

Single storey extension to provide three additional classrooms at Temple Hill Primary Infants School, Dartford – DA/15/00514/CPO (KCC/DA/0089/2015)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2015

Application by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure Support for a new single storey extension to provide three additional classrooms with toilet facilities, storage and plant room, together with associated external works at Temple Hill Primary Infants School, St Edmund's Road, Dartford – DA/15/00514/CPO (KCC/DA/0089/2015)

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr T Maddison

Classification: Unrestricted

### Site

1. The application site relates to Temple Hill Primary School located on the southern side of St Edmund's Road in Dartford. This is a primary school with attached nursery and is in an area of predominantly residential development which lies to the north of Dartford town centre.
2. Rather than compact, this is a sprawling school of part single and part two-storey form with flat roofs. Vehicular access is from St Edmund's Road into a parking area for 55 cars. The hard surfaced playground with adventure play equipment lies to the north of the school buildings and extends up to the perimeter fence, which runs along St Edmund's Road. To the south of the school buildings are extensive playing pitches.
3. There are three existing mobile classrooms on site, two to the rear of the school by the playing fields, and one at the front in the location of the proposed extension. The existing school buildings are set back approximately 30m (98ft) from St Edmund's Road (behind the playgrounds). The boundary along this road is marked with a green palisade fence, which sits atop a grassed bank. The footpath therefore sits at a lower level than the school grounds.
4. There are yellow zig-zag 'Keep Clear' road markings in front of the access, but no other parking restrictions in front of the school.
5. On the northern side of St Edmund's Road (facing the school across the playgrounds) are three storey blocks of flats set back from the pavement with a grassed forecourt.

### Background

6. In 2014 the Kent Commissioning Plan 2014-2019 was approved by KCC Education Cabinet Committee. The Kent Commissioning Plan provided forecasts that indicated an increase in the demand for primary school capacity. Furthermore this increase showed no signs of reducing over the forecast period. KCC Education therefore proposed a capacity increase to a number of schools in the Dartford urban areas, and this included the expansion of Temple Hill Primary School to permanently increase its Reception Year

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intake from 60 to 90 places (a 3 form-entry), taking the proposed maximum capacity of the school from 420 places to 630 places.

7. The latest forecasts for the Dartford North planning area support the view that without the expansion to Temple Hill Primary School the Council will fail to meet its statutory obligations to provide sufficient school places in the area.

### Recent Site History

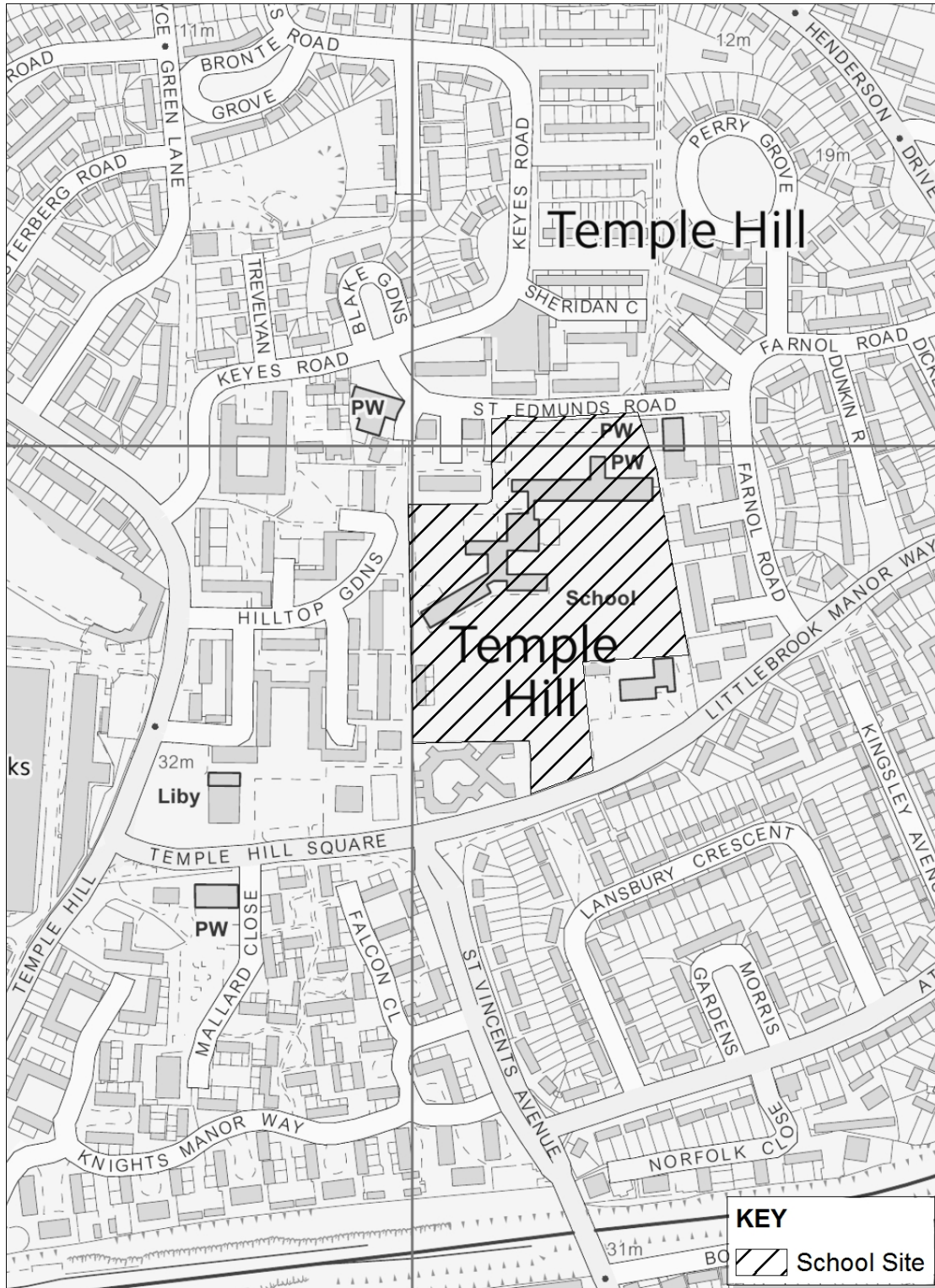
8. The most recent planning history for the site relates to the temporary renewal of consent for the siting of three mobiles in the school grounds given in 2008 (DA/08/849) and then again in 2013 (DA/13/1544) and for the erection of ball stop fencing to two sides of a tarmac play area in 2005 (DA/05/162).

### Proposal

9. The proposal is for the construction of a single storey three classroom extension to the school. The extension would be located to the north of the existing eastern wing of the school, projecting towards St Edmund's Road, and would be attached to the main school building by a single storey link. The extension would have a maximum width of 13m (43ft), a length of 28m (92ft) and a height of just less than 4m (13ft). It would match the design of the existing school buildings in that it would have a flat roof, elevations of brickwork and vertical timber cladding and white aluminium windows and doors.
10. The extension would provide three classrooms and associated toilet and storage facilities, and a small plant room. Shallow ramps would be used to allow level access to the classrooms from the playground.
11. One of the existing mobile classrooms would be removed from the site to make way for this new extension but the two mobile classrooms sited by the playing fields to the rear would be retained. Additional information received from the School states that one would be used for storage and the other as a base for the Parent Association, who currently use the mobile which would be removed.

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## General Location Plan

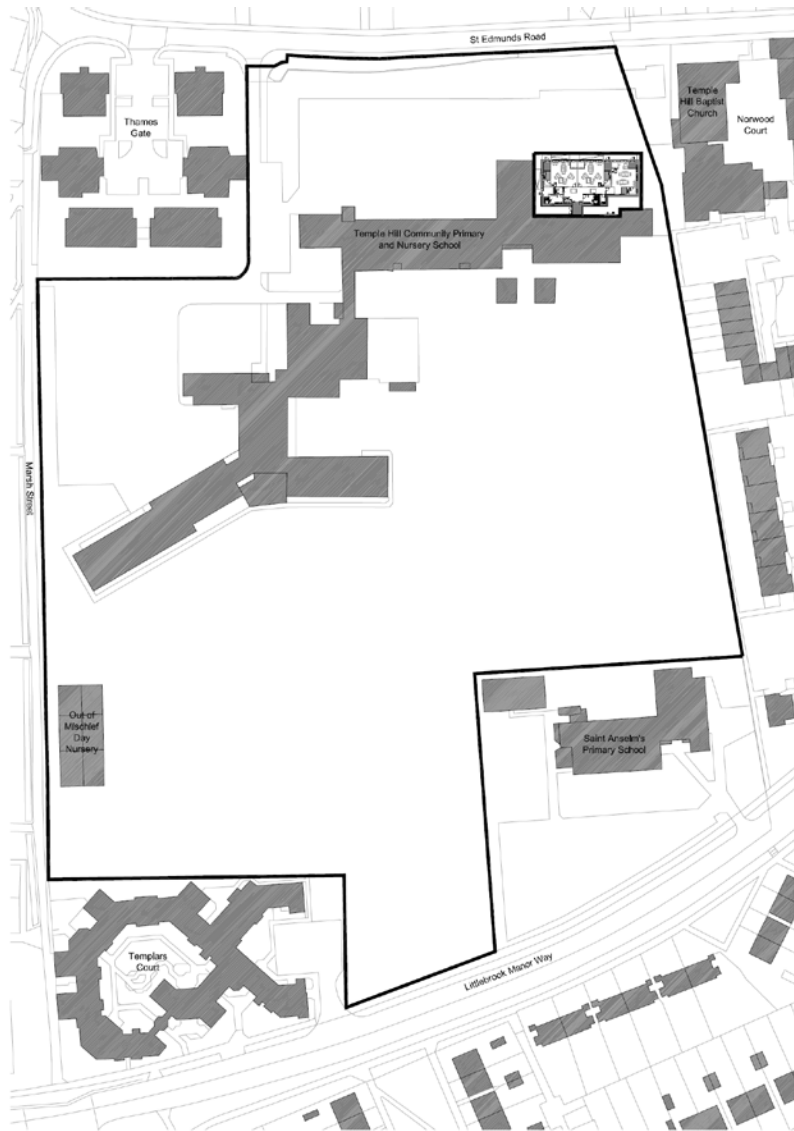


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**Site Location Plan**

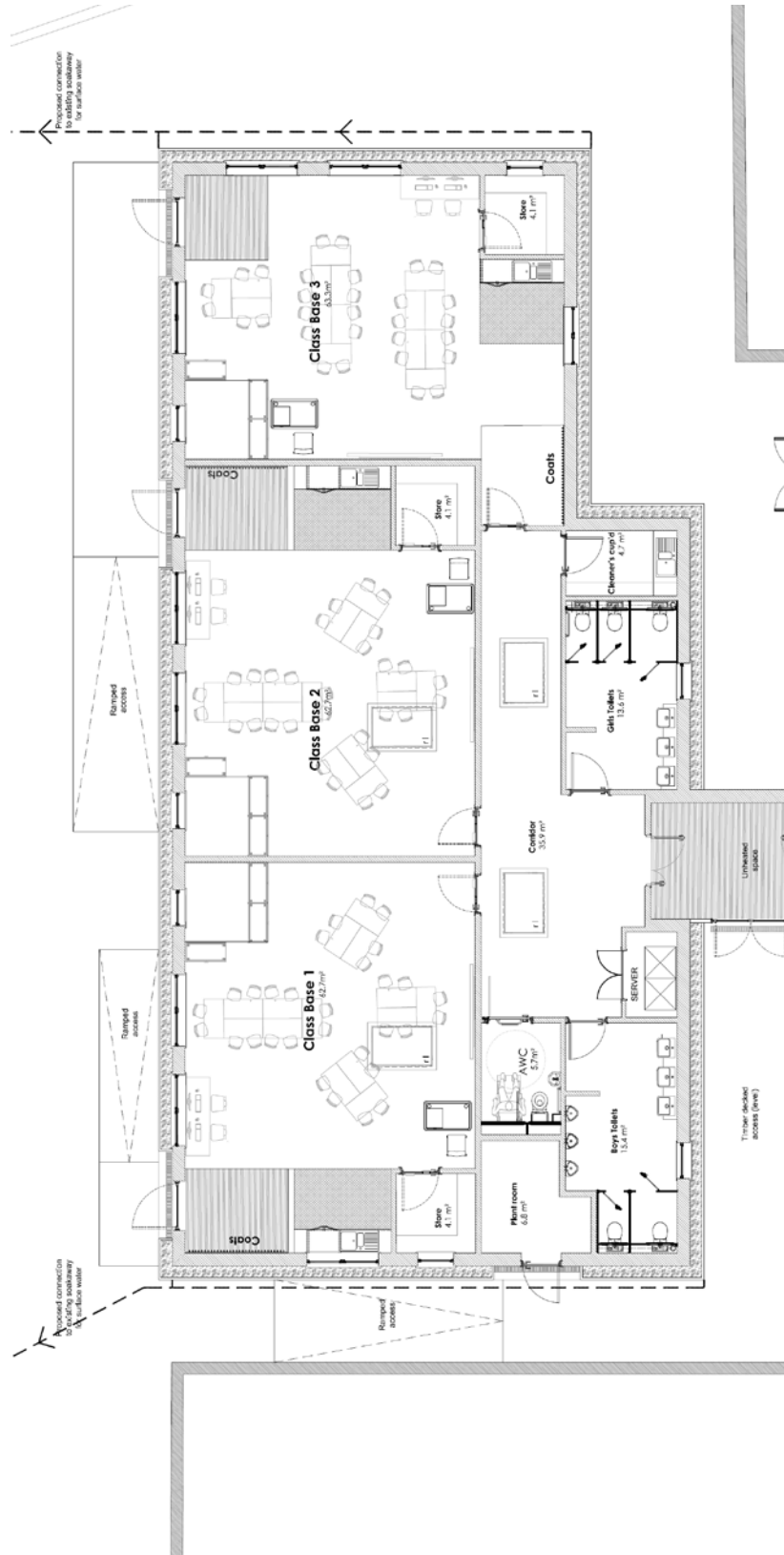


**Proposed Site Location Plan**

Scale 1:1250

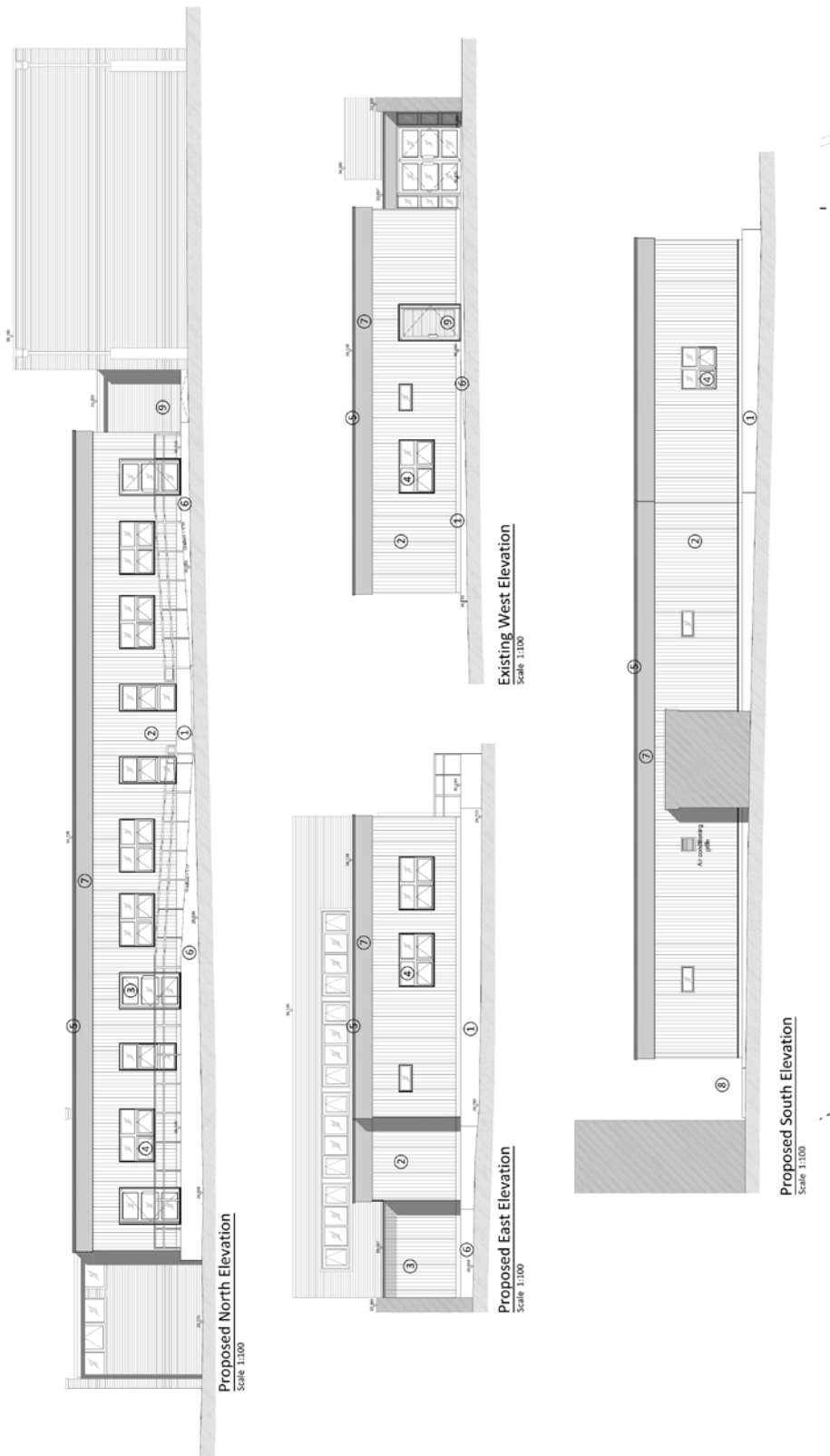
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## Ground Floor Plan



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**Proposed Elevations**



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### Planning Policy

12. 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 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) The adopted **Dartford Borough Council Local Plan 1995**:

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

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

**Policy RT15** Development proposals involving the loss of educational open space will not normally be permitted where the open space is important to the environment and amenity of the area in which it is situated, or where the use of the site meets an important local need.

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- Policy S6** Development proposals should conserve and improve the existing built environment and a high quality and standard of design shall be achieved in new development.
- Policy T19** Development proposals should be appropriately related to the highway network and not generate volumes of traffic in excess of the capacity of the highway network.
- Policy T23** Development proposals should include adequate off-street parking facilities.
- Policy T27** Development proposals shall make adequate provision for pedestrians.

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

- Policy CS21 Community Services:** Ensure the effective provision of community services.
- Policy CS15 Managing Transport Demand:** Development proposals which generate additional traffic should use measures to encourage sustainable patterns of travel including travel plans and Car Parking Supplementary Planning Document.

### (v) Dartford Car Parking Supplementary Planning Document (adopted July 2012):

Schools should have a parking standard of 1 space per 15 pupils for employees, and 1 space per 2 classes for visitors.

## Consultations

### 13. Dartford Borough Council raises no objection.

**Kent County Council's Archaeological Officer** requests a condition to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work.

**Kent County Council's School Travel Planner** advises that the School need to update their school travel plan, which was last submitted in 2010, and was not a completed document. This can be secured via a condition.

**Kent County Council's Highways and Transportation Officer** raises no objection subject to appropriate funding (£3000) being provided for additional waiting restrictions on St Edmund's Road (to be forwarded to KCC Highways or the Borough Council in order to progress the work); the submission of an acceptable updated travel plan prior to occupation of the new classrooms, and this document to clarify how the School will address inappropriate parking by parents in the roads surrounding the school; and the submission of an acceptable Construction Management Plan.

## Local Member

### 14. The local County Member, Mr Maddison was notified of the application on 26<sup>th</sup> March



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2015.

### Publicity

15. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice along the frontage of the site, and the individual notification of 67 residential properties.

### Representations

16. In response to the publicity, 2 letters of representation have been received. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:
- Assume additional classrooms will mean additional pupils
  - Already existing parking problems in St Edmund's Road and this will make it worse
  - Because of lack of space parents cars parking in private residential spaces, resulting in damage to vehicles and some instances of abuse
  - Additional parking should be provided for the school, possibly along the school playground side of the road
  - Concerned about the noise levels associated with the plant room
  - Previous approval for the perimeter fence should have included planting but this has not been undertaken
  - Request that noise reducing foliage is planted as part of this application otherwise it should not be allowed
  - Request written confirmation that the noise levels from the plant room will be at a level of less than 10dB below the background noise at the nearest sensitive properties.

### Discussion

17. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 12 above. Section 38(6) of the 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. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case are the principle of extending the school, the increase in pupil numbers and the implications this has for on-street parking and transport related matters, the design and appearance of the extension and any affect on the amenities of nearby residents.

### **Principle of School Expansion**

18. Policy CS21 of the Dartford Core Strategy seeks to ensure the effective provision of community services, which includes education services. The applicants have advised of the process carried out last year by the KCC Education Cabinet Committee, which resulted in the need for more primary school places being established. A statutory consultation was undertaken, with the Council confirming the decision to expand this primary school, on the basis of a comprehensive feasibility study showing that the project was viable.

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19. The decision to expand the school would therefore meet the aims of Policy CS21 of the Core Strategy.

### School Roll

20. Additional information has been provided by the agent and the Executive Headteacher of the school in relation to staff and pupil numbers and how this would change with the decision to expand to a three-form entry school.
21. At present there are 537 pupils in the school in years Reception through to Year 6, plus 40 children in the nursery at any one time. A full 3-form entry primary school could accommodate 630 places therefore there is scope for the pupil roll to increase by 93 pupils. The nursery, which is separate to these figures, runs on a sessional basis and can accommodate 52 nursery children on site at any one time. There is therefore scope for each session in the nursery to increase by 12 pupils.
22. At full capacity the school could have a total pupil number on site of 682 (630 school age pupils + 52 nursery children). At present this figure is 577 (537 school age pupils + 40 nursery children). This would equate to an increase overall of 105 children.
23. The Head Teacher has advised that there are currently 21 classrooms in the school and 2 rooms for the nursery. At full capacity a three form entry school would only require 21 classrooms (3 for each year - R to 6), therefore the total number of classrooms to be provided does not need to increase to accommodate the maximum school roll. However the Head advises that some of the existing classroom accommodation is below standard (i.e. the two classes being taught in the mobile units on the playing field) and these classes would be relocated into the new extension. The third new classroom would be used to provide space for small group work and other activities such as an IT suite which the School currently lack. The two mobile classrooms, which would be retained on the playing field, would be used for storage and as a base for the Parent Association as set out earlier.
24. The Head Teacher has also advised that there would be no increase in the number of staff associated with this move to a three-form entry school as they currently 'over staff' allowing for smaller class sizes in all year groups.
25. Whilst it would appear that the School does not need the new extension to accommodate the increase in pupil numbers, on the basis that they already have 21 classrooms on site, the proposed extension would allow better accommodation for the school overall and allow those classes being taught in the mobile units to move into permanent classrooms and provide better overall facilities for the pupils and staff. The reduced reliance of the use of mobile classrooms on school sites is a factor generally supported in planning land use terms wherever it can be practicably achieved, especially if the increased pupil intake is more than a short term demand.
26. However, notwithstanding that the classroom numbers would not need to increase, the number of pupils attending the school *would* increase by a maximum of 93 children in the school itself and potentially a further 12 in the nursery for each session. This increase in pupil numbers therefore needs to be addressed in terms of transport and highway matters.

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### Highways and Transport Matters

27. Objections were received relating to the parking problems experienced around the school at both drop off and pick up, and these were further witnessed by the County Council's Highways and Transportation Officer, who observed cars parking on verges, carrying out unsafe manoeuvres in relation to pedestrian safety, cars parking in and having to reverse and wait in the yellow zig-zag no parking areas, and the fact that St Edmund's Road effectively became a single carriageway round at the time that parents cars were parked waiting to collect their children.
28. The applicants have submitted a revised Transport Statement which now addresses the increase in pupil numbers and looks at the implications this would have for travel patterns to the school. They note that the proportion of pupils who arrive by car is lower than the vast majority of schools across Kent, but that despite this there are congestion problems before and after school, particularly in St Edmund's Road. They state that congestion problems have the 'benefit' in assisting in the reduction of travel speeds and as a by-product promote a safer environment for pedestrians (as evidenced by the road safety data showing a single incident classified as a 'one off' occurrence in the most recent study period to June 2014), however acknowledge that there are safety implications of cars using the footway to pass each other which need to be addressed.
29. Once the school is at full capacity they have calculated (based on current travel patterns and adjusted to include pupil absences, sibling effect and before and after school clubs) that there would be an additional 44 one-way movements across the morning peak period, and an additional 45 one-way vehicle movements across the afternoon peak hour.
30. The County's Highway Officer has advised that contributions ought to be made by the applicants to provide additional waiting restrictions in St Edmund's Road in the form of short lengths of yellow lines to allow passing spaces for traffic even when parents are dropping off or waiting for children. In the revised Transport Statement the applicants accept that the provision of this funding would be appropriate.
31. In order to further encourage travel to school by non-car modes of transport, the School need to update their School Travel Plan and register it with the 'Jambusters' website. This can be required by the imposition of a condition and it is considered that the School should submit this prior to the occupation of the new classrooms, should permission be given, to ensure that the School look at ways to improve the travel and parking situation at the school straight away. The updated document should look in particular at ways in which they can address the inappropriate parking by parents in the roads around the school. Again the need for this is acknowledged in the revised Transport Statement.
32. Given the undertaking of the applicants to fund the additional waiting restrictions in St Edmund's Road, and to update the School Travel Plan to encourage modes of transport other than the car, it is considered that the proposed development would be acceptable in highway and transportation terms and meet the aims of Policies T19, T23 and T27 of the Dartford Borough Local Plan and Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy.

### Design, Appearance and Impact on Amenity

33. The extension would be very much in keeping with the existing school building design, and would fit in well with the overall appearance of the school. The materials proposed

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are considered to be acceptable and the layout would be wholly practical and functional. In this regard the proposal is considered to accord with Policies B1 and S6 of the Dartford Borough Local Plan.

34. The extension would not project any further forward than the existing building line as it extends towards St Edmund's Road. The extension would also be set in from the eastern boundary of the school, and would therefore retain a good amount of space between it and the neighbouring properties in this direction. The windows provided in this elevation would be far enough away and screened by the existing boundary treatment so as not to cause any concerns regarding loss of privacy for the occupiers of the properties in this direction.
35. The small area of playground that the extension would be sited over would equate to a minimal loss of external hard play space in relation to the amount that would be retained, and is considered to be acceptable.

### **Other Matters**

#### **Representations Received**

36. The objections received made reference to the possible noise disturbance resulting from the plant room. The agent has confirmed that the plant room would contain a hot water storage tank and associated controls and pipework which would serve the new building only, and that the items would be similar to that found in a domestic house and would not generate any noticeable noise outside of the building and certainly not outside of the school site. The objector was informed of this during the processing of the application.
37. The replacement perimeter fence to the tarmac play area was approved in 2005, and the same objector who has commented now, wrote in at that time expressing concerns that the loss of the soft landscaping (trees, shrubs, hedgerow) would result in increased noise disturbance. The application did not propose any removal of the existing trees or shrubbery and an informative was included on the decision notice bringing the concerns of the neighbours to the attention of the applicant and asking them to ensure that the vegetation was not affected as a result of the development. It would appear from the objector's comments that there was some loss of vegetation, which has not been replaced.
38. The fence that was approved in 2005 was to the west of the site and in a different location to the proposed classroom extension currently being considered. In order to include conditions on a planning permission they have to be (amongst other things) "necessary and relevant to the development to be permitted". In this regard I consider that the classroom extension would be wholly acceptable without the need for additional planting and screening along the boundary, and therefore the request of the objector to include planting as part of this scheme would not, in my opinion, be 'necessary' and therefore should not be imposed. Notwithstanding this, I consider it appropriate to include an informative that brings this matter to the attention of the applicant and suggests that for good neighbourly relations some planting might be undertaken.

#### **Construction**

39. Given that there are neighbouring residential properties, if planning permission is granted it is considered appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of

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construction to protect residential amenity (Monday to Friday between 0800 and 1800; Saturday 0900 to 1300; and no operations on Sundays or public holidays).

40. Should permission be granted a condition requiring the submission of a full Construction Management Strategy prior to commencement of development is considered appropriate. That should include details of how the site access would be managed, details of the methods and hours of working, location of site compounds and operative/visitor parking, details of site security and safety measures, lorry waiting and wheel washing facilities and details of any construction access.
41. 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.

### Archaeology

42. The site lies in an area of archaeological potential and therefore it has been requested that a condition be imposed on any permission given to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable approved by the County Planning Authority.

### Conclusion

43. The application has been considered on its own merits and in the light of the NPPF, the Planning for Schools Development Policy Statement, the Development Plan, and comments received raising concerns about the scheme. I consider that the proposed extension would be in keeping with the existing school in terms of its design and the choice of materials proposed, and is sited in a location where it would not cause any harm to neighbouring properties in terms of its built form. The implications of the increase in the school roll to a 3 form entry school in terms of parking and highway matters have been addressed and on this basis the expansion is considered to be acceptable. It is therefore considered that the development would accord with the principles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF and should therefore be granted.

### Recommendation

44. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE APPROVED SUBJECT TO the payment of appropriate funds for the provision of additional waiting restrictions on St Edmund's Road and the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
  - 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 construction materials to be used externally;
  - within 2 months of the commencement of development, the advertisement of a Traffic Regulation Order required for the new parking restrictions in St Edmunds Road be undertaken, and once confirmed the works be implemented to the satisfaction of the County Planning Authority in association with Kent Highway Services.
  - the submission of a School Travel Plan prior to occupation of the new classrooms and its ongoing review;

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- measures to be taken to prevent mud and debris being deposited on the public highway;
- hours of working during construction to be restricted to 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 or Bank Holidays;
- the submission of a Construction Management Plan, providing details of access, parking and circulation within the site for contractors, site personnel and other operatives; details of wheel washing procedures for construction traffic; giving an undertaking that access into and out of the site shall be under the supervision of a qualified banksman; and that the site be managed to avoid peak school times.
- the submission and written approval of a specification for a programme of archaeological work.

45. I FURTHER RECOMMEND that the following INFORMATIVES be added:

- the registering with Kent County Council of the School Travel Plan through the “Jambusters” website following the link <http://www.jambusterstpms.co.uk>; and
- that the applicant considers the planting of some soft landscaping around the perimeter fencing along St Edmunds Road to address the concerns of the residents of neighbouring properties;
- that the applicants submit a Memorandum of Understanding that the funds required for the Traffic Regulation Order to secure the waiting restrictions in St Edmund’s Road, of £3000, will be paid to the County Highway Authority, as agreed in the Transport Statement CC/10584/Rev A, dated May 2015.

Case Officer: Helen Edwards
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Tel. no: 03000 413366
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Background Documents: see section heading
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