2013)

Recommendation: planning permission be GRANTED subject to CONDITIONS.

**Local Members:** Mrs Ann Allen

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Site**

1. Oakfield Lane Primary School is located to the south of Dartford town centre and to the west of Wilmington. The Primary School is 2 form of entry (FE) at present, with built accommodation largely located to the north of the site, although a newly built nursery is located to the south east of the main school building (see paragraph 4 for planning history). The 2.33 hectare (5.75 acres) school site is bounded to the north by Oakfield Lane, with facing residential properties opposite the site, to the east by the A225 with a Sure Start Children's Centre, Public House (The Orange Tree) and residential properties backing onto the site, to the south by Church Hill, with facing residential properties, and to the west by properties in Oakfield Park Road/Carsington Gardens which back onto the site. To the north west of the application site, a property to the south of Oakfield Lane (number 2 Oakfield Lane) is adjacent to school site boundary.
2. The school site is accessed from Oakfield Lane, with car parking (30 spaces for school staff, 4 disabled spaces and 3 spaces allocated to the Sure Start Centre) to the north east of the school building. To the north/north west of the application site the school building is separated from Oakfield Lane by a playground which is limited in its northern extent by former air raid shelters. The playground is at a lower level than Oakfield Lane, with an embankment rising up from the playground to the site boundary. The air raid shelters are at the base of the embankment, which is unused and overgrown with trees and vegetation. To the south of the application site lies a small car park and separate controlled access from Church Hill for use by staff associated with the Nursery only.
3. This application proposes development to the north west of the school site, between the existing school building to the south and the Oakfield Road site boundary to the north. The red line application site boundary includes the existing access from Oakfield Lane and abuts the western school site boundary which adjoins number 2 Oakfield Lane.

*A site location plan is attached.*

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Site Location Plan

**NOTES**

Check all dimensions and all bearings.  
 Check all the locations of all the buildings.  
 The site location plan is provided as a guide only.  
 It is not intended to be used as a basis for any other  
 arrangements between the developer and other  
 interested parties.

Scale: 1:1000

N

DATE: 14 OCT 2013 PLANNING ISSUE

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DA/14/19

OAKFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL  
 DARTFORD

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LOCATION PLAN

NO	PLANNING	DATE	BY	REV	PI
0001	0001	10/08/13	JK	001	PI
0002	0002	10/08/13	JK	002	PI
0003	0003	10/08/13	JK	003	PI
0004	0004	10/08/13	JK	004	PI
0005	0005	10/08/13	JK	005	PI
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0007	0007	10/08/13	JK	007	PI
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0095	0095	10/08/13	JK	095	PI
0096	0096	10/08/13	JK	096	PI
0097	0097	10/08/13	JK	097	PI
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0100	0100	10/08/13	JK	100	PI



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Proposed Site Plan





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Proposed Floor Plan



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### Background/Relevant Planning History

4. Oakfield Primary School was previously split into two schools, Oakfield Junior and Oakfield Infant Schools, both of which had their own buildings on the site. Application reference DA/08/209 proposed the demolition of the existing Infant School buildings, and the construction of a 2FE Primary School including partial refurbishment of the existing Junior School buildings. That application was granted permission under delegated powers in April 2008, and was subsequently implemented. Subsequent to that, planning permission has been granted under delegated powers for the following on the site:
  - DA/08/842 – renewal of planning application for mobile units;
  - DA/10/252 – retention of construction access on Church Hill for maintenance access;
  - DA/12/625 – new temporary modular building;
  - DA/12/762 – single storey nursery building and 5 car parking spaces accessed via Church Hill;
  - DA/13/457 – renewal of temporary permission DA/12/625; and
  - DA/13/1676 – renewal of temporary permission DA/08/842;
5. This application proposes to provide the accommodation required to cater for a previously agreed expansion of Oakfield Lane Primary School from 2FE to 3FE. The applicant advises that due to changing demographics in the area, with an increasing birth rate and in-migration, Oakfield Lane Primary School has expanded from 2FE to 3FE, with reception stage classes already at 3FE with teaching accommodation provided in temporary modular accommodation. This application was validated in December 2013, and has taken longer than expected to determine due to a requirement to undertake ecological surveys which have only recently been concluded and submitted. As the school's intake has already had to expand to 3 FE, additional accommodation is needed in September 2014 to accommodate the additional class to be admitted in the next academic year. Due to the delay in the determination of this application, meaning the provision of permanent accommodation has not been possible, an application has been submitted for the provision of a temporary two classroom modular building. That application, reference KCC/DA/0197/2014, is on the papers for this Planning Application's Committee under Item D2.

### Proposal

6. This application has been submitted by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure Support and is part of the County wide Basic Needs Programme. The application proposes the demolition of the existing hall and the former air raid shelters and the erection of a 5 classroom extension and a new school hall. A drop off point for parents is also proposed. The expansion from 2FE to 3FE would increase pupil numbers to 630 (2FE intake is 420), and staff numbers would increase from 30 full time to 36, and 53 part time to 55. It should be noted that the reception year is already operating at 3FE, and that pupil and staff numbers would increase gradually over a period of time (as each year group expands to 3FE as they move up through the school).
7. With regard to the classroom block, it is proposed that an extension is added to the western elevation of the existing school building, returning east to run parallel with the existing school building to create a courtyard playground. It is proposed to provide two classrooms to the extension to the western elevation, which would run parallel with the western site boundary. A further three classrooms are proposed in the return wing, which is proposed to run east-west, parallel with the existing school building. Each of the 5 classrooms would provide a minimum of 60m<sup>2</sup> internal floor space, and would

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include a resource store and wet area. Additional toilet facilities, cloak areas and a plant room are also proposed within the extension. At the eastern end of the classroom wing a new main school hall is proposed. The classroom extension would be linked to the existing building internally by linking with an existing corridor, and externally by the provision of a covered walk way to the eastern elevation of the western classroom wing.

8. The applicant advises that the existing hall does not comply with the current DfE and Kent County Council recommendations in size to cater for a 3FE intake (289m<sup>2</sup>). To accommodate all 630 pupils associated with a 3FE school and staff, the proposed hall would be 300m<sup>2</sup>, sufficient to comply with size recommendations. In addition, the proposed hall would comply with Sport England design guidelines in terms of the provision of a 2-court sports hall.
9. To accommodate the extension on site without encroaching onto playing field or car parking areas, it has been necessary to propose the extension on a footprint that would necessitate the removal of the former air raid shelters cutting into the embankment to the north west of the school site. The single storey extension would adopt the design of the newly built school building in terms of mass, scale and form, with roofs sloping down towards the site boundaries and classrooms opening onto the playground. To the rear of the new classroom block a maintenance and emergency access route would run between the building and the necessary retaining wall.
10. The proposed building is to be clad in a combination of dark grey brick and yellow fibre cement panelling. Windows and doors would be aluminium framed units, powder coated mid grey with some feature windows in red and orange (to match the existing school buildings). A shallow pitched dark grey slate insulated roof is proposed, again to match the existing school. The hall roof is proposed to be clad with a dark grey insulated metal finish, with the roof curving and continue to ground level (albeit higher than the internal floor level) to the rear of the building, facing Oakfield Lane. The two side walls of the hall are proposed to be finished in yellow fibre cement panelling, with the front elevation facing into the site finished in glass.
11. The school would continue to be accessed on foot using the existing pedestrian entrance on Oakfield Lane. This application does, however, propose changes to the current vehicular access arrangements. An additional exit point is proposed to the west of the existing site access on Oakfield Lane. Those using the existing access to enter the car park would enter and exit as per the current one way system on site. However, the new exit point would be linked to the existing access via a new parent drop-off point, located to the north of the proposed new hall on the currently unused and overgrown embankment area. The area proposed for the new drop-off facility is at the top of the embankment and fairly flat in nature. The drop-off area would contain 6 bays for parents to pull into the drop off pupils, and it is also proposed that these spaces be used during the school day by part time staff that are not on site at the start and end of the school day.

*The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, Ecological Scoping Survey Report, Reptile Survey Report, Bat Survey Report, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Desktop Study and Walkover Survey, Transport Statement, and Travel Plan.*

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## Planning Policies

12. **National Planning Policies** – The most relevant National Planning Policies are set out in the **National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)**, and the **National Planning Policy Guidance (March 2014)**, which set 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).

The NPPF states that, in determining applications, 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:

- achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity, and protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity;
- promoting sustainable transport.

In addition, Paragraph 72 states that: *The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools, and works with schools promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted*

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

## Development Plan Policies

- (i) 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.

**Policy B12** Archaeological sites will be preserved and protected.



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- 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 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.

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

- 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.
- Policy CS21 Community Services:** Seeks to ensure the effective provision of community services.
- 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 groundwater's is protected and enhanced.

Consultations

13. **Dartford Borough Council** raises no objection to the proposal and comments as follows:

“The County Council are asked to consider the highways and parking implications of the proposal in the interests of local residential amenity and highway and parking conditions. Consideration should also be given to maintaining a historic record of the air raid shelters lost as a result of the development and a copy of any such record sent to the Wilmington Heritage Centre.”

**Wilmington Parish Council** has no comments/observations to make other than welcoming the proposed provision of a new drop-off point for parents.

**Kent County Council Highways and Transportation** considers that the expanded school should be able to function without excessive impact on the road network, provided that school traffic and parking is managed adequately. The issue of parents setting down and picking up children without creating difficulties for other road users is fundamental to making the enlarged school acceptable in highway terms. Highways and Transportation suggest that the School should work with the parking enforcement authority (Dartford Borough Council) and the Police to ensure that parking offences

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result in fines in order that offending parents take traffic signs and parking restrictions seriously. It is recommended that that be included within the School Travel Plan.

Although the provision of additional on-site car parking would be preferred, an objection would not be warranted as the impacts of the proposal on the local highway network would not be severe without the provision of additional on-site car parking. It is recommended that the applicants seriously consider making parking available to school staff in the car park off Church Lane (Nursery car park).

Should planning permission be granted, Highways and Transportation recommend that conditions be imposed requiring:

- 1) the submission of a construction site and traffic management plan, showing parking during construction and procedures governing HGVs entering and leaving the site, including wheel washing measures;
- 2) the submission of plans to show acceptable visibility plays at the new exit.

**Environment Agency** raises no objection to the proposal subject to the imposition of a condition of consent requiring the submission of a remediation strategy to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site including a verification report, the submission of a scheme for the disposal of surface water, and conditions controlling the infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground and further land contamination.

**The County Council's Biodiversity Officer** comments as follows:

"We are satisfied that the surveys were carried out to an appropriate standard.

No reptiles were recorded during the survey and as such no further work is required in relation to their potential presence.

Low levels of bat use of the site for commuting and foraging were recorded but there was no evidence recorded of bats roosting on the site. As stated in the report, there remains some potential for occasional use of the trees by bats during the active season. If the tree removal works are to be carried out between October and February, no ecological supervision is considered necessary as it is reported that the trees do not contain suitable bat hibernation features. This timing would also reduce the potential for offences against breeding birds. If the works to remove the trees are to be carried out during the active season (March to September (October if mild)), then reasonable avoidance measures will need to be implemented. This should be secured by condition, if planning permission is granted. Suggested condition wording is provided below. Please note that we do not consider it necessary for this to be an extensive document.

*No development shall take place until an ecological method statement for the removal of trees with bat roosting potential has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The EDS shall include the following:*

- a) *Purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed works;*
- b) *Detailed design(s) and/or working method(s) to achieve stated objectives;*
- c) *Extent and location/area of proposed works on appropriate scale maps and plans;*
- d) *Timetable for implementation demonstrating that works are aligned with the proposed phasing of development;*
- e) *Persons responsible for implementing the works;*

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As recommended in the *Bat Survey Report*, any external lighting required should be designed to minimise the potential for impacts to bats that use the site for foraging and commuting through the use of hoods/cowls/shields, and by avoiding direct illumination of trees and other vegetation.

We advise that the landscaping of the site should incorporate appropriate native species planting to replace the features that will be lost.”

**The County Archaeologist** no comments received to date.

**The County Council’s Landscape Advisor** raises no objection to the application, and is happy with the applicant’s response to previous queries raised, including the submission of an amended Arboricultural Impact Assessment. Replacement planting should be secured by condition of consent, with specific reference to the provision of replacement trees and planting to the area between the drop off area and the Oakfield Lane site boundary.

**The County Council’s School Travel Plan Advisor** considers that an amended/updated School Travel Plan should be submitted, which should address any outstanding matters. It is advised that the School register with the County Council’s new Jambusters system, and prepare the Travel Plan using that purpose built data base.

#### Local Member

14. The local County Member, Mrs Ann Allen, was notified of the application on the 7 January 2014.

#### Publicity

15. The application was publicised by the posting of 3 site notices and the individual notification of 64 neighbouring properties.

#### Representations

16. To date, I have received a total of 7 individual letters of representation from 5 local properties/residents.

A summary of the main issues raised/points made to date are set out below:

##### Access and car parking

- On-street parking space in **Oakfield Lane** would be lost as a result of providing the proposed drop-off access for school parents – parking space is limited on Oakfield Lane and losing spaces for the new access is absurd;
- The proposed drop-off may alleviate traffic problems in the morning, but the problems would still persist in the afternoons.
- There is no regulation of parking by the School, with staff from the school and the SureStart Centre parking on the road themselves;
- Better use should be made of land within the site for parking spaces for visitors, parents and staff;
- The proposed pick-up and drop-off area would not reduce the increased traffic flow at peak times, and may even cause more congestion with vehicles entering and leaving;

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- Whilst the peak-time congestion is only for half an hour twice a day, parked vehicles from 0800 to 1700 hours makes it dangerous for residents using driveways because of impeded visibility up and down Oakfield Lane;
- KCC should acquire the Alsford Timber site [at the corner of Oakfield Lane and Lowfield Street] for school parking use, rather than its proposed re-use for commercial vehicle hire, which will add to local traffic problems;
- KCC should introduce yellow lines to prohibit on-street parking altogether on this part of Oakfield Lane;
- The Travel Plan refers to opening up a side gate from **Oakfield Park Road** to the west, but that is in private ownership, and its use would be resisted because of extra traffic congestion, difficulties for parking by residents and the need for constant access to properties;
- Use of the suggested western access is via a rough alleyway providing access to rear garages, and previous blocking of the access by vehicles meant residents could not get their vehicles out; following complaints the School closed that gate and the problem was solved, but we would strongly object to re-establishing that school access;
- Nuisance parking and blocking of house driveways previously occurred in Oakfield Park Road, and we were assured by the School that parent access via this access would not be allowed again.

#### Amenity Aspects

- Would like to see more flowering trees to improve the visual aspect;
- Sympathetic to the School's requirements for new buildings, but would like to see any trees removed being replaced to preserve the views and birdlife.

*Following correspondence with those submitting representations, one resident in Oakfield Lane has maintained their objections as follows:*

- The land proposed for the drop off would be better used for parking rather than drop-off and collection, since the same volume of traffic would use Oakfield Lane and the congestion likely to be made worse;
- If zig-zag lines are only to restrict parking at school peak times, why cannot a similar arrangement be introduced outside the houses farther up the road? Efforts should be made to resolve the problems for residents of cars constantly parked outside our houses during the day;
- When exiting driveways it is frequently impossible, with the parked cars, to see traffic approaching in either direction;
- The main problem is not the parking by school parents but the parking throughout the day, aggravated by inadequate parking available within the school grounds, including for the adjacent Children's Centre.

#### Discussion

17. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 12 above. Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance, including the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. Issues of particular relevance include design and layout considerations, parking and access, biodiversity, landscaping and tree protection and residential amenities.



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#### Need

18. The expansion of the school is part of the targeted Basic Needs programme to provide new school places across Kent, and the whole country, to cater for the demand created by the previously underestimated national demographic changes. In West Kent this demand is increased by the in-migration of pupils either moving out of London or opting to send children to schools in Kent rather than neighbouring London Boroughs. The National Planning Policy Framework, together with the Planning for Schools Development Policy Statement, strongly promote the provision of new or expanded schools and exhort local planning authorities to work with developers to overcome any obstacle to the securing planning consents. I therefore see no objection in principle to the proposed development, which is strongly supported by the general thrust of planning policy.

#### Design and Layout

19. The proposed design of the new buildings has been carefully considered to correlate with some of the more recent built development at the school, including the choice of materials and colours to be employed externally. Whilst the materials and colour treatment might seem incongruous on some school sites, it is important to respect the local context, and since the neighbouring built development is largely modern with no distinctive or heritage characteristics to follow, the design details proposed here appropriately respond to the recent school buildings on the site itself.
20. The proposed siting and layout logically groups the new build with the existing buildings and where there would be the least conflict with other requirements for playspace and playing field protection. To accommodate the new build and the proposed new access and parent drop-off area however in this northern part of the site would however involve the loss of trees and a landscaped part of the site, and the visual impact and arboricultural impacts of that is discussed further below.

#### Parking and Access

21. Most of the local neighbour objections relate to the potential for parking nuisance and congestion in Oakfield Park Road, in the event that the former side access to the school site is re-opened there. Following discussion with the applicants, the School has confirmed that there 'are absolutely no plans to re-open the Oakfield Park Road gate as an alternative access'. Although the School use the access for quick access to Oakfield Park, with residents' agreement, the School have confirmed that they would never consider use of the gate as a permanent alternative access. Consequently all those objections have been withdrawn.
22. The objections which cannot be resolved relate to parking in Oakfield Lane, which would appear to be a perennial occurrence and not necessarily related only to the operation of the Primary School. There are other activities that would account for some of the on-street parking, but the school staff are understood to exacerbate the problem by parking throughout the working day. However, it is not clear why school staff would opt to park some distance away from the school entrance, by the complainant's house, when there is other unrestricted parking space closer and presumably not occupied by school parents when most staff arrive. Nevertheless, the current proposal includes improved on-site drop-off and pick-up provision and increased parking provision for part-time/lunch time staff (within the drop-off/pick-up area). In addition, as required by Highways and Transportation, should permission be granted a revised Travel Plan

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would be required pursuant to condition, which must include, amongst other matters, measures to promote safer and more considerate parking by parents associated with the school, and measures to encourage use of the drop-off facility. These Travel Plan initiatives would further reduce the likelihood of continued on-street parking by both staff and parents.

23. Although it is argued that roadside parking spaces would be lost with the creation of the extra access point, the improved on-site parking and circulation space would compensate for that loss, as well as encouraging those just dropping-off/collecting to enter the site rather than occupy roadside space, and then depart leaving space for others to follow them. Criticism of drop-off facilities is common in places where they have not operated effectively, but where the parents are properly informed and understand from the outset how they are intended to be used, there is the potential to avoid dozens of on-street parking spaces being occupied and no need to permanently sterilise significant areas of the school site for parking that is only need for a few minutes twice per school day. Clearly careful management of the use of drop-off spaces is crucial to avoid them being misused as parking spaces, but I see no reason why that could not be achieved here, backed up by an updated School Travel Plan.
24. It also needs to be borne in mind that Oakfield Lane is public highway, and the public highway is there to be used as such - either by passing and re-passing or by parking - and it is not possible to restrict its use to one category of user such as adjacent residents. It is also important not to confuse parking that might be an inconvenience or an irritation, with parking that is actually causing a danger to road safety. Where there is a serious danger or regular obstruction being caused, then the Borough Council and the Highway Authority work together to introduce parking or waiting restrictions where it is practicable and has widespread support. In particular, Traffic Regulation Orders cannot always be pursued if other users, residents, businesses object to the restrictions being introduced, which is a common problem where some residents with their own off-road parking want on-street parking controls introduced but other residents or businesses without their own private facilities do not. In particular, in this case, we received objections to a loss on on-street car parking, and representations from those who wished to see all on-street car parking removed. With regard to concerns regarding a loss on on-street car parking, these were overcome by an agreement by the applicant to provide signage enabling parking on 'School Keep Clear' zig-zag markings for safe roadside parking between the hours of 6pm and 7am Monday to Friday and anytime on Saturdays and Sundays.
25. Although Highways and Transportation would recommend that additional onsite car parking be provided in the car park on site accessed via Church Hill, they do not consider the impacts of the proposal to be unacceptable without such increased parking provision. It should be noted that that car park is for use by staff associated with the on-site stand alone Nursery unit only, and is subject to conditions of consent which limit its use. The car park would need to be extended to enable additional use, and additional use of that access point would need to be subject to further consultation. I therefore do not consider increased use of that car park to be acceptable at this time, especially in considering that the Highway Authority are satisfied that the application as proposed would not have an 'excessive impact on the local road network. However, in the light of the continued concern, I consider that it would be appropriate to ask for the off-site situation to be regularly monitored and for the School to work further with Highways and Transportation to explore any necessary measures to further reduce parking on Oakfield Lane by school staff and visitors. In this regard, there is scope to manage the use of the drop-off area so that it can be used for staff parking during the rest of the school day, eg. by part-time staff, midday supervisors and visitors. This is something that the school

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are proposing to do, in addition to the Travel Plan targets referred to in paragraph 22 above.

26. It is suggested by a local resident that the County Council buy the Alsford Timber site on the corner of Oakfield Lane and the A225, to provide additional car parking for the school. However, it would be impracticable and unaffordable for KCC or the School to acquire a neighbouring business premises solely for the purpose of providing some extra top-up parking space for the school, when most of its parking needs can be met within the school grounds. Moreover, even it was feasible, an off-site parking area would be empty for most of the working day, and completely unused at weekends and school holiday times, potentially presenting maintenance and security problems. Under the circumstances, I consider that the combination of the proposed drop-off facilities (including use for parking during the school day) and the Travel Plan initiatives are sufficient in this particular case to ensure that the use of Oakfield Lane is made no worse with the rise in the school roll, and potentially would be improved.
27. In considering the above, I am satisfied that subject to the imposition of conditions requiring the submission of visibility splays at the new exit, the submission of an updated/revised Travel Plan within 6 months of the date of occupation, the provision of the drop-off facility prior to occupation and its subsequent retention, and the provision of signage enabling parking on 'School Keep Clear' zig-zag markings for safe roadside parking between the hours of 6pm and 7am Monday to Friday and anytime on Saturdays and Sundays, that the development would not have a significantly detrimental impact on the local highway network. I therefore see no reason to refuse the application on this ground.

#### Landscaping and Ecology

28. The proposal necessitates the removal of some trees and undergrowth within the school site, which is regrettable but unavoidable given the extent of trees on the site and the lack of other space within the grounds which is not needed for other purposes. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that there would sufficient trees retained within this part of the site to not unduly alter the existing landscape character. In addition, replacement trees are proposed to be planted as part of the proposals, as requested by the Landscape Officer and one of the neighbouring residents, and the School has agreed to consider the possibility of flowering trees. The Biodiversity Officer has however advised that native species trees should be used to replicate the wildlife habitat that would be lost to the development
29. The submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment uses a standard methodology for categorisation of the trees in terms of their health, longevity and species value. 17 Grade C trees would be lost, together with 4 groups of Grade C trees, plus 3 Grade U trees to be removed anyway in the interests of sound arboricultural management. These trees are judged to be of low quality and value in terms of retention, and whilst they are nevertheless of some visual screening value, the proposed scheme of replanting is judged to be capable of restoring that screening value. The trees to be lost would include largely Norway Maples with Sycamore, Beech and Elm, which are either native or now naturalised in the UK.
30. Both the requirement for a scheme of landscaping and tree planting, and the Biodiversity Officer's requirements relating to bat roost protection (if works to remove trees are to be undertaken between March and October, an ecological method statement for the removal of trees with bat roost potential must be submitted and approved prior to commencement) would be covered by planning conditions in the event that planning

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consent was given. Similarly, further aspects of potential concern raised by the Biodiversity Officer would also be covered by planning conditions to ensure best practice and appropriate mitigation is followed. Subject to the imposition of the conditions outlined above, I am of the view that the development would not have a detrimental impact on the local landscape, trees on site, or ecology/biodiversity.

#### Residential Amenities and Construction Matters

31. Other than off-site traffic and parking issues, and the replacement of trees, no issues of specific residential amenity have been raised by objectors, and I am satisfied that the proposed development is sufficiently distanced from neighbouring properties to avoid any adverse impacts. However, given that there are nearby residential properties, if planning permission is granted it would, in my view, be appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of construction and demolition in order to protect residential amenity. I would suggest that works should be undertaken only between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays. It is also normal 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.
32. In accordance with the requirements of Highways and Transportation, I also consider it appropriate that details of a full Construction Management Strategy be submitted for approval prior to the commencement of development. That should include details of the methods and hours of working, location of site compounds and operative/visitors parking, details of site security and safety measures, lorry waiting and wheel washing facilities, details of how the site access would be managed to avoid peak school times, and details of any construction accesses. Therefore, should permission be granted, a Construction Management Strategy would be required pursuant to condition and the development would thereafter have to be undertaken in accordance with the approved strategy.
33. In addition to the above, should permission be granted, conditions of consent would ensure that dust, mud on the local highway network, and other matters associated with construction, would be mitigated as far as reasonably possible so as to minimise disruption to local residents.

#### Other Matters

34. The Borough Council has suggested that building recording should be undertaken in relation to the air raid shelters due to be removed, and if planning consent was to be granted, then that could be made a conditional requirement. The drainage and potential contamination aspects raised by the Environment Agency relate to standard precautionary requirements and would also be covered by routine planning conditions.

#### Conclusion

35. The proposed development is strongly supported by current planning policy and is wholly acceptable in principle, as well being in accordance with the general thrust of the relevant Development Plan policies. The details of the proposed development are also fully acceptable to my mind, and the objections that the application has attracted relate to parking and access considerations, rather than the proposed development itself. These aspects have been thoroughly investigated and responded to through further correspondence with both applicants and neighbouring residents. The only maintained



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objection relates to on-street parking in Oakfield Lane which is essentially a wider matter, and not wholly related to the proposed school development. Under the circumstances, I consider that planning consent should be granted subject to appropriate conditions to address the key issues raised by respondents and discussed above, including monitoring of school parking on Oakfield Lane.

**Recommendation**

36. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO conditions, including conditions covering:

- the standard time limit;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- the submission of details of all materials to be used externally;
- a scheme of landscaping, including hard surfacing, its implementation and maintenance;
- measures to protect trees to be retained;
- if works to remove trees are to be undertaken between March and October, an ecological method statement for the removal of trees with bat roost potential must be submitted and approved prior to commencement;
- no tree removal during the bird breeding season;
- development to accord with the recommendations of the ecological survey;
- submission of an updated Travel Plan within six months of occupation, and thereafter ongoing monitoring and review. Updated Travel Plan to include measures to promote safer and more considerate parking by parents associated with the school, measures to manage and encourage efficient use of the drop-off facility, further monitoring of school parking on Oakfield Lane, and the School and Nursery working together to investigate the scope for optimum use of the car park on Church Hill;
- provision and retention of access, the drop-off/pick-up facility, & circulatory routes;
- submission of visibility splays at the new exit point onto Oakfield Lane;
- provision of signage to enable unrestricted parking on the proposed road markings/zig-zag lines between the hours of 6pm and 7am Monday to Friday and anytime on Saturdays and Sundays;
- recording of the former air raid shelters prior to demolition;
- the submission and approval of further works with regards to contaminated land;
- the submission and approval of details of a surface water drainage scheme;
- hours of working during construction and demolition to be restricted to between 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays;
- construction management strategy, including access, lorry routing, parking and circulation within the site for contractor's and other vehicles related to construction and demolition operations;
- measures to prevent mud and debris being taken onto the public highway.

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

- With regard to the requirement to prepare and submit a (revised/amended) School Travel Plan, the applicant is advised to register with Kent County Council's Travel Plan Management system 'Jambusters' using the following link <http://www.jambusterstpms.co.uk>. Jambusters is a County Wide initiative aiding Schools in the preparation and ongoing monitoring of School Travel Plans.

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- The applicant's attention is drawn to the letter from Highways and Transportation in which it is noted that it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all necessary highway approvals and consents where required are obtained.

Case officer – Mary Green	01622 221066
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Background documents - See section heading
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