

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

Provision of temporary classroom accommodation and staff facilities at Land at Thistle Hill, Minster on Sea, Isle of Sheppey - 15/502691/COUNTY (KCC/SW/0111/2015)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 10th June 2015.

Application by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure Support for the provision of temporary classroom accommodation and staff facilities, comprising of a two storey four classroom block and a single storey administration block at Land at Thistle Hill, Aspen Drive, Minster on Sea, Isle of Sheppey, Kent – 15/502691/COUNTY (KCC/SW/0111/2015)

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr Crowther

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

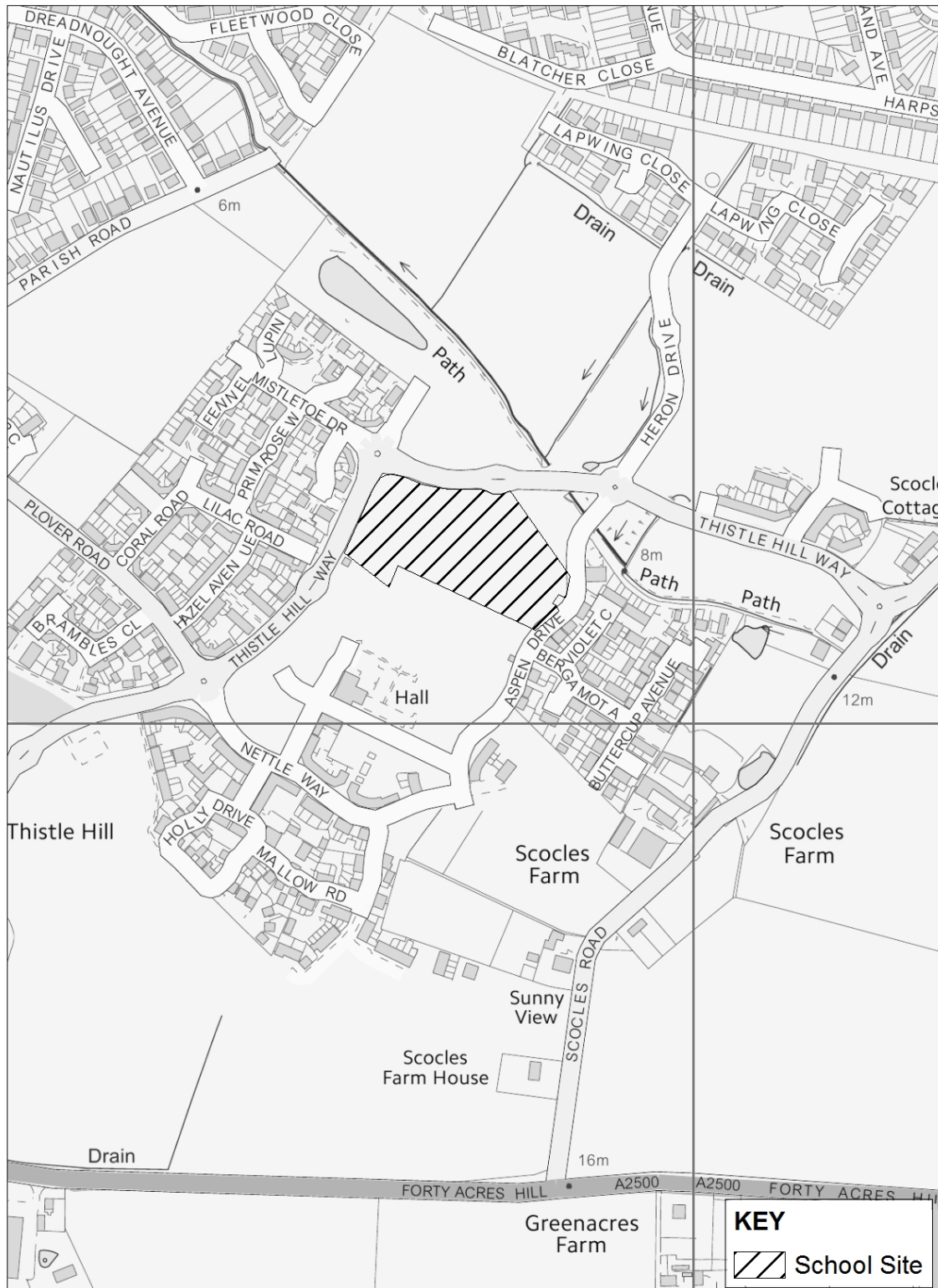
1. The proposed temporary classrooms would be sited on part of the larger school site approved in October 2014. This school site lies in the heart of a new housing development in Minster, Sheppey. The areas to the east and west of the site have already been built out, with further development taking place to the north. The surrounding development is predominantly two storey housing, but with some three story flat developments as well. The wider site generally slopes down from the south-west to north-east.
2. To the south of the wider school site is the community centre, with an existing playing field enclosed by green wire mesh fencing. Thistle Hill Way runs round the edge of the site to the west and north, with Aspen Drive running down the eastern boundary (the playing field lies to the south). There are footpaths surrounding the site along these residential roads and the roads have traffic calming measures.
3. The part of the site relating to this application for temporary classrooms is along the north-eastern edge of the school application site, utilising the existing entrance point from Aspen Drive.

Background

4. The Planning Applications Committee gave approval for the construction of a two form entry primary school on this site at the meeting held on 2nd October 2014, under reference SW/14/500221. The approval related to a two storey building with the provision of hard and soft play areas, car parking, cycle parking and access way, and shared use of the community playing fields to the south.
5. Construction is now under way for the school with the steel frame of the school already in place, and the hardstanding for the playground and base level for the car parking areas laid.

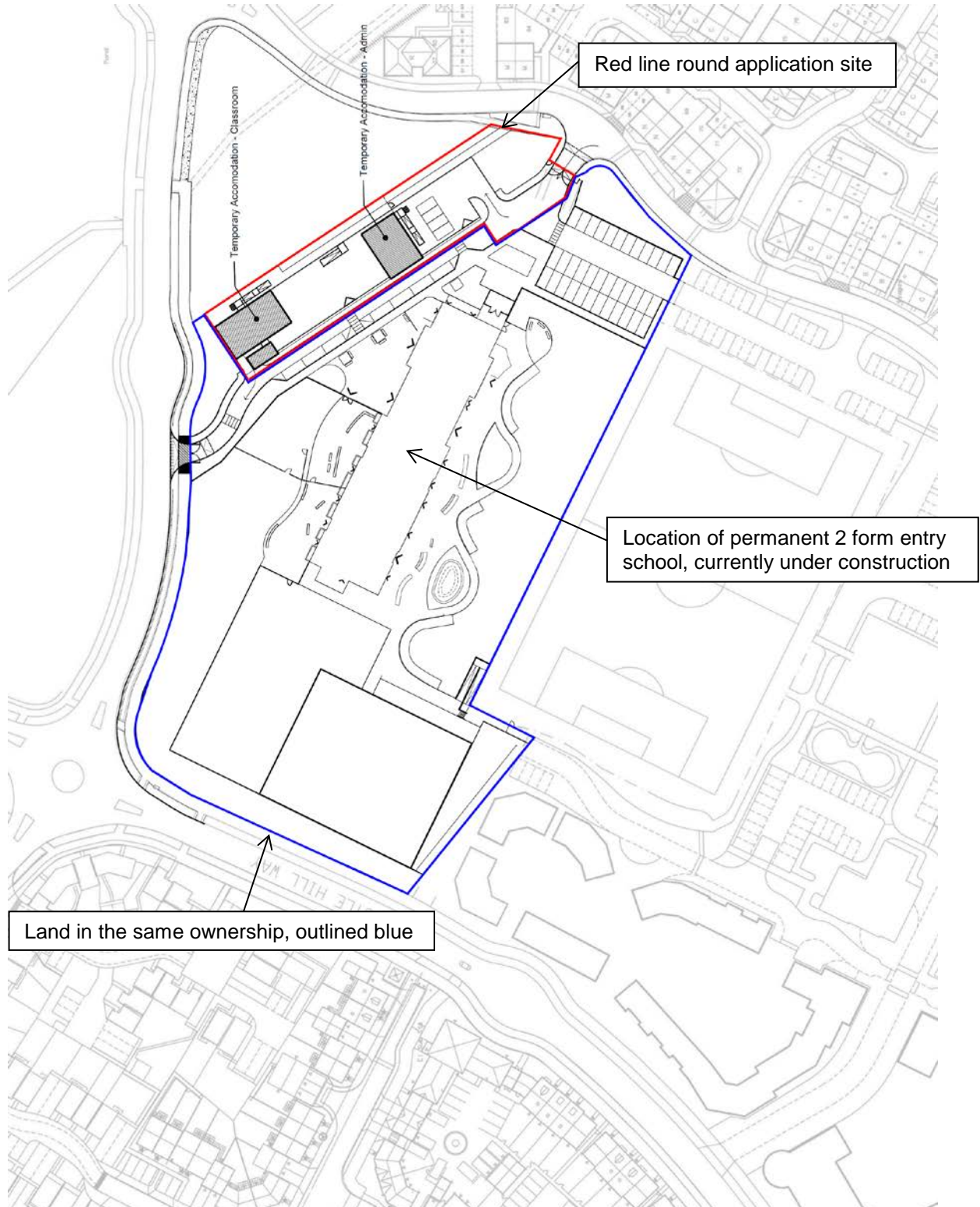
Provision of temporary classroom accommodation and staff facilities at Land at Thistle Hill, Minster on Sea, Isle of Sheppey - 15/502691/COUNTY (KCC/SW/0111/2015)

General Location Plan



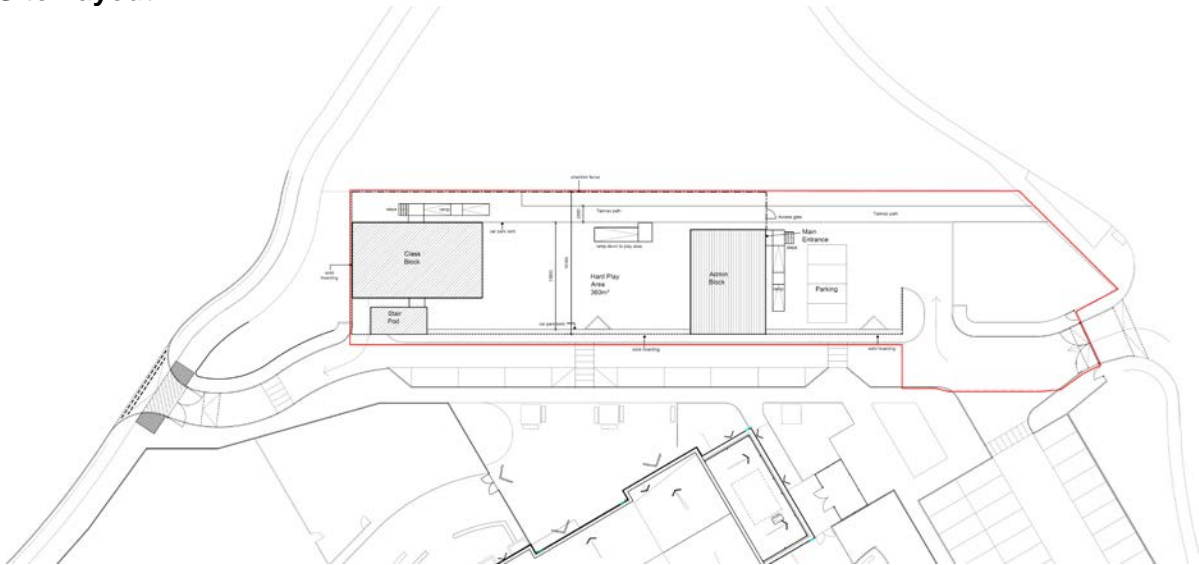
Provision of temporary classroom accommodation and staff facilities at Land at Thistle Hill, Minster on Sea, Isle of Sheppey - 15/502691/COUNTY (KCC/SW/0111/2015)

Site Location Plan

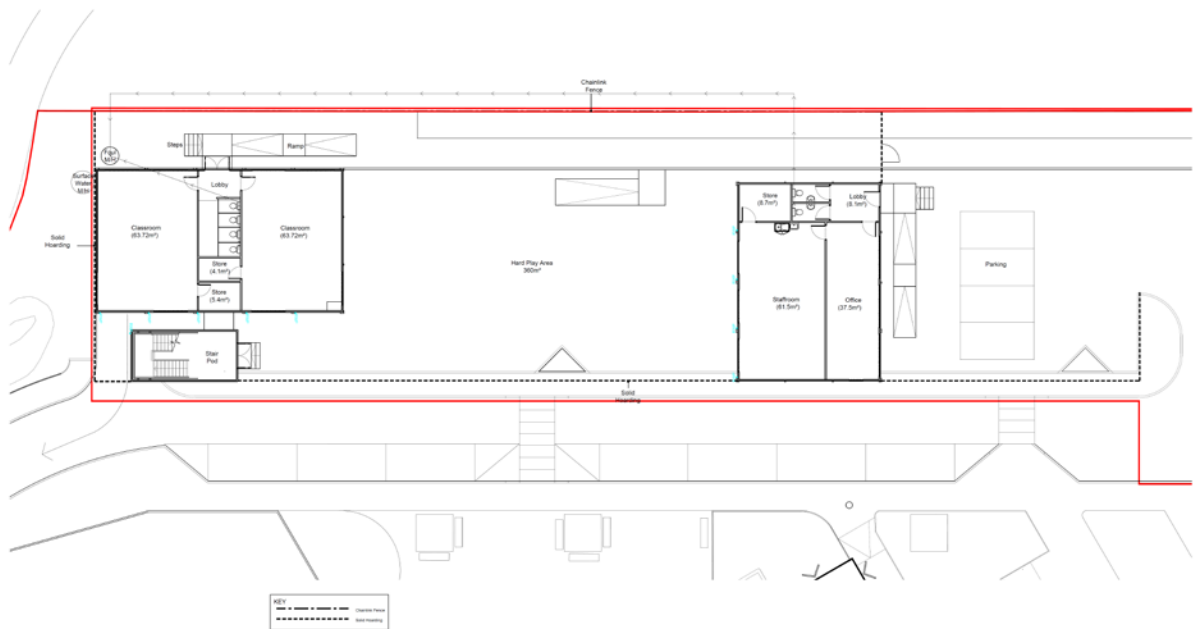


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Site Layout

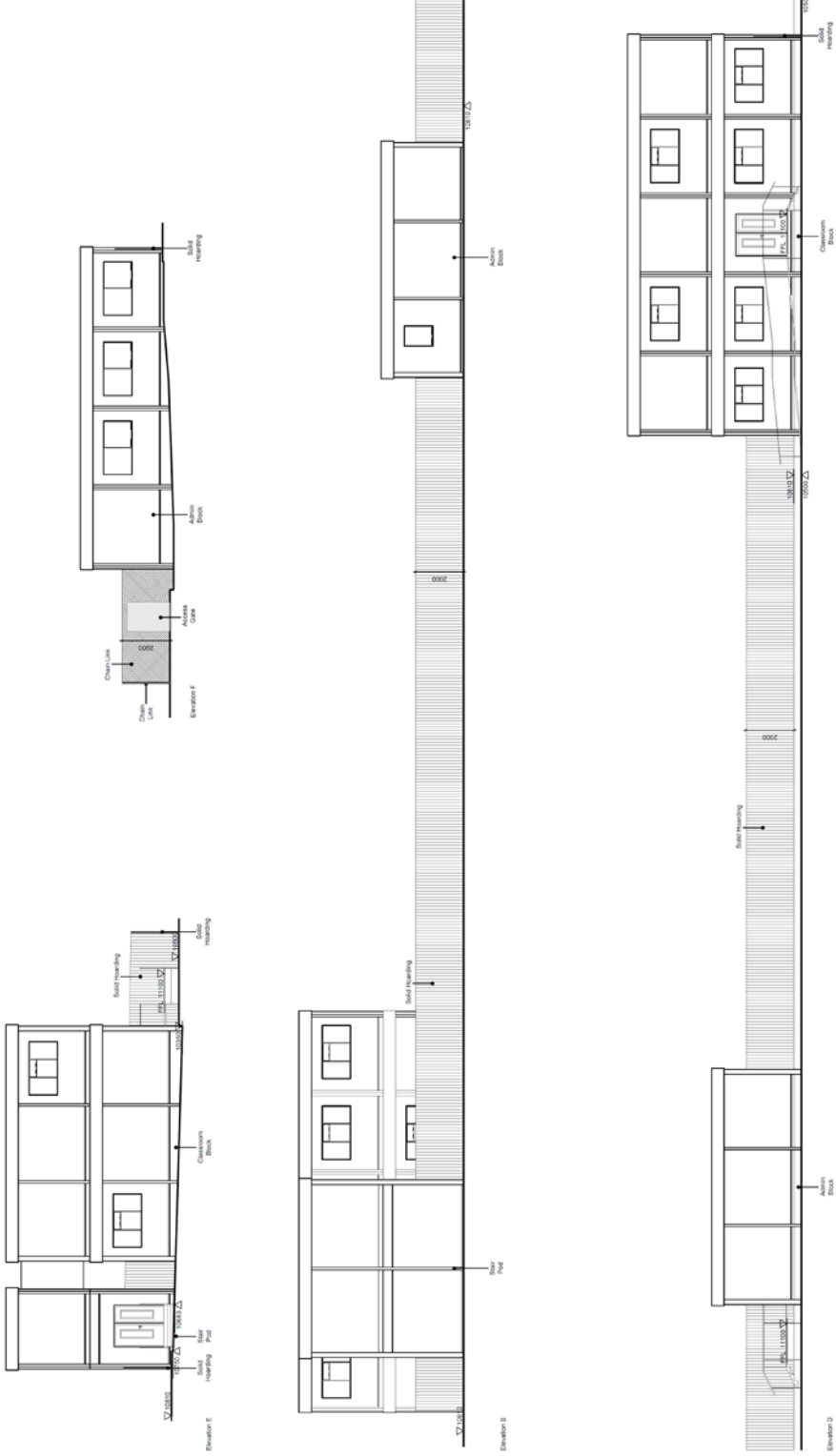


Block Plan



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Proposed Elevations



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6. However, the school will not be ready for the first intake of pupils for September 2015, therefore this application has been made for the provision of temporary classrooms to accommodate these first pupils until the school is completed. Construction is due to be finished in December 2015, with the school being open in time for the new term in January 2016.

Proposal

7. The proposed temporary classrooms are to be sited on the area which will subsequently form the visitor and parent car park, which lies to the north-east of the site. The temporary buildings would be provided in two blocks with a hard play area in between them. Access into this area would be from Aspen Drive where 4 parking spaces would be located.
8. The temporary building closest to the entrance would be single storey in height and used for administration purposes – a staffroom and office. The other building would be two storey in height with an external stair pod to provide four classrooms, plus storage and toilet facilities.
9. The north-eastern boundary would be marked with a 2m high chain link fence, whilst the north-west and south-west boundaries would be formed by a 2m high solid hoarding (and partly formed by the buildings themselves along the south-west boundary). A new pedestrian access from Aspen Drive would be created to provide a safe access point for pupils separate from the construction site of the new school and vehicular access.
10. The outdoor hard play area would be between the two temporary buildings and the community playing fields (which the school will have joint use of) will be available as a soft play area.
11. The temporary facilities will be able to accommodate up to 120 pupils and 15 staff for the September 2015 term, which would take the form of two reception classes on the ground floor and two Key Stage 2 classes on the first floor.
12. The temporary classroom block would be off-white in colour, whilst the administration block would be light grey, with white framed windows.
13. It is anticipated that the new school construction would be completed in time for the new term in January 2016, at which time the temporary buildings would be removed and the car park set out as per the original approval.

Planning Policy

14. The most relevant Government Guidance and Development Plan Policies summarised below are pertinent to the consideration of this application:
 - (i) **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** March 2012 and the **National Planning Policy Guidance** (March 2014), sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England, at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications but does not change the statutory status of the development

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plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However the weight given to development plan policies will depend on their consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the development plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

In determining applications the NPPF states that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

In terms of delivering sustainable development in relation to this development proposal, the NPPF guidance and objectives covering the following matters are of particular relevance:

- Consideration of whether the opportunities for sustainable transport have been taken up and safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people;
- Achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- The great importance that the Government attaches to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities, and that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools.

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

(iii) **Swale Borough Local Plan (saved policies) 2008** constitutes the current adopted development plan for the Borough and the relevant policies can be summarised as follows:

Policy SP1 Sustainable Development: Proposals should accord with principles of sustainable development that increase local self-sufficiency, satisfy human needs, and provide a robust, adaptable and enhanced environment.

Policy SP2 Environment: Development should avoid adverse environmental impact, and where development needs are greater, adverse impacts should be minimised and mitigated.

Policy C1 Existing and New Community Services and Facilities
The Borough Council will grant planning permission for new or improved community services and facilities, and particularly those that include provision for wider public use.

Policy E1 General Development Criteria: Proposals should cause no demonstrable harm to residential amenity and other sensitive uses or areas; reflect positively characteristics and features of the site surroundings; and protect and enhance the natural and built environments.

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- Policy E19 Achieving High Quality Design and Distinctiveness:** Development proposals should be of a high quality design and respond positively to design criteria.
- Policy E21 Sustainable Design and Build:** Proposals should incorporate sustainable design and build measures into the detailed design of new development in its use of siting, design, materials and landscaping.
- Policy T1 Providing Safe Access to New Development:** Proposals which cause unacceptable impacts of the capacity of the highway network or on highway safety will not be granted planning permission.
- Policy T3 Vehicle Parking for New Development:** Requires appropriate vehicle parking for new development in accordance with the adopted Kent County Council parking standards.
- Policy T4 Cyclists and pedestrians:** Requires cycle parking facilities for new development in accordance with the Kent County Council cycle parking standards.

(iv) The draft **Swale Borough Local Plan ('Bearing Fruits')** (December 2014) also contains broadly similar policies on transport, parking, design and general development criteria. This document has been submitted (20th April 2015) for independent Examination before its adoption.

Consultations

15. Swale Borough Council objects to the application on the grounds that the proposal would entail a severe under-provision of off-street vehicle parking that would result in overflow parking on the surrounding streets, particularly at drop off and pick up times, which would result in a significant harmful impact on the amenities of residents of neighbouring properties, contrary to Policies E1 and T3 of the Swale Borough Local Plan 2008.

Minster-on-Sea Parish Council has no objection to the principle behind the temporary classrooms, on the understanding that it will make way for the permanent school building to be erected. However they comment that the plan shows two parking areas; one for staff and one for parents. The staff parking area will be taken up by the on-site offices and parents' parking area is the area the temporary classroom buildings will be sited on. This suggests that there will be no allocated parking available on the site.

Transportation Planning raise no objection to the application.

Local Member

16. The local County Member, Mr Adrian Crowther was notified of the application on 9th April 2015.

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Publicity

17. The application was publicised by the posting of three site notices around the site, and the individual notification of 54 residential properties.

Representations

18. In response to the publicity, 2 letters of representation have been received. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:
- Unaware the school was to be built on this site – had thought it was on land further away
 - Had been told the school would be a ‘small’ primary but understand there will be over 400 pupils
 - Concerned over where the parking and drop off facilities will be
 - Thistle Hill is already a busy road with narrow sections
 - Consideration should be given to the existing residents in terms of extra parking, traffic and noise impacts
 - Objections raised to the principle of having a school on this site per se, with the associated noise issues, traffic and inconsiderate parking likely to occur.

Discussion

19. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the 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 the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
20. This application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee following the objection by Swale Borough Council, the points raised by the Parish Council, and the letters of representation received. The principle of providing an education facility on this site has already been established through the approval of a permanent 2 form entry school last year. In my view the main issues to consider are the siting and design of the temporary classrooms and the implications of siting them on the proposed parking area.

Siting and Design

21. Due to the delayed start on site for construction of the new school, the provision of temporary classrooms to cover the gap between the start of the new academic year in September and the completion of the permanent building are required.
22. The proposed temporary buildings would be of a standard design with flat roofs and light coloured panels for the walls. The maximum height for the single storey building would be 3.4m (11.15 ft) and the two storey building would be 7.1m (23.29 ft). In the location proposed, the temporary buildings would be partially screened from the housing development which lies to the north-west and south by the construction of the new two

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storey school, but visible to occupiers of properties towards the northern end of Aspen Drive and beyond. The buildings are of a typical modular design, which are considered not to be harmful to the appearance of the wider area. Furthermore their provision on a temporary basis, until the new school is complete, would mean that any perceived impact would be for a limited time only.

23. The temporary buildings are sufficient distance away from surrounding residential properties that there would be no issues with overlooking. It is therefore considered that the development would accord with Policy E1 of the adopted Swale Borough Local Plan and the general development policies of the draft Swale Borough Local Plan 'Bearing Fruits' document.

Highway and Parking Considerations

24. The temporary buildings would be sited on the area set out for visitor parking under the permanent application, and as a result there would be no 'on-site' parking for parents and visitors whilst the temporary buildings are in situ. Four parking spaces are provided to the front of the administration temporary building, which would be used for deliveries, emergency vehicles if required, parking for disabled people and visitors, and would be managed by the school administration staff. The area allocated for staff parking under the original approval is situated within the construction area for the new school, and is being used for the siting of the contractor's offices and contractor's parking, and is therefore not available to be used. The drop off layby spaces that would be set out for the new school also fall within the construction area and would not be available for the temporary use either, as there would be conflict with construction traffic moving around the site.
25. The applicants are attempting to negotiate the use of adjacent land for temporary car parking to be available for the school drop and pick up, but no firm proposals have been agreed at the time of writing. It is therefore envisaged that as no parking can be provided on site whilst the temporary buildings are in use, parking will be dispersed amongst the surrounding streets.
26. The Highways and Transportation Officer has advised that whilst 4 classrooms could accommodate a total capacity of 120 pupils and often be expected to attract around 40 or 50 vehicles, it is unlikely that this will be the case as to do so would mean that the new school would have to commence with a full 2Form Entry reception intake of 60 pupils and operate a further 2 full classes of children displaced from other schools. Furthermore given the location of the school to generally serve the Thistle Hill residential development, walking to the school is likely to be a popular mode of travel, being within a short walk of most of the residential properties, so there could be far less vehicles attracted compared to a school in a more remotely located site. (It should be noted that based on those children who have confirmed a place at the new school, the furthest distance a pupil would need to travel would be just over ½ mile in a straight line).
27. The Highways and Transportation Officer has also noted that car parks are located nearby within the local centre, and these could be expected to accommodate some of the vehicles, and any additional parking could be absorbed around the surrounding streets.

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28. It is considered that the parking of cars in the surrounding roads for this temporary period could be accommodated without causing significant problems, particularly considering the temporary nature of the proposal just to cover the interim period of around 4 months before the permanent solution is available.
29. Given the short-term nature of this parking issue, and the fact that ample parking would be provided once the new school is operational and the temporary buildings have been removed, it is considered that the temporary buildings should be permitted in this instance, in order to allow the school to open in September, meeting the legal responsibility of Kent County Council to provide school places, and the Planning Authorities obligation under the NPPF and Planning for Schools policy guidance to provide sufficient school places. The applicants, however, should be encouraged to continue to try and secure the provision of an area of temporary parking in the meantime, and an informative to this effect is proposed.
30. Moreover it is understood that at present the number of children allocated to the school falls well below the full capacity figure of 120 pupils. Whilst it is accepted that the school roll could still change between now and the start of term in September (and also during the September to December period should children move to the area etc.), the likelihood is that in reality far fewer pupils and vehicles will be associated with the school during the interim period, than could actually be accommodated.
31. The objections received regarding the provision of a school in this vicinity per se, the size of the permanent school and its location on this specific site, whilst noted, are not relevant to this current application for the temporary classrooms, as the decision relating to these issues was taken in October last year.

Conclusion

32. The provision of the temporary classrooms is necessary to bridge the gap between the start of the school term in September of this year and the completion of the new school by January 2016, therefore they would be in use for a limited period of 4 months. The size and design of the buildings are considered to be acceptable for such a temporary period and would not have any negative impact visually on the surrounding area.
33. The lack of on-site parking facilities due to the location of the mobile classrooms on the parking area, could result in some temporary parking of parents' cars on the surrounding streets. However, that would be for a temporary period only, as once the new school is completed, ample parking on site for drop off and pick up would be available, and the situation as the school grows would be well provided for. I therefore consider the application to be acceptable for such a temporary period.
34. The permanent school building is expected to be available for the School for its January term. Nevertheless in drafting the conditions there would be some merit in allowing a short contingency period to avoid the need for a revised application for the temporary buildings should the construction programme slip. KCC schools return for the Summer Term on Monday 11th April 2016, therefore this date is suggested as an end date for the removal of the buildings, but that they should be removed as soon as the permanent facility is ready.

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Recommendation

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

- The temporary buildings hereby permitted shall be removed from the site upon the completion of the new school for occupation or at the latest by 11th April 2016, and the area then laid out as the permanent parking facility for the school, approved under SW/14/500221;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details.

36. I FURTHER RECOMMEND that the following INFORMATIVE be added:

- the applicants be encouraged to continue to try and secure the provision of an area of temporary parking in the surrounding area, prior to the opening of the temporary school buildings in September 2015.

Case Officer: Helen Edwards

Tel. no: 03000 413366

Background Documents: see section heading
