

Extension at Holy Trinity & St John's CE Primary School, Margate – KCC/TH/0451/2015 (TH/15/0027)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 8th April 2015.

Application by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure Group and Holy Trinity & St John's C of E Primary School for conversion of existing store (former garage) and extension to the rear to provide a new nurture room at Holy Trinity & St John's C of E Primary School, St John's Road, Margate, Kent CT9 1LU.

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mrs M Elenor & Mr W Scobie

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

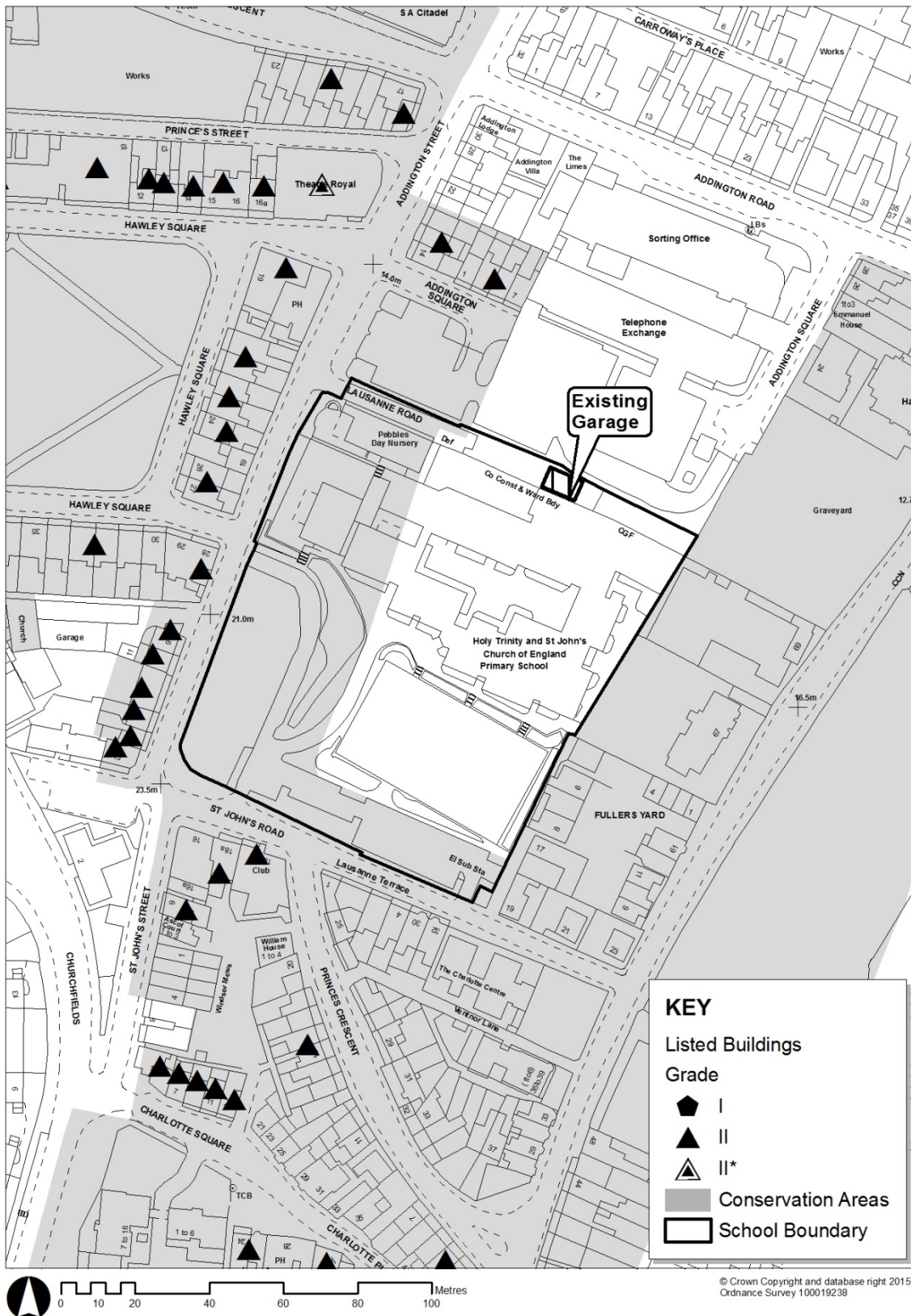
1. Holy Trinity & St John's Primary School is located within Margate Town centre. Whilst the main entrance to the School is located in St John's Road, this proposal is accessed from Addington Street via Lausanne Road, to the north of the School, which provides a secondary access to a School car parking area and also to an existing garage which is being used as a store for School equipment and furniture and a mini bus parking area.
2. The proposal site concerns the garage building and land to the rear of the garage building. The site is south of the Telephone Exchange. The proposal is located close to the Margate Conservation Area and a number of listed buildings. The School site itself is not within the Conservation Area although is surrounded on three sides by the Margate Conservation Area.

Background

3. The applicant states that the School currently has an increasing number of children at the school who require additional support for emotional, social communication and interaction development and that currently these children spend a period of time in the school's nurture room. As part of the nurture room, the School requires "home" and "classroom" areas, where the children can have break and snack time, as well as a sensory area. The School considers that the current nurture room facilities for snack time are not sufficient as there is no running water and toilet facilities are too far away, requiring accompanied visits. This proposal would enable the School to meet the requirements of the Nurture Group Network to provide "a warm, welcoming and educational environment that incorporates aspects of both home and School". The proposal is designed to help children using the nurture room to develop greater independence. The applicant also seeks a larger space for the nurture room so that more children can use the room, and office space for the nurture group leaders and for the school counsellor.

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Site location plan



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Site History

4. Most recently, the School applied for renewal of the existing dining hall roof in 2012 (TH/12/303). A proposal for a new garage (TH/07/251) was reported to Committee on 17th July 2007 when Members decided to grant permission to the proposal. This current proposal concerns the former garage building. An extension to front entrance/reception and extension to Nurture room (TH/07/882) was also granted in 2007 and in 2003, permission was granted for a proposed single storey building to provide pre-school nursery accommodation with single play room and associated ancillary rooms. The nursery, known as Pebbles Day Nursery, is located on the corner of Lausanne Road and Addington Street.

Front and rear view of existing store (former garage) showing site location



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Side elevations of existing School hall



Proposal

5. The proposal is for the conversion of the existing store (the former garage) and extension to the rear to provide a new nurture room.
6. The applicant originally proposed a felt covered flat roof and timber effect cladding extension to the rear of the garage building with UPVC double glazed windows and doors. However, in response to the consultation process the applicant has revised their original proposal to a pitched roof with slate tiles, and a fibre reinforced cement weatherboard cladding in blue grey colour (ref C10) and white powder coated aluminium windows and doors. To the rear of the extended building a new covered canopy area is proposed. The canopy would have a steel frame and clear translucent

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roof covering and would be freestanding and not connected to the building. The existing garage entrance would be replaced with a new door and windows and a concrete ramp would be provided for disability access. The applicant proposes that the front elevation access would be used as an emergency access only. Routine access would be via the rear of the building from the existing children's play area which is accessed via the existing School hall. The proposal would require the removal of some existing small sycamore trees to the northern boundary of the building. The School minibuses are currently parked in front of the store, rather than within the garage as originally permitted.

Planning Policy

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

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2012, and the 2014 guidance sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications but does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However the weight given to development plan policies will depend on their consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the development plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

In determining applications the NPPF states that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. In terms of delivering sustainable development in relation to this development proposal, the NPPF guidance and objectives covering the following matters are of particular relevance:

achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;

the promotion of healthy communities, including that great weight that the Government attaches to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities;

conserving and enhancing the natural environment;

conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

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

Thanet Local Plan (2006) Saved Policies

Policy TR16 - concerns satisfactory car parking provision.

Policy D1 - seeks high quality design, sustainability and materials and for new development to respect or enhance the character or appearance of the surrounding area, particularly in scale, massing, rhythm and use of materials appropriate to the locality and to be compatible with neighbouring buildings and spaces without leading to unacceptable loss of amenity. The policy also requires consideration of access arrangements and to retain features that contribute to biodiversity and the quality of the local environment and measures to promote safety and security.

Policy D2 – seeks to require landscaping arrangements in order to enhance new development and to retain existing landscaping where possible.

Policy HE11 – concerns the assessment of archaeological or historic importance and the likely impact of development.

Policy HE12 – seeks to ensure arrangements are made for satisfactory archaeological investigation and recording.

Policy CF1 – planning permission would be granted for new community facilities and re-use of existing facilities for alternative community uses if the proposals are not contrary to other Local Plan policies and the community use and location are demonstrated as appropriate.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Conservation Areas (2002)
Kent Design Guide (2006)

Consultations

8. **Thanet District Council** - raised no objection to the original proposal or the amended proposal.

Conservation Advisor - in relation to the original proposal commented that it would be preferable for the extension to the garage building to have a pitched slate covered roof, rather than a flat roof because of the elevated position which is visible from the Conservation Area. These amendments were subsequently made by the applicant.

In relation to the amended proposal, the Conservation Advisor raises no objection and comments that the applicant has come a long way in agreeing to the alteration of the roof design and use of powder coated aluminium for the windows/doors. The building is not within the Conservation Area but the School site is bounded by it. Although the front elevation can be seen from Addington Road, the extension can only be seen from the side access road to the post office building. It is an elevated site however and choice of cladding is important. Whilst the Conservation Advisor would prefer timber because of the position close to the site boundary it is unlikely that timber would be adequately maintained, and so therefore there is no objection to the use of cladding in this instance. With regard to the canopy comments that as long as the canopy framing is painted black the impact of this lightweight structure on the nearby Conservation Area would be minimal.

County Archaeological Officer - comments that the site lies within an area of archaeological potential associated with prehistoric and later activity, and therefore recommends a condition on any forthcoming consent to secure a watching brief, so that any excavation is observed and items of interest and finds are recorded.

Environment Agency (Kent Area) - assessed the application as having low environmental risk and therefore have no comments to make.

Transportation Planning - raises no objection to the proposal which is unlikely to lead to a material increase in demand for on street parking or vehicle trips on surrounding highways.

Local Member

9. The local County Members Mrs M Elenor and Mr W Scobie were notified of the application on 8th January 2015. No comments have been received.

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Publicity

10. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice, an advertisement in a local newspaper, and the individual notification of 53 properties. The subsequent amendments to the application were also individually notified to 53 properties.

Representations

11. In response to the original application publicity, 1 letter of representation objecting to the proposal has been received. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:

- The design is of insufficient quality for its conservation area setting.
- The front of the building bounds the Margate Conservation Area and the rear is within the setting of the Conservation Area.
- Plastic windows and plasticized timber cladding are not in keeping with the context nor sustainable uses of material. Has no objection to the principle use of the proposed extension but does not feel that the proposed cladding and window and door types are in any way appropriate.
- Comments that UPVC windows on a building adjacent to and overlooked by the Listed properties in Hawley Square would erode the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

12. In response to publicity regarding the amended proposal, 1 letter of representation objecting to the proposal was received from the same resident who comments are summarised below:

- No objection to the principle of the extension and conversion of the building.
- Maintains objection to the proposed cladding materials which are of insufficient quality for its location on the boundary of the Margate Conservation Area.
- Considers the plastic canopy to the rear as wholly inappropriate and of very low quality.
- Comments that this is a cheap unsightly solution which should not be permitted.

Discussion

13. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (7) above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore the proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. Of particular relevance in this case is the impact of the proposal on the surrounding Margate Conservation Area and the setting of nearby Grade II Listed Buildings.

Need

14. I have outlined in the background to the proposal above the School's need to provide appropriate "home" and "classroom" facilities to meet the needs of children attending

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the school that require additional support for emotional, social communication and interaction development in order to provide “a warm, welcoming and educational environment that incorporates aspects of both home and school”. Given the weight that the Government attaches to the need to create, expand or alter schools and the need to promote healthy inclusive communities importance, I am satisfied that there is a need for this development.

Location and Heritage Aspects

15. Whilst not within the Margate Conservation Area, the site within the school grounds is bounded on three sides by land which is within the Conservation Area. Because of the proximity to the Conservation Area, the impact on the character and /or appearance of the Conservation Area needs to be considered. The impact on the setting of any close listed buildings also needs to be considered.
16. To the immediate north of the site the Telephone Exchange is located. This is a large building which is also outside of the Conservation Area and which provides substantial screening of the proposal for views from the north. The proposed site is situated approximately 1.4m (4.5ft) above the level of the adjoining telecommunications site with a retaining wall at the site boundary and so the site has an elevated position. Houses 1-7 Addington Square are located approximately 45m (148ft) to the north west of the proposal beyond a yard used for car parking. These houses are Grade II Listed Buildings and are within the Conservation Area boundary. They would have oblique views towards the proposal, but given the location of the proposal in the context of the telecommunications site, and having regard to the comments from our Conservation Advisor, I do not consider that the proposal would detrimentally affect their setting. In particular, planning legislation seeks to protect primarily the fabric and external appearance of Listed Buildings, with some secondary consideration of their immediate setting; note that there are no provisions for protecting views from Listed Buildings or protecting their wider setting.
17. To the west of the proposal there is also a number of grade II listed buildings in Hawley Square, also set within the Conservation Area boundary. The front of these buildings face onto an area of open space in Hawley Square and the rear of these buildings face the school site. The rear boundary of the nearest building in Hawley Square is approximately 75m (246ft) away. There would be some views from the rear of these properties towards the proposal, although the extension is at the rear of the existing store (former garage) and would generally be screened by the existing store (former garage) building. Although there would be views towards the amended front elevation of the store (former garage), the main part of the proposal to the rear would be not be seen from properties in Hawley Square or Addington Street. Notwithstanding the fact that protecting private views from neighbouring buildings, whether listed or not, is not a planning consideration, and having regard to the comments from our Conservation Advisor, I do not consider that the proposal would detrimentally affect the setting of the Listed Buildings in Hawley Square.
18. Immediately south of the proposal is the school hall, and further to the south the main school buildings are located. To the east of the building the graveyard is located. Views toward the proposal would all be screened by existing development and I do not therefore consider the proposal to impact on the setting of these neighbouring areas.

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19. For developments affecting the Conservation Area, special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. This includes considering the appropriateness of the overall mass of proposed building, its scale and its relationship to its context in the Conservation Area, and any new buildings would be required to be in harmony with or complementary to its neighbours. Whilst the proposed development is not in the Conservation Area, I have considered the same principles in relation to this current proposal as far as it is justifiable. In particular, it should be noted that consideration of the special character of Conservation Areas primarily relates to sites within the Conservation Area, with some limited relevance to conspicuous sites on approaches to Conservation Areas, where there potentially could be a detrimental impact on the immediate setting of the Conservation Area.
20. The existing store building is brick built with a pitched roof and externally measures 9m (29.5ft) long by 4.5m (14.7ft) wide and is 4.5m (14.7ft) high. It provides 32.98m² (355sq.ft) internal floor space. The existing cycle shelter external measurements are approx. 2.1m (6.8ft) high and 2.7m (8.5ft) long by 4.1m (13.4ft) wide. The external measurements of the proposed building would be approx. 6.2m (20.3ft) long by 4.5m (14.7ft) wide and 3.9m (12.7ft) high and provide 23.1m² (248.6sq.ft) additional internal floor area. The proposed canopy would be approximately 4m (13.1ft) long by 3.8m (12.4ft) wide and 2.56m (8.3ft) high.
21. Given the small scale of this proposal, which is outside the Conservation Area and set back from its boundary by approximately 32m (105ft) (when measured from the rear to the Pebbles Day Nursery to the front of the store building), and adjacent to a substantial Telephone Exchange building, I consider the overall mass of the building to be acceptable in this location. In particular, the proposed location is not prominent in the street scene and would be viewed largely only within the context of the school and school grounds. Given that the extension to the main store building is smaller and follows the same profile, I also consider that the scale of the proposal is acceptable in this location. The proposed canopy is freestanding and the profile would be largely screened from views by other built development. Subject to the colour of the canopy frame being black and the details of the external materials being as submitted, and taking account of the comments received from my Conservation Advisor, and the lack of objection from Thanet District Council, I do not consider the proposal to have a negative impact on the setting or appearance of the Conservation Area. Moreover the presence of the existing garage and the dominating effect of the neighbouring Telephone Exchange and car parking adjacent to the site reinforces this judgement.
22. Given the amendments which have been made to the design of the proposal, which are discussed further below, I do not consider the location of this proposal to negatively impact upon the setting of any of the Listed Buildings nearby. In coming to this view, I have considered that the proposed building work would require removal of existing trees along the northern boundary of the school site which currently provide some softening of views from the frontage of Listed Buildings in Addington Square. These small sycamore trees are of little significance and could not be retained if the proposed development proceeds. There is no opportunity for additional planting within the area of the proposal in order to screen the proposal. The existing store is set back from the road by 65m (213ft) and is at least 75m (246ft) from the rear of any of the Grade II Listed Buildings nearby in Hawley Square and views from Listed Buildings in Hawley Square would be limited to the front elevation.

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23. Nevertheless, it is important not to confuse the protected visual setting of Listed Buildings with the reverse/outward views obtainable from within Listed Buildings. Even so, the front elevation of the existing store (former garage) would in my view be generally improved by the replacement of the garage door by a pedestrian access and windows. Moreover, the views from properties in Addington Square would be of the side elevation, against a backdrop of the existing school hall elevation and the Telecommunications Building, and I do not regard the setting of the Listed Buildings to be detrimentally affected by the proposal.
24. I have also considered the response from Thanet District Council, which has no objection to the proposal in either the original or amended form, and the response from our Conservation Advisor who does not object to the amended proposal. I therefore conclude that the location of this small scale extension is acceptable and does not unduly impact on the character and /or appearance of the Conservation Area or the setting of any of the nearby Listed Buildings.

Design Matters

25. Planning Policy D1 seeks high quality designs reflected in materials and consideration of sustainability in new development proposals in order to respect the character or appearance of the surrounding area. As discussed above, the surrounding area in this case comprises a mix of building types and car parking areas typical of a town centre location including a number of Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area boundary. The immediate surrounding area also includes the extensive brick built BT Telephone Exchange and the school's own existing buildings, and to the rear of the site a graveyard. The use of materials which are appropriate to the locality and compatible with neighbouring buildings is a consideration when applying this policy.
26. In the amended proposal, the applicant has proposed a cement fibre slate pitched roof (rather than a flat roof as originally proposed) for the extension, following the same profile as the existing building, although the roofline would be 0.6m (2ft) lower than the existing roofline. The materials proposed for the roof are the same as existing. However, it is proposed that the extension would be clad in weatherboarding in a blue grey colour, which would be a different material to the existing brick built store. This choice of material has attracted neighbour objection and the resident considers the material to be insufficient quality given the location on the boundary of the Margate Conservation Area. However, the material would only be visible on the northern elevation which would have oblique views towards it from the Conservation Area across Addington Square and the Telephone Exchange car park. Moreover, any stipulations about using traditional building materials within a Conservation Area do not apply outside of that area.
27. Because of the site which is in an elevated position above a retaining wall, the advice from our Conservation Advisor is that the building would require special foundations and is likely to require a lightweight construction which is reflected in the choice of design materials. Whilst there would be a preference for timber cladding, the location of the proposal means that it would be difficult to gain access to maintain it. For this reason, it is considered that the proposed cladding would be appropriate for this specific proposal. A sample of the material has been submitted. The choice of material requires low maintenance when compared to traditional wood

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weatherboarding which if not well maintained can fall into disrepair. The material, which is a fibre reinforced cement board can achieve A+ rating in the BRE's "Green Guide to Specification" and is not a UPVC product as suggested. It is similar in appearance to timber weather boarding and therefore in my opinion would be visually of an acceptable quality in this location.

28. The applicant has also made amendments to the original proposal to use powder coated aluminium (white) instead of UPVC windows and doors. These materials are considered to be acceptable in this location, given also that there are no windows or doors in the side elevations, and only the front elevation using these materials would be visible from the boundary of the Conservation Area.
29. With regard to the canopy, the applicant proposes that this be steel frame with a clear/translucent roof covering. It would provide a basic weather shelter at the entrance to the building within the play area. Given that this is to the rear of the existing store and would be screened from views from the Conservation Area due to the buildings to the west and north, I do not consider this to be inappropriate development in this location. No objections to the canopy have been received from Thanet District Council or my Conservation Advisor, who considers the impact of the canopy to the Conservation Area to be minimal, subject to the frame being black. A black frame could be required by condition should Members be minded to grant permission for this proposal.
30. Taking account of policy D1 and comments received from the District Council and the Conservation Advisor, I conclude that the design is of sufficient quality in this location and with the amendments made by the applicant to the roof profile and windows and doors respects the character and appearance of the surrounding site context. I conclude that the proposed materials are appropriate and compatible with neighbouring buildings.

Amenity and other matters

31. I am satisfied that neighbouring residential properties are sufficiently far away from the site so as to be unaffected by construction activity, although the hours of work could be controlled by the standard condition concerning hours of work.
32. The site lies in an Area of Archaeological Potential and I am satisfied that a condition can be applied with regard to provision of a watching brief so that any excavation is observed and items of interest and finds recorded in accordance with Policies HE11 and HE12.
33. Given also that the application is of low environmental risk and the Environment Agency has no comments to make on the proposal, and that the proposal is not likely to lead to highways impacts and has attracted no objection from our Highways Advisor, I consider that the proposal is acceptable in terms of other matters.

Conclusion

34. The proposal seeks to provide a community facility at an existing school site by use of an existing and extended building. Given that it has not attracted objection on policy grounds from Thanet District Council I conclude that it is not contrary to Local Plan policies and that the location has been demonstrated as appropriate. I therefore

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conclude that the proposal is in accordance with policy CF1 with regard to provision of community facilities.

35. This proposal is near to but purposely excluded from the Conservation Area. Whilst there are views towards the proposal from the neighbouring Conservation Area, I conclude that the impact on the character and/or appearance of the Conservation Area is acceptable given the design and materials proposed, and that the setting of nearby Listed Buildings would not be adversely affected by the proposal. Furthermore, given the weight attached to working in a positive manner when dealing with proposals for the alteration of state-funded schools with a presumption in favour of the sustainable development as expressed in the NPPF, I conclude that refusal of this proposal could not be justified on grounds of unacceptable impacts on the character and /or appearance of the nearby Conservation Area or on the grounds of unacceptable impacts to the setting of nearby Listed Buildings.

Recommendation

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

- Standard time limit of 5 years;
- For the development to be as set out in the application;
- Use of external materials and colours as submitted;
- Limitation on construction hours to between 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and 0800 to 1300 Saturday with no work on Sundays and Public Holidays;
- Requirement for an archaeological watching brief;
- That the canopy frame be painted black.

Case Officer: H Mallett	Tel. no: 03000 413411
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Background Documents: see section heading
