

Proposed expansion of Furley Park Primary School, Reed Crescent, Park Farm, Ashford – AS/14/606 (KCC/AS/0162/2014)

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

Application by Kent County Council, Property & Infrastructure Support for erection of new two storey building, provision of 32 additional car parking spaces and 34 cycle spaces and additional hard and soft landscaping at Furley Park Primary School, Reed Crescent, Park Farm, Ashford – AS/14/606 (KCC/AS/0162/2014).

Recommendation: permission be granted subject to conditions.

**Local Member:** Mr Michael Angell

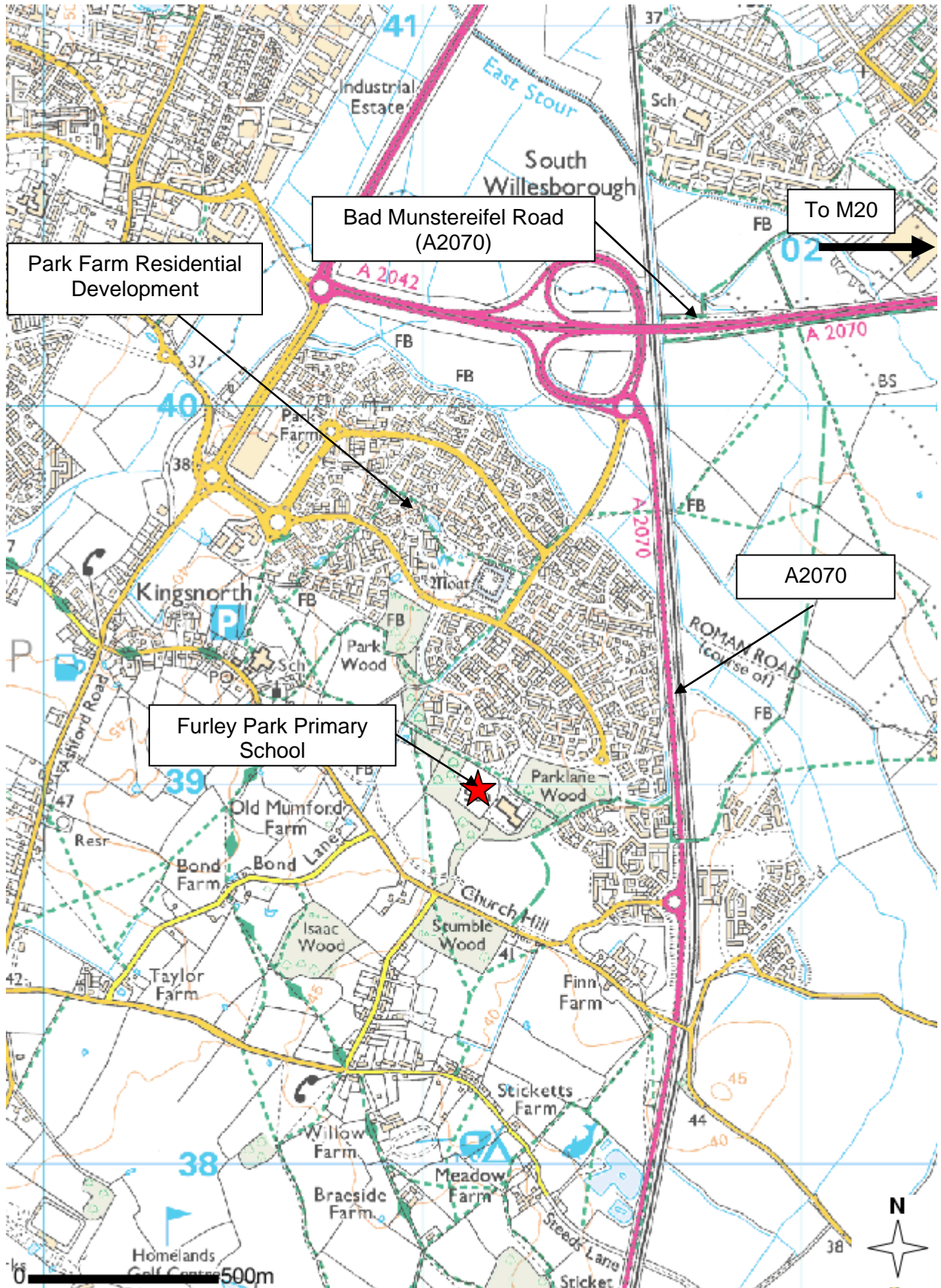
**Classification:** Unrestricted

### Site Description

1. Furley Park Primary School is located on the Park Farm Housing Estate, north-east of the village of Kingsnorth, Ashford. The site is bounded to the north-east, south and west by woodland with residential development situated to the north-west. Parklane Wood located adjacent to the north-east of the school site is designated as an area of Ancient Woodland. The school buildings are located to the east of the site with playing field to the west. A public right of way runs through the site from the north-west and forms the northern boundary to the north-eastern section of the school site.
2. The site comprises three single storey buildings including the main school building, the school hall and the school kitchens. A modular building accommodating two classrooms is located on the school playground, to the eastern boundary. A Children's Centre is located to the north of the site which is currently in use but being considered for closure. There are playgrounds located to the front and rear of the school and nature area with a pond situated within the north-eastern part of the site, adjacent to the public right of way. The playing field, within the western part of the site is a community play area within the management of the school but also accessible to members of the public via the public right of way. The school's pedestrian and vehicular entrances are accessed from Reed Crescent. Pedestrian access is also gained by the public right of way that runs through the site.
3. The school is defined in the Local Plan as within the Park Farm development allocation. Park Farm consists of a major housing development site with associated open space and facilities, more general policies are set out in paragraph (14).

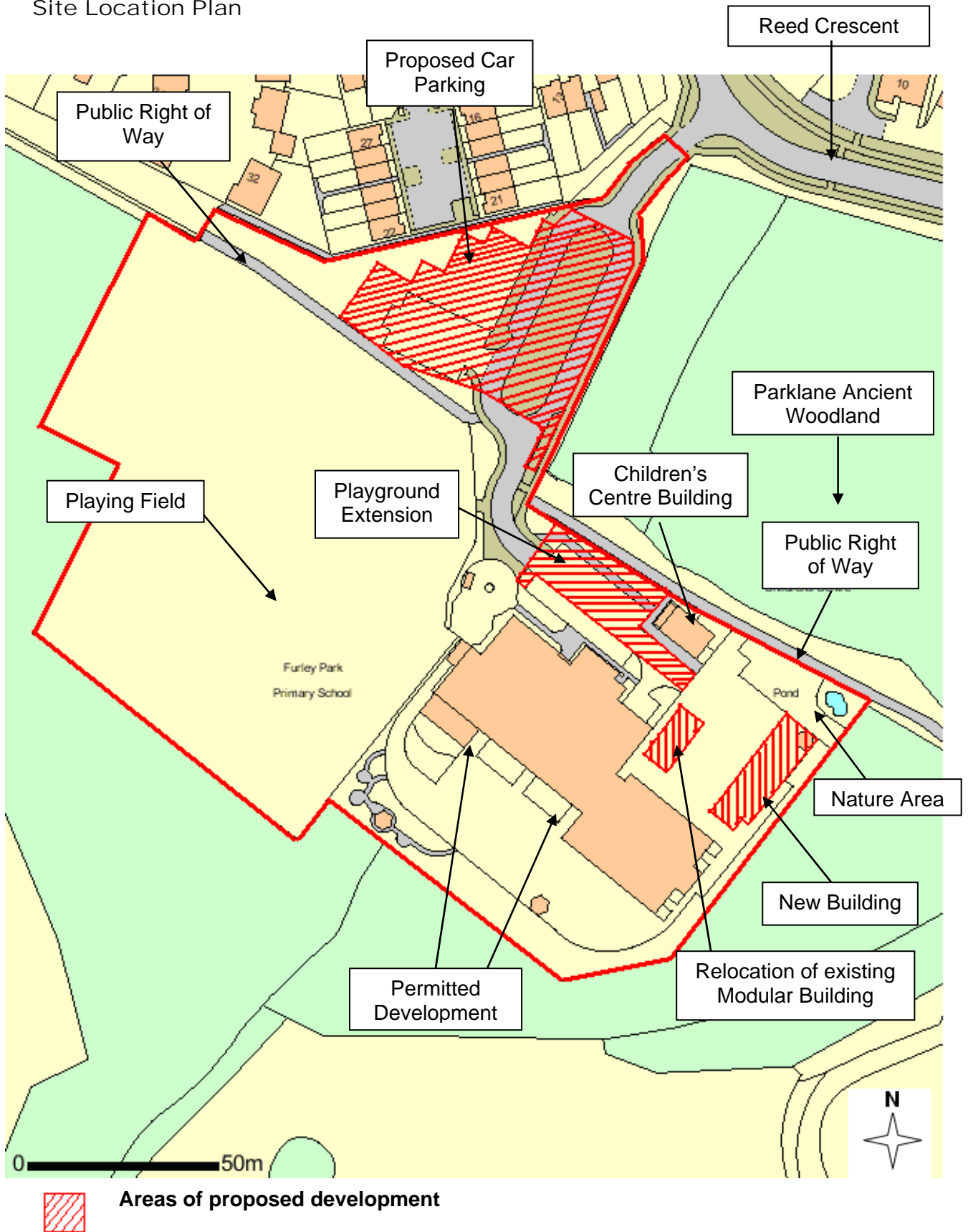
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Wider Site Location Plan



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Site Location Plan



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### Aerial View of Site



### Relevant Planning History

4. In recent years, Furley Park Primary School has been granted planning permission for a modular two classroom building (AS/12/598). Planning permission for the construction of a single story building for use as a Children Centre with associated boundary fencing with associated boundary fencing was given by the County Council in May 2010 (AS/10/468). Other recent applications include the provision of a canopy to the Key Stage 1 area (AS/06/311) and various extensions and alterations to the main school building including a severy store and detached storage building (AS/04/1296).

### 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 Ashford 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 and subsequent inward migration and also a rise in the birth rate.

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6. The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2013-2018 provides forecasts that indicate an increase in the demand for primary school capacity in some areas of Ashford, indicating a surplus of places to the south and south west of the Borough and growing pressures in the Town. This proposal aims to provide some of the school place provision needed in Ashford Town. As of September 2014, Furley Park Primary School will have 510 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. The proposed accommodation would allow for the provision of a total of 630 pupils at the school.
7. The School currently employs 26 full time equivalent (FTE) staff positions who are at the school site on a daily basis. The proposal would lead to an increase of 7 FTE additional staff members, bringing the total members of full time staff to 33. An additional 15 part time members of staff would be employed at the school.
8. The application proposes the construction of a two storey standalone building to be located in the location of the existing modular classroom block. The modular classroom block which has temporary planning consent until July 2017, would be re-located to the western side of the playground. The proposed building would accommodate six classrooms, a school hall and associated facilities and storage. As part of the proposals, a new playground would be created to the north of the main school building on the existing car park. 32 additional car parking spaces are proposed as part of the development within the main car park area located within the north-west part of the site. 34 cycle spaces are also proposed as part of the application. The proposals would allow the provision of accommodation for another form of entry each year thereby increasing Furley Park Primary School from 2 form entry to 3 form entry. A small extension to the rear of the school for the provision of a new classroom and extension of the existing canopy to the outdoor play area will be carried out under permitted development rights with planning permission not required for this element of the works.
9. The proposed building would be a two storey construction with single membrane flat roof and blue and buff brickwork with polyester powder coated aluminium windows to match the existing main school building. The overall footprint of the building has been reduced through the design of a two storey building to limit the loss of playground.
10. The application proposes the creation of 32 additional car parking spaces within the parking area located to the north-west of the school site to replace the spaces that would be lost through the extension of the main school playground within the north-east of the site and accommodate the expansion in pupil numbers. The staff car parking area is proposed to be modified to accommodate 44 vehicles. Parking for parents and visitors would be provided within the existing looped area with the existing central island, along the access road and area to the west accommodating 35 parking spaces provided in an echelon format. This would include 2 disabled parking bays. The lay-by to the east of the access road is to remain in use, providing 10 parking spaces for use as a quick collection area for use by parents dropping off and picking up pupils with a further 2 disabled bays. This would provide a total of 91 parking spaces overall, an increase from 59 spaces. Secure fencing is to be provided to the staff car park, extended playground area and existing bin storage and servicing area.
11. Provision for 34 cycle spaces is also included within the proposals with an additional 17 Sheffield cycle stands proposed to be located close to the school's main entrance.

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12. Fifteen young semi-mature trees are proposed to be removed as part of the proposed development along with an area of grassland and thicket shrub planting. The majority of the trees are located in the vicinity of the main school car park, within the north-west part of the site and within the existing central island. One tree is located in the vicinity of the car park to the north of the main school building. The applicant proposes to plant fifteen trees, together with shrub planting to the central road island within the access road. Native hedgerow planting is proposed along the existing western path, adjacent to the staff car park and further areas of thicket planting along the boundary north-western boundary, adjacent to residential properties. Additionally, soft landscaping is proposed to the playground extension as part of the landscaping scheme.
13. 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 would help to mitigate the traffic impacts of the proposed development. Modification to the parent and visitor parking area have been proposed as well as the provision of additional staff car parking spaces to accommodate the increase in staff numbers resulting from the expansion of the school and mitigate the loss of parking provision adjacent to the main entrance. The proposal as originally submitted was amended to provide 32 additional car parking spaces as a result of KCC Highways & Transportation officer comments that the originally proposed 24 additional car parking spaces was insufficient. Cycle storage provision has also been modified through the processing of this application from 16 spaces to 34 spaces based on comments from KCC Highways & Transportation.

### Planning Policy Context

14. 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;

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- 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.

(ii) **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.

(iii) **The Ashford Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008:**

- Policy CS1** Sustainable developments and high quality design are at the centre of the approach to deciding planning applications, the key objectives of which include the timely provision of community services and encouraging use of sustainable transport
- Policy CS2** 'The Borough Wide Strategy' – Focuses large scale development within the Ashford Growth Area. Key infrastructure projects, including education, to be delivered at the same time as the development that they would serve.
- Policy CS9** Development proposals must be of high quality design and address issues such as character, distinctiveness, sense of place, permeability, ease of movement, legibility, mixed use and diversity, continuity and enclosure, quality of public spaces, flexibility, adaptability and liveability, richness in detail and efficient use of natural resources.
- Policy CS10** All major development must incorporate sustainable design features to reduce the consumption of natural resources.
- Policy CS11** Development proposals should avoid harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests and seek to enhance and expand biodiversity.
- Policy CS15** Promotes public transport and other non-car based modes of travel including measures to encourage cycling, and sets out maximum vehicle parking standards. Development proposals must show that transport needs can be satisfied
- Policy CS18** School and community facilities should be timely and provided to meet the needs generated by new development.
- Policy CS20** All developments should include appropriate sustainable drainage systems for the disposal of surface water.

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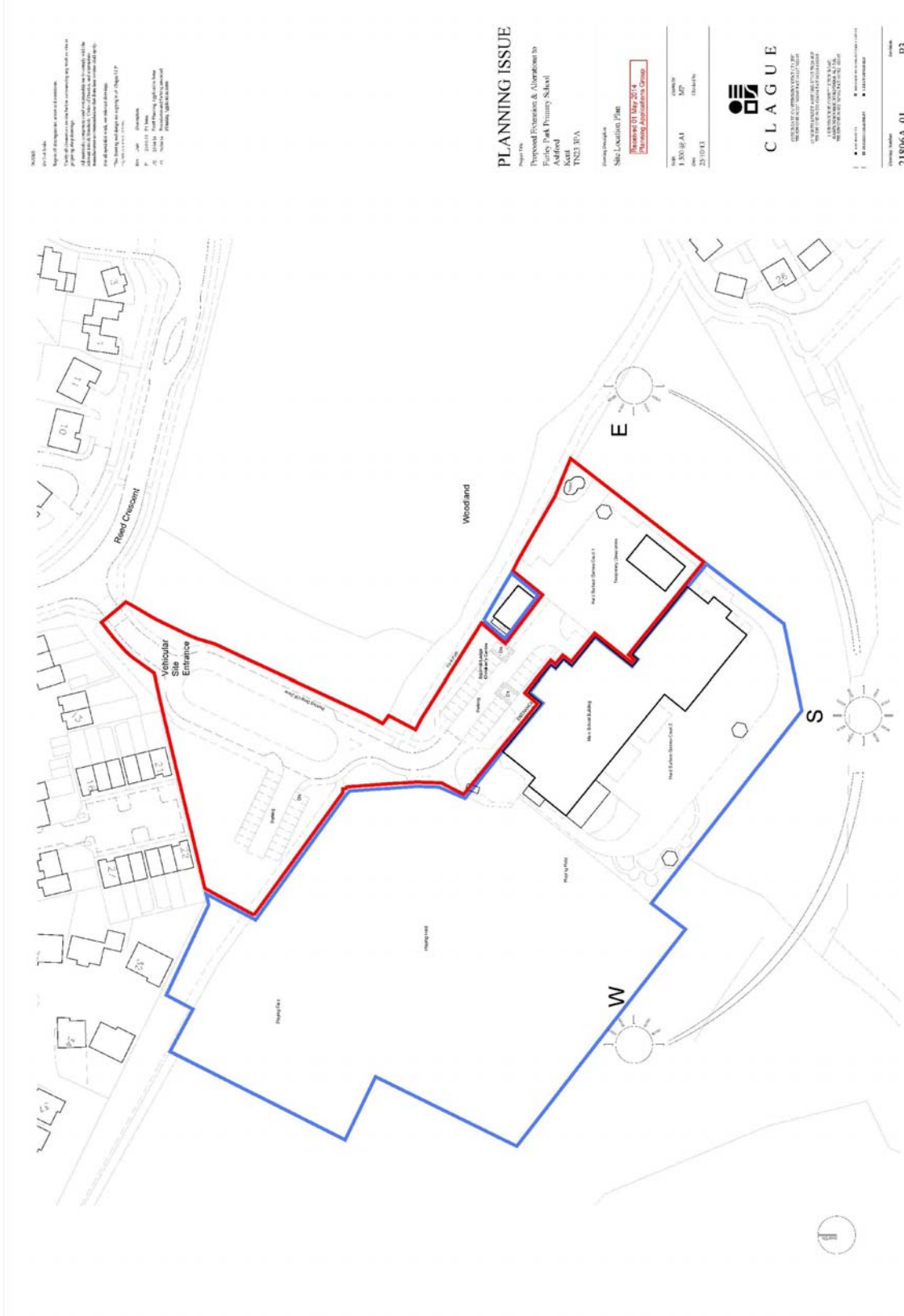
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- (iv) The adopted **Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000:**
- Policy EN23** Archaeological sites will be preserved and protected.
  - Policy S17** Park Farm Allocation which covers the Furley Park Primary School site and includes the protection of key habitats including Park and Parklane Woods.
- (v) The adopted **Urban Sites and Infrastructure Development Plan Document 2012:**
- Policy U0** Presumption in favour of sustainable development within the Ashford urban area supporting development proposals that accord with the policies in the Core Strategy.
  - Policy U23** Development proposals on the edge of an urban area should complement and enhance the landscape character area, taking into consideration the composition of trees, woodlands and wildlife habitats, the distribution of footpaths and the scale, layout and design of vernacular buildings along with the guidance in the Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document.
- (vi) The adopted **Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document 2011:**  
Furley Park Primary School is located on the boundary of the urban area and the 'Bethersden Farmlands' landscape character area, characterised by an undulating landscape with blocks of woodland. Development proposals should demonstrate regard for this landscape character, ensuring that the development is appropriate to its location and character and incorporate high quality design principles.
- (vii) The adopted **Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document 2012:**  
Development proposals should incorporate sustainable design and construction principles and comply with environmental performance standards under Policy CS10.
- (viii) The adopted **Sustainable Drainage Supplementary Planning Document 2010:**  
Development proposals should incorporate sustainable surface water management supporting Policy CS20.



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Site Location Plan



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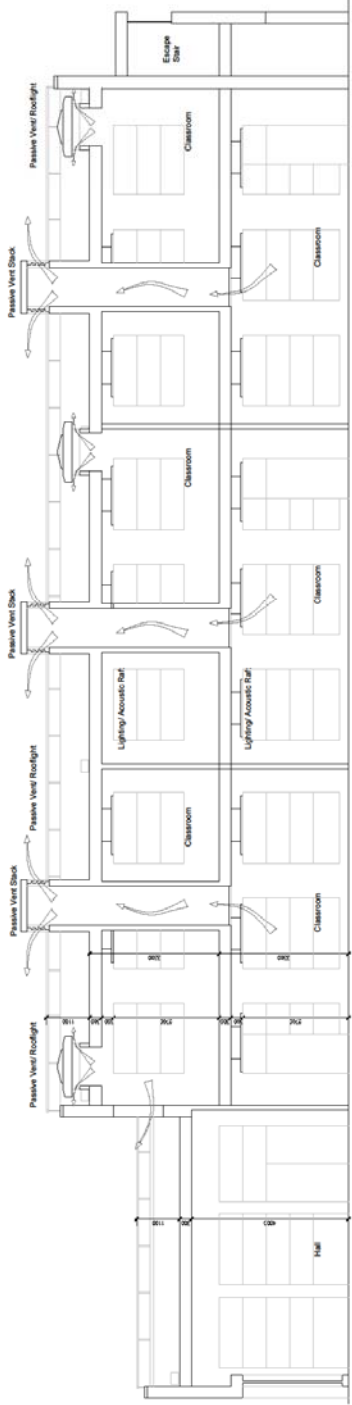
Proposed Floor Plan of New Building



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Proposed Sections Plan of New Building

NOTES:  
1. See also drawings 218006A 11 and 218006A 12.  
2. All dimensions are in millimetres unless otherwise stated.  
3. All dimensions are to the face of the wall or slab unless otherwise stated.  
4. All dimensions are to the centre line of the wall or slab unless otherwise stated.  
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Section A-A

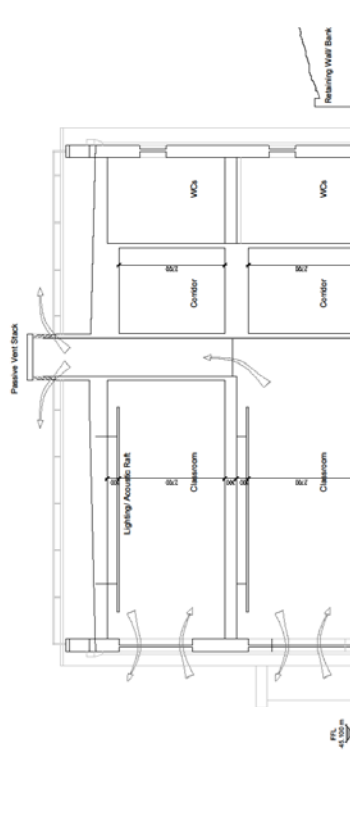
**PLANNING ISSUE**  
Proposed Extension & Alterations to  
Furley Park Primary School  
Ashford  
Kent  
TN23 3PA

Date	Drawn by
11/08/14	GL
22/11/14	BR

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Drawn by: GL  
Checked by: BR  
Date: 11/08/14  
Date: 22/11/14

Drawings Number: 218006A 11  
Revision: P5



Section B-B



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Proposed Elevation Plan of New Building



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Proposed Views of New Building

**NOTES:**  
 1. The building is shown in a perspective view.  
 2. The building is shown in a perspective view.  
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Sketch View of North West Elevation

Planning Issue

**Project Title:**  
 Proposed Expansion and Alterations to  
 Furley Park Primary School  
 Ashford  
 Kent  
 TN21 3PA

**Project Reference:**  
 Proposed Sketch Views

**Client:**  
 KCC

**Scale:**  
 1:100

**Date:**  
 14/06/14



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**Drawn By:**  
 21806A\_22

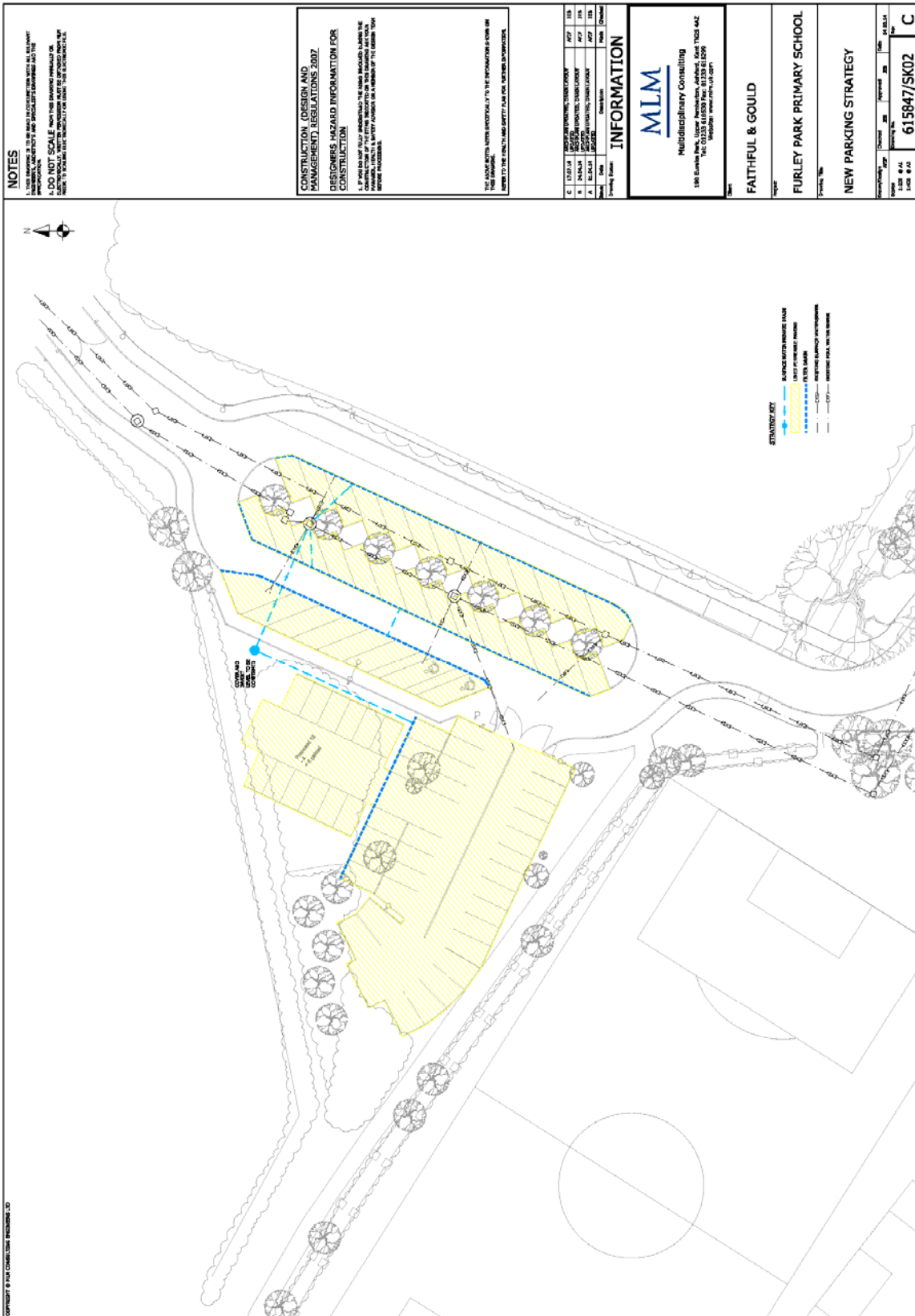
**Checked By:**  
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Sketch View of South West Elevation

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Car Parking Proposals



## Consultations

15. **Ashford Borough Council** – Raises no objection to the proposal subject to the imposition of a number of conditions including the submission of details covering materials, landscaping scheme, archaeological watching brief, ecological mitigation measures, phase II ground investigation report and remediation scheme and conditions imposed securing provision of car parking spaces, bicycle storage, implementation of School Travel Plan, implementation of approved Sustainable Urban Drainage System, reporting of unexpected contamination and provision of Tree Protection measures.

**Kingsnorth Parish Council** – No comments received to date.

**Kent County Council Highways and Transportation** – Raises no objection to the application. Following amendments being made to the number of car parking and cycle spaces, KCC Highways and Transportation consider that the parking provision is now sufficient for the extra one form entry that the new building would accommodate. This is subject to the implementation of conditions including the provision of parking facilities for site personnel and visitors, construction vehicle loading/unloading and turning facilities, the use of vehicle cleansing and wheel washing equipment during construction to prevent mud and other debris being deposited on the public highway, the provision of the vehicle parking spaces and turning space and the provision of the cycle spaces.

**The County Council's School Travel Plan Advisor** – Provides advice on how the School can produce an updated School Travel Plan using a new dedicated online system.

**Environment Agency** – Raises no objection to the proposal and has classified that the development is of low environmental risk.

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

**Public Rights of Way Officer** – Raises no objection as the proposed development does not directly affect the public right of way but requests that the applicant's attention is drawn to the following points:

- no furniture may be erected on or across public rights of way without the express consent of the Highway Authority;
- there must be no disturbance to the surface of the right of way, or obstruction of its use, either during or following any approved development;
- no hedging or shrubs should be planted within 1 metre of the edge of the Public Path; and
- the granting of planning permission confers on the developer no other permission or consent or right to close or divert any public right of way at any time without the express permission of the Highway Authority.

**The County Council's Landscape Officer** – Raises no objection subject to the tree species proposed to be planted being changed to native species to avoid potential hybridisation within the Ancient Woodland and retention of its character. A Tree Protection Plan has also been requested in the form of a planning condition.

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**Biodiversity Officer** – *Originally* commented that insufficient ecological information had been provided and additional information regarding the impact that the proposed development could possibly have on Great Crested Newts (GCN). Further to the submission of an updated ecological report from the applicant's ecologist detailing precaution and avoidance measures during the construction phase to limit any potential impact on GCNs, KCC's Biodiversity Officer considers the information provided to be satisfactory and *raises no objections* to the proposal. This is subject to precautionary approach recommendations to GCN as detailed within the updated ecological survey being implemented during construction works to minimise the potential of GCN being impacted by the proposed development. Further recommendations have been made by KCC's Biodiversity officer that any lighting for the proposed development should be designed sensitively due to the new buildings proximity to Ancient Woodland and enhancements to biodiversity within the vicinity of the nature area should be provided.

#### Local Member

16. The County Council Local Member Mr Michael Angell was notified of the application on the 21 May 2014 and has commented that he supports the proposals and would like the opportunity to address the Committee.

#### Publicity

17. The application was publicised by the posting of 3 site notices, on Reed Crescent at the main vehicular and pedestrian entrance to the school, along the public right of way to the north west and north east. The individual notification of 33 neighbouring properties was carried out as part of the consultation.

#### Representations

18. I have received 5 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
- Concerns regarding vehicles being driven dangerously and parents parking in local roads and blocking driveways, which is a nuisance to local residents
- The behaviour and attitude of some parents towards local residents in relation to parking issues is reportedly poor and can be aggressive.
- Suggestion that one side of Reed Crescent should be marked out with double yellow lines to prevent vehicles impeding the flow of traffic
- Consider that Reed Crescent is not wide enough for the current flow of traffic which is not only inconvenient but considered a danger to pupils due to restricted driver view and aggressive behaviour
- Roadside vegetation is poorly maintained, which is a danger to both pedestrian and drivers, restricting visibility
- Consider that Kent County Council should assess the current road layout of Reed Crescent and that either parking restrictions are imposed or the road is widened
- Consider that school sustainable transport strategies such a walking bus are of limited success especially during poor weather



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- Re-routing of buses due to on street parking is considered to be unfair for local residents who will have to walk further to use public transport
- Concerns regarding lack of access for emergency service vehicles when cars are parked along Reed Crescent
- Acknowledge that a proportion of the additional school places will be taken up by siblings/existing families driving to the school, but consider that extra traffic will still be generated
- Consider that the plans for the school expansion are unworkable unless all traffic except by local residents is banned within a 2 mile radius of the school
- Note that the School made a loudspeaker announcement during the morning drop-off time requesting that vehicles which were parked on double yellow lines should be removed as a bus was not able to get through.

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.

Discussion

Introduction

19. The application seeks planning permission for a two storey building, comprising of six classrooms, school hall, small group room, toilets and storage space. Additionally, the application seeks permission for the creation of 32 car parking spaces, 34 cycle spaces and associated hard and soft landscaping works including an extension to the northern playground. The application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of the objections received from local residents regarding the proposal.
20. In considering this proposal regard must be had to Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 14 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. The other aspects to consider are the issues to do with the design, layout and scale of the development, residential amenity concerns including noise disturbance and implications of the proposal on the local road network and highway safety considerations.

Need

21. The strong policy support for the development of schools must 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

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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

22. The Ashford Borough Council Local Plan (2000) and Core Strategy (2008) 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 sensitively designed within its residential and woodland 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 various different locations for the new classroom block in relation to the existing mobile building and Children's Centre. Many of the options were reliant on the closure of the Children's Centre, which at the moment is being considered. These options assessed the feasibility of demolishing or remodelling the existing building as part of the proposals however the Centre's closure is still under consideration and it was deemed that such proposals would not provide sufficient teaching space. An option based on leaving the Children's Centre in its current use was subsequently chosen. The option which has been proposed as part of this application is for the re-location of the existing modular classroom block to the west of the school playground and the construction of a two storey building on the site of the existing modular classroom block. The car park to the north-west of the school playground is proposed to be replaced with a new external play area and an additional 32 car parking spaces are to be provided within the existing main car park to the north east of the site, resulting in a total of 91 parking spaces. In my view the proposed layout of the development is acceptable and the most coherent option considered by the applicant's architect.
23. The proposed development has been designed to match the existing school buildings and is reflected in the choice of external materials and colour scheme chosen for the proposed development. The proposed new building would be constructed using blue and buff brickwork and matching polyester powder coated aluminium windows to reflect the external materials of the existing adjacent building. 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.
24. The applicant has taken into consideration the location and layout of the proposed building in relation to the area of Ancient Woodland located adjacent to the north-east of the site, beyond the public right of way to the east of the site. The proposed new building is located approximately 66m from Parklane Ancient Woodland being separated by a nature area and public right of way situated to the north of the building, providing a sufficient level of screening. I consider that the location of the development would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the existing woodland. Furthermore, a planning condition ensuring that external lighting is sensitively designed could be imposed in the event that permission for the development is granted. This lighting scheme would also cover the car park to the north-west of the site.
25. The proposed building is of a two storey construction with the existing school buildings being single storey. Through the initial design process, as detailed in the application, it was noted that a single storey building would have a significantly larger footprint and have a detrimental impact on the provision of playground. The height of the proposed building is 15m and the flat roof would help to reduce the overall height of the building.

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Although the existing buildings on site are of a single storey construction, I do not consider that the scale of the development would have a detrimental impact on visual amenity. The building is sited away from residential properties located to the north-west of the site. The external appearance and choice of materials proposed for the new building would help the building relate well to the existing buildings on site. Consequently, I consider the design of the building to be acceptable and in accordance with Development Plan policies.

Access, Parking, Traffic and Highway Safety

26. The parking provision as originally submitted proposed an additional 24 car parking spaces. However KCC Highways and Transportation initially considered that the provision of additional car parking spaces was insufficient and would actually result in a reduction in the number of current staff spaces. That would subsequently have a detrimental impact on the availability of the pupil drop-off zone and directly lead to off-site parking on local roads, particularly Reed Crescent. After amendments were made by the applicant's transport consultant, a revised car parking proposal was submitted indicating the provision of 32 and additional car parking spaces
27. The application as originally submitted proposed the provision of 16 cycle spaces. However this number of cycle spaces was deemed insufficient based on the increase in pupil and staff numbers. Following amendments to the application, a total of 34 cycle spaces are proposed, achieving the current targets of 12% for the cycle to school rate amongst pupils. The location of the public right of way within the school grounds should also encourage greater use of cycling as a sustainable method of transport to the school by pupils and staff within the wider Park Farm area.
28. The school currently has facilities for the pick-up and drop-off of pupils on site with parking for parents vehicles. However it is noted within the Transport Statement that these facilities have recently been restricted due to the misuse of the facility by parents. The parking proposals submitted for consideration as part of this application would provide 47 car parking spaces for parents and visitors including 4 disabled parking bays and a separate staff parking area, accessed via a secure gate. This would allow dedicated parking provision for the increased numbers of staff and pupils as a result of the expansion of the school and reduce parking pressures on local roads including Reed Crescent.
29. The Transport Statement submitted as part of the application concludes that the proposed expansion of the school from two form entry to three form entry would generate a maximum of 69 one-way vehicle movements across the morning peak hour (0800-0900 hours) and a maximum of 65 one-way vehicle movements across the afternoon peak hour (1500-1600 hours). The Transport Statement has assessed the level of staff car parking to be provided as a result of the school expansion and taken into consideration Kent Vehicle Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Guidance. The parking provision has been deemed to be fully compliant with the recommended parking standards. Consequently, the Transport Statement concludes that the parking provision as part of the proposals would be able to adequately meet the additional demand on parking resulting from the school expansion and considers that the proposals would not have additional detrimental impact to residential parking amenity. Furthermore, the provision of parking for parents would be made available with 47 parking spaces for parents and visitors, reducing the impact that parent parking has on the local road network. Kent County Council Highways and Transportation consider that the additional vehicle trips generated by the expansion of the school to 3FE would not have a

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significantly adverse impact on the surrounding highway network and I would agree with this view.

30. 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. The School's current travel plan was updated in 2006 however much of the local area has changed since its production with a number of houses being constructed as part of the wider Park Farm development. The updated Travel Plan will seek to reduce the mode share for car travel by pupils and staff and encourage sustainable travel, particularly walking, cycling and car sharing. The provision of 17 cycle stands would allow 34 cycle spaces to be provided as part of the proposals, encouraging cycling to the school. The School are also keen on setting up a Walking Bus initiative to encourage pupils to walk to school from the surrounding Park Farm housing estate. The majority of new pupils will come from the area of housing within Park Farm being constructed and the existing walking and cycle infrastructure is supportive of sustainable methods of travel. Updating and 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 if consent was granted.
31. Local residents have raised concerns that the local highway network already struggles to accommodate traffic associated with the school and the school expansion would exacerbate this problem. Furthermore, it is considered that on-street car parking by parents and staff is dangerous, and an inconvenience to local residents, causing congestion on local roads within the vicinity of the school, particularly during peak school times. Various suggestions have been made by local residents requesting that traffic restrictions should be implemented along Reed Crescent including the feasibility of marking out one side of the road with double yellow lines and amending the current road layout including widening the road. It should be noted however that the highway infrastructure within the Park Farm Estate was implemented relatively recently in the late 1990's to Kent Design Standards for residential streets and many of the roads have traffic calming measures already to enable efficient movement of two-way traffic with limited conflict. It also needs to be borne in mind that these roads are part of the public highway and the public highway is there to be used, and it cannot be reserved for the sole use of one just one group of users, such as residents. The comments from local residents have been assessed by KCC Highways and Transportation who consider that it is unreasonable to request any further parking restrictions to parking on Reed Crescent, as part of this application to address existing parking issues. The current width of Reed Crescent at 6.75 metres is deemed to be entirely appropriate and KCC Highways and Transportation do not consider it necessary to widen the roadway. Furthermore, the provision of additional car parking within the school site is satisfactory to accommodate the increase in pupil and staff numbers at the school, and consequently no works to the public highway can reasonably be requested as part of this proposal.
32. The Transport Statement, submitted as part of the application details bus services that run within the Park Farm area. Recently, services were introduced to Reed Crescent, however it was found that conflict was caused during the school morning and afternoon peak times whereby parent on-street parking caused issues for the free flow of bus services. Subsequently, bus services that presently cover Reed Crescent will be re-routed and although this is an inconvenience to local residents, there remains a good level of services within the immediate area. On-site parking provision for parents should also serve to reduce parking on local roads.

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33. Concerns have been raised by local residents with regard to the obstruction to visibility within the vicinity of the school access on Reed Crescent caused by overgrown vegetation on the public highway. This is a more general issue not directly related to the processing of this planning application and these concerns have been sent to the County Council's Highways District Manager for Ashford and the vegetation will undergo maintenance works if required to ensure driver and pedestrian safety.
34. 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. 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. I consider that any potential additional traffic on the local road network created by the school's expansion could effectively be managed by the additional car parking provision proposed as part of this application, which is a view shared by KCC's Highways and Transportation advisor.
35. I also consider that the proposed additional car parking provision would provide sufficient mitigation to accommodate the increase in vehicles associated with the expansion of the school. Furthermore, the provision of 47 pupil drop-off and pick-up spaces would help to reduce the number of vehicles parking on local roads such as Reed Crescent. The updating and annual review of the School Travel Plan will also 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 the School Travel Plan to be regularly updated to encourage sustainable methods of travel. Highways and Transportation are satisfied that this proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the local highway network, and consider the car parking provision sufficient for the level of expansion of pupil and staff numbers.
36. Taking the professional advice received from Highways and Transportation into account, I would consider the proposal acceptable in highway terms, subject to the imposition of conditions covering provision of parking facilities for site personnel and visitors, construction vehicle loading/unloading and turning facilities, the use of vehicle cleansing and wheel washing equipment during construction to prevent mud and other debris being deposited on the public highway, the provision of the vehicle parking spaces and turning space and the provision of the cycle spaces.

#### Noise

37. The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Acoustic Assessment which has assessed the potential noise impact resulting from the proposed development. The report concludes that noise levels would not be significant to warrant specific acoustic measures to the building to be implemented and consequently recommend a natural ventilation strategy of opening windows would be acceptable for all areas within the school. I consider that the applicant has adequately assessed potential noise levels arising from the proposed works. Additionally, no concerns have been raised by local residents regarding noise disturbance with the proposed new building being sited approximately 160m from the nearest residential properties located adjacent to the north-west of the site.

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Construction

38. Given that there are neighbouring residential properties located to the north-west of the site, if planning permission is granted it is considered appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of construction to protect residential amenity. I would suggest that works should be undertaken only between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays. It is also good practice on school sites for contractors to be required under the terms of their contract to manage construction traffic/deliveries to minimise conflict with traffic and pedestrians at the beginning and end of the school day.
39. In addition, I consider it appropriate that details of a Construction Management Strategy be submitted for approval prior to the commencement of development should permission be granted. 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.
40. In addition to the above, should permission be granted, a further condition to ensure that dust and mud are not deposited on the highway would also be considered appropriate, to minimise disruption to local residents.

Biodiversity

41. An updated Ecological Assessment was submitted by the applicant further to additional information being requested by KCC's Biodiversity officer concerning the potential impact the proposed development could possibly have on Great Crested Newts. It was noted from the protected species survey work that the small pond located within the nature area to the north-eastern part of the site had a good predicted presence of Great Crested Newt. Consequently, KCC's Biodiversity officer requested precautionary measures to be implemented during construction of the new building, including for example the storage of building materials on pallets to prevent newts and other amphibians using them as refuges. No other protected species were found to be present within the school site. Additionally, recommendations have been made by KCC's Biodiversity officer that lighting for the proposed new building should be sensitively designed to reduce the potential impact on habitats located within the Parklane area of Ancient Woodland. The NPPF encourages opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments, subsequently management recommendations to enhance the nature area for biodiversity should be investigated. Subject to planning permission being granted, I would consider it appropriate to impose planning conditions requiring recommendations within the revised Ecological Assessment to be implemented, a lighting scheme to be submitted for prior approval ensuring that it is sensitively designed, and a programme of ecological enhancement to promote biodiversity within the nature area to the north-east of the site to be submitted to the County Council for approval.

Landscaping

42. The application is accompanied by a Tree Survey, Landscape Statement, Specification and Scheme. The proposed development includes a scheme of hard and soft landscaping as outlined in paragraph 8 and comprises of an extension to the northern school playground and tree and shrub planting within the vicinity of the car park and

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playground. Amendments were made to proposed tree species during the processing of the application to ensure that only native species were incorporated into the landscaping scheme to avoid potential hybridisation within the Ancient Woodland and to retain its character in accordance with the Ashford Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document 2011. Furthermore, KCC's Landscape officer considers that a Tree Protection Plan should be submitted. This can be accommodated via planning condition should permission be granted. Overall, I consider that the scheme of soft and hard landscaping proposed enhances the landscape character of the site and the loss of vegetation has been sufficiently addressed with areas of additional shrub and tree planting.

#### Public Right of Way

43. As detailed in paragraph 1, a public right of way is located within the site boundary from the north-west and forms the north-eastern boundary of the school site. Although not directly affected by the development proposals KCC Public Rights of Way Officer has provided advice detailing that no works are proposed to be undertaken to the Right of Way, and that no temporary closure or diversion of the Right of Way should take place without consent, no furniture is to be erected on or across the Right of Way and no hedging or shrubs should be planted within 1 metre of the edge of the Public Path. Should permission be granted, I consider it appropriate to draw this advice to the applicant's attention by way of an informative if consent is granted.

#### Archaeology

44. The County Archaeologist has indicated that the school grounds are located within an Area of Archaeological Potential associated with prehistoric activity. Evidence of Bronze Age, Late Iron Age and Roman settlements have been identified within the local area and it is always possible that proposed development works may disturb archaeological remains, although the site has of course 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 EN23 of the adopted Local Plan.

#### Conclusion

45. Concerns have been raised regarding the impact of the proposed development on various aspects including residential amenity and traffic and highway safety issues. Having assessed 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 sufficient to presume against planning consent.

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## Recommendation

46. 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;
- the submission of the specifications of the fencing and gates proposed to be erected;
- the submission of details of external lighting to the building and car parking;
- a programme of archaeological work to be submitted and approved;
- the development to be undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of the Ecological Survey;
- no vegetation clearance to take place during the bird breeding season;
- the submission of a biodiversity enhancement scheme for the nature area;
- the scheme of landscaping to be implemented as approved;
- the submission of a tree protection plan and the development to be undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of the Tree Survey;
- the submission of a detailed Phase II Geo environmental ground investigation report and remediation 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;
- the submission of a Construction Management Strategy, including the location of site compounds and operative/visitor parking, provision to accommodate operatives' and construction vehicles loading/ off-loading and turning on site, 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 prior to occupation, its implementation and on-going review;
- the provision and retention of the vehicle parking spaces and turning space;
- the Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme to be implemented as approved;
- the provision and retention of the cycle parking facilities prior to occupation of the new building;
- measures to prevent mud and debris being deposited onto the public highway.

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

- The applicant's attention is drawn to the letter from Public Rights of Way which contains general informatives with regard to works adjacent to and/or on a Public Right of Way. It is also advised that 'the granting of planning permission confers on the developer no other permission or consent or right to close or divert any Public Right of Way at any time without the express permission of the Highways Authority;
- 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.



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Case officer – Hardeep Hunjan

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Background documents - See section heading