

Retention of mobile classroom at Tunstall Church of England (Aided) Primary School, Tunstall – SW/09/286

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 26 May 2009.

Application by the Governors of Tunstall Primary School for the renewal of planning consent for existing mobile classroom at Tunstall Church of England (Aided) Primary School, Tunstall, Sittingbourne.

Recommendation: Temporary planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mrs. B Simpson & Mr R. Truelove

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

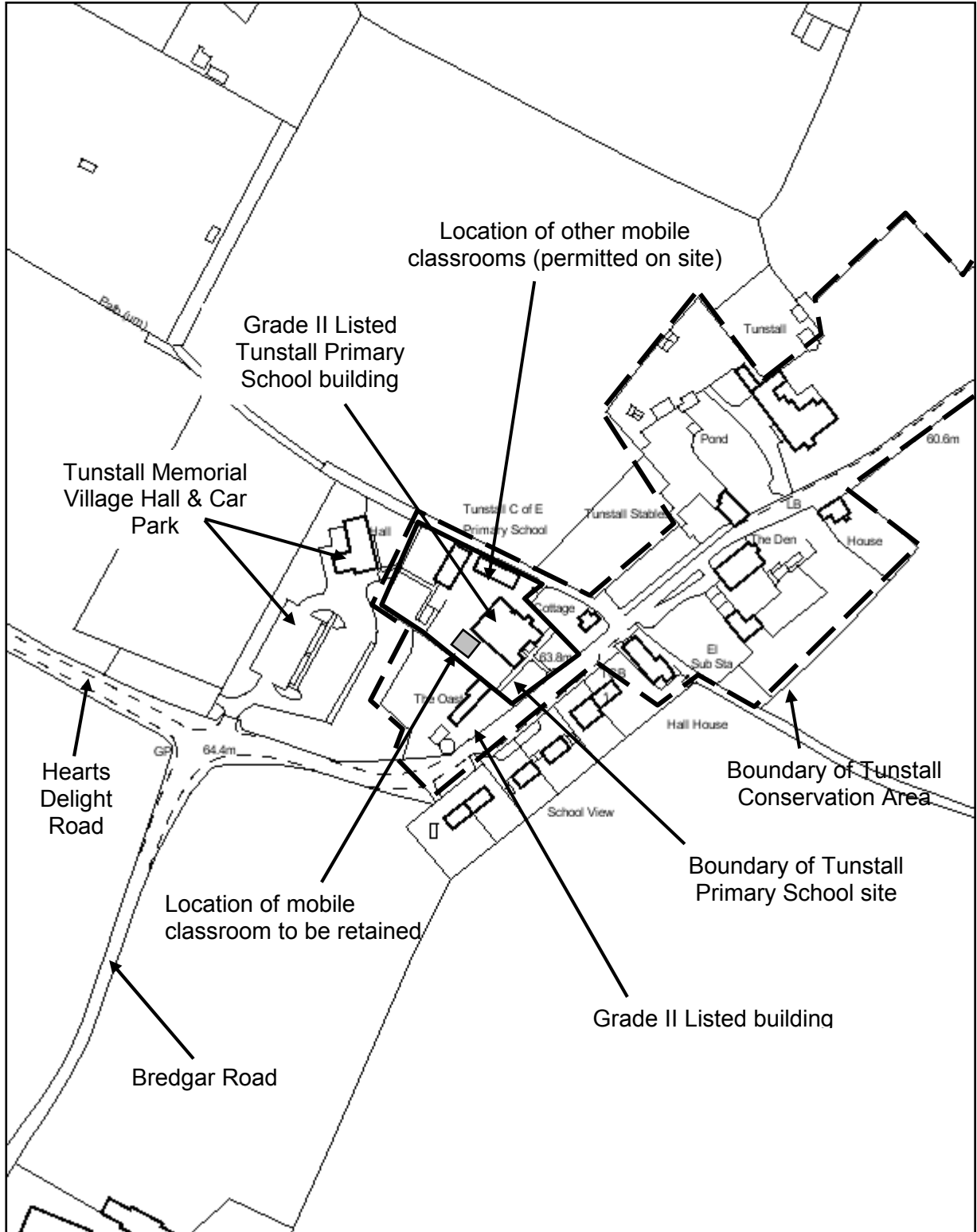
1. Tunstall Church of England Primary School is situated alongside the main road (B2163), which runs through Tunstall village. The mobile classroom to which this application relates is located to the south of the school site. The teaching accommodation at the school is currently provided by three mobile classrooms (two in addition to the one for which renewal of planning permission is sought) as the main school building is under-sized for the current school roll (211 pupils). The main building dates from the 19th Century and is a Grade II Listed Building. The application site also adjoins a further Grade II Listed Building, 'The Oast', immediately to the south-western boundary. Behind the school, to the west is the Tunstall Memorial Village Hall and associated car park. The application site is located outside the built up area boundary defined in the adopted Local Plan, and the whole site is within the Tunstall Conservation Area. *A site location plan is attached below.*

Planning History

2. The recent planning history for the school site includes retention of the temporary buildings on the school grounds directly to the north and west of the main school building. The current application proposes the retention of a single classroom mobile unit originally positioned on site under planning reference SW/02/762. This temporary permission was subsequently renewed by the County Planning Authority in February 2006 for 3 years under reference SW/05/1426, which lapsed on 28 February 2009. A School Travel Plan was approved in July 2004 under condition 4 of the original planning decision SW/02/762
3. Members will be aware that a similar proposal for the retention of an existing two classroom mobile unit at this site was permitted by the Planning Applications Committee at its meeting on 17 February 2009. The planning permission allows a temporary consent for 3 years which included an informative advising the applicant that the County Planning Authority would wish to see urgent action taken to resolve the accommodation issues at the school within the three-year period allowed.
4. Other planning history includes provision of a new playing field by conversion of agricultural land to the west of the school (ref: SW/05/1356), and a proposal for new car parking facilities at the front of the main school building, which was subsequently refused (ref: SW/05/254).

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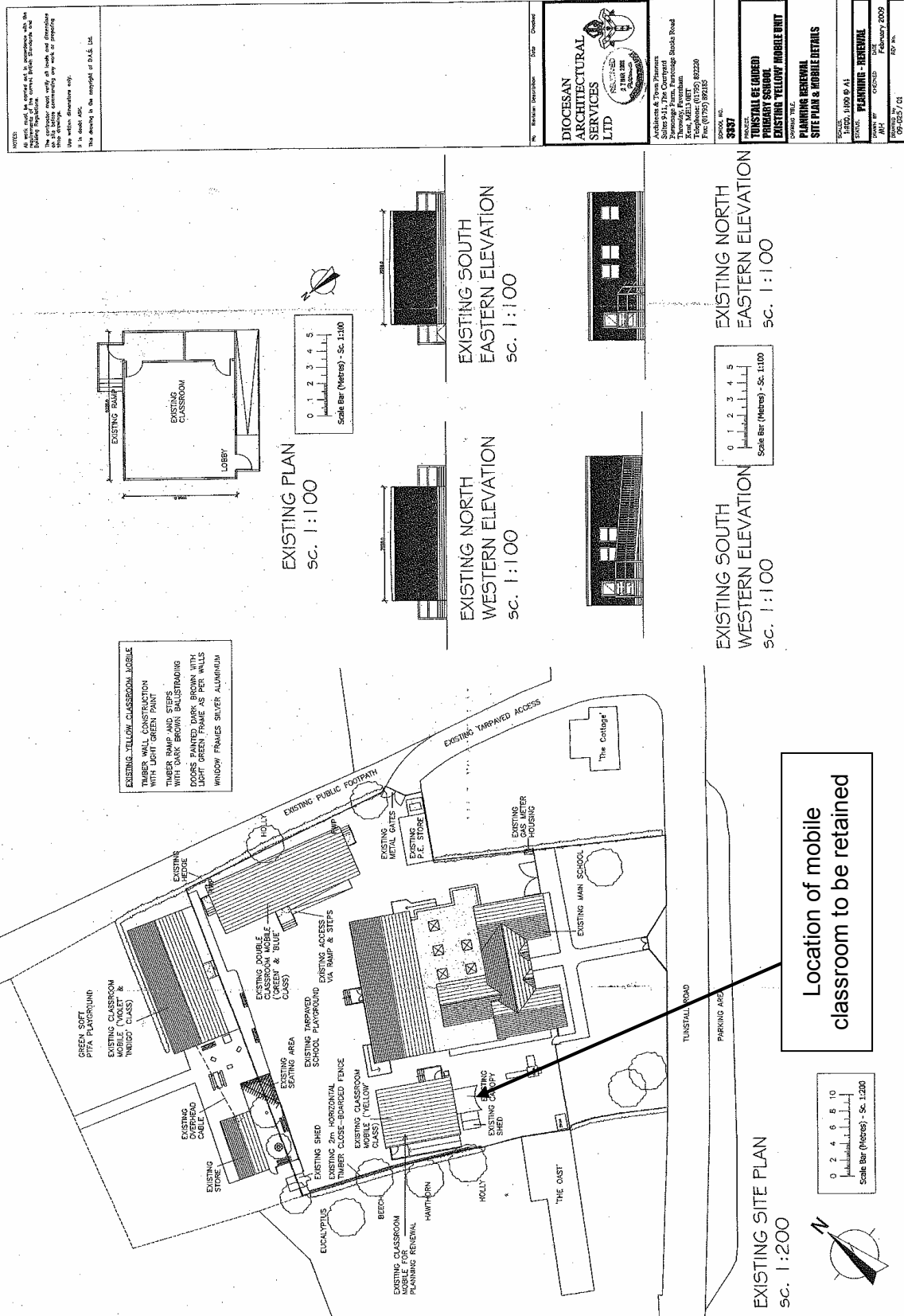
Site Location Plan



Site Location Plan – Tunstall Primary School
Scale 1:2500

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Mobile Classroom Plans



NOTES:
All work must be carried out in accordance with the Building Regulations.
The contractor must ensure that the mobile classroom is fully enclosed and that the structure is fully secured.
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PROJECT:
TUNSTALL CE AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL
EXISTING YELLOW MOBILE UNIT

DRAWING NO:
PLANNING - RENEWAL

DATE: February 2009

SCALE: 1:100 (P.A.)

DATE: 09/03/07, C1

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Proposal

5. The application has been submitted on behalf of the Governors of Tunstall Primary School and proposes the retention of an existing mobile classroom. The temporary building proposed is of standard design, single storey with a flat roof, and is similar in appearance to another mobile classroom retained within the school grounds. The proposed building provides approximately 67m² of floorspace, with the unit measuring approximately 9.2m by 7m by 3.5m high. The building is completed in a light green textured paint with aluminium windows, timber doors, minerals felt roof and associated timber steps and ramp to allow inclusive access to the unit.

6. The applicants have provided the following information in support of their application:

“The current school roll is 211, structured in seven classes. The Governors of the school are seeking permission to renew planning consent as the mobile unit.... needs to be retained to enable efficient delivery of the curriculum to children in their appropriate age groups. Tunstall CE Primary School is at the top of the Diocesan Board of Education’s list for a new school site. The [mobile] unit is intended to be temporary until grant is made by the Department for Children, Schools and Families to replace all the temporary accommodation.”

7. The retention of the mobile unit within the site is not proposed to increase either staff or pupil numbers, but seeks to maintain an adequate amount of teaching accommodation for existing pupils attending the school.

Additional Information provided by the Applicant

8. *“In response to objections raised by Tunstall Parish Council and the Village Hall Committee to the planning application to retain mobile classroom units at Tunstall School, the Diocesan Board of Education and Kent County Council wish to comment as follows:-*

KCC and the Canterbury Diocesan Board are committed to replacing Tunstall School on a new site. KCC owns several areas of land sites in the vicinity of Tunstall village which could potentially be identified for educational use.

Central Government funding however, in the form of the Primary Capital Programme, has as its main focus on failing schools in deprived areas. Tunstall CEP School delivers an excellent standard of education and is not located in a deprived area. Schools which do fall into this category must be a priority for replacement/refurbishment.

Discussions are taking place both nationally and locally to seek ways of addressing the needs of schools such as Tunstall. Until a way forward can be identified and funding put in place, it is essential that the school retains its existing accommodation to deliver the curriculum.”

Planning Policy

9. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to consideration of the application:

(i) The adopted 2009 **South East Plan**: the most relevant Regional Planning Policies are:

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CC1 (Sustainable Development), **CC6** (Sustainable Communities and Character of the Environment), **C4** (Landscape and Countryside Management), **BE5** (Village Management), **BE6** (Management of the Historic Environment), **S3** (Education and Skills), **S6** (Community Infrastructure) and **KTG1** (Core Strategy).

(ii) The adopted 2006 **Kent & Medway Structure Plan**:

Policy SP1 – The primary purpose of Kent’s development and environmental strategy will be to protect and enhance the environment and achieve a sustainable pattern and form of development. This will be done principally by, amongst other matters:

- protecting the Kent countryside and its wildlife for future generations;
- protecting and enhancing features of importance in the natural and built environment;
- Encouraging high quality development and innovative design that reflects Kent’s identity and local distinctiveness and promoting healthy, safe and secure living and working environments.

Policy EN1 – Kent’s countryside will be protected, conserved and enhanced for its own sake. Development in the countryside should seek to maintain or enhance it.

Policy QL1 – All development should be well designed and be of high quality. Developments, individually or taken together, should respond positively to the scale, layout, pattern and character of their local surroundings. Development which would be detrimental to the built environment, amenity, functioning and character of settlements or the countryside will not be permitted.

Policy QL6 – Development within Conservation Areas should preserve or enhance their character or appearance. Development which would harm the character or appearance of a Conservation Area will not be permitted.

Policy QL8 – Listed buildings will be preserved and their architectural and historic integrity and the character of their settings will be protected and enhanced. Development which would adversely affect them will not be permitted.

Policy QL11 – Existing community services will be protected and enhanced as long as there is a demonstratable need for them.

(iii) The adopted 2008 **Swale Borough Local Plan**:

Policy SP1 – In meeting the development needs of the Borough, proposals should accord with principles of Sustainable Development.

Policy E1 – Development proposals should, amongst others, respond positively by reflecting the positive characteristics of the features of the site and locality; protect and enhance the natural and built environments; well sited and of a scale, design and appearance that is appropriate to its location; cause no demonstratable harm to residential amenity and other sensitive uses.

Policy E6 – The quality, character and amenity value of the wider countryside of the Borough, will be protected and where possible enhanced.

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Policy E14 – Proposals affecting the setting of a Listed Building(s), will only be permitted if the buildings special architectural or historic interest, and its setting, is preserved.

Policy E15 – Development within, affecting the setting of, or views into and out of a Conservation Area, should preserve or enhance all features that contribute positively to the area's special character or appearance.

Policy E19 – The Borough Council expects all development proposals to be of high quality design.

Policy C1 – The Borough Council will permit proposals for new or improved community facilities.

Consultations

10. **Swale Borough Council** – No objection to the proposal, subject to a temporary permission of 3 years only.

Tunstall Parish Council – comments received are set out below:

- *“Parish Councillors have reviewed the application. Ideally they would like permission to be refused. However, Councillors appreciate that the school could not continue to function without these buildings and, therefore, have no option but to agree this application, but with one condition. We would like it to be for one year only pending positive action on the part of the Local Authority and the Diocese for a new school;*
- *Our reluctance is caused by the fact that these buildings are old, are not in a good state of repair and have outlived their usefulness. The School struggles to fulfil the demands of the National Curriculum on a very cramped site and it is to the credit of the School, led by the Headteacher, and working with her staff that it is so successful;*
- *Both the Local Authority and the Diocese accept that new buildings, probably on a new site are essential but nothing would appear to be happening. This application gives the Local Authority and Diocese another five years before anything has to be done and this is not acceptable. Under the new Department for Children, Schools and Families criteria, why should successful schools be penalised?*
- *Tunstall Parish Council would, therefore, like to request that the Local Authority and Diocese develop, with some urgency, a definite proposal for this school and that permission for this mobile classroom be given for one year only pending an outline plan for the new school”.*

The County Conservation Architect – no comments have been received on writing this report. Any views received prior to Committee meeting will be reported verbally.

Tunstall Memorial Hall Management Committee – Objects to the application on the following grounds:

- Failure to comply with planning conditions of the original planning permission requiring the implementation of a School Travel Plan;
- Inappropriate building design, and
- Overdevelopment of the site

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A full copy of the comments received from the Management Committee is attached to this report within Appendix 1.

The comments received maintain that this application should be refused on the above grounds. However, it is noted that the Village Hall Management Committee requests that that if the Planning Applications Committee take the view that the temporary building is necessary to the continued short term functioning of the school, the conditions covering the following points should be applied and enforced:

- The School to produce and implement a Travel Plan, including safe management by the School of pick up and drop off of pupils;
- Compliance with the above condition to be actively monitored by planning officers;
- The Education Authority and Diocesan Board of Education to be encouraged to consider the need to relocate the school to a more appropriate site;
- Permission to be limited to one year in order that the position can be reviewed in 12 months time.

Local Members

11. Mrs B. Simpson and Mr M. Truelove, the local County Members were notified of the application on the 6 April 2009.

Publicity

12. The application was publicised by an advertisement in a local newspaper, the posting of a site notice, the notification of 9 neighbouring residential properties and the notification of the adjacent Village Hall.

Representations

13. One letter of representation commenting on the application has been received from a local resident. The main points raised are as follows:
- *“Ideally we would like permission to be refused. However, we appreciate that the school could not continue to function without these buildings and, therefore, have no option but to agree this application, but with one condition. We would like it to be for one year only pending positive action on the part of the Local Authority and the Diocese for a new school. If this is not practical in the timescale and permission is given for 3 years, then we would wish to see as a condition, 6 monthly reviews to assess progress on plans for a new build dated from the consent of this application.*
 - *This building abuts our garden and is an unsightly feature in a conservation area though we appreciate the measures such as high quality fencing that have been implemented to mitigate the noise and high visibility from our garden. We are also concerned that this building adds to the congestion on this site. The school struggles to fulfil the demands of the National Curriculum on this very cramped site where there are only 2 out of 7 classrooms inside the main building.*
 - *Both the Local Authority and the Diocese accept that new buildings, probably on a new site are essential but nothing would appear to be happening. This application gives the Local Authority and Diocese another five years before anything has to be done and this is not acceptable. Under the new Department for Children, Schools and Families criteria, why should successful schools be penalised?*
 - *We would, therefore, like to request that the Local Authority and Diocese develop, with some urgency, a definite proposal for this school and that permission for this*

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mobile classroom be given for one year only pending an outline plan for the new school with 6 monthly reviews attended by the Head teacher, Chairman of Governors, and representatives from the Parish Council, the Diocese and someone from planning.”

Discussion

14. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this 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 considering this proposal the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (9) above are particularly relevant.
15. In my opinion, the main determining issues relate to the following points:
- the siting, design and appearance of the buildings within the backdrop of the Tunstall Conservation Area and neighbouring Listed buildings;
 - highway related considerations;
 - the need for the development; and
 - other considerations
16. The application seeks planning permission to retain an existing mobile classroom to meet a current shortfall in permanent teaching accommodation at Tunstall Primary School. The application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of the views expressed by Tunstall Parish Council, Tunstall Memorial Hall Management Committee and a nearby local resident, as identified in paragraphs (10 & 13) above.

Siting, design and appearance

17. The application raises a number of material considerations concerning the siting and design of the mobile building when considered in the context of the character of the surrounding built environment and landscape.
18. The application site is positioned to the south-west of, and within the setting of the Grade II Listed main school building. A second Grade II Listed Building (The Oast) is located immediately adjacent to the application site to the south. The entire school grounds are located within the Tunstall Conservation Area, although outside the built confines of Tunstall village as defined in the Swale Borough Local Plan.
19. An objection has been received from the Tunstall Memorial Hall Management Committee, and strong concerns from Tunstall Parish Council and a nearby resident on the grounds that, amongst other matters, the proposed building would continue to detract from the local built environment as well as the setting of the school and nearby Listed Building, due to the nature of its design and materials used in construction.
20. Kent and Medway Structure Plan Policies QL1 and QL8, and Swale Borough Local Plan Policies E1, E14, E15 and E19, all seek proposals that are well designed, and appropriate in the context of the existing pattern of development, with emphasis on protecting or enhancing the character and the setting of any Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

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21. In considering the visual impact of retaining the mobile unit on the setting of the Listed Building and the Conservation Area, it is noted that the design of the building does little to enhance the special historic and architectural merits of the existing school building. Similarly, I note that this is the case with the other mobile classroom buildings currently located on site which have previously been granted temporary planning permission (the most recent at February's Planning Applications Committee meeting).
22. In considering the qualities of the Listed school building, I note that, whilst the whole of the building is Listed, the flint road-facing façade of the original building is of most historic and architectural importance. It is noted that the original school building has been extended to the rear over many years on an incremental basis, comprising of a mix of flat roof and pitch roof extensions which are of no particular architectural merit.
23. I consider that the façades of the main school building and the neighbouring Listed residential property that face the road are the most important features from a historic and architectural perspective, being prominent in the local street-scene within the Tunstall Conservation Area. Accordingly, significant weight should be given to preserving the setting, character and appearance of buildings when viewed from the public realm. However, I note the mobile classroom to be retained is located in a relatively discreet location to the side of the main school building, and would not be widely visible from the street-scene. Its close proximity to the boundary with the neighbouring Listed property is in my opinion mitigated by the limited scale of the structure and, as identified by the neighbouring resident, the high quality wooden fencing recently installed along the south-west boundary.
24. I do not consider that the setting of either Listed Building would be detrimentally affected through the mobile unit's retention for a further temporary period. I consider that whilst arguably the retention of the mobile classroom would not enhance the setting of the Listed Buildings, due to the location on site the retention for a further temporary period would only have a marginal impact on the surrounding built environment. Accordingly, I would not raise an objection to the retention of the mobile unit for a further temporary period when considering the proposal against the objectives of Policy QL8 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan or Policy E14 of the Swale Borough Local Plan.
25. As noted above, the application site is located directly within the Tunstall Conservation Area. Comments received from the Parish Council, Tunstall Memorial Hall Management Committee and a local resident indicating that the proposed building is unsightly and not suitable for retention within a Conservation Area are noted in this particular case. It is therefore important to consider the potential impact of the mobile classrooms retention for a further temporary period on the character and appearance the village. In this instance, I note that the mobile building would appear of a different scale, character and appearance to many of the other buildings within the surrounding built environment, which predominantly consist of a mix of pitched roof residential properties, some of which are Listed due to their special characteristics. I further note that the mobile unit to which this application relates is of typical construction, similar to those found on many educational sites across the County. I accept that the mobile classroom would do little to enhance the character or appearance of the overall Conservation Area.
26. However, as previously discussed it is considered that the mobile classroom is relatively well screened from the wider Conservation Area by the existing built-development including the school building and adjoining residential properties. Under the circumstances, I do not consider that the mobile classroom has a noticeable prominence

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in the Conservation Area, or indeed on the overall street-scene when viewed from outside of the site. That said, I do not consider it appropriate for the building to be retained in situ indefinitely despite its discreet location, and if permission is granted it should only be on a temporary basis. On balance, whilst I consider that the retention of the mobile unit does little to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, I am satisfied that the proposals would not detract in this instance. Therefore, the development would not be contrary to the relevant Development Plan Policies including Policy QL6 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan and Policy E15 of the Swale Borough Local Plan.

27. I note that the Tunstall Memorial Hall Management Committee also raises objection to the application on the grounds that it represents overdevelopment of the site. The comments received suggest that with 211 pupils in 7 classes the school has outgrown the site. I note that the site is relatively small for a successful one-form entry Primary School, however, the building in question has already been accepted by the Planning Authority on site on two previous occasions. Its removal would not result in a reduction in the numbers of pupils attending the site, although it would have a significant impact on the School's ability to deliver the curriculum (*please see below for further comment on this point*).
28. I do not consider that the mobile unit's retention would have a significant impact on the open countryside, even though the site is defined as being outside of the limits of built development in the Local Plan. Accordingly, I would not raise an objection to this proposal on these grounds and consider that it broadly meets the objectives of Policy EN1 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan and Policy E6 of the Swale Borough Local Plan

Highway considerations

29. The Tunstall Memorial Hall Management Committee object to the application, amongst other matters, on highway grounds, and are concerned that the traffic generated by people attending the site at the beginning and end of the school day leads to chaos in the Village Hall car park and difficulties on the public highway. It should be noted that parents attending the site are afforded access to drop off facilities designed into the Village Hall car park in-order to reduce the impact of traffic on the surrounding public highway.
30. The Management Committees comments note that a School Travel Plan was a condition of the original planning consent (under reference SW/02/762). This document was subsequently approved in July 2004 (and updated in October 2007) and includes, amongst other matters, measures to reduce reliance on private vehicles and a School Traffic Management Policy to help mitigate for the traffic generated, together with guiding principles for parents choosing to use the Village Hall car park.
31. The Tunstall Hall Management Committee is concerned that the drop off / pick up facilities made available to parents in the Village Hall car park are being misused on occasion and that the facilities are not necessarily managed in the manner set out in the School's Travel Plan. In their opinion that represents a breach in the original planning permission and that the current application should be refused on the basis that the applicant is unable to adhere to existing planning conditions.
32. It is noted that the production and approval of a School Travel Plan was a condition of the original planning permission. In strictest planning terms the condition required that a plan be submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority, which has been

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completed, and as such the condition has been met. The concept of the document is to raise the profile and impact of people's travel options, encouraging a move away from reliance on private motor vehicles. It is the nature of a Travel Plan to be a living document that is intended to be reviewed and revised on a regular basis to adapt to changes in circumstances. I note that the Tunstall School Travel Plan appears to have been updated in 2007. The issue of delivering the agreed content of the plan is very much a school management issue. Kent Highway Services has a School Travel Plan Team who work with Schools preparing and reviewing plans, and guiding on the delivery.

33. It is my understanding that the School are beginning the process of preparing a revised Travel Plan. This would be an ideal opportunity to try and address some of the concerns that may have arisen since the previous Plan was prepared. It would be appropriate that the School seeks to consult with their immediate neighbours including the Tunstall Hall Management Committee to feed into the plan making process. Hopeful this would allow discussions to take place that would help an acceptable and practical solution for all interested parties to be prepared and implemented.
34. In my opinion, the alleged non compliance with the current Travel Plan and in turn the non compliance with the original planning permission, is not a material reason to seek refusal of the current application. The proposal permitted or otherwise would not change the situation in that it does not propose additional pupils or visitors to the site that could exacerbate any existing concerns at peak travel times. The principle of a one form entry primary school has long been accepted for this site. I note that the School are already in the process of drafting a revised Travel Plan. Therefore, subject to an informative encouraging engagement with the wider community and all interested parties in this process, I would not raise an objection to the application on highway grounds.

Continued Need for Mobile Classroom and Temporary Nature of Proposal

35. I am aware that there are long-term plans to re-locate the school off-site with new purpose built school, but due to Government funding arrangements such proposals have not come forward to date. Whilst it is unfortunate that the building to which this application relates, and indeed the other mobile units, have been on site for a long period of time, I am mindful of the School's need for this particular mobile classroom to be retained in order to maintain essential teaching facilities for one of its seven year groups.
36. Members will note that Policy QL11 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan supports the continued retention of existing community facilities. Without the guarantee of alternative teaching accommodation at the site to house the existing class, I am mindful of the pressing educational need of the school to retain this current teaching facility. Accordingly, I consider significant weight should be given to this retention of a well supported community facility in this instance.
37. The application is seeking the renewal of temporary planning permission in which the applicants are hopeful that the current situation can be resolved through the bringing forward of a new school site. Whilst I note that the Parish Council, the Village Hall Management Committee and a nearby resident have expressed a desire for permission to be granted for a one year period only, I consider that such time would not be either sufficient or realistic for the applicants to bring forward development proposals and obtain the necessary consents for work to proceed. In particular, it is not feasible to acquire a site, obtain all the necessary consents and construct a new school within a one year timeframe. Moreover, I consider that such a strict timescale would in no way

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help to bring that process forward because the funding policy and availability of funds is beyond the direct control of the applicants in this case. Under the circumstances, I am mindful of the need to retain teaching facilities at the site, albeit on a temporary basis, and reluctantly agree the further retention of the mobile classroom for a period of up to three years would be appropriate, and consistent with the Committee's recent decision to retain one of the other mobile structures on site.

Future re-development / re-location of School

38. Both the Parish Council and Memorial Hall Management Committee have noted that the current school is operating on an extremely tight site with less than ideal teaching facilities. Both organisations and the neighbouring resident have requested to be kept up-to-date on the progress of the proposals to provide a permanent accommodation for the school. Members will note that the applicants have expressed the desire for the school function to be re-located to a new purpose built site, but in the absence of Government funding for this project, this has not been possible to date.
39. Members will also note that it is for the Planning Applications Committee to determine the current proposal, as opposed to having a direct influence over the re-location of the school onto a new site, or the re-development of the existing site with permanent classroom accommodation. Accordingly, as discussed above, I recommend that temporary planning permission be granted for a further period, together with informatives advising the applicants that the County Planning Authority would wish to see permanent replacement accommodation built either at the current site, or on a new site at the earliest possible opportunity, and requesting that the applicant keeps all interested parties regularly appraised of the progress in bring a scheme forward.

Conclusion

40. In weighing the considerations set out above, I consider that the design of proposed development is not acceptable as a permanent fixture in this relatively sensitive location. Nevertheless, the mobile unit is largely screened from public views in the context of the wider landscape, street-scene and Conservation Area. I consider that due to the unit's position in relation to the nearby Listed Buildings, the continued retention of the proposed building for a temporary period would not have a significant impact on the setting of either building. Any visual impact from the development would be localised to the immediate vicinity surrounding the unit.
41. In my opinion, the applicant has established that the building is essential to the short-term operation of the school whilst suitable permanent accommodation for the school is established. When balancing the visual impact of the mobile buildings in the context of the character of the surrounding area against the effective operation of the school, I would consider that, in this instance, the continued provision of a community service outweighs the potential impact of a temporary period of planning permission.
42. I further consider that the applicants should be made aware, by way of a suitable informative, of the urgent need to resolve the temporary classroom accommodation at Tunstall Primary School within this three-year time window; requesting that the applicant keeps all interested parties regularly appraised of the progress in bring a scheme forward; and, that as part of the development of any revised Travel Plan process further discussions should take place between the applicant and interested parties before the document is prepared.

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Recommendation

43. I RECOMMEND that TEMPORARY PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO conditions, including conditions to cover the following aspects:
- temporary consent for period of 3 years from date of permission;
 - removal of classroom unit from site at expiration of 3 year period and the subsequent restoration of the site thereafter;

I FURTHER RECOMMEND THAT INFORMATIVES be added to the decision notice advising the applicants that the County Planning Authority would wish to see urgent action taken to resolve the temporary classroom accommodation at Tunstall Primary School during the three-year timescale of the permission, requesting that the applicant keeps all interested parties regularly apprised of the progress in bring a scheme forward, and that as part of the process of preparing a School Travel Plan, the School engage with the local community in an attempt to address any concerns over the traffic generated by the use.

Case officer – James Bickle	01622 221068
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Background documents - See section heading
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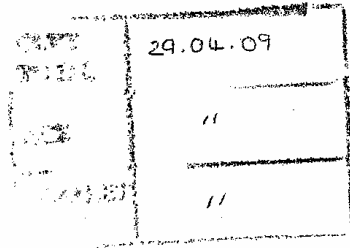
Appendix 1 – Comments received from Tunstall Memorial Hall Management Committee

TUNSTALL MEMORIAL HALL
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Kent County Council
Planning Applications Group
First Floor
Invicta House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent ME14 1XX



28th April 2009

Dear Sirs

Renewal of planning consent for existing classroom mobile (single) at Tunstall CE Primary School, Tunstall, – Planning Application No.SW/09/TEMP/0013

We wish to object to the renewal of this planning consent for the following reasons.

(A). Failure to comply with planning conditions as detailed in Travel Plan dated April 2006

1. When this application for planning consent for this mobile classroom was originally applied for in 2005, the Trustees of Tunstall Village Hall objected to the application on the ground that the increase in pupil numbers for the additional classroom (30 pupils), would represent a significant overloading of the “off highway” pupil pick up and drop off facility provided for the School from the Village Hall car park.
2. At the meeting our concern was shared by Members who recognised the problem and when granting the application included a planning condition requiring the School to produce and implement a Travel Plan which would include management and control by the School of the parent’s use of the pupil pick up and drop off facility. --- The final planning approval was therefore subject to this condition.
3. The School subsequently prepared a Travel Plan which included full details of their proposals for dealing with the pupil pick up and drop off facility, key points are listed below and the full script is attached to this letter.
 - 3.1. *Section 2.10, Access to the School by Car*
 - 3.2. *Section 3.6, School Travel Plan Policy – The Tunstall Traffic Management Policy (TMP) – Enforcement*
4. Since approval of the Plan the School has failed to implement any of their proposals leading to chaos in the car park and difficulties on the highway outside.

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Primary School, Tunstall – SW/09/286**



5. Please note that the Village Hall is booked every weekday afternoon and some early mornings meaning that the car park is part filled with Hall users cars parked for the duration of their hire of the Hall.
6. During the five year period since the original approval, the trustees and Management Committee of the Village Hall have written to the School and its Governors, by letter and e-mail on numerous occasions identifying the misuse of the car park by parents and the absence of any management of the facility provided by the School.
7. Within the past 6 months the Trustees of the Village Hall have become so concerned as to the safety of pupils using the car park that they have expended over £1000 of the Hall funds (the Hall is a registered charity) to install bollards to prevent parents fly parking on the pedestrian paved area adjacent to the School rear entrance.
8. Numerous other suggestions have been made to the School to improve the situation, for example requesting that parents arrive well before the end of the school day, as this blocks up the car park and in the mornings requesting that parents don't wait with their children until the bell rings, which again blocks up the car park. There is no apparent acceptance or implementation of these suggestions.
9. From the above you will see that the School has completely failed to comply with the planning condition relating to the management of the parents use of the car park area, as enshrined in their Travel Plan. For this reason we believe that the current application should be rejected as they have demonstrated they are unable to adhere to the condition.

(B).Inappropriate building design

1. The building is an eyesore and would not be permitted as a permanent development in the Tunstall Conservation area.

(C).Overdevelopment of the site

1. The School now has 211 pupils in 7 classes on a very restricted site requiring 3 temporary mobile units to serve 5 of these 7 classes. Playground provision was further reduced when the third mobile classroom (the subject of this application) was installed 5 years ago and this lack of playground was criticised by Ofsted. The School has approximately 50-60 pupils from the Parish with the remaining 150-160 travelling considerable distances to the School by car with an undesirable environmental impact plus attendant traffic problems, uncontrolled by the School. The School has outgrown the site and needs to relocate to a larger purpose built development suitable for this millennium.

(D).Summary

- On grounds of non compliance with a key condition of the original grant
- On grounds of inappropriate building design, and
- On grounds of overdevelopment of the School site, leading to undesirable environmental impact uncontrolled by the School,



- We maintain that this application should be refused on these planning criteria.

Retention of mobile classroom at Tunstall Church of England (Aided) Primary School, Tunstall – SW/09/286

If, however, the Planning Committee takes the view that use of the temporary building is necessary to the continuing short term functioning of the School, before it can relocate to a more suitable site and is minded to grant the application, we firmly believe that the following conditions should apply and be enforced.

- a) The School should produce and implement a Travel Plan which will include provision for safe management and control by the School of the pick up and drop off of pupils by parents from their cars in the Village Hall car park.
- b) Compliance with this condition should be actively monitored by planning officers.
- c) The attention of KCC Education Department, the Diocesan Board of Education and other interested school authorities, shall be drawn by the Planning Committee to the unsuitability on planning grounds of the present over development and use of the site by the enlarged school and the pressing need for the School to relocate on a more appropriate site.
- d) Permission to continue to use the temporary building shall be limited to one year only, after which the Planning Committee will revisit the application in the light of progress made in conditions (a) and (c) above.

Yours faithfully

 
D J NUTTING
Chairman
Tunstall Village Memorial Hall Management Committee



