

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

**Infill classroom extension to provide an intervention space
at Swalecliffe Junior School, Whitstable – CA/16/1822
(KCC/CA/0191/2016)**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 19th October 2016.

Application by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure for an infill classroom extension to provide an intervention space at Swalecliffe Junior School, Bridgefield Road, Whitstable, Kent – CA/16/1822 (KCC/CA/0191/2016)

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr Michael Harrison

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

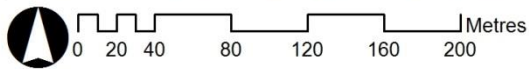
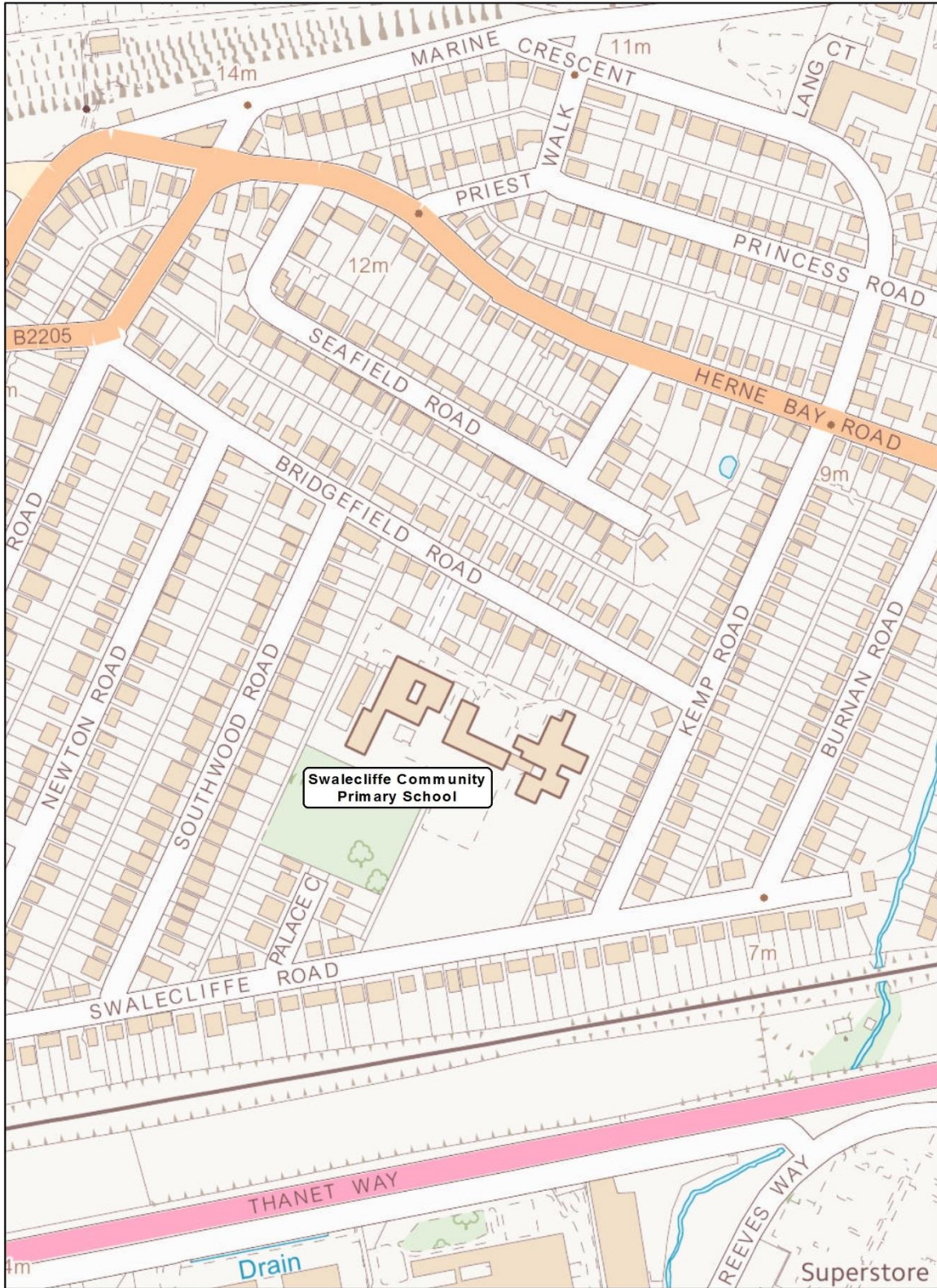
1. Swalecliffe Junior School is situated within the residential area of Swalecliffe in Whitstable, to the east of Whitstable town centre. The application site is bounded by Southwood Road to the west, Bridgefield Road to the north, Kemp Road to the east and Swalecliffe Road to the south. Residential properties surround the site to the north, south, east and west.
2. There are three points of access to the school via Bridgefield Road, two of which serve as vehicular access for staff and deliveries to the infant school and the junior school respectively, with the third designated as a pedestrian only access. There is also rear site access off Swalecliffe Road to the south of the school site. There are no designated parking facilities for parents or visitors on the school site and therefore parents and visitors rely on street parking in the surrounding residential area. There is one disabled space allocated for school use and an additional disabled space allocated within the parking for the Surestart Children's Centre which also lies within the school site. The school playing field is located to the south of the site.

Background

3. Swalecliffe Community Primary School is a 3FE school, and caters for children from age 4-11. A bulge year was taken last year for the year 2 (now year 3) group. The school is divided into 21 classes, 9 classes in the infant department and 12 in the junior department. The school day runs from 08:45 am – 15:05 pm in the junior department and 09:00 am – 15:00 pm in the infant department. The school has identified a need for additional classroom space to allow an intervention group currently held in various other spaces within the school to continue in to the next academic year. The current school roll is 649 pupils and 89 teaching staff, both full time and part time. The proposed infill extension would not result in any additional intake of staff or pupils.

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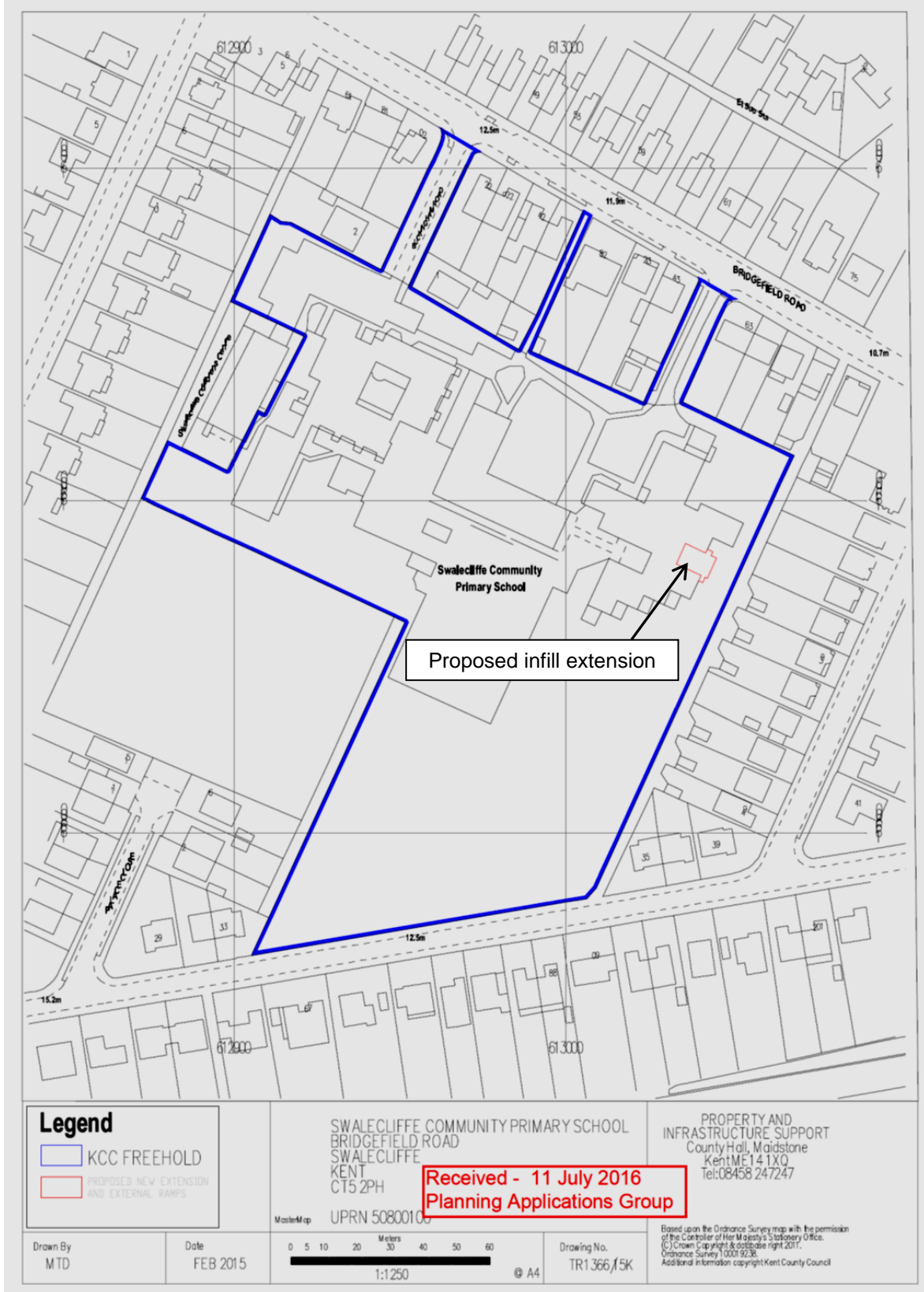
General Location Plan



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Ordnance Survey 100019238

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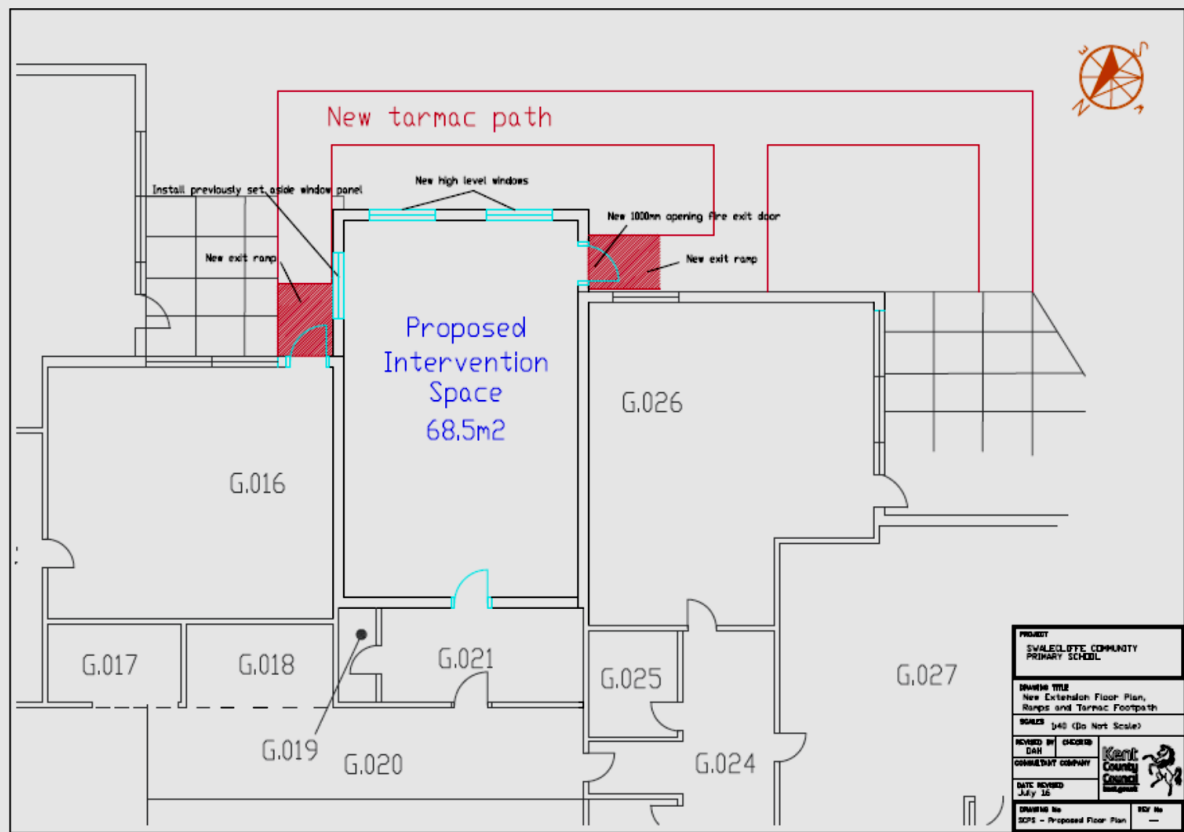
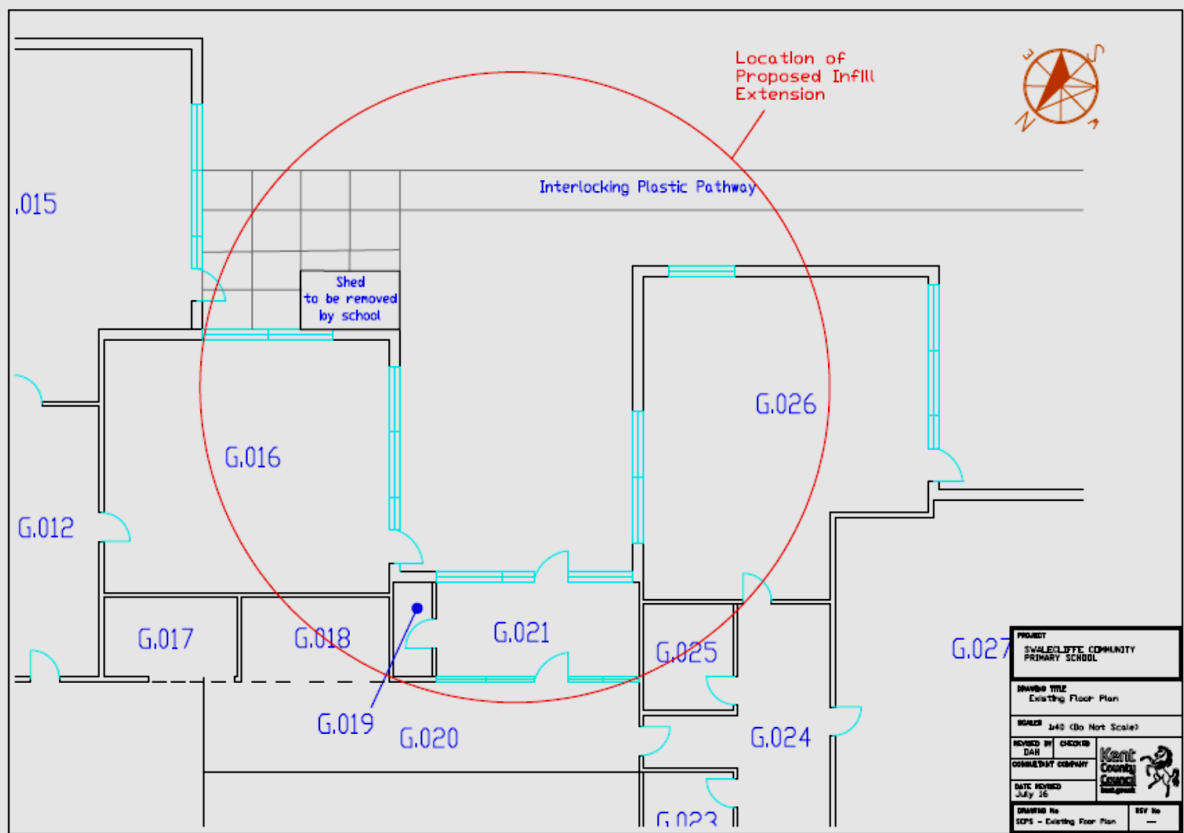
Site Location Plan



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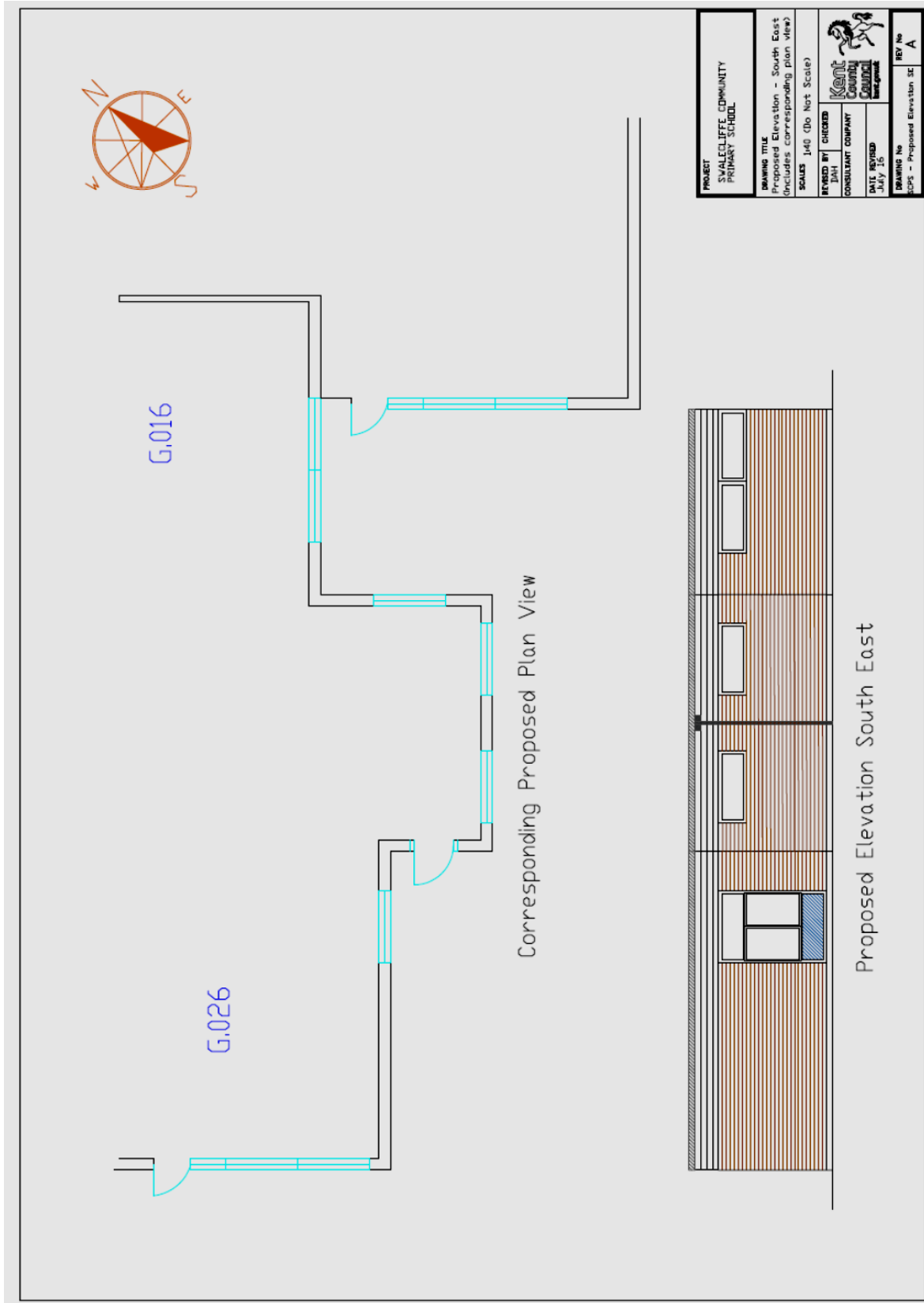
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Existing and Proposed Floor Plan



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Proposed Elevations



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4. The school serves the local community of Swalecliffe, Chestfield, Tankerton and the wider area of Whitstable. In recent years there has been fairly extensive building within the local area. In addition there has been growth in the number of looked after children in the area. A Surestart Children's Centre and Nursery opened on the school site in 2009.
5. The junior block where the infill extension is proposed was constructed circa 1970 and is of steel frame construction with a flat felt roof and cedar clad external walls with uPVC double glazing.

Recent Site History

6. CA/08/78 Single storey modular building for use as a community Children's Centre, including the installation of a canopy, external storage units, fencing, hard surfacing, ramped pathway and extension of existing staff parking.
Granted planning permission.
- CA/07/786 Replacement of glazed curtain walling to the junior block.
Granted planning permission.
- CA/06/244 Replacement section of front boundary fence with a 2.4 metre maximum height close boarded panel, concrete post and gravel board fence.
Granted planning permission.
- CA/06/171 Provision of an equipment store externally to the Infant School.
Granted planning permission.
- CA/05/1683 Replacement of steel frame windows with white uPVC double glazed units.
Granted planning permission.
- CA/05/534 Provision of an external canopy to the infant school.
Granted planning permission.
- CA/04/1914 Replacement of glazed steel frame curtain walling with aluminium curtain walling with glazed uPVC double glazed units.
Granted planning permission.
- CA/03/500 Replacement of crittall windows in timber sub frames including integral asbestos panels with uPVC double glazed units to the classroom known as 5W.
Granted planning permission.

Proposal

7. The current application is for a single storey infill extension to the south east of the junior block utilising an underused courtyard area. The purpose of the infill extension is to provide the school with an additional classroom to be used as an intervention space.
8. During the past academic year the school has held an intervention group in a variety of spaces within the school including an outdoor science classroom, the junior library and

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the infant library. However these spaces are becoming less available as they are needed for their originally intended purpose. In order for the intervention group to carry on in to next year, the School are therefore proposing this infill classroom to provide the necessary space.

9. The proposed extension would be approximately 6.50m (21.32ft) x 10.53m (34.55ft) providing a total area of 68.5m² (736.61sqft). The height of the building would be approximately 3.65m (11.97ft) (to match the existing building). The proposed extension would meet all current regulations and standards to facilitate the educational requirements of the pupils who are to use it.
10. The proposed extension would be timber framed construction and be of a similar appearance to the adjacent classrooms, with a flat felt roof (flush with adjacent), uPVC fascia's, cedar cladding and uPVC windows all to match the existing building as closely as possible. The proposed new extension would be fully accessible with a level threshold.
11. A new fire escape door would be provided on the south facing side of the extension. The fire escape door serving the adjacent classroom is to be relocated to accommodate the infill extension. The fire exit door to the new intervention classroom and relocated fire exit door to the adjacent classroom would both be served by exit ramps and a new tarmac footpath to provide a fully accessible fire exit from the building.
12. It is proposed to use the access off Swalecliffe Road as the contractor's main point of access including deliveries. All site compounds would be within the boundary of the site. A banksman is proposed to be employed by the contractor to control the flow of site traffic to and from the site. Times of such access would be stipulated in order to avoid unnecessary congestion during peak school times. Parking within the site would remain unchanged and unaffected by the proposed new extension. The operating hours of the school would also remain unchanged.

Planning Policy

13. The Government Guidance and Development Plan Policies most relevant to the consideration of this application are summarised below:
 - (i) The **National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)** and the **National Planning Policy Guidance (March 2014)** set out the Government's planning policy and 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 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

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particular relevance:

- Achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- The promotion of healthy communities; and
- 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 (August 2011)** sets out the Government’s commitment to support the development of State-funded schools, and their delivery through the planning system.

(iii) **Canterbury District Local Plan First Review Adopted 2006:**

Policy BE1 The City Council will expect proposals of high quality design which respond to the objectives of sustainable development.

Policy BE3 Design statements and/or Development Briefs shall be submitted with planning applications setting out the principles used in the scheme to relate the development with and to its context. This will apply to all planning applications, where the development is visually significant or is significant to its neighbours.

Policy C9 The City Council will apply Kent County Council’s adopted Vehicle Parking Standards to development proposals.

Policy C11 Proposals for new building or uses for local communities to provide social infrastructure will be encouraged and granted planning permission on the basis that any new building is appropriately designed and located, and highway safety would not be prejudiced.

Policy NE5 Development should be designed to retain trees, hedgerows, woodland or other landscape features that make an important contribution to the amenity of the site and the surrounding area and which are important to wild flora and fauna. The City Council will refuse planning permission for proposals that would threaten the future retention of trees, hedgerows, woodland or other landscape features of importance to the site’s character, an area’s amenity or the movement of wildlife.

(iv) **Canterbury District Local Plan Publication Draft 2014:**

Policy SP1 States that when considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF.

Policy EMP9 Sets out that the City Council will work with the Education Authority and other school providers to ensure that provision is made for

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educational needs arising from new development and that appropriate mechanisms are secured through legal agreements to deliver this provision.

Policy LB10 States that development should be designed to retain trees, hedgerow and woodland that make an important contribution to the amenity of the site and the surrounding area and which are important to wild flora and fauna.

Consultations

14. **Canterbury City Council** raises no objection.

KCC Highways and Transportation Officer raises no objection.

Local Member

15. The local County Members Mr Harrison and Mr Dance were notified of the application on 27 July 2016.

Publicity

16. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice, and the notification of 11 neighbouring properties.

Representations

17. In response to the publicity, 3 letters of representation have been received objecting to the proposal. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:

- Adverse impact on residential amenity.
- The proposed extension and tarmac footpath would be closer to residential boundaries resulting in additional noise and extra footfall to gardens adjacent to the school.
- Concern over the loss of residential amenity with 2 high level windows on the proposed extension overlooking gardens.
- Residential amenity affected by out of hours activities at the school and foul language and damage caused to properties by children at the school.
- Building works on the site have commenced prior to the determination of the planning application.
- Concern regarding the removal of a large tree on the proposed development site.
- The need for a new classroom to be used as an intervention space called in to question as an empty classroom is currently being used for the same purpose.
- Concern that the school would take additional pupils with the availability of the new classroom.
- Additional pupils at the school would exacerbate traffic and parking issues in the surrounding residential area. A sensible traffic plan is required for the school to alleviate issues of traffic and congestion.
- Concerned if the beech boundary hedge is not maintained there would be no screening between the school and residential gardens.
- Concern over the capacity of the public drainage and water systems, particularly

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- removal of surface water exacerbated by the recent installation of an astro turf area.
- Would like the applicant to consider alternative sites that would be more sensitive to residents.

Discussion

18. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 13 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, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning Policy Statement for Schools Development and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
19. This application is being reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee following the receipt of objections from 3 local residents. In my opinion the main issues to consider are the need, siting and design of the extension, any impact on residential amenity, traffic and transportation impacts, and other matters such as construction management and the loss of trees.

Need

20. The applicant has identified a need to provide a dedicated classroom space to enable an intervention group to continue. It is not proposed in order to accommodate an additional class of pupils at school. However as a result of the school roll increasing last year spaces previously used are now becoming less available for this purpose due to demand for their intended purpose as referred to in paragraph (8) above. I therefore accept that there is a need for the proposed accommodation to enable the school to deliver the interventions the children need.

Siting and Design

21. The proposed infill extension would be sited on the south east side of the junior block and has been designed to match that of the existing building, with timber cladding and a flat felt roof. It would be of the same height as the existing building (approximately 3.65m/11.97ft), and the style and design of the doors and windows would also be in keeping with the existing building. The extension would project beyond the existing opening of the courtyard by between 2.3 metres (7.54ft) and 4.1 metres (13.54ft) and would be within about 7 metres (22.96ft) of the school boundary line with neighbouring properties. I note that the northern part of the existing building line on this side of the school projects to about 5 metres (16.4ft) from the boundary and therefore consider that the siting and design in that respect is acceptable.
22. A representation received has queried whether the applicant has considered any alternative sites that would be more sensitive to residents. However it is considered that the current site utilises an underused courtyard area, infilling a space within the junior block of the school site which would not compromise playing field, hard or soft play space or school building that is currently occupied or in regular use.
23. It is therefore considered that in terms of siting and design the extension is acceptable and would comply with Policy BE1 and C11 of the Local Plan.

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Amenity Issues

24. As indicated above the proposed extension would sit behind the furthest extent of the existing established building line and away from the boundary with the residential properties in Kemp Road. There would be a distance of about 7 metres (22.96ft) between the facing elevation of the new extension and the boundary line of the school site. In addition the main façades of the adjoining properties are some 26 metres (85.3ft) from this boundary line. There is also a rear access to these properties between the school boundary and garden boundaries of these properties. Furthermore there is a wide beech hedge about 3 metres high (9.8ft) on the school boundary, which in my view provides a substantial screen between the school and adjoining residential properties.
25. Objections to the application have been received on the grounds of loss of amenity as a result of this extension. In terms of loss of privacy the two windows in the elevation facing the rear gardens of the properties in Kemp Road are at high level, which would restrict views out of (and into) the classroom. This combined with the existing hedge screening and separation distances of about 33 metres (108.26ft), which is in excess of the widely recognised minimum separation distance of 21 metres (68.89ft) for house to house windows of habitable rooms, would ensure adequate privacy. Whilst the hedge would provide less of a screen in the winter months, it is considered that the minor infill would be viewed against, and as part of, the existing established elevation of the school, and its impact would be considered minimal.
26. The use of the new path could possibly result in a slight increase in noise as children walk along it (although it is intended to serve the fire exits of the new classroom and adjacent classroom), but it would be a minimal increase in relation to the existing school and is unlikely to be of such a scale that any overriding harm to the amenity of the occupiers of adjoining properties could be demonstrated.

Travel and Transport

27. The proposed extension is not required to accommodate any *additional* children at the school, and the applicants have confirmed that there will be no increase in the school roll or staff numbers. As a result there would be no additional impact on the existing parking and traffic situation associated with the School as a result of this proposal, and the Highways and Transportation Officer has confirmed that they have no objection to the application.
28. The objections received demonstrate that there is an existing problem with the amount of school traffic in the surrounding area at drop off and pick up times, and the School also acknowledge this in their School Travel Plan. However, as this proposal does not increase the staff or pupil numbers there would be no reason to refuse the scheme on highway grounds.

Other Matters

Construction matters

29. Given that there are neighbouring residential properties, should planning permission be granted it would, in my view, be appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of construction to protect residential amenity. I would suggest that works should be undertaken only between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between

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the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and bank holidays. It is also good practice on school sites for contractors to be required under the terms of their contract to manage construction traffic/deliveries to minimise conflict with traffic and pedestrians at the beginning and end of the school day.

30. Various other construction and refurbishment works have taken place on the school site during the time the application was submitted including the replacement of an internal glazed wall with a solid partition, the replacement of floor tiles in the hall adjacent to the classroom, the replacement of a fire exit door that does not meet current regulations and external works being carried out to repair broken flagstone and the clearing of overgrown vegetation on the courtyard space of the proposed extension.
31. Although these works might be perceived as prejudicing the outcome of the infill extension I remain satisfied that none of the works which have taken place in the hall and classrooms adjacent to the proposed extension and on the site of the extension itself require planning consent in relation to this application.

Loss of trees

32. Two of the letters of objection received drew attention to the fact that a tree had been removed from the proposed site of the infill extension prior to planning permission being obtained. They suggest that the tree removal should have been considered in conjunction with the application for the extension and that the removal of the tree was done so in order to remove an obstacle in the planning process. It should be noted, however, that the removal of the tree did not require planning permission itself, and the tree was not covered by a Tree Protection Order. The School have stated that they intended to remove it irrespective of whether planning permission was obtained for the construction of the infill extension, as it was growing within 1 metre of the adjacent classroom wall.
33. Whilst there is a policy in both the Canterbury District Local Plan 2006 and the Canterbury District Local Plan 2014 (Draft) which states that development should be designed to retain trees that make an important contribution to the amenity of a site and its surrounding area, and ideally it would have been better to consider the tree as part of the application process, the tree has now been removed and cannot be reinstated. However, a condition could be imposed which requires the School to plant a replacement tree in a more appropriate location, in order to address the loss of the original tree.

Conclusion

34. In my view, the development would not give rise to any significant material harm and is in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies, as well as the National Planning Policy Framework. In my view there are no material planning considerations that indicate that the conclusion should be made otherwise. I therefore recommend that planning permission be granted subject to appropriate conditions.

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Recommendation

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

- The standard 5 year time limit;
- The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- Hours of working during construction and demolition to be restricted between 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operation on Sundays and bank holidays;
- Construction traffic/deliveries to minimise conflict with traffic and pedestrians at the beginning and end of the school day.
- The provision of a replacement tree within the first available planting season following the granting of permission.

Case Officer: Francis Carpenter

Tel. no: 03000 410842

Background Documents: see section heading
