

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 existing temporary classroom to the front of the school from the rear at Wilmington Grammar School for Girls, Parsons Lane, Wilmington – DA/16/00800/CPO (KCC/DA/0091/2016)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 14th September 2016.

Application by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure Support for the relocation of an existing temporary classroom to the front of the school from the rear at Wilmington Grammar School for Girls, Parsons Lane, Wilmington – DA/16/00800/CPO (KCC/DA/0091/2016).

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mrs Ann Allen

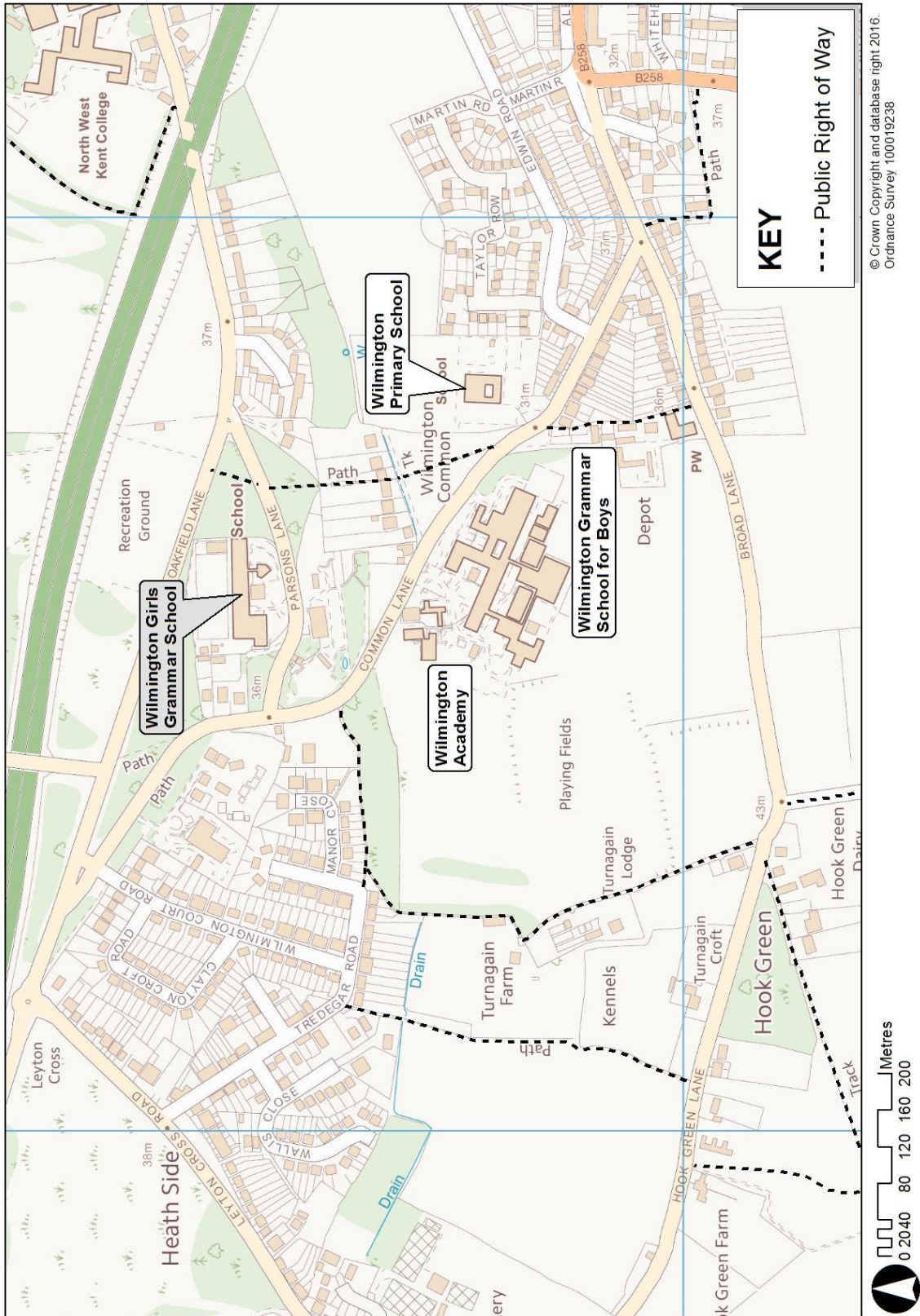
Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Wilmington Grammar School for Girls (WGSG) is located in Parsons Lane in Wilmington, which lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The school is located on both sides of the lane – the main buildings are on the northern side, with the Manor House and more undeveloped land being located on the southern side of the road. The Grange, on the northern side of the lane is an old two and a half/three storey yellow brick and tiled building with pitched roofs. Sitting behind and alongside this is a 1960's flat roof two and three storey building which extends across the site frontage which has cream rendered panels and white windows in a uniform pattern. A new three storey curved building has recently been added at the eastern edge of the site, which is constructed with yellow brickwork and dark grey panels. The ground floor for this extension is set down at a lower level than the rest of the site. To the rear of the buildings is a series of hard court sports pitches, enclosed with wire mesh fencing and at the eastern end of the site at the rear are two existing modular/temporary classrooms. One of these buildings was granted planning permission in 2003 and the other was placed on site temporarily during the construction of the three storey music and teaching block granted permission by Dartford Borough Council in 2014.
2. The rear of the school is well treed and screened from wider views, and Oakfield Lane runs along the rear of the site. To the front of the school buildings is an area of parking, and the site is enclosed along the road frontage with green roll top metal fencing, with some established hedging in places, and mature trees surrounding the built form. At the western end of the school site is a narrow lane which provides access to a scattering of residential properties.
3. Parsons Lane is accessed from Common Lane at its western end and runs eastwards until its junction with Oakfield Lane at the other end. At the Common Lane end of Parsons Lane, traffic is two way. Outside the main entrance to the school, the road is 'traffic calmed' and at this point the road effectively becomes one way, allowing traffic to

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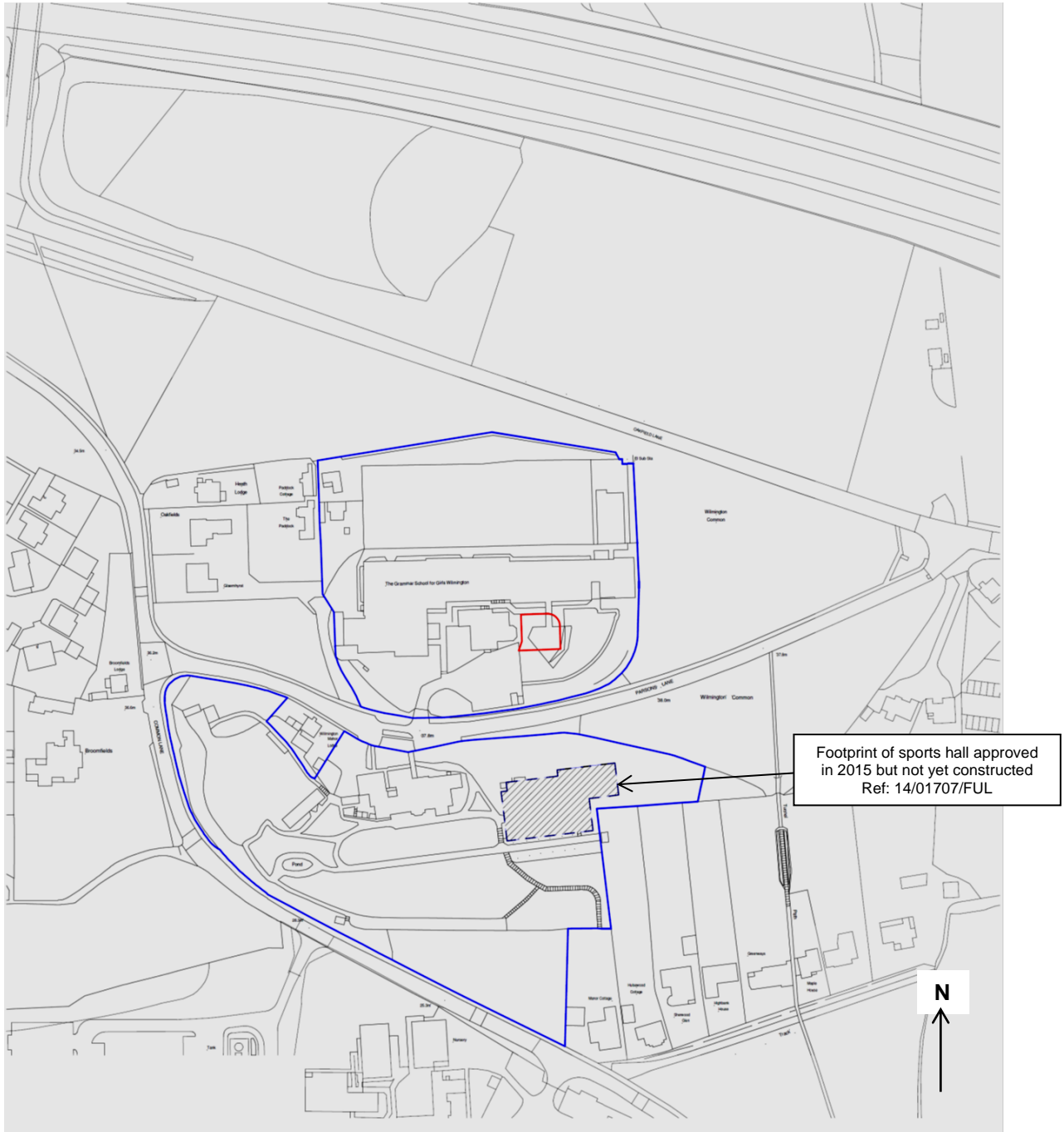
General Location Plan



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Site Location Plan



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Proposed Siting of Temporary Classroom

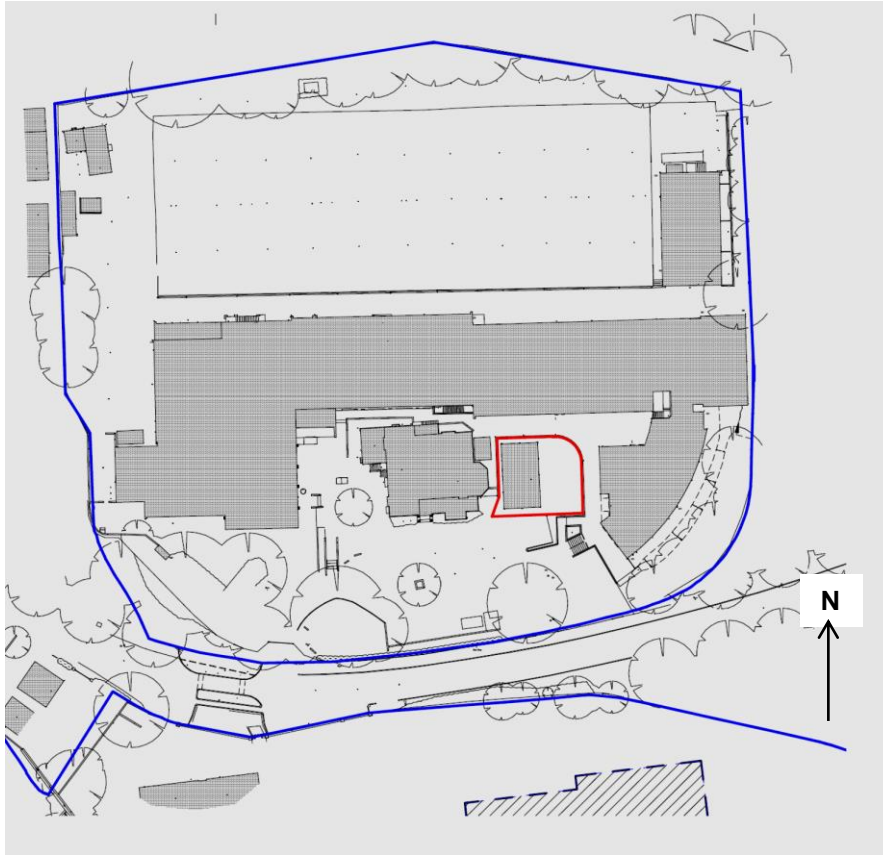
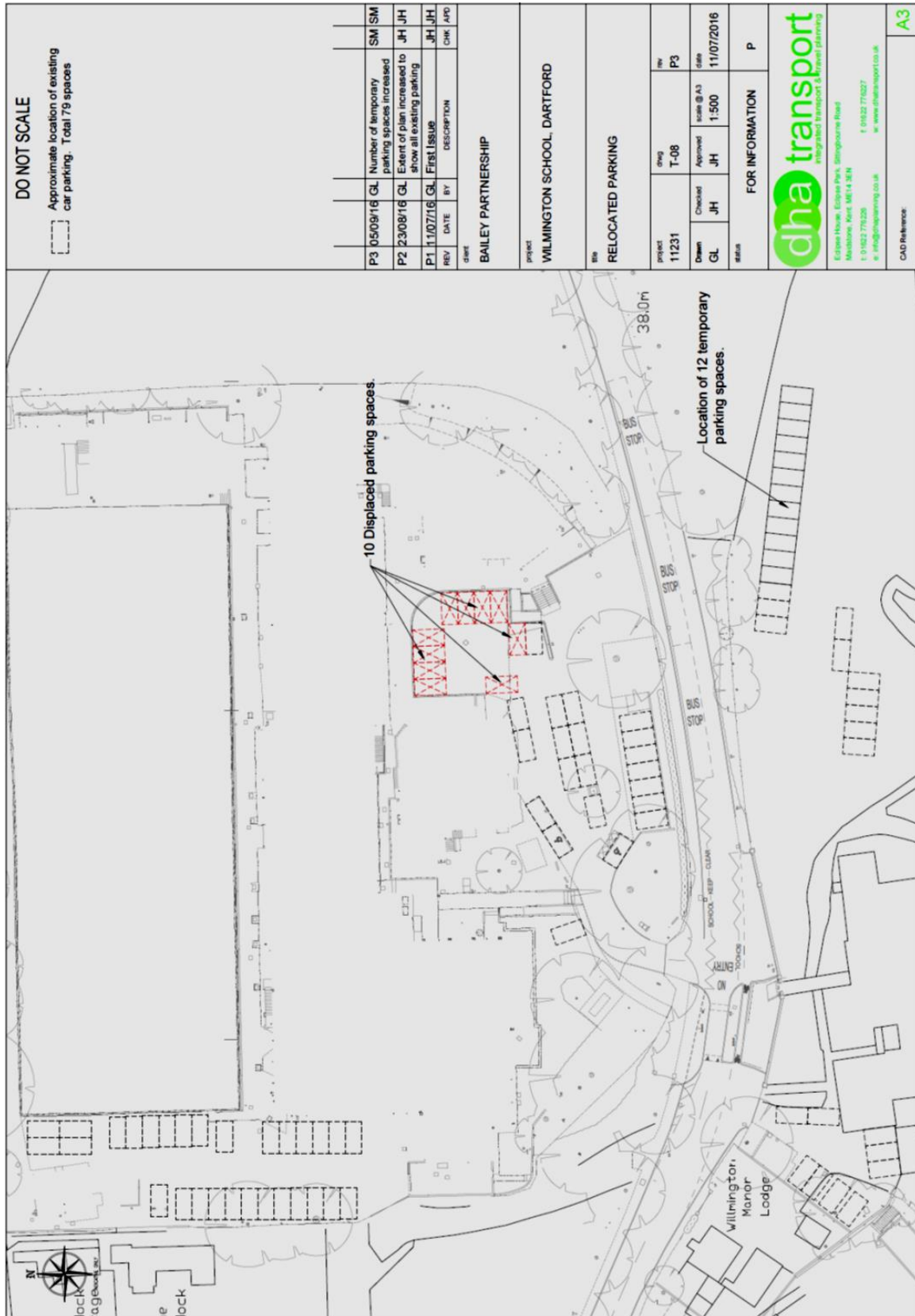


Image of temporary classroom in proposed Location



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Location of Existing and Relocated Parking Spaces



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travel from west to east only, with no access back past this pinch point towards Common Lane, and no entry to Parsons Lane from Oakfield Lane either. There are zig-zag 'keep clear' markings outside the school entrance on both sides of the lane, with 'on road' bus stops marked along the remainder of the open frontage of the school.

4. WGSG is located in close proximity to a number of other education facilities. Wilmington Day Nursery and Pre-School, Wilmington Academy, Wilmington Grammar School for Boys and Wilmington Primary School are all located to the south of WGSG and accessed from Common Lane.

Background

5. This application was submitted at the same time as a separate application seeking permission for a two storey extension to provide additional teaching accommodation for another form of entry at the school, expanding it from 4FE to 5FE (KCC/DA/0090/2016). This application is still under consideration, due to concerns over the wider traffic, highway and parking issues surrounding all the education establishments located in this area, and the combined effect of the school expansions.
6. This application has been submitted separately as it relates to the relocation of an existing building which was placed on site temporarily during the construction of the three storey music and teaching block granted permission by Dartford Borough Council in 2014. However the temporary building does not benefit from planning permission. There are two strands to the School's wish to relocate this temporary building. The first is that if the two storey extension referred to above were to gain approval, it would be constructed in the location of the current siting of the temporary building and as such it would need to be relocated to allow this development to proceed. However, in addition to this, WGSG has been asked to accept an additional 20 pupils this September (2016) as a bulge intake, for which it would need to use the existing temporary classroom on site. Given that the temporary classroom is in a relatively inaccessible location where it is currently sited, the school wish to relocate the temporary building anyway, to the proposed more useable location, but still for a temporary period only. It should otherwise have been removed from the site or planning permission sought for its retention in that location.

Recent Site History

7. There have been a number of planning applications at the site determined by Kent County Council and more recently by Dartford Borough Council, since the school took on academy status in 2011.

Applications approved by Kent County Council

Application Reference	Description	Decision
DA/02/1010	Erection of 2 no. prefabricated classroom buildings – single storey	Approved 12/12/2002
DA/03/293	Renewal of temporary permission for 2 no. mobile classroom buildings which were the subject of two separate applications DA/93/394 and DA/94/292	Approved 18/06/2003

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DA/03/628	Erection of a single storey permanent modular building as a Mathematics Centre	Approved 09/09/2003
DA/05/929	Erection of new 4 classroom teaching block together with new lift, toilets and ancillary accommodation, together with alterations to the existing external escape stair and associated external works	Approved 13/12/2005
DA/06/330	Erection of new 8 classroom teaching block, together with seminar room, new lift, toilets and ancillary accommodation, along with a pitched roof to existing school building	Approved 01/06/2006
DA/07/1120	Formation of two pedestrian entrances, pupil waiting area and car parking modifications (including extension of existing car park at the north-west corner of the Grange) associated with the school travel plan.	Approved 17/01/2008
DA/08/883	Erection of aluminium solar shading to three storeys, to the south facade of the main teaching block.	Approved 22/07/2008

Applications approved by Dartford Borough Council

Application Reference	Description	Decision
12/00616/FUL	Removal of existing panelling and windows and provision of replacement windows system and new cladding	Approved 26/07/2012
14/00709/FUL	Demolition of existing music block, removal of mobile classrooms and erection of three storey music and teaching block and extension of existing car park with associated landscaping	Approved 12/08/2014
14/01707/FUL	Erection of new sports hall	Approved 05/06/2015
15/01202/COU	Change of use of abandoned building in school grounds to Use Class D1 (education)	Approved 24/09/2015

Proposal

8. The application seeks permission to relocate a single temporary classroom building from its current position to the rear of the school, and site it at the front of the school for a temporary period. The classroom would be re-sited in front of the three storey flat roof teaching block (and to the east of The Grange) on an area currently used for car parking. This parking area was laid out as part of the works associated with the construction of the three storey music extension approved by Dartford BC in 2014. Due to the partially raised nature of the existing modular building, it would require the construction of steps and a ramped access to the front of the building. The external appearance would remain as existing, with grey coloured walls and trims, and dark grey double glazed windows and doors.
9. The siting of the temporary classroom in this location would result in the displacement of 10 parking spaces and it is proposed that these would be relocated to the southern side

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of Parsons Lane; two additional spaces are also to be provided to meet the current staff parking standards for the proposed accommodation. There is currently space to accommodate the parking here as the sports hall approved in 2015 has not been constructed yet. The current parking in this location is informal and not laid out with lined car parking spaces.

Planning Policy

10. 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;
- That the development has taken into account the importance of protecting the Green Belt, assessed the development against the exceptions provided and provided a case for any very exceptional circumstances;
- The great importance that the Government attaches to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities, and that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools.

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

- (iii) The adopted **1995 Dartford Borough Council Local Plan (Saved Policies September 2011)**:

Policy B1 Development proposals should be appropriate for the location and should not have a detrimental amenity impact on the local area. A high

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standard of design should be implemented in proposals with layout, materials, adequate infrastructure, access and parking taken into consideration

Policy S4 There is a presumption against development in the Metropolitan Green Belt, as defined in the Local Plan; continued protection will be given to the countryside and its amenity value and recreation potential will be enhanced.

Policy S6 Development proposals should conserve and improve the existing built environment and a high quality and standard of design shall be achieved in new development.

Policy T19 Development proposals should be appropriately related to the highway network and not generate volumes of traffic in excess of the capacity of the highway network.

Policy T23 Development proposals should include adequate off-street parking facilities.

Policy T27 Development proposals shall make adequate provision for pedestrians.

(iv) Dartford Borough Core Strategy (2011)

Policy CS21 Community Services: Ensure the effective provision of community services.

Policy CS13 Green Belt: Seeks to resist inappropriate development within the Green Belt, in accordance with the NPPF.

Policy CS15 Managing Transport Demand: Pledges support for minimising the need to travel and minimising car use, whilst making effective use of the transport network. Travel plans will be required for all significant traffic generating development to ensure more sustainable modes of transport are pursued. Kent County Council's parking standards will be applied.

(v) Dartford Development Policies Plan (December 2015) (This document was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in June 2016 and an Examination is due to commence in October 2016, with the plan expected to be adopted by Dartford BC towards the end of 2016 or early 2017.)

Policy DP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development: States that the Plan is written in accordance with national objectives to deliver sustainable development. A positive approach to considering development proposals will be had, reflecting the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF and the development needs of the Borough set out in the Core Strategy.

Policy DP2 Good Design in Dartford: Development will only be permitted where

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it satisfies the locally specific criteria for good design in the Borough by (a) reinforcing and enhancing localities to create high quality places, (b) ensuring heritage assets are retained, re-used and respected, (c) facilitating a sense of place through a mix of uses and careful design, (d) providing clear pedestrian and cycle linkages and permeability, active frontages and a mix of buildings and spaces. Provides further advice about determining planning applications in relation to scale, massing, form, materials, Conservation Areas and areas of heritage sensitivity, inclusive, safe and accessible places, management of natural resources and flood alleviation, and appropriate signage and advertisements.

Policy DP3 Transport Impacts of Development: Development will only be permitted where it is appropriately located and makes suitable provision to minimise and manage the arising transport impacts, in line with Core Strategy Policies. Localised residual impacts on the highway network should be addressed by well-designed off site-transport measures and adverse impacts on residential amenity or the environment must be minimised. Development will not be permitted where the localised residual impacts from the development, on its own or in combination with other planned development in the area, result in severe impacts on one or more of the following: (a) road traffic congestion and air quality (b) safety of pedestrians, cyclist and other road users and (c) excessive pressure for on-street parking.

Policy DP5 Environmental and Amenity Protection: Development will only be permitted where it does not result in unacceptable material impacts, and consideration must be given to potential amenity/safety factors such as traffic, access and parking, anti-social behaviour and littering, and intensity of use (amongst other matters).

Policy DP22 Green Belt in the Borough: Sets out 12 aspects against which development in the Green Belt will be assessed, including criteria to assess development considered as potentially not inappropriate by the NPPF; those developments that support Core Strategy Policy CS13; the re-use of existing permitted permanent buildings; taking account of the character and scale of existing buildings; criteria relating to extensions to buildings or infilling of previously developed sites; the replacement of buildings; ensuring no loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land; criteria for proposals for farm diversification; the use of land for horses or the erection of stables; outdoor sports and recreation uses; and the infrastructure required for such uses.

Consultations

11. **Dartford Borough Council** raises an objection to the application as it considers the siting of the classroom at the front of the site would be intrusive and incongruous at the front of the building, and out of character with and unsympathetic to the existing taller school buildings. Its prominent location would make it highly visible and exacerbate its awkward appearance within the street scene. They suggest it could instead be relocated to the area to the west of the hard surfaced ball courts at the rear of the

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building. They agree the additional 10 parking spaces would be acceptable, providing the applicants can demonstrate that the new spaces would be additions to the existing parking on site.

Wilmington Parish Council objects to the application. In relation to both this application and the two storey extension application they state that whilst they accept that each application must be treated on merit they urge the County Council to take an overview of all the current plans/proposals that are either under current consideration or have already been approved in respect of Wilmington Academy, Wilmington Grammar School for Girls, Wilmington Grammar School for Boys, Wilmington Community Primary School and the Nursery all of which are in close proximity. They state that taken as a whole the proposals for the Grammar School and Academy produce an extreme overdevelopment that is detrimental to the character of the area and which, due to highway concerns, have serious safety implications.

In further correspondence they also state that they consider it would make more sense for the former Rowhill School to be used as a 'satellite' to the existing schools and that this should be considered as an option for either Wilmington Academy or Wilmington Grammar School for Girls.

KCC Highways and Transportation Officer initially sought clarification from the applicant as to where the 10 displaced parking spaces would be relocated to and how they would be accessed, and where the existing parking spaces are located. Also, required that two additional parking spaces be provided to meet the current staff parking standards for the proposed accommodation, taking into account that it does not currently benefit from planning permission. Following receipt of the requested information, and the submission of the School Travel Plan he has stated that there is no objection to the application provided the 12 parking spaces to be provided south of Parsons Lane are clearly marked out on the ground with pegs or permanent markers and conditioned to be retained for the period the temporary classroom is sited in the proposed location at the front of the site. In addition, that upon removal of the temporary classroom the existing ten parking spaces are to be reinstated.

Local Member

12. The local County Member, Mrs Ann Allen, was notified of the application on 19th May 2016.
13. The two Dartford Borough Council Members for the ward of Wilmington, Cllr Eddy Lampkin and Cllr Derek Hunnisett, have raised objection and concern regarding the proposal and have expressed their full support for the views of Wilmington Parish Council, Wilmington Safer Streets, and local residents.

Publicity

14. This application was publicised by the posting of a site notice outside the school. At the same time the application for the permanent 2 storey extension was also received and advertised by the posting of site notices, an advertisement in the local newspaper, and the individual notification of 11 residential properties surrounding the site.

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Representations

15. In response to the publicity for this application, 4 letters of representation were received from 3 properties. In addition 9 separate representations were also received from the community based campaign group Wilmington Safer Streets, who represent over 450 households in Wilmington, however these on the whole relate to the application for the permanent two storey extension and the impact the expansion of this school, in conjunction with the proposals to expand Wilmington Academy, would have on the already congested road network surrounding the schools in Wilmington.

The comments pertinent to this scheme are summarised below.

- Concern raised as to why this application was submitted separately to the main application;
- Unless the extension is approved there is no need to relocate the temporary building to the front of the site;
- If approved the length of time the temporary building is allowed to remain should be included.

The representations submitted by Wilmington Safer Streets are substantial and as such the most recent response, which I consider to comprehensively combine all of the earlier comments, has been appended to this report, for clarity and completeness. The Parish Council has also registered its support for these representations.

Discussion

16. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 10 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 carrying out of development within the Green Belt; the principle of using and relocating the existing temporary classroom within the school grounds; the siting and design impact of the relocated classroom; and the displacement of 10 parking spaces that would result from siting the building in this location.

Carrying out development within the Green Belt

17. Wilmington Grammar School for Girls is located within the Green Belt. The fundamental aim of the Green Belt policy, as set out in the NPPF paragraph 79, is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and in paragraph 80 the 5 purposes are set out as follows:
- a. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;
 - b. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - c. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - d. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

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- e. to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
18. In support of the planning application, the applicants submitted a Green Belt Policy Statement, which considered whether the relocation of the temporary classroom would conflict with the aims of the Green Belt Policy, having taken into account the exceptions listed in paragraphs 89 and 90 of the NPPF, and the aims of Policy S4 of the Saved Local Plan, CS13 of the Core Strategy and Policy DP22 of the emerging Dartford Development Policies Plan.
19. Exceptions which may not be considered inappropriate in Green Belt Policy terms include limited extensions and replacement buildings, new building for agriculture, woodland and facilities for outdoor sports and recreation, new buildings at cemeteries, limited infilling in villages in the Green Belt, limited affordable housing for local community needs, and limited infilling in or redevelopment of previously developed sites. The extension of buildings, provided they are of limited size, may not be inappropriate in the Green Belt; and replacement buildings need not be inappropriate provided that the replacement is not materially larger than the building it replaces, and the open character of the Green Belt is maintained.
20. In its proposed location the temporary classroom would be in very close proximity to the existing built form of the school and sited in a position where it would consolidate this built form. The school site itself has an urban feel given the range of large school buildings on site, and the relocated temporary classroom would be within the hard surfaced area and seen against the backdrop of the existing school. Because of this it is considered that it would not conflict with the main aim of the Green Belt Policy which is to prevent urban sprawl and maintain the open character of the designated Green Belt. Furthermore, the building is only being applied to be relocated for a temporary period, and in the long term would be removed from the site, thus causing no lasting impact on the wider setting of the area and the openness of the wider Green Belt itself.
21. Given these factors it is considered that the proposed location of the temporary building would not conflict with the aims of the Green Belt policies set out in the NPPF, the Saved Local Plan, Core Strategy and the emerging Dartford Development Policies Plan.

Principle of use of temporary classroom

22. As stated above the temporary classroom is already on the school site, and is currently situated to the rear of the main buildings and in the north-east corner of the school site, close to its boundary with Oakfield Lane; although it does not benefit from planning permission, as referred to in paragraph (6) above. In this location access to the classroom is somewhat limited, due to the position of the adjacent modular building and the fenced hard ball courts which are located to the south and west of the building respectively.
23. In their supporting statement, and as set out in paragraph 6 above, the applicants have two reasons for wishing to relocate the temporary building to the suggested location at the front of the site. Should planning permission be given for the second application for a two storey extension to accommodate a further form of entry at the school, it would be sited over the area where the temporary building is currently located at the rear of the site. This second application has not been determined yet, and is being considered

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alongside the current application for permanent accommodation at Wilmington Academy, both of which will be reported in due course.

24. Initially it was considered that both applications at this site should be determined together, as there would be no need to relocate the temporary building if the permanent extension was not approved. However, the applicants have requested this application be determined separately, as the School need to use the temporary building in association with the bulge intake of 20 pupils in September 2016, and this use is not ideal in its current location. They therefore wish to re-site the building in any event.
25. Concern was raised that by determining this application separately from the main extension, there was an assumption that the two storey extension would get approval. However, it is considered that the two applications can be dealt with individually and any consent for this application would not pre-determine the main extension since that application would still need to be determined on its own merits in due course.

Siting and design impact of relocated classroom

26. The temporary building would be sited to the front of the main school and would therefore be visually prominent within the street scene of Parsons Lane. Given its temporary structure and prominent position it is considered that it would not be appropriate to site the building here for anything other than a temporary period, as it would detract from the setting of the school, and the visual appearance of the wider area of Parsons Lane. This concern was raised by Dartford Borough Council in their consultation response, who also felt the temporary building would be incongruous with the other buildings sited at the front. In their response they suggest an alternative location at the rear would be preferable, to the west of the hard ball courts. The land to the west of the ball courts is also currently used for parking for staff at the school, and it is considered that locating the temporary classroom here would result in the displacement of more than 10 spaces, given the narrow and linear nature of the parking in this area, as shown on the plan included above. It would also result in the building being in much closer proximity to the neighbouring properties to the west of the school, which would bring additional amenity issues for these residents.
27. It is considered that by only allowing the building to be sited where proposed for a temporary period, it can be ensured that the impact on the setting of the school and the wider area can be limited to a short time frame. A temporary period of 2 years is suggested, after which it would need to be removed from its current location and the site returned from to its former use as a parking area. If, however, an application to retain it is subsequently made, the visual impact of having the classroom in this location could then be reassessed. On this basis it is considered that the proposed relocation would be acceptable, in relation to Policies B1 and S6 of the saved Local Plan and DP2 of the Dartford Development Policies Plan.

Displacement of parking spaces

28. The building, in its proposed location at the front of the site, would be sited on an area previously laid out as parking as part of the consent given for the new curved music block. 10 parking spaces would therefore be temporarily lost as a result of this application. Given the concerns raised over traffic problems in the area and the widespread parking issues associated with not only this school, but the other schools in

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the area, it is considered that these 10 spaces would need to be temporarily replaced elsewhere for the application to be considered acceptable. The applicants have submitted an additional plan showing where the 10 spaces, together with the 2 additional spaces required, could be sited to the south of Parsons Lane, which is included above. This area is currently only used informally for parking, and previously storage containers were sited in this area, which have now been removed. There is an existing permission associated with this land (approved by Dartford BC in 2015, reference 14/01707/FUL) for a new sports hall, but this has not been built and therefore the land remains available for a parking use for a temporary period associated with the loss of spaces in front of the school.

29. Given the lack of formal spaces laid out in this area, it is difficult to demonstrate that the spaces now shown for the parking of 12 cars are not currently used on an informal basis. A further plan was therefore requested from the applicants to show where the existing 79 parking spaces for the school are currently located, as referred to in the submitted School Travel Plan, and this plan has now been submitted. Existing parking spaces are dotted around the campus on both sides of Parsons Lane – an existing 10 in the location of the proposed temporary spaces, 9 by Wilmington Manor Lodge, 31 in front of the main school (10 of which would be lost through the siting of the temporary classroom) and 29 along the western edge of the school site, to the rear by the hard ball courts.
30. Given that these 79 spaces are shown elsewhere within the wider school site, it is considered that the provision of the 12 spaces would be considered as 'additional' to that already provided and would therefore be acceptable, provided they are clearly laid out on the ground with pegs or other permanent marking, and that a condition be imposed which requires their retention and use for the period that the temporary building is sited at the front of the school, displacing existing parking spaces. Subject to that it is considered that the siting of the temporary building would not result in any net loss of parking associated with the site, and therefore would not add to the current parking and traffic problems outside the school. In this regard the application would accord with Policy T23 of the saved Local Plan, Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy and Policies DP3 and DP5 of the Dartford Development Policies Plan.

Other Matters

Alternative Site

31. The Area Education Officer was asked to provide a response to the Parish Council's comments about using the former Rowhill School as a satellite for either the Grammar School or the Academy. In response they state that these buildings were last used approximately 5 years ago as a Pupil Referral Unit and before that as Rowhill Special School. There are two main single storey buildings on site, one built in 1973 and one in 2001, with a site size of 1.48 hectares (3.66 acres). They state that there are three reasons why the site would not be appropriate as a satellite. First the existing buildings and building footprint do not lend themselves to secondary school use, having been designed originally to facilitate special school education. They state that they could conceivably be adapted for *primary* aged pupils but that it would be expensive to adapt or rebuild the facilities for *secondary* use. Secondly, two alternative uses for that site had already been considered, which were to sell the site for a capital receipt or retain it for a new primary Free School. Thirdly, to use the school as an annexe would see the

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constant movement of students between the two sites, making it unnecessarily operationally inefficient.

32. Other concerns with using the site as an annexe are the sustainability issues of having two administration bases, the need for unreasonable duplication of facilities such as the canteen, sports facilities and specialist teaching accommodation, and the potential need for students to be transported between the two sites several times a day. In summary they state that the site size of 1.48 hectares (3.66 acres), in conjunction with the above comments means that the site would not lend itself to secondary education as an annexe, and would not be favoured by either the Academy or the Grammar School. Under the circumstances, I accept that the Rowhill site does not offer a workable or deliverable alternative to the current proposal.

Hours of Construction

33. Given the concerns over traffic and parking problems at school drop off and collection times, it is considered appropriate that should permission be given, any construction traffic or deliveries associated with the relocation of the temporary building and the laying out of the parking spaces should be restricted to hours outside of peak school times, and this can be covered by a suitably worded condition.

Conclusion

34. This application seeks approval for the relocation of an existing temporary classroom from the rear of the main school building to the front and the temporary displacement of 10 parking spaces to the southern side of Parsons Lane. The relocation would allow the School to better utilise the temporary classroom to accommodate the bulge intake of 20 pupils from September 2016. It would also regularise the current position of it not benefiting from planning permission in its existing location.
35. In my view the key determining factors for this proposal are the planning policy aspects in relation to the Green Belt, together with the wider visual impact of siting the temporary classroom in this location and the resulting temporary displacement of parking spaces. In addition weight should also be given to the NPPF's clear policy support for ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places be available to meet the needs of existing and new communities, and the need to create, expand or alter schools. Subject to any permission being given for a temporary period only and subject to conditions to secure the provision of replacement parking facilities, I consider that the development would not give rise to any demonstrable harm as explained in the discussion above, and would meet the aims of the NPPF in relation to the guidance for school provision.

Recommendation

36. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
- The temporary building hereby permitted shall be removed from the site on or before 1st September 2018 and the existing parking spaces reinstated;
 - The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;

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- The 10 replacement and 2 additional parking spaces to the south of Parsons Lane shall be laid out with pegs or other permanent marking prior to the occupation of the relocated temporary classroom, in accordance with drawing number 11231 T-08 Rev P2, and shall be retained for the period of its siting;
- Construction traffic and deliveries to the site shall be restricted to hours outside of peak school times – prior to 8am and after 9am, and prior to 3pm and after 4pm.

Case Officer: Helen Edwards

Tel. no: 03000 413366

Background Documents: see section heading

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Representation from Wilmington Safer Streets

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Wilmington Safer Streets - Resident Consultation

Before we began this document we wanted to identify the main aims of Dartford Borough Council. Please see the below text taken from Dartford Borough Council's latest Core Strategy. **We felt the last paragraph was significant to our concerns.**

"This Core Strategy is a significant document for everyone who lives and works in the Borough. Whilst no one could ever claim that it makes light reading what it contains and what it may mean for the future of our community is hugely important. It sets out the approach that a number of partners - particularly those involved in community planning and development control - will take to the challenges ahead. It looks at this community's future needs in areas like housing, transport, leisure, growth and jobs. It seeks to provide a 'routemap' to ensure that the future Dartford we get is the future Dartford we want.

The strategy is not a fixed blueprint. Over time it will flex, change and adapt to different circumstances but the core principles will be the ones that drive our decision-making and policies for the years ahead.

Please don't think that this strategy is all about development and building things. It's not.

Some of its most important proposals relate to things we won't permit - like overdevelopment, excessive burdens on our transport network, poor design and badly thought-out architecture. It rightly places huge importance on public spaces, the dignity of housing that we demand and the need to provide social infrastructure - things like village halls, playgrounds, parks, open spaces and even cemeteries. It also encapsulates my own personal view that a place like Dartford - a rich mix of rural villages and urban centres - should only grow and change at a rate that's supported by local people.

Dartford is your town and its growth, future and character are in your hands."

Jeremy Kite
Leader of Dartford Council

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**Areas of concern that need addressing in the
Transport Consultation**

**Proposed Expansion of
The Academy and Wilmington Grammar School for Girls**

CONGESTION

Main Causes of Congestion :

- Common Lane is not wide enough in places for buses, coaches and other large vehicles to pass each other, resulting in vehicles dangerously mounting the pavement whilst children and families are walking along it. **See photos L, M and N.**
- Common Lane is not wide enough to allow filter traffic to turn right in to the school entrance at the bottom of the Village Common.
- Insufficient waiting and parking zones on site at schools for parents who wish to collect or drop off their children which results in parents parking where ever possible, no matter if it blocks access routes and causes congestion to other road users. **See photo P.**
- Schools currently restrict parents from entering the Academy to collect their children. At 3pm each day two school wardens are placed at the main entrance to the Academy and their job is to stop parents from parking on site, which leads parents to parking anywhere possible, no matter if it blocks access routes and causes congestion to other road users. **See photo P.**
- Buses and coaches are restricted on their route when trying to turn from Common Lane in to Parsons Lane due to the amount of cars parked across the entrance of Parsons Lane.
- Buses currently collect school children from 'unofficial bus stops' created by the school children. One example of this is a bus that currently collects groups of girls who congregate at the corner of Parsons Lane and Common Lane. This again leads to immense congestion and is incredibly unsafe for the children. Please note to widen these pavements, as suggested, would simply encourage the children to use this area as an unofficial bus stop even more. **The area of the unofficial bus stop is shown in photos A and B.**

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- Other roads in the area around the schools are also affected greatly by the traffic and congestion issues. We asked our members to share details of problems in other local roads and got a lot of information back about some key "hot spots":
 - **Edwin Road** (marked with a blue star on the map) is extremely hard to navigate exit safely during school run times due to parents parking on both sides of the road on the section nearest to Common Lane, this means not even a large car is able to pass through, let alone an emergency vehicle. In addition, as you exit Edwin Road onto Common Lane, there's rarely a weekday afternoon when people aren't parked on the yellow lines on Common Lane, near the corners of Edwin Road. You cannot see anything coming up or down Common Lane until you have pulled out into the path of any oncoming traffic, making it almost impossible to exit Edwin road safely.
 - **Tredegar Road** (marked with a red star on the map) is also affected. Parts of Tredegar Road are very narrow and traffic has increased along here since the last expansion of the Academy so we envisage this will continue to become more of a problem. The road is used as a cut through and speed, especially along the narrow sections is a real problem. Cars and vans regularly mount the pavement to pass cars coming the other way. Tredegar Road is also used as a cut through for students walking to the bus stop at home time, due to the narrow pavements they spill onto the road and into the paths of parents rushing to pick up their own children, resulting in hooting and swearing.
 - **Wilmington Court Road** (marked with an orange star on the map) is used as a cut through and speed along here is a concern among residents.
 - **Broad Lane** (marked with a green star on the map) is also affected, parents and students park there, adding to congestion and often parents arriving for pick-up and drop-off times park across driveways. Students parking here all day prevent home owners parking outside their own homes, a problem which will only get worse with increased students in the area.

COMMUNICATION

- Schools need to increase the flow of information and communication between themselves with regards to the congestion and parking issues created by the parents, coaches, buses and 6th former parking.
- Schools need to communicate more with local residents on local issues created as a direct result of the schools.
- Schools need to give advance warning to local residents when traffic is expected to be increased out of normal school hours. E.g. local residents are not given prior warning when the schools have open evenings, which grinds the whole village to a halt due to the parking of the prospective parents for all three schools along Common Lane and surrounding areas between and 6 and 8pm.

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SAFETY

Currently Common Lane is very unsafe for its users and Kent County Council need to address the following issues:

- Coaches and buses mounting pavements to pass each other, which is dangerous to the school children and other pedestrians. There have been several instances of buses hitting children in accidents that have miraculously not resulted in serious injuries. One Academy pupil was recently hit by a bus as she walked along the pavement on Common Lane. **See photos L, M and N.**
- Speeding trucks that use Common Lane as a cut through to the various construction industry businesses in the area, including the aggregate and concrete supplier on High Road Wilmington, and some of the businesses located in the industrial park off Powder Mill Lane to the East of the village. These vehicles are enormous and are thundering past very young children, just inches away, at speeds inappropriate for the road.
- Lack of safe and secure crossings for the school children and pedestrians.
- Lack of signage about safe parking, and lack of school crossing signs (the ones that exist are largely obscured by foliage, **see photo J**).
- Lack of safe places to stop and wait whilst collecting children from school.

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ENVIRONMENT / PUBLIC HEALTH

Observations and Existing Concerns:

- Concerns over the length of the expansion projects and lack of parking on site for contractors, which will overflow on the already strained parking we have in the village.
- Concerns over an increase in nuisance behaviour by students to and from the schools, with the increase in numbers.
- A high percentage of children attending these schools are not local and therefore will be driven to and from school which means a further increase in car pollution/carbon emissions in our local area.
- Smoking and associated litter by school children (see photo V). Litter is currently a big issue, even without the expansion, and needs to be addressed. The woodland from Tredegar Road is used as a walkway to and from the bus stops and schools by pupils and an easy place to drop their litter en route, particularly as there is only one (very unstable) bin in this area (see photos D and F). The level of local litter has reached the point where the Parish Council have organised a volunteer clean up session in March.
- Rude and aggressive behaviour of parents collecting their children when challenged for their unsafe parking by pedestrians or residents, with little support given by the schools.
- Losing the 'village feel' by allowing this expansion, any changes to improve safety need to be made sympathetically in order to keep the village feel of Wilmington and prevent it turning into a "campus" for local schools.
- The last expansion of the schools was completed in July 2014, can we have an assurance there will be no more expansion in future?
- Lack of support and acknowledgement by Dartford Borough Council and Kent County Council regarding local resident parking issues in the past and present, let alone with the proposed new expansion. Currently any parking restrictions are not enforced at all, the parking wardens have only attended once since September 2015 despite numerous complaints from residents. Parking restrictions simply do not work without enforcement.
- Poor parking across pavements which leave pedestrians with young children and buggies no option but to walk into the road – see photos Q and R. Poor parking has led to the deterioration of the grass on our village Common, as pedestrians are forced to walk on the edge of the Common in order to pass the cars blocking the pavements – see photos S, T and U and V.
- Gangs of children waiting on the edge of the village Common, again ruining the grass.

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- Schools need to accept responsibility and act towards a solution when residents make them aware of issues. Complaint emails have been ignored in some cases. Extract taken from "Home to school travel and transport guidance- Department for Education - Statutory guidance for local authorities":

"July 2014 - Poor behaviour on school buses/other modes of transport

47. The department expects each school to promote appropriate standards of behavior by pupils on their journey to and from school through rewarding positive behaviour and using sanctions to address poor behavior. The EIA 2006 empowers head-teachers to take action to address unacceptable behaviour even when this takes place outside the school premises and when pupils are not under the legal control of the school, but when it is reasonable to do so. In the department's view, this would include behavior on school buses, or otherwise on the route to and from school, whether or not the pupils are in school uniform."

SPECIFIC PARKING ISSUES THAT NEED ADDRESSING AND HAVE BEEN RAISED ALREADY WITH KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

- Persistent stopping and parking on the triangle piece of pavement outside Wilmington Day Nursery. See photo O.
- Persistent parking across the public footpath entrance that leads to Tredegar Road. See photo D.
- Parking at the entrance of Parsons Lane, increasing congestion and making the area unsafe. See photos B and C, which show the areas where parking is a problem.
- Persistent unsafe parking and stopping over local residents private access roads - which violates Highway Code 243:
DO NOT stop or park:
I.anywhere you would prevent access for Emergency Services
II.in front of an entrance to a property

RESPONSIBILITY

- Schools need to acknowledge responsibility of their pupils and the associated issues that we incur as residents by their presence. Litter, parking, congestion etc. Schools frequently ignore emails from residents and do not address the issues we have raised previously.
- Schools need to educate their 6th form students on safe parking, these students have often only just passed their test and frequently park in unsafe places which directly affects pedestrian access in the village. This needs to be addressed and advice given to

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the students on where to park when attending their school. This needs to be done each year.

- Schools need to educate the parents of the pupils on where is safe and appropriate to park, collect or wait for their children.
- Schools need to increase available parking on site for parents at collection and drop off times. Currently two stewards from the Academy do not allow parents on site for the afternoon collection. This is unfair on local residents and needs to be addressed as it increases the chance that those vehicles will sit and wait in unsafe and nuisance places.

POLICE

- After complaints from local residents regarding the numerous issues we face, the local police suggested a police presence for 1 hour each week on the village Common to assist with issues. Currently a police van with two PSCOs park around the village Common from 10am-11am every Tuesday, perhaps one of the quietest times of the week. When questioned why they were not able to attend at the time of the reported issues (between 8 and 9am or 3 and 4pm) we were told that resources wouldn't allow that.
- This leads us to think that the police are not properly engaging with the schools or the local residents on these issues as the police are even present on the Common during schools holidays, which seems a waste of local resources when clearly there are no issues at these times as the schools are closed.

WILMINGTON SAFER STREETS' SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS TO THE ABOVE ISSUES

- We would ask that instead of filling the village with fixed bollards, which we feel will ruin the look and feel of our pretty village, Kent County Council should place raised flower beds outside of Wilmington Day Nursery where the parents constantly park on the triangle piece of pavement alongside the zig-zig lines on the main road. **See photo O.**
- An additional pelican crossing to be added by the Primary School, this would provide safe crossing and also alleviate the congestion at the other crossing further along Common Lane. This would also mean that traffic further up the hill would not be held up as frequently as it currently is. **See point 13 on the map.**
- Where parking is currently permitted on the Common - place marked parking bays for safe kerb parking - 50% on the curb and 50% on the road. This will ensure enough room is left for pedestrians to walk safely along the pavement. It will also encourage safer parking. **See photos X and Y for an example of this in another borough.**

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- Place double yellow lines on any part of the pavement where dedicated kerb parking bays will not work, there is one particular piece of pavement used as a parking space and pedestrians are left with no alternative but to walk in the road - see photos Q and R.
- Ensure consistent and effective enforcement of parking restrictions. At present yellow line restrictions are not enforced at all and any future additional restrictions will need proper policing/enforcement. Dartford Borough Council needs to take responsibility for this.
- Upgrade and move the barrier which is placed at the start of the public footpath leading to Tredegar Road. See photos D and F. The barrier currently sits back from the road and this allows cars to park and sit and wait in front of it, we would suggest moving this barrier nearer to the road. By reducing the amount of space at the mouth of the footpath, you will stop cars being able to park in this very dangerous and congested spot.
- Re-route the coaches and buses to make their journey as efficient as possible and reduce congestion.
- Reduce the speed of traffic by adding speed calming solutions as the current speed bumps are not working and are poorly maintained. See photos E and F. We think a 20mph speed restriction is needed along Common Lane.
- Place double yellow lines all the way up Common Lane from the private road to Parsons Lane, as this currently has no restrictions and unless policed, parents will start to park here going forward and have done so in the past when attending open evenings.
- Place white deterrent lines across the private access road entrance on Common Lane to signify the access route to properties. See photo W for an example.
- Create a drop-off and pick-up site for parents away from the village on Oakfield lane, where there is no residential housing and the road is wider.
- Create a coach park/drop-off on Dartford Heath or on site at the Girls Grammar School.
- Current bus stops need reviewing and the 'unofficial bus stops' should not be permitted. Children should be walking to safe official bus stops away from Common Lane, not congregating in large groups on narrow pavements.
- Increase the amount of litter bins on the Common and in the woodland.
- Carry out a structural check on the old wall that runs up the hill on common Lane on the border of WGSG land. See photos G and H.

Having attended the evening consultation at the Academy in February we were impressed with some of the solutions proposed, although any changes absolutely have to be made in keeping with the village feel of Wilmington. Any additional pathways or walkways would have to be designed appropriately to avoid any future issues – such as creating places where anti-social behaviour and littering would be likely. Any street “furniture” would need to be in keeping with the village and where possible historical features, such as the old walls along Common Lane, should be retained.

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Map and photos of key locations on Common Lane, Wilmington



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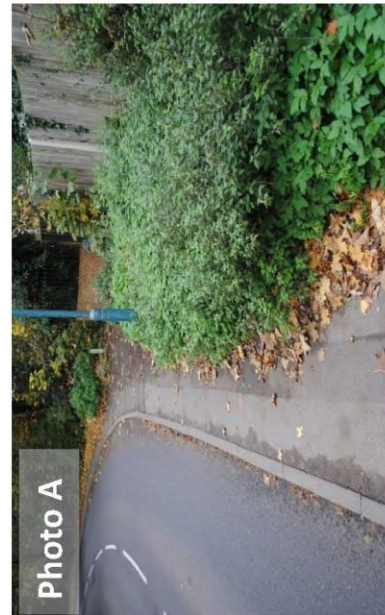


Photo A

Point 5 on map
On this narrow section of pavement just off Parson's Lane an "unofficial" bus stop operates for pupils for the Girls Grammar school. Photo B shows the view towards the corner of Parsons Lane where parents park and block buses causing traffic to come to a standstill.

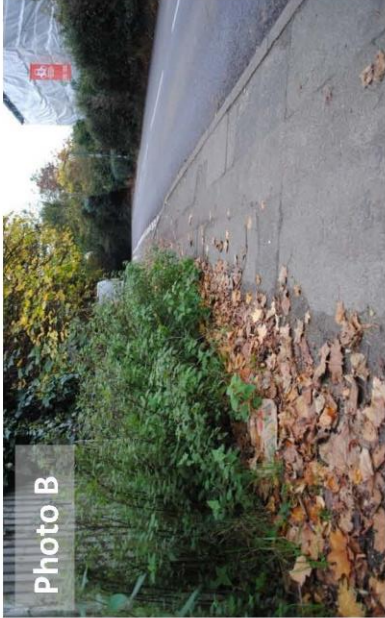


Photo B



Photo C

Point 6-7 on map
Looking from Parson's Lane towards the blind corner. From this point onwards until the Common the road is not wide enough for 2 buses, or other large vehicles, to pass.



Photo D

Point 7 on map
Just after the blind corner is the access to the alleyway leading through the woods to Tredegar Road. That bin is frequently tipped over by kids/wind/or people moving it to park across the alleyway entrance. Consequently litter is strewn across the road and woods. Parents frequently use this to park, churning up the mud and making it slippery and dangerous as well as blocking the entrance to the footpath.

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Photo F



Photo E

Point 7 on map

The speed bumps are poorly maintained and ineffective to large vehicles, particularly the large plant vehicles travelling through the village.

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Point 7-8 on map

The pavement is only on one side and is extremely narrow. Buses mount the pavements here, but even when they don't they are travelling at 30mph or more within inches of small children, families and secondary pupils. Heavy construction vehicles also travel along this section at speed.



Point 8 on map

You can see here how narrow the pavement is and how narrow the road is.



Point 9 on map

Signage is almost entirely obscured by overgrown foliage. The double yellow lines stop here and parents do, inexplicably, park on this section of road causing massive congestion in the area.

In Photo H you can see how close buses come to pedestrians, in this instance the bus had pulled slightly over the centre of the road to avoid hitting the pedestrians.



Photo K

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Photo M

Point 8 on the map
 These photos are just 4 of many taken by parents and residents. This is a daily occurrence during term times. In every one of these photos you can see children walking along pavements as buses brush past them.



Photo L



Photo N

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Point 12 on the map
Parents park on both sides of the road on yellow lines causing chaos.



Point 10 on the map
Parents park on the pavement to avoid the zig-zags, this obscures the view for children crossing and is illegal and dangerous.

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Point 10 on the map
.Sixth formers and parents frequently park on this section of pavement leaving no space at all for pedestrians and forcing them to walk into the road.

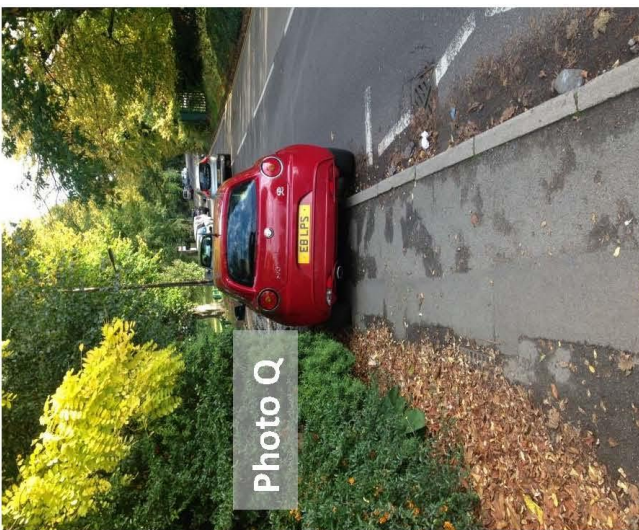


Photo Q



Photo R

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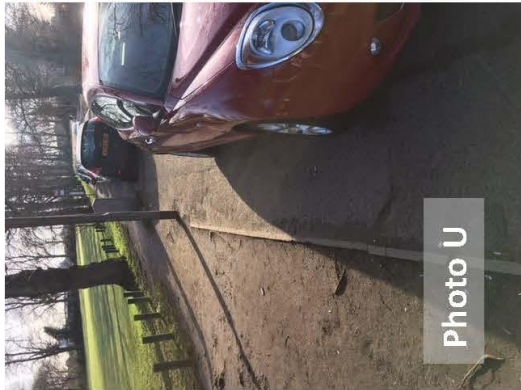


Photo U

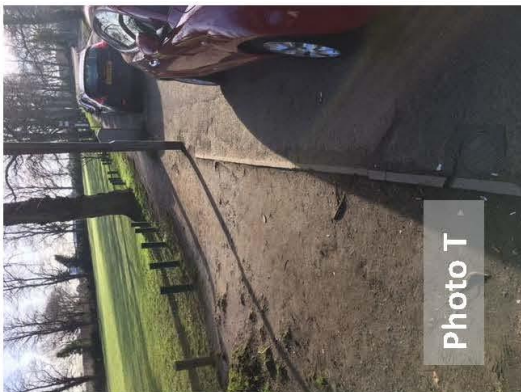


Photo T

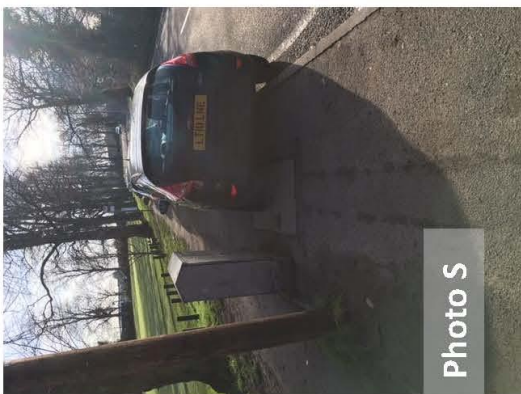


Photo S



Photo W

Point 11 on the map
These photos show the deterioration of the Common due to pedestrians having to walk along the edge as the pavement is blocked by cars.



Photo V

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An example of allocated kerb parking bays.