

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

Relocation of Halfway Houses Primary School including expansion from two form entry to three form entry at Land at Danley Road, Sheerness – 15/503584/COUNTY (KCC/SW/0123/2015)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 15th July 2015.

Application by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure Support for the relocation of Halfway Houses Primary School including expansion from two form entry to three form entry and comprising the construction of a part single, part two storey building with games court, sports pitches, car parking, drop off area and hard and soft landscaping at Land at Danley Road, Sheerness – 15/503584/COUNTY (KCC/SW/0123/2015).

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Ms A Harrison

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

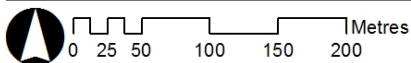
1. The site for the new Halfway Houses Primary School is the site of the former Danley Middle School, which is located to the north-east of Minster on Sea and to the south-east of Sheerness, in the area of Sheppey known as Halfway Houses. The site falls within the Swale Borough and also in the Thames Gateway. The current site area is 63,000m² (15.57 acres) and is situated to the east of Halfway Road (A250) and to the north of Minster Road (B2008). There are three access points to the site, one from Danley Road for vehicles and pedestrians, an emergency vehicle and pedestrian access from Halfway Road and the third being a pedestrian only access off Minster Road.
2. Whilst part of the site adjoins a built up area which is predominantly residential, the school grounds fall outside the built up boundaries as identified in the Swale Borough Local Plan, and therefore within the 'countryside'. A map showing the location of the site in relation to its surroundings is included below.
3. The site is enclosed with metal palisade fencing and locked gates at all access points. There is a change in levels of 3.5m (11.5 ft) across the site with the land falling away from a high point in the south-west to the low point in the north-east.

Background

4. Members of the Planning Applications Committee had the opportunity to visit this site whilst touring sites in Swale on 29th June 2015, including viewing the neighbouring road conditions. The Danley Middle School site was vacated in July 2009 as a result of the phasing out of the three-tier education system in Sheppey. The site as a Middle School had a capacity for 720 pupils.

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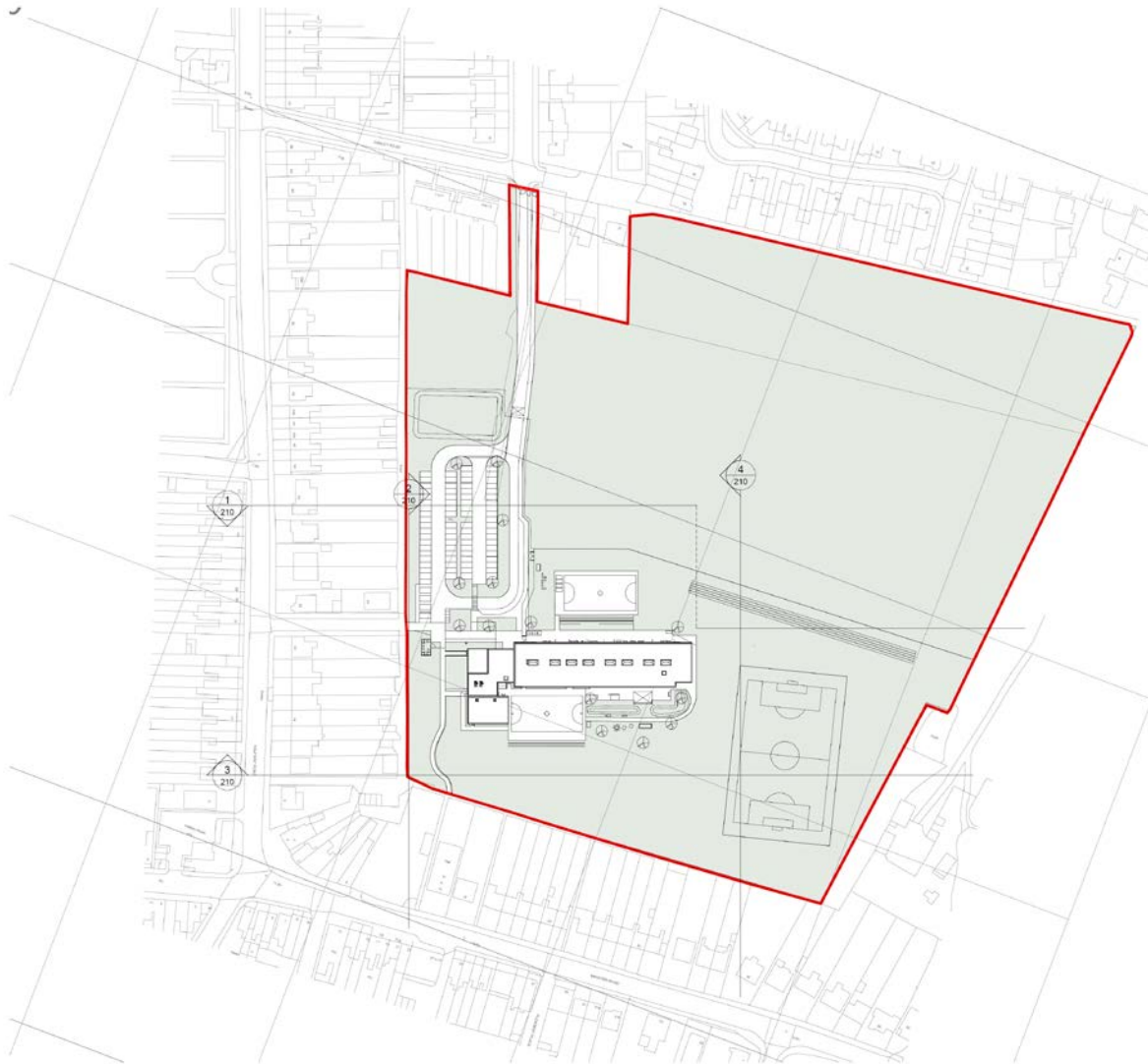
General Location Plan



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Site Location Plan



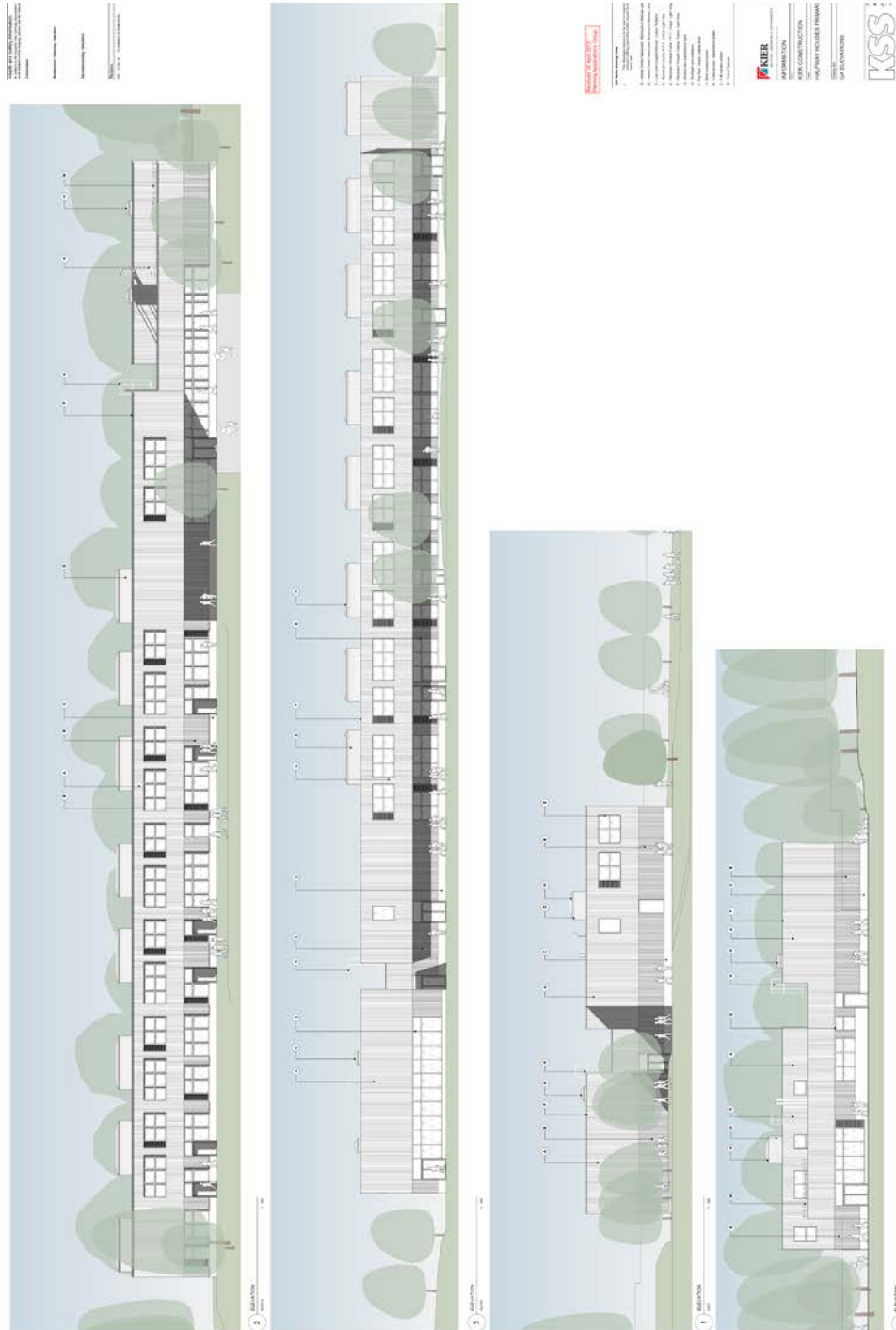
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Site Layout



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Proposed Elevations



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Background continued

5. In May 2011 an application was brought to Planning Applications Committee for the refurbishment of the school buildings at Danley Middle School for use by the relocated Halfway Houses Primary School (SW/10/1334). This proposal involved substantial changes to the external appearance of the building, amendments to the access and site security arrangements, and also a reduction in the amount of open space that would be incorporated into the new school by virtue of the location of the proposed boundary fencing. The proposed redeveloped school was due to provide capacity for 510 pupils initially, reducing to 420 (a two form entry roll) by 2015
6. Following the recommendation of that application for approval and its referral to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government due to an unresolved Sport England objection, the application was approved on 13th June 2011. However, the buildings were subsequently deemed to be inadequate and they were subsequently demolished in 2013.
7. The existing Halfway Houses Primary School is a two form entry school located on the southern side of Queenborough Road, to the south-west of the Danley Road site. The Kent Basic Needs Programme has identified that the expansion of Halfway Houses Primary School from a two form entry to a three form entry is required (an increase in pupils from 420 to 630). The existing school is popular, over-subscribed and currently at full capacity. With the proposed increase in housing on the Isle of Sheppey and families moving into the area, additional school places are required to ensure education needs are provided for. Halfway Houses School was one of the successful applicants to be selected for funding as part of the Priority School Building Programme (PSBP) published in March 2014. This PSBP is a centrally managed programme (created by the Education Funding Agency) set up to address the needs of the schools most in need of urgent repair.

Proposal

8. This is an application for the construction of a three-form entry school with a maximum capacity for 630 pupils. At full capacity (2021) it is proposed that there would be 73 full time staff and 26 part time staff (current staffing levels at the existing school are 66 full time and 22 part time).
9. The proposed three-form entry school would be sited in approximately the same location as the former Middle School, in the south-west corner of the site. The building would be mostly two storey, with a small section of single storey development by the main entrance. The building would have a predominantly linear footprint, with a small return at the south-west corner.
10. The building is proposed to be constructed with a pale grey render at low level, and larch rain screen vertical cladding (in two different widths) above. The windows, doors and grilles would all be powder coated aluminium. The secure internal boundary line would be marked with a 1.8m high square weld mesh fence. Two hard surfaced playgrounds would be provided either side of the school building for Key Stage 1 and 2 children, and an under 11 size football pitch sited to the east of the school building.

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11. There would be three points of access to the site, as previously served the Middle school. The main vehicle access to the site would be from Danley Road on the northern boundary of the site. An alternative emergency vehicle access would be provided from the west, off Halfway Road. Pedestrian access to the site would be also be available from these access points, and a further pedestrian only access point would be provided along the southern boundary, off Minster Road.
12. The access road would enter the site between 15 and 17 Danley Road providing an internal turning loop, to then exit back onto Danley Road. The access road would be realigned slightly, widened and reconstructed to an adoptable standard. Parking for 81 cars would be provided, with additional drop off/pick up areas for 10 cars. Accessible parking bays would be located next to the main entrance. Space for 28 bicycles and 6 scooters would also be provided on site.
13. An informal/voluntary one-way system is proposed outside the site which would encourage parents to approach the school by entering St Kathrine's Road off the Halfway Road, turning down Filer Road to meet Danley Road at the school access point, and then for cars to exit the school via Danley Road back onto Halfway Road.
14. The existing boundary treatments (fencing and vegetation) would be retained along the southern and western boundaries.

Planning Policy

15. 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

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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 (paragraph 72).

(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 SH1 Settlement Hierarchy: Defines 6 categories of settlement and sets out the scale of development that would be supported within them. The countryside areas are defined as “all remaining settlements for which built-up area boundaries have not been defined”. These areas are only considered suitable for development in exceptional circumstances as indicated by saved Policy E6.

Policy TG1 Thames Gateway Planning Area: Recognises the position of the proposed development within the Thames Gateway Planning Area.

Policy E6 The Countryside: Sets out a number of exception criteria to the general presumption against development in the Countryside, with criterion 8 referring to the provision of community infrastructure.

Policy E7 Separation of Settlements: In order to retain individual character and setting of settlements, countryside gaps are defined. More stringent planning controls apply in these areas.

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.

Policy E9 Protecting the Quality and Character of the Borough’s Landscape: Seeks to protect and enhance the quality and character of the landscape in the countryside.

Policy E10 Trees and Hedges: Seeks to retain trees and hedges as far as possible and provide for new planting to maintain and enhance the

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character of the locality.

- Policy E11 Protecting and Enhancing the Borough's Biodiversity and Geological Interests:** Seeks to ensure that the potential impacts of planning decisions on biodiversity and geological conservation are fully considered and suitable mitigation is in place.
- Policy E16 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites:** Seeks to protect sites of archaeological importance.
- 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 SP6 Transport and Utilities:** Aims to ensure that there is sufficient infrastructure in place such that new developments are located close to good quality public transport and the principle highway network, whilst seeking to reduce car dependence.
- Policy SP7 Community Services and Facilities:** Seeks to satisfy social needs of communities and promote safe environments and a sense of community by providing and continuing existing services and safeguarding services and facilities from harmful changes of use and development proposals.
- 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 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.
- Policy T5 Public Transport:** Recognises that a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan will be expected to support all proposals generating potentially significant volumes of traffic.

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- (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, with hearing sessions scheduled for September 2015.

Consultations

- 16. Swale Borough Council** were consulted on 7th May but no comments have been received to date. Any comments received prior to the Planning Applications Committee meeting will be reported verbally.

Minster-on-Sea Parish Council raises an objection to the application. Although they support the principle of relocating and expanding the Halfway Houses Primary School and are impressed with the internal design and lay-out of the proposal, there is concern about the omission of the large green area which could be utilised as a playing field. This leaves a large school described as “being in the top ten in size in Kent” presumably without a playing field where the 50% increase in pupil numbers from the previous 465 within the 2 Form Entry (2FE) to 635 with the proposed 3 Form Entry (3FE) means the physical education needs of the children who are aged between 4 and 11 years will not be catered for. This exclusion of the existing playing field is assumed to be contrary to Government Policy and the advice of Sport England where every effort is made to encourage health and fitness to alleviate the serious national and rapidly increasing problem of childhood obesity and diabetes in young people. (They add that it is well documented that healthy, outdoor children tend to have a healthier diet and playing in the open air promotes an increase in Vitamin D, which is very important in growing children.) The Parish Council argues that a school of this size needs to come with enough playing field provision in place to adequately provide for the needs of its pupils.

Sport England raises no objection to the granting of planning permission.

The County Council's Biodiversity Officer is satisfied with the ecological information submitted.

County Archaeological Officer advises of the potential for significant archaeological deposits to be affected by the new development and requests the imposition of a condition to secure a programme of archaeological work.

The Environment Agency (Kent Area) is satisfied that the submitted Flood Risk Assessment shows that the risk of flooding to the site will be low, therefore raises no objection.

The County Council's Landscape Officer has requested a change in the type of plants proposed for the new landscaping scheme to reflect the 'Minster Marshes' landscape character area.

The County Council's Sustainable Drainage Officer raises no objection subject to the imposition of a condition relating to a fully detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme for the site.

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Kent County Council Highways and Transportation raise no objection to the application subject to the applicants funding the progression of a Traffic Regulation Order and associated highway works to make Danley Road one-way only, and the imposition of conditions relating to site operatives parking on site; loading and turning on site; preventing mud being deposited on the highway; the provision of parking on site for cars and cycles prior to occupation of the school; pedestrian visibility splays; the positioning of any gates; and the need for a School Travel Plan.

The County Council's School Travel Planner has raised no objection subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the submitted draft Travel Plan being uploaded to the Jambusters website and the plan being updated within 6 months of the occupation of the school.

Local Member

17. The local County Member, Ms Angela Harrison was notified of the application on 7th May 2015.

Publicity

18. The application was publicised by the posting of three site notices around the perimeter of the site, an advertisement in a local newspaper, and the individual notification of 285 adjacent residential properties.

Representations

19. In response to the publicity, 16 letters of representation have been received. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:

- Delighted to hear the school children of Halfway Houses will have a modern school;
- No objection to school transferring sites as the site previously functioned as a middle school;
- Current facilities at Halfway Houses are in a poor state of repair;
- Concern over children having to walk to the traffic lights of Halfway Road, Minster Road and Queenborough Road, which is a very busy junction;
- Suggest creating a proper pathway along the boundary fence of the school behind the houses on Halfway Road so the children can walk along here to the light controlled crossing point on Minster Road;
- Lack of room allowed for expansion of the school at a later date;
- Seems foolish not to retain the extra land for future expansion;
- Access through Halfway Car Park not suitable as its busy from 8am therefore not allowing cars to enter or leave to drop off children;
- Traffic congestion caused in Danley Road if even a single car parks here, which is the main entrance to the school;
- Traffic congestion is likely as Halfway Road is 'gridlocked' at school times;
- No renewable energy elements are included in the proposals for the site;
- Flat roof design would suffer same problems as previous school;
- School plan is fine but serious issues would occur without proper traffic management in place;

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- Cars turning right into Danley Road or Katherine Road would cause delays back to the traffic lights;
- Suggest resident-only parking be introduced at certain times to protect the amenities of local residents;
- Double yellow lines will not solve anything as they are not enforced;
- Volume of traffic would be increased for a primary school compared to a middle school. Middle school pupils generally walked independently or caught a bus, whereas primary school children are more likely to be brought to school by car which will make the situation worse for residents;
- Provision should be made within the school grounds for all drop off and collection of school children – it should be a school rule;
- Pick up/drop off area and car park proposed is not large enough to accommodate hundreds of cars of parents dropping off or picking up their children at the start and end of each school day;
- Should use more of the grass field area (currently excluded) to provide a larger car park so that parents do not use the side streets of Danley Road, Filer Road and St Katherine's Road, which are already over-populated with vehicles;
- Existing access problems for large vehicles and emergency vehicles along Danley Road, and getting to Filer Road, will be made worse if parents are allowed to park in these side roads;
- Concern over inconsiderate parking by parents dropping off school children blocking residents driveways as used to occur when the middle school was open;
- Extra area of land should not be sold off for housing but given over to the local community as there is a lack of open space in the area;
- Concerned that local residents' views are not taken into account;
- Suggest traffic should enter the school site from Danley Road and exit out of the other end [onto Minster Road] leaving Filer Road and St Katherine's Road as no through roads;
- St Katherine's Road/Halfway Road is an awkward junction due to the bend and Danley Road/Halfway Road is an awkward junction;
- New entrance should be made from Power Station Road, around Abbots Mead Estate and into the far end of the site;
- The neighbouring roads are already impassable on a good day;
- Recent permission given for 100+ houses off Powerstation Road – there is not the infrastructure to support a new school as well.

Discussion

20. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (15) 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 relocating the existing school to this site; the design and appearance of the proposed school; issues relating to access, parking and highway impacts; the omission of part of the site from the school grounds; along with

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other matters including ecology and biodiversity, landscaping, construction methods, and archaeological impacts.

21. This application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee due to the number of neighbour representations received (which have been summarised above) and the objection by the Parish Council.

Principle of School Relocation

22. The school site lies outside the built up area and therefore within 'countryside' as defined in the Local Plan, and also falls within a defined Countryside Gap. Policy E6 states that development proposals will only be permitted in the countryside when it provides for necessary community infrastructure, as set out in criterion 8. Additionally within the areas defined as countryside gaps, paragraph 3.23 of the Local Plan states that not all forms of development are discouraged and lists schools as a form of development that could be accommodated provided the objectives of Policy E7 are not undermined.
23. This site has a previously established education use, which would fall within the exceptions given in Policies E6 and E7. The relocation of the Halfway Houses Primary School would continue this education use and in principle would therefore accord with the above policies. The siting of the built form in the south-west corner of the site adjoining the boundary of built development would ensure that encroachment into the open and undeveloped part of the gap would not occur and would therefore further accord with Policy E7.
24. The existing Halfway Houses School is not able to support the expansion of the school from two forms of entry to three, either by extension or refurbishment, and the principle of relocating the school to the Danley Road site was established under the previous planning consent SW/10/1334.
25. It is therefore considered that the principle of re-using this site, and the relocation of the Halfway Houses Primary School, is acceptable in relation to saved Policies E6, E7 and SP1 of the Swale Local Plan and paragraph 72 of the NPPF.

Siting, Design and Appearance

26. The proposed new school is sited in the south-west corner of the site on roughly the same footprint as the former Middle School. It is of a modern design with materials comprising render and timber cladding, with roof lights running along the linear classroom block, which would provide light to the first floor and the ground floor corridor via double height voids. The flat roof design is common with many new schools and the layout (although tailored for this specific school) follows the guidelines of the Education Funding Agency for a three form entry primary school. It should be noted that there is very little opportunity now to depart from the Government imposed design templates for new schools, if Government funding is to be achieved and that earlier examples of more individual or iconic Kent school building designs, including on the Isle of Sheppey, are no longer possible under the current Government's funding restrictions. The current design templates may be less striking in their visual appearance to some commentators, but they have the advantages of being functionally compact, ergonomically cost effective as well as achieving sound environmental performance standards.

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27. The main entrance to the school would be on the northern façade, and would be obviously located in relation to the car park and the other pedestrian accesses. There would be a first floor overhang on both the north and south facades which would create visual interest to the elevations; reduce the appearance of massing; provide shelter; and form a natural place to enter the building.
28. The school is laid out with the classrooms being separated from the halls by the main entrance to the school, which would allow access to the large and small hall both during and outside of school hours, without disturbing the teaching in the classrooms, and meeting school security issues. The key stage 1 classrooms would be located at ground floor level and key stage two at first floor. There would be two staircases (one at either end of the classroom block) and a platform lift. All of the ground floor classrooms would have direct access to the outside, with the reception classes having a secure outside play area separate to the larger playgrounds.
29. Given the site's previous use as a Middle School it is considered that the presence of a new building on this site would not be considered out of keeping with the character of development in the area. The school would be sited sufficiently far away from the neighbouring houses to the west and south so as not to cause any problems with overshadowing or it being considered overbearing. There is a good existing amount of landscaping along these boundaries, which would continue to help screen the development, and indeed the proposals include further strengthening of the landscape screening here.
30. In the light of the careful attention to external appearance and detailing, I consider that the proposed new school would enhance the appearance of the site and the surrounding area due to its design and choice of materials, and that it incorporates the principles of saved Policies SP1, E1 and E19 of the Swale Local Plan. It should also be noted that the new school would be more compact and therefore more visually appealing than the previous agglomeration of buildings which occupied the site.

Access, Parking and Highway Impacts

31. The planning application was supported by the submission of a Transport Assessment that considered the impact the proposed school was likely to have on the existing highway network, and the parking demand on the surrounding streets. It also took into account the former use of the site as a middle school, the existing Halfway Houses School located on Queenborough Road and the previous planning permission to relocate the Halfway Houses School as a two form entry establishment.
32. The County Council's Highways and Transportation Officer has considered the information submitted and concluded that the analysis provided a very robust assessment of the situation. He states that although one of the conclusions is that the Halfway Road/Queenborough Road junction would be over capacity in 2021 (when the proposed school would have a full 3 form roll), the junction would be over capacity without the development as well, and it has to be appreciated that the impact of the school is likely to be limited to a 15 minute period within the peak hour before returning to normal conditions.

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33. The proposals include child drop-off and collection provision within the school grounds in addition to parent parking facilities that were not previously available for the former middle school, and are not currently available for the existing Halfway Houses Primary. This provides the ability for children to be dropped off in a safe environment, and would remove much of the parking demand that would otherwise need to be accommodated entirely on-street. The car park would cater for 81 formal parking spaces, which significantly exceeds the numbers normally expected for a 3 form entry school. With the drop-off layby within the school grounds, the general habit for parents to park up off-site and walk their children the remaining distance to school would be minimised, as they would be able to drop the children directly at the building entrance and continue on their journey. The layby can accommodate around 10 vehicles at a time, so the throughput of dropping off should be able to work fairly efficiently with a large turnover. It is also likely that parents would drop off children along the access road in advance of the layby when traffic begins queuing for it, again directly onto the footway leading to the entrance, and then pass the layby without needing to stop. This would further increase the parking capacity on site. The car park would then mainly be used by those parents needing to accompany younger children, or those who need to interact with the School itself.
34. As with most schools, the parking situation associated with the end of the school day operates in a different fashion to that of the start, as parents have to wait for the children to be let out of school, and therefore park over a longer period. The parking demand would be greater during that period than it would be during the AM drop-off, so there is likely to be more on-street parking as a result. Once the school car park has been filled, additional parking could take place in the drop-off layby, providing for around 10 vehicles, and it is likely that parents would continue to park along the length of the access road leading to it, and informally within the other internal routes around the car park. The roads immediately outside the school gates are also expected to provide much of the parking too, and the study shows that around 60 to 70 vehicle spaces are typically available at the start and end of the school day along Danley Road, Filer Road and St. Katherine's Road.
35. However, it should also be remembered that up until 2009, these roads were already serving the parking needs for Danley Middle School, which did not have any on-site parking provision for parents vehicles, and so residents arguably have experienced a respite from school traffic over the last 6 years. In this location, as with many schools, on street parking within residential streets is mainly an amenity/nuisance issue, as opposed to a matter of highway safety, but it is expected these roads would have been used to capacity previously. Generally, at the end of the school day, the traffic activity and parking demand within residential areas is largely only associated with schools, as this does not overlap with the highway network peak period or when most of the residents are at home.
36. Consideration should also be given to the consequences of removing the Halfway Houses Primary School from its current site, as this would transfer away much of the parking demand that occurs around that site, and the traffic issues that are associated with it. This would generally be seen as a benefit to those residents that live close to the existing school who would no longer experience the difficulties with parking and congestion there. As noted earlier, there are no drop-off and collection facilities with that existing school, and they would be moving to a site that until recently was also a school without those facilities either. The new school on this site would now include parking and drop-off/pick-up provision, and for the reasons given above, is considered to be an

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acceptable and adequate solution to serve the proposed development.

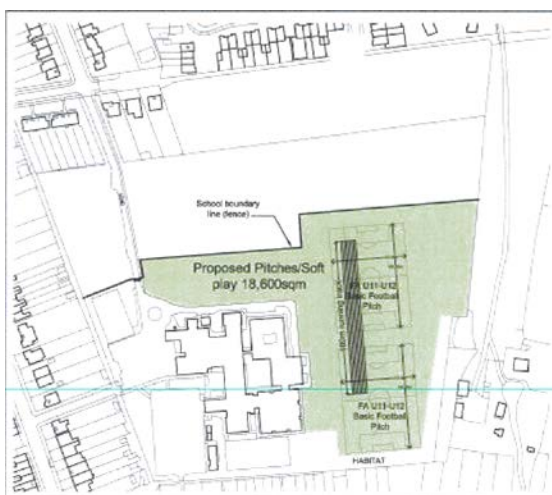
37. Given that Danley Road is narrow and two-way traffic is likely to become congested when any parked vehicles are present, the School intends to promote the use of a voluntary one-way system from St Katherine's Road and Filer Road to access the school, with vehicles departing via Danley Road. However, whilst this may in theory operate reasonably successfully, as evidenced at several other school sites across the county, there is concern that some people might ignore the one-way system and turn into Danley Road from Halfway Road, unless the one-way system is to be formalised. The applicant has suggested the use of advisory/information signs to encourage the operation of the one-way system, but such signage is not currently sanctioned in Kent.
38. The Highway Authority considers that it would be more favourable if a permanent one-way system were formally introduced, whereby only Danley Road would be covered by the restriction to prevent vehicles from entering it directly off Halfway Road. That would ensure that vehicles do not overrun the footways to pass one another, and still maintains St Katherine's Road and Filer Road as two-way, so that traffic leaving the school can still disperse onto Halfway Road over 2 junctions, if required. It is therefore recommended that the development should fund the progression of a permanent Traffic Regulation Order and its associated physical works to introduce a one-way system to Danley Road. The Highways and Transportation Officer considers that build-outs would be required at its junction with Halfway Road to restrict the entry width into Danley Road and accommodate the signage, and a contribution would need to be secured from the applicant to fund this in an appropriate manner. Note that the introduction of traffic management via a Traffic Regulation Order is a separate process to the planning consent process, with its own publicity and consultation mechanism, and it would have to be pursued separately in the event that planning consent is obtained. The Highway Authority has confirmed that a sum of £3000 is sufficient for the Traffic Regulation Order costs.
39. One of the representations received from residents adjoining the site was that the school should have an access in from Danley Road but exit elsewhere within the site, so as to create an 'internal' one way loop. The only possible other access point for cars to enter and leave the site is the point currently proposed as the emergency access along the western boundary, via the unmade road between 22 and 26 Halfway Road. The County's Highway and Transportation Officer has considered this alternative but concludes that the intense use of this junction so close to the traffic signals at Minster Road/Queenborough Road would cause highway safety problems, particularly with the likelihood of opposing traffic flows from other parent's vehicles entering that short section of road in order to park. It would be much safer for the vehicles leaving the site to do so further away from the traffic signal controlled junction, where activity is less concentrated. It should be noted that the notion of using this side road access was investigated through the previous planning application on this site, and it was fiercely resisted by the occupiers of properties reliant on that road for parking and rear access.
40. It is therefore considered that the on-site parking provision for vehicles and cycles is acceptable for a three form entry school, in conjunction with the introduction of a School Travel Plan and would accord with saved Policies T3, T4 and T5 of the Swale Local Plan. Subject to the introduction of a formal one-way only system for Danley Road it is also considered that the proposed access and exit for the school would be acceptable in

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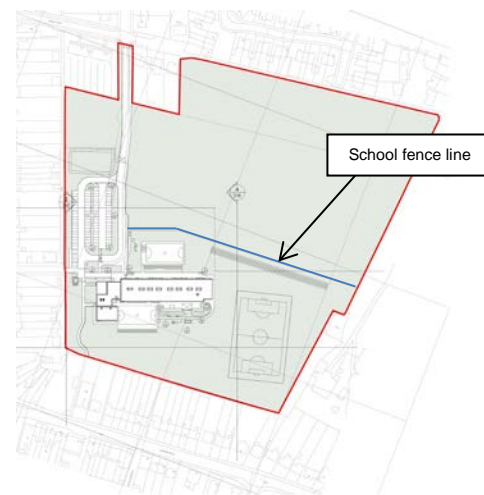
relation to highway safety and would therefore accord with Policies SP6 and T1 of the Local Plan.

School Boundary and Open Space

41. The planning application site boundary relates to the whole site of the former Danley Middle School, yet the layout for the new Halfway Houses Primary School excludes a portion of the site that lies to the north-east. The secure boundary of the school would run down the eastern edge of the access road and half way down the car park, and then return to follow a new fence to be erected running in a west/east direction across to the eastern boundary with Danley Farm. This subdivision of the site reflects generally the school boundary line approved in the 2011 application. At this time the east-west boundary that divided the field was slightly further to the north than the current line, but under this layout the school footprint was different and occupied more space in the south-west corner of the site that the current school building proposed. The approved and proposed layouts are shown below.



Approved layout under SW/10/1334



Proposed layout for SW/15/503584

42. The applicants have not provided any information as to the future use of the area of land to be excluded from the new school site, and it is not subject to any other current planning application. Should the site come forward for development under a new planning application, the loss of this open space could be addressed on its own merits, against the proposed development at that time.
43. A number of letters of representation were received in relation to the exclusion of that area of the site from both neighbouring properties and the Parish Council. These included the fact that more of the site could be utilised to create a bigger car park and alleviate perceived potential parking problems; that the school should be provided with larger playing fields to provide additional outside activity space for the children's benefit; that the land should be saved for future expansion of the school should it be needed; and that the extra land should not be sold off for housing but given to the community as open space.
44. As set out in the highways section above, the size of the car park being provided for this 3 form entry school meets the County parking standards and exceeds the size normally

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expected for a school of this size, therefore a larger car park utilising part of this additional land cannot be justified and would represent a poor use of land bearing in mind the limited time and days on which it would be likely to be used. Moreover, it is important to strike the correct balance with parking provision, since any over provision simply encourages more reliance on personal transport from those that might well have realistic alternatives. Furthermore, any over provision of parking would entice more vehicles to travel along the adjacent streets, thereby adding to the likely congestion and nuisance complained about.

45. In the previous application there was a concern that the subdivision of the site would result in the loss of playing field land, and this resulted in an objection from Sport England. The view taken at the time was that the location of the school fence line did not result in the *loss* of any playing field land, but simply the *subdivision* of the playing field land. It concluded that any 'loss' would be considered at a later date should any development be proposed on the land excluded from the school site.
46. In support of this current application the applicants have stated that according to the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 playing fields are defined under Schedule 4 (aa) as being "land which has been used as a playing field at any time in the 5 years before the making of a relevant application and which remains undeveloped" and also at (bb) "land allocated for use as a playing field in a development plan or in proposals for such a plan or its alteration or replacement". The applicants state that the school grounds have been locked and inaccessible to the public and local community since the school closed in 2009. The site has therefore not been used as a playing field for a period of more than 5 years. The site is also not allocated as playing field land within either the adopted Swale Local Plan or the emerging plan, and they therefore conclude that the site would not fall within the definition of playing fields given in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure).
47. Notwithstanding this view, given that no development is proposed on the other part of the site, it is again considered that this internal fence simply divides the playing field at present, rather than resulting in the loss of playing field land, as set out in the earlier application.
48. In response to our consultation, Sport England has raised no objection to the omission of this area in terms of playing field provision, and has also raised no objection in terms of the school allegedly being left with an inadequate amount of outside play space for its size. Clearly new school proposals are all required to include the appropriate amount of outdoor play space for that particular type of school, in accordance with the School Premises Regulations, so there is no question that the submitted proposals fail, as argued by the Parish Council, to provide sufficient space for the new school and the new total number of pupils. Similarly, although not a planning land use matter, concerns about child health and obesity have already been taken into consideration by Schools and the Government through the National Curriculum.
49. The land excluded from the school site remains in the ownership and under the control of KCC at this time, and until such time as the land comes forward for development would potentially still be available for the expansion of the school in the future should it be required. It is considered that this would be an issue to address at such a time when the land is proposed for an alternative use, and not as part of this application.

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Other Matters

Ecology and Biodiversity

50. The application was supported by the submission of an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey; a Reptile Population Size Class Assessment; a Reptile Mitigation Strategy; and a Great Crested Newt Scoping Survey and Impact Assessment. The Phase 1 Habitat Survey had highlighted the need for additional survey work due to the presence on site of features that could potentially support reptiles and also be used by great crested newts.
51. In terms of the great crested newts, the additional survey work, carried out in September 2014, assessed the suitability of the three individual ponds located within 500m of the site against the habitat suitability index and concluded that no mitigation work was required in relation to great crested newts.
52. The reptile assessment concluded that the site supports a low population of slow worms, common lizard and grass snake. The development of the site would involve the loss of an area of reptile habitat to the west of the site, therefore a 'Translocation Scheme and Habitat Creation and Management Plan' has been produced. There is no space within the proposed school boundary to create a new habitat for reptiles, therefore the area to the north of the school boundary line would be used as the receptor site, and this land will remain within the ownership and responsibility of Kent County Council.
53. An initial concern was raised that the land used for the receptor site (the land outside the school boundary but within the red line) would itself come forward for development in the future and that the reptiles would need to be relocated again. As stated above there are no current proposals for any development on this remaining land. Should a development proposal be submitted at a future date it is considered that the ecology could be reassessed at that time, and mitigated with any appropriate measures at the appropriate time.
54. In terms of this application it is considered that the relevant ecological issues have been dealt with by the applicant, and the necessary mitigation measures put in place. Provided the development is carried out in accordance with the recommendations set out in the ecological assessments, the application would accord with the aims of saved Policy E11 of the Swale Local Plan.

Landscape

55. In landscape terms the site falls within the 'Minster Marshes' landscape character area and land designated as open countryside. The existing mature woodland edge along the western, southern and eastern perimeters of the site would be retained and is due to be developed into Forest School facilities for the new school. The scheme would require the removal of seven trees along the eastern edge of the access road, adjacent to the boundary of 17 Danley Road, to allow the access road to be widened allowing two cars to pass and provide a footpath link to the school. There would be insufficient room for any new trees to be replanted along this part of the access road (within the site) once the development was completed. The removal of the trees would result in the adjoining property being more open and therefore more likely to hear vehicles entering and

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leaving the site at the start and end of the school days. However, it is considered that this potential disturbance would not be sufficiently harmful to the occupiers here to object to the removal of the trees, especially given the traffic is limited to two short periods during the day and only during term times.

56. Due to the change in levels across the site the proposal would require some cut and fill to be undertaken to create a level terrace upon which the building could be located. Where existing site levels are to be retained the former playing field grassland would be renovated to provide the new playing fields, and where levels are altered the reinstated playing field areas would be reseeded.
57. Kent County Council's Landscape Officer has assessed the information submitted and given the fact the landscape character is grassland/marshland, they have suggested that appropriate grassland species be used within the scheme rather than the wildflower seeds which would bear no relation to the local area. This amendment could be secured through an appropriately worded landscape condition.
58. The location of the school building close to the existing built development would ensure that the open landscape character of the remainder of the site would be retained and this would therefore be in keeping with the aspirations of the Minster Marshes character area. It is considered that subject to the imposition of conditions covering a landscape scheme to be submitted and the ongoing maintenance of such planting, that the proposals would accord with saved Policies E9 and E10 of the Swale Local Plan.

Flood Risk and Drainage

59. The application was supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), which shows that the site lies in part within flood zones 1, 2 and 3, but that the built aspects of the scheme are within the area with the lowest level of flood risk (flood zone 1). In an extreme flood the main entrance may be affected by floodwater, but the emergency access off Halfway Road would provide a safe and dry access/egress, therefore no compensatory measures are required.
60. The Environment Agency is satisfied that the submitted Flood Risk Assessment shows that the risk of flooding to the site will be low, and therefore raises no objection to the proposed development.
61. The County Council's Sustainable Drainage Officer has considered the Surface Water Management Strategy submitted, and advised that the scheme is considered to be acceptable given that the proportion of impermeable area across the site would not be increased, and that the rate of surface water runoff from the site would be reduced through the use of appropriate and 'open' SuDS features. No objection is therefore raised subject to the imposition of a condition relating to the submission of a fully detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme for the site.

Construction Methods

62. Given that there are neighbouring residential properties, if planning permission is granted it is considered appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of construction to protect residential amenity (Monday to Friday between 0800 and 1800; Saturday 0900 to 1300; and no operations on Sundays or public holidays).

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63. 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.
64. 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

65. The County Council's Archaeological Officer has advised that the site at Danley Road lies in an area where important archaeological remains have been found previously (to the north of the school) where there was evidence of occupation during the Neolithic, Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, Saxon and Medieval periods. They advise that it is quite likely that significant remains will be present within the land that will be occupied by the proposed school. They acknowledge that there is likely to have been some disturbance previously from the buildings of the former middle school, however, the proposed plans show development on areas not previously built on and the landscaping of the playing fields/small scale cut and fill required means that archaeological deposits may be affected by this new development.
66. As a result, and to protect any archaeological remains found on site, a condition is suggested which would require the applicants to submit a written specification for a programme of archaeological works, so that any features found can be properly examined and recorded.

Conclusion

67. The application has been considered on its own merits and in the light of the NPPF, the Planning for Schools Development Policy Statement and the Development Plan, and comments received raising concerns about the scheme. The proposed relocated Halfway Houses Primary School would be located on a site that was formerly used as a middle school, and where the principle of providing an education establishment is acceptable. The school has been designed to a high standard which would be appropriate to the surrounding area and has been sited within the grounds, close to the surrounding built development, so as to cause a minimal impact on the wider landscape character area and open countryside. Subject to the recommendations of the Highway and Transportation Officer the school would be able to operate without causing any highway safety issues and with the provision of an appropriate level of on-site parking facilities. It is therefore considered that the development would accord with the principles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.
68. Therefore, subject to the imposition of conditions, I consider that the development would not give rise to any material harm, and is otherwise in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies, the Planning Statement and the guidance contained in the NPPF, and that permission should therefore be granted.

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Recommendation

69. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO the receipt of no additional issues from Swale Borough Council that have not already been addressed in the above report, the payment of appropriate funds for the progression of a Traffic Regulation Order to create a formal one-way system to Danley 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 to make Danley Road one way only shall be undertaken;
- the submission of a School Travel Plan prior to occupation of the new school and its ongoing review;
- 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 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;
- the provision of the on-site parking areas prior to occupation of the school and their retention thereafter;
- the provision of cycle parking prior to the occupation of the school;
- the provision of 2m x 2m pedestrian visibility splays at the access with no obstruction over 0.6m from the footway level, and that this be maintained thereafter;
- the submission of a fully detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme for the site and the written approval of such a scheme and its ongoing maintenance;
- the submission of a native species landscape scheme to supplement details submitted with the application, and details of a maintenance scheme for such landscaping;
- prior to the commencement of development the relocation of all reptiles from the site to the area indicated on drawing number 3344_SK_014 shall be undertaken in accordance with the ecological report submitted;
- the submission of a detailed lighting design strategy to be approved in writing prior to occupation of the school;
- the submission and written approval of a specification for a programme of archaeological work.

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

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- the registering with Kent County Council of the School Travel Plan through the “Jambusters” website following the link <http://www.jambusterstpms.co.uk>;
- that the applicants submit a Memorandum of Understanding that the funds required for the Traffic Regulation Order to change Danley Road to one-way only, of £3000, plus those required for the associated highway improvement works and signage will be paid to the County Highway Authority; and
- that the applicant ensures that all necessary highway approvals and consents are obtained.

Case Officer: Helen Edwards

Tel. no: 03000 413366

Background Documents: see section heading
