

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College, Swanstree Avenue, Sittingbourne-SW/16/504626 (KCC/SW/0095/2016)

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

Application by Kent County Council for new build extensions to form additional classrooms with new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop off and hard and soft landscaping improvements throughout site – Sittingbourne Community College, Swanstree Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 4NL. (Ref: KCC/SW/0095/2016 and SW/16/504626)

Recommendation: The application be referred to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and subject to his decision planning permission to be granted, subject to conditions.

Local Members: Mr Burgess & Mr Truelove

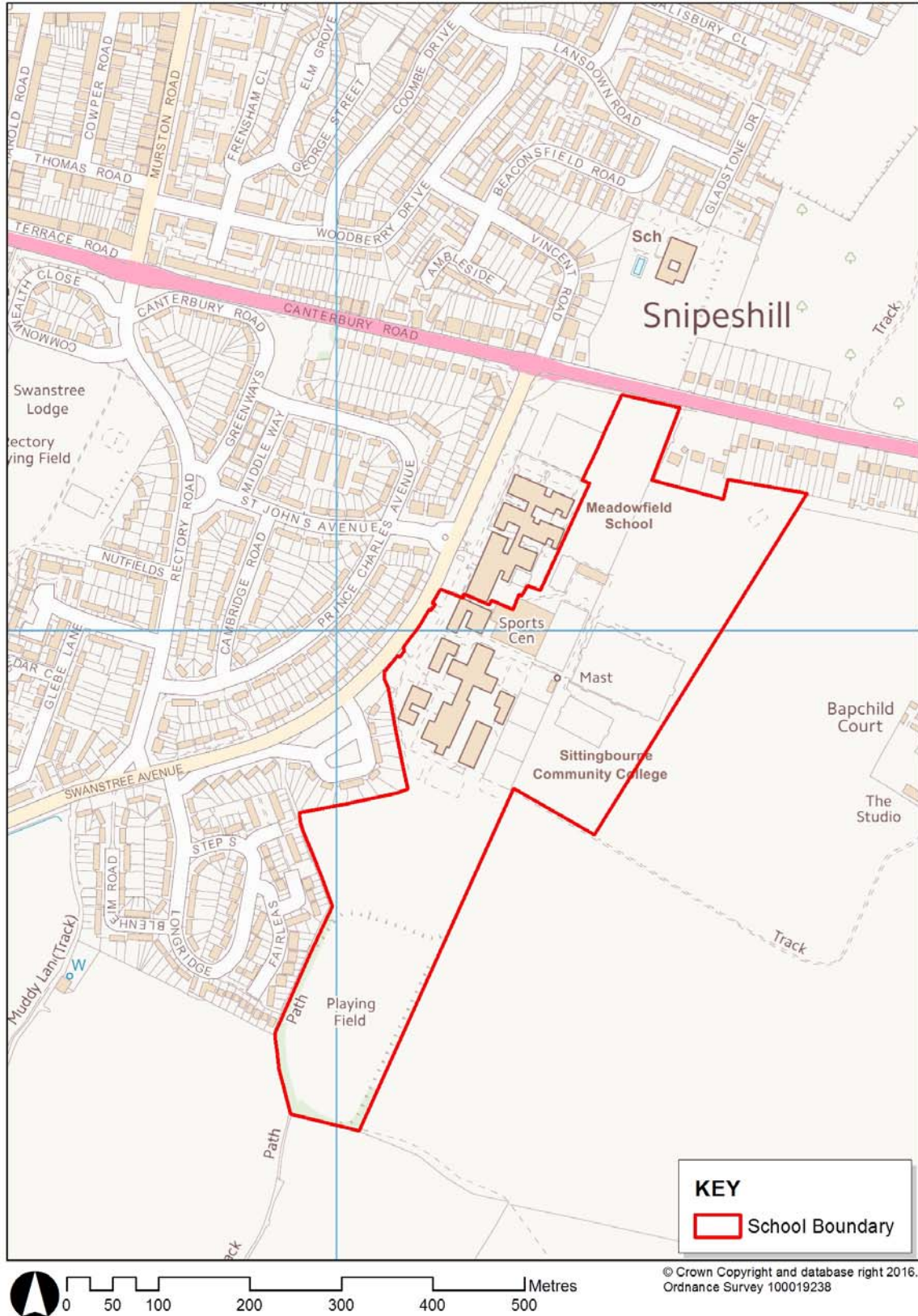
Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Sittingbourne Community College is situated to the south-eastern edge of Sittingbourne and is adjacent to the A2, Canterbury Road, which forms the northern boundary of the school site. To the east and south of the school site is open farmland and there are some residential gardens that back onto the site to the south west and the north east. The west boundary, which provides the site frontage and entrance to the school, lies adjacent to Swanstree Avenue with existing residential houses immediately opposite. Please refer to the site location plan.
2. The school site is large and elongated across 850 metres. Within the site the main built-form is centralised, with existing sports fields to the north and south and multi-use courts located on its east side. In terms of topography the site slopes progressively from the southern boundary to the centre, where onwards to the north the site stays relatively level. The school buildings are a mixture of one and two storey buildings and most are flat roofed structures with roof lights. The use of external materials varies across the structures.
3. Access to the site is via Swanstree Avenue, which is also shared by the neighbouring school, Meadowfield School, which is located to the north of Sittingbourne Community College. Due to the close proximity of these two schools, Swanstree Avenue is a frequent point of congestion particularly at school drop off and pick up times, with buses and taxis obstructing the entrance to the school and backing up into Swanstree Avenue as there is not enough internal space to hold all the buses/coaches and taxis.
4. The school has 152 car parking spaces in total. 126 spaces are for staff, 17 spaces are for visitors and 5 spaces are for mobility impaired drivers. The school also has 4 mini bus parking spaces.

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

Site Location Plan



Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

Site Location Plan

DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING
CHECK ALL DIMENSIONS ON SITE
THIS DRAWING IS COPYRIGHT ©

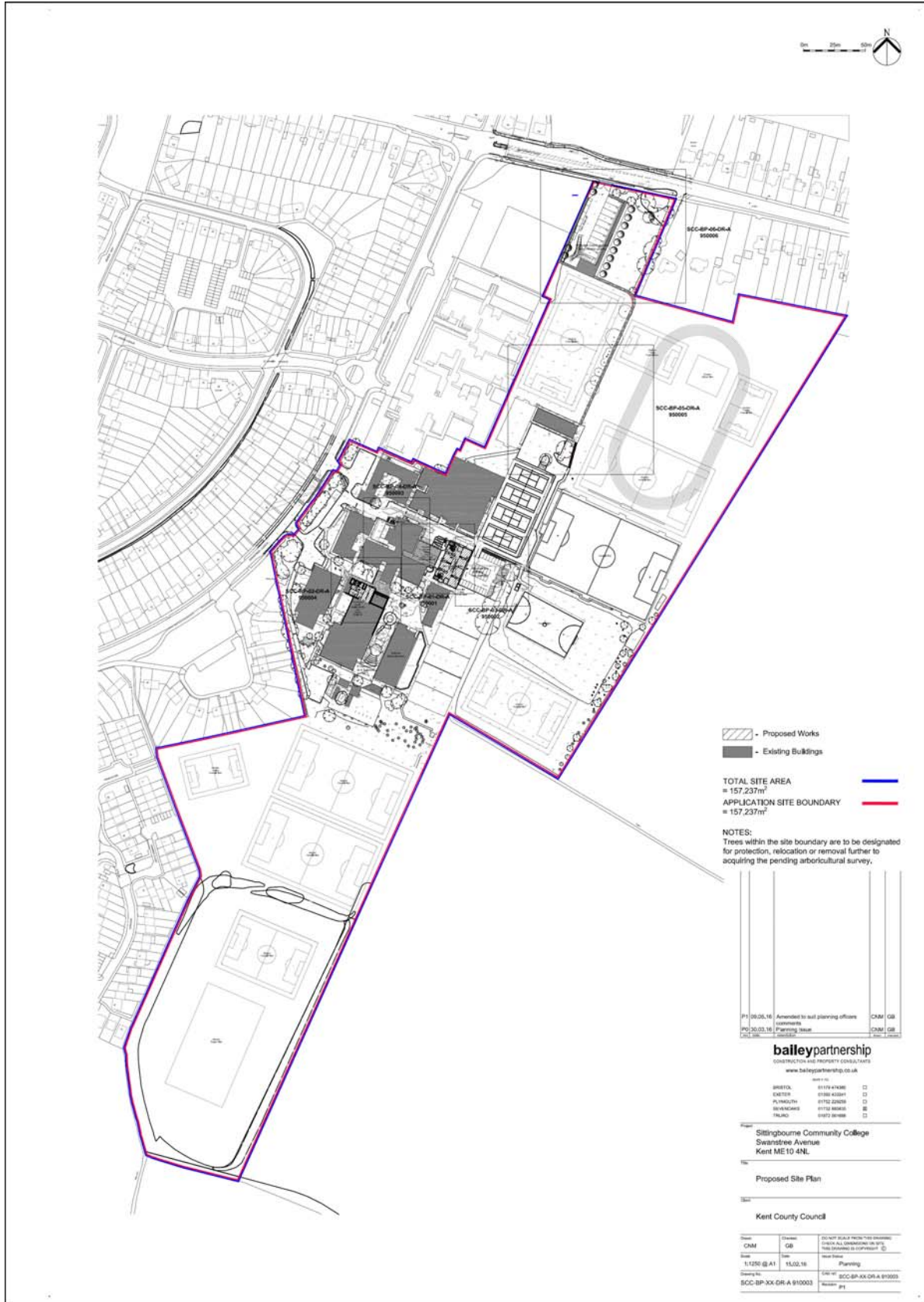
rev	date	description	drawn	checked
A	21.10.2015	Updated in line with Satellite Imagery and site visit report	BP	DV

<p>baileypartnership CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY CONSULTANTS www.baileypartnership.co.uk</p> <p>REPLY TO</p> <p>BRISTOL 01179 474380 <input type="checkbox"/> EXETER 01392 433241 <input type="checkbox"/> PLYMOUTH 01752 226259 <input type="checkbox"/> SEVENOAKS 01732 886835 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRURO 01872 961696 <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Title Site Location Plan</p> <p>Project Sittingbourne Community College Swanstree Avenue Kent ME10 4NL</p>	<p>Drawn SG/BP</p> <p>Checked DV</p> <p>Date 04.09.15</p>	<p>Scale 1/2500 @ A3</p> <p>Issue Status N/A</p>
	<p>Client Kent County Council</p>	<p>Drawing No. SCC-BP-XX-DRA 910001</p> <p>CAD ref SCC-BP-XX-DRA 910001</p> <p>Revision P1</p>	

A3 Drawing sheet

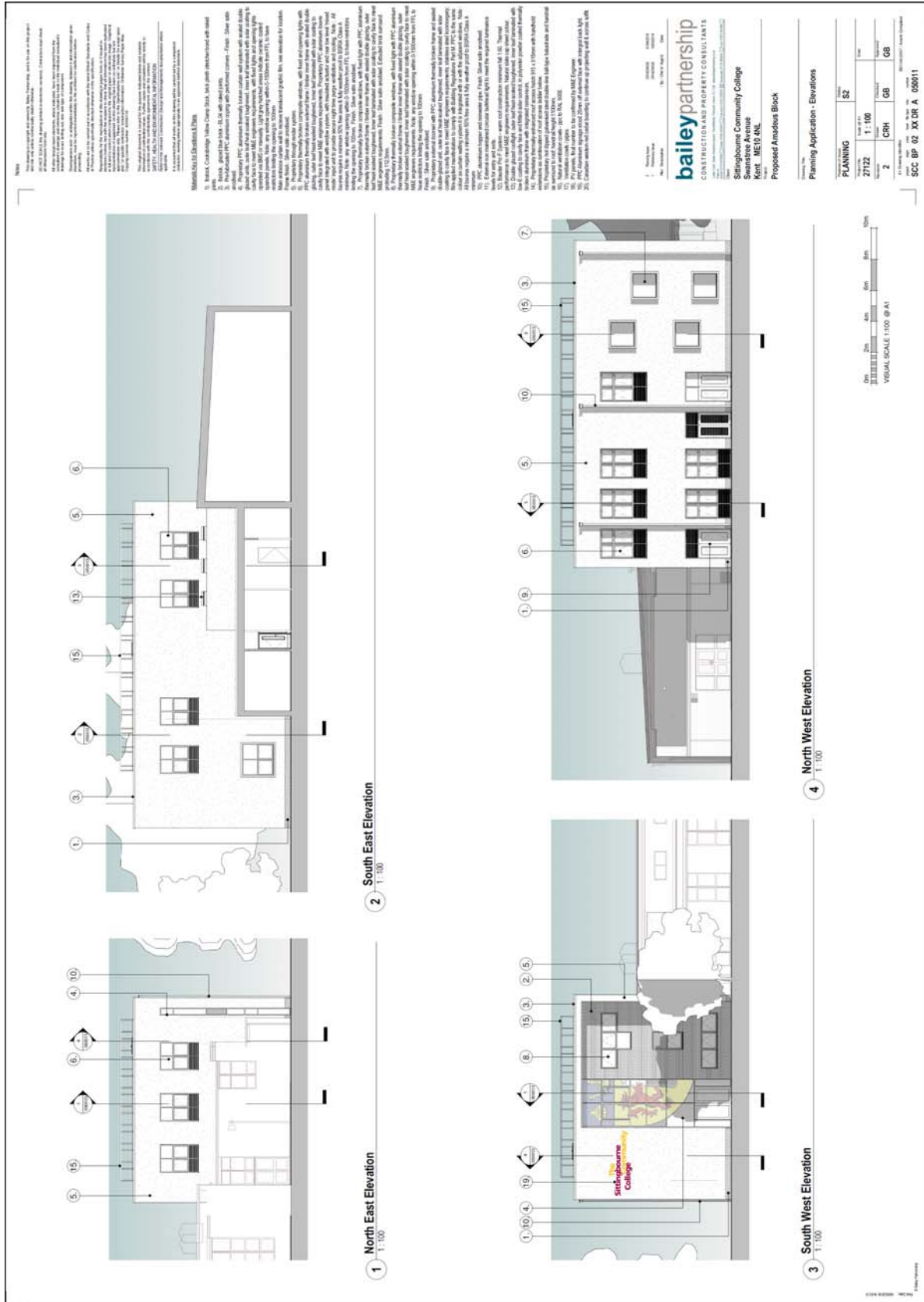
Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

Proposed site plan



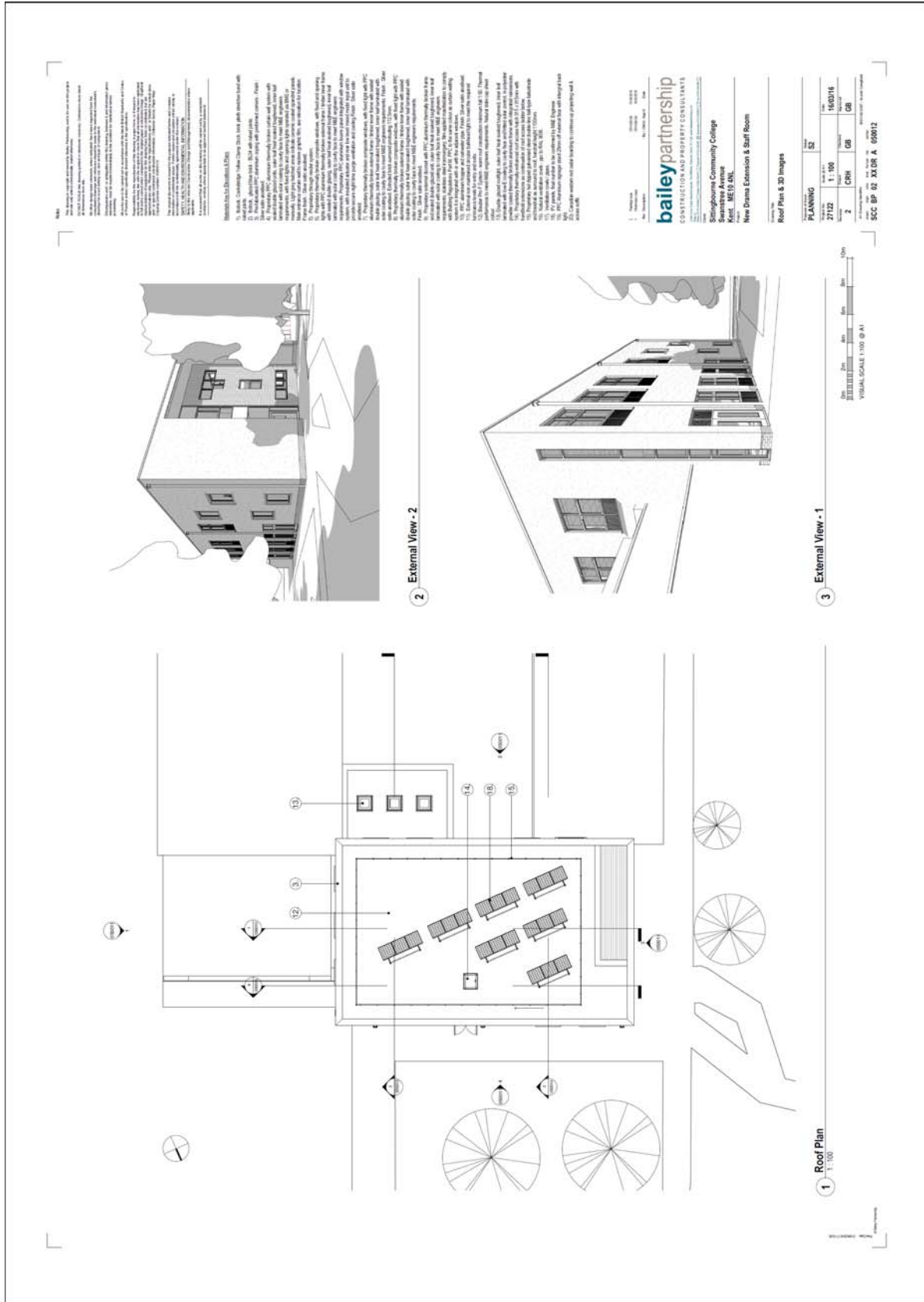
Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

Proposed elevation of Amadeus Block



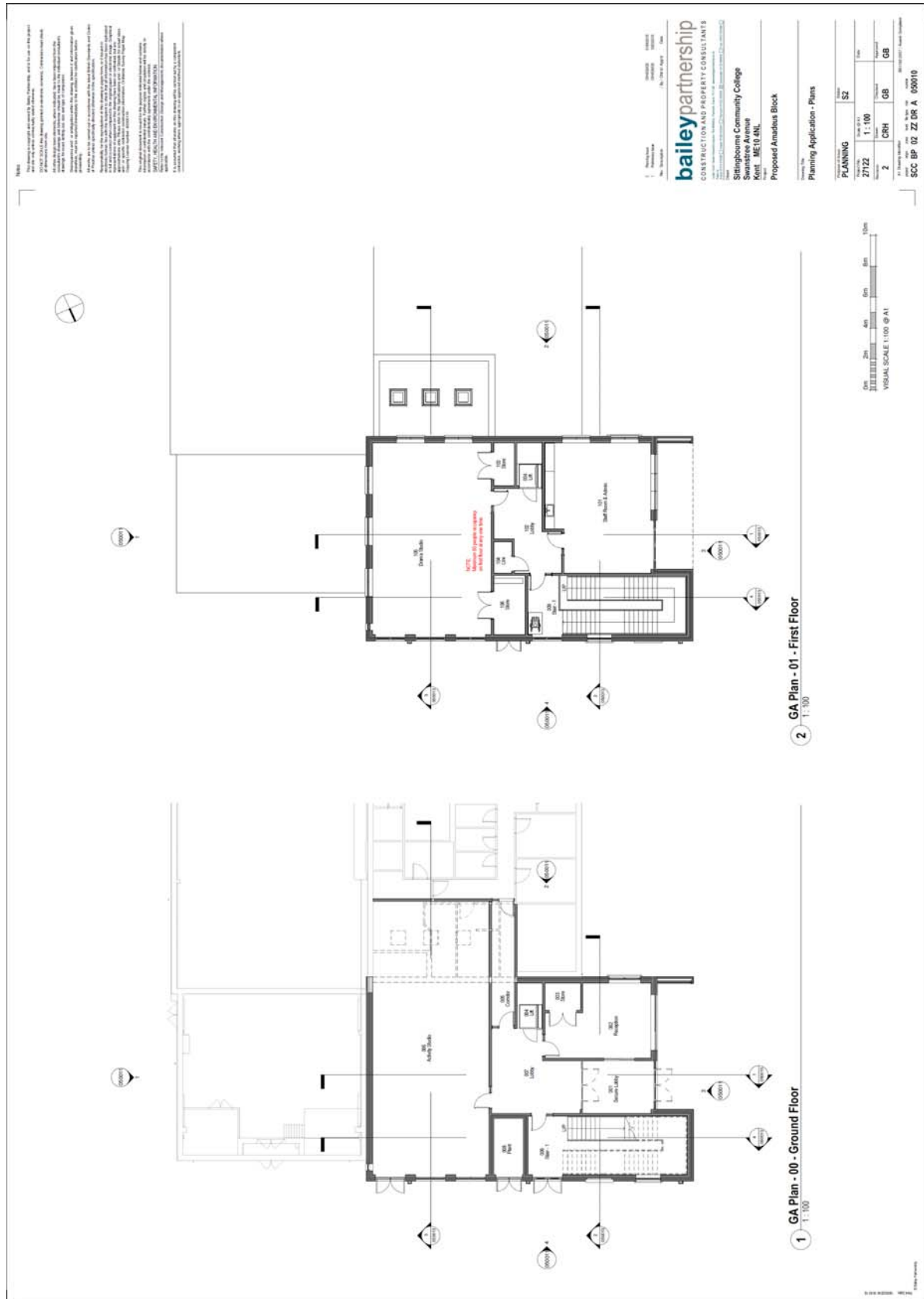
Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

Roof Plan and 3D Images – Amadeus Block



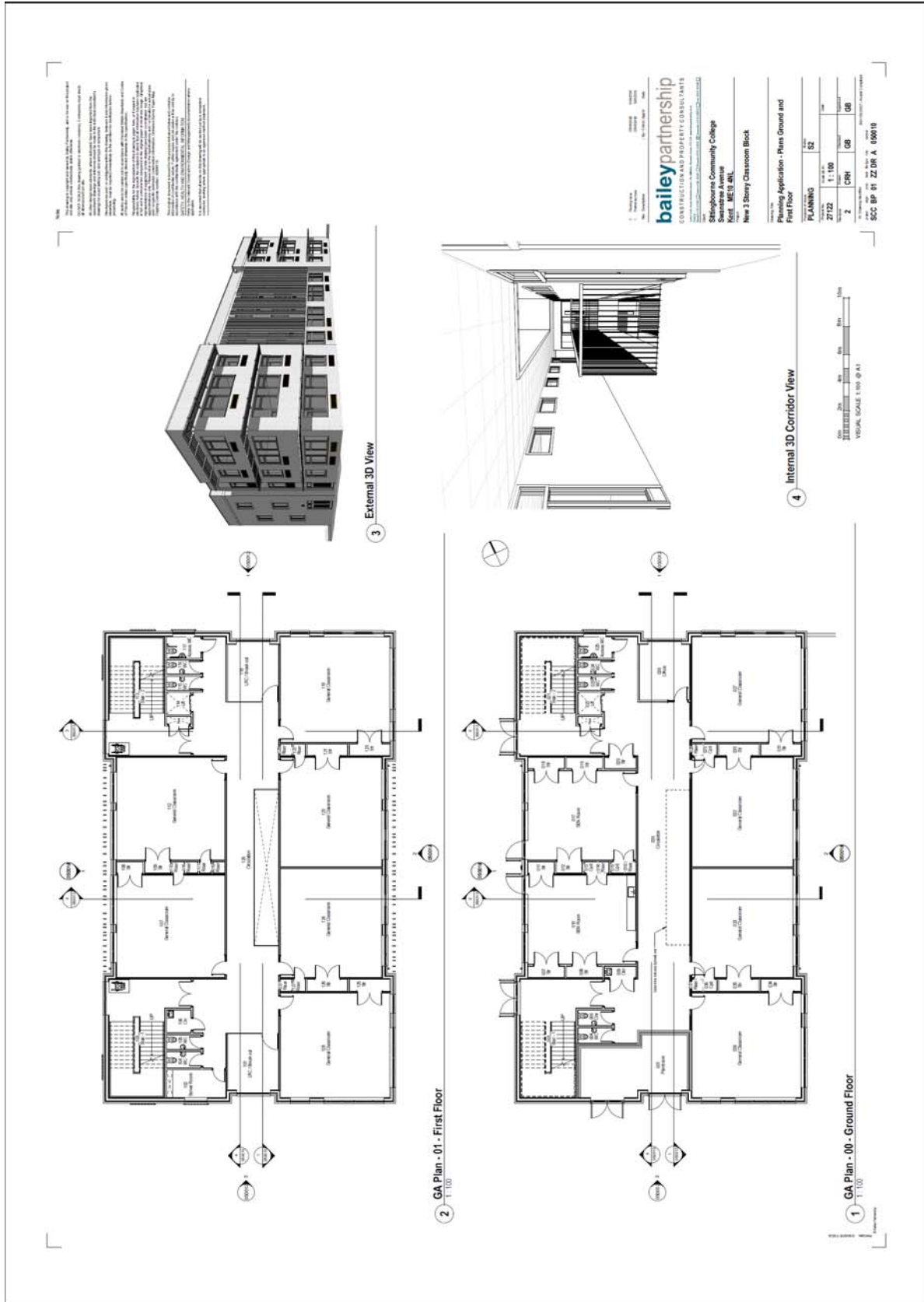
Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

Proposed floor plan –Amadeus Block



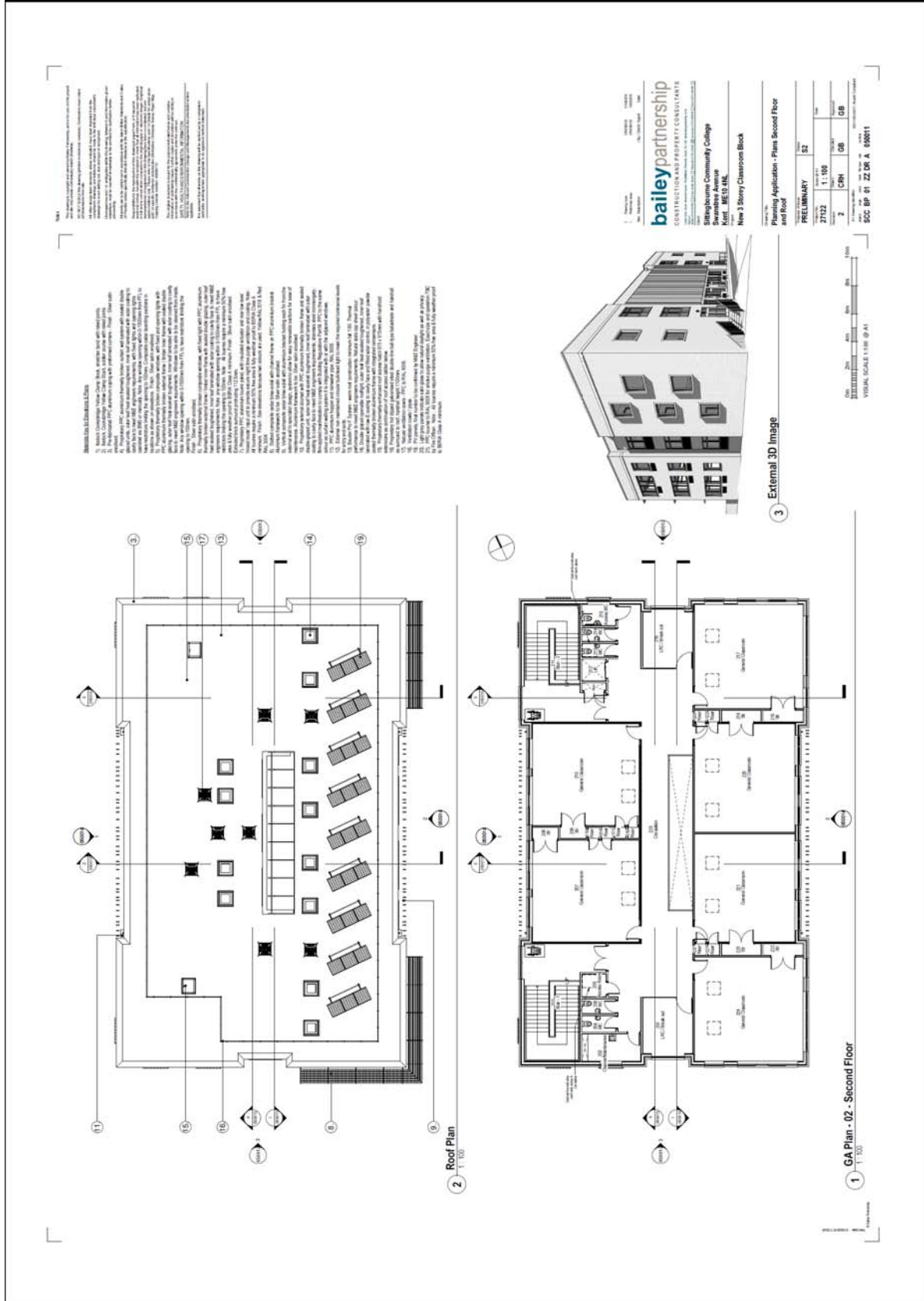
Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

Ground and first floor plans – Proposed 3 storey classroom block



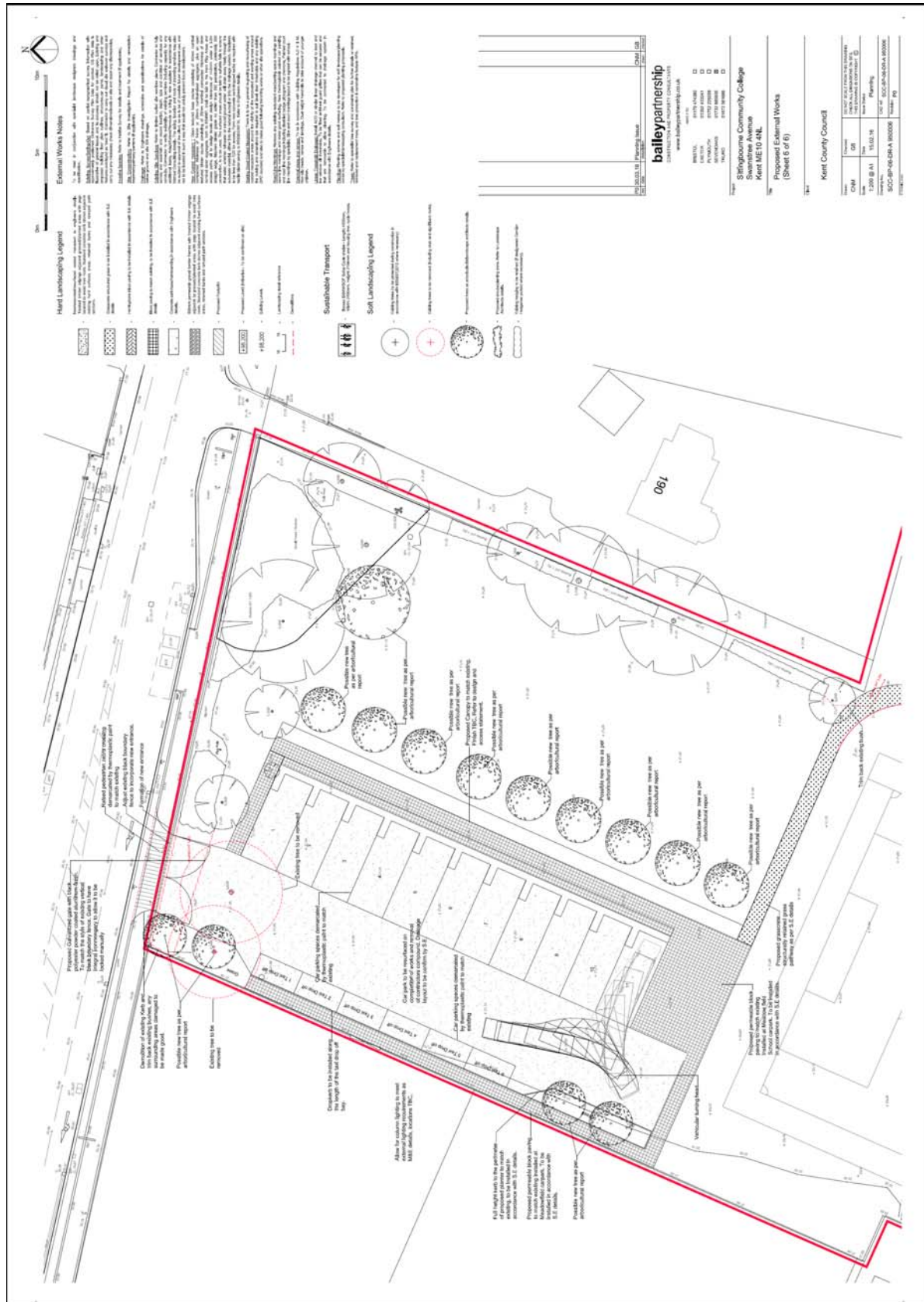
Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

Second floor and roof plans – Proposed 3 storey classroom block



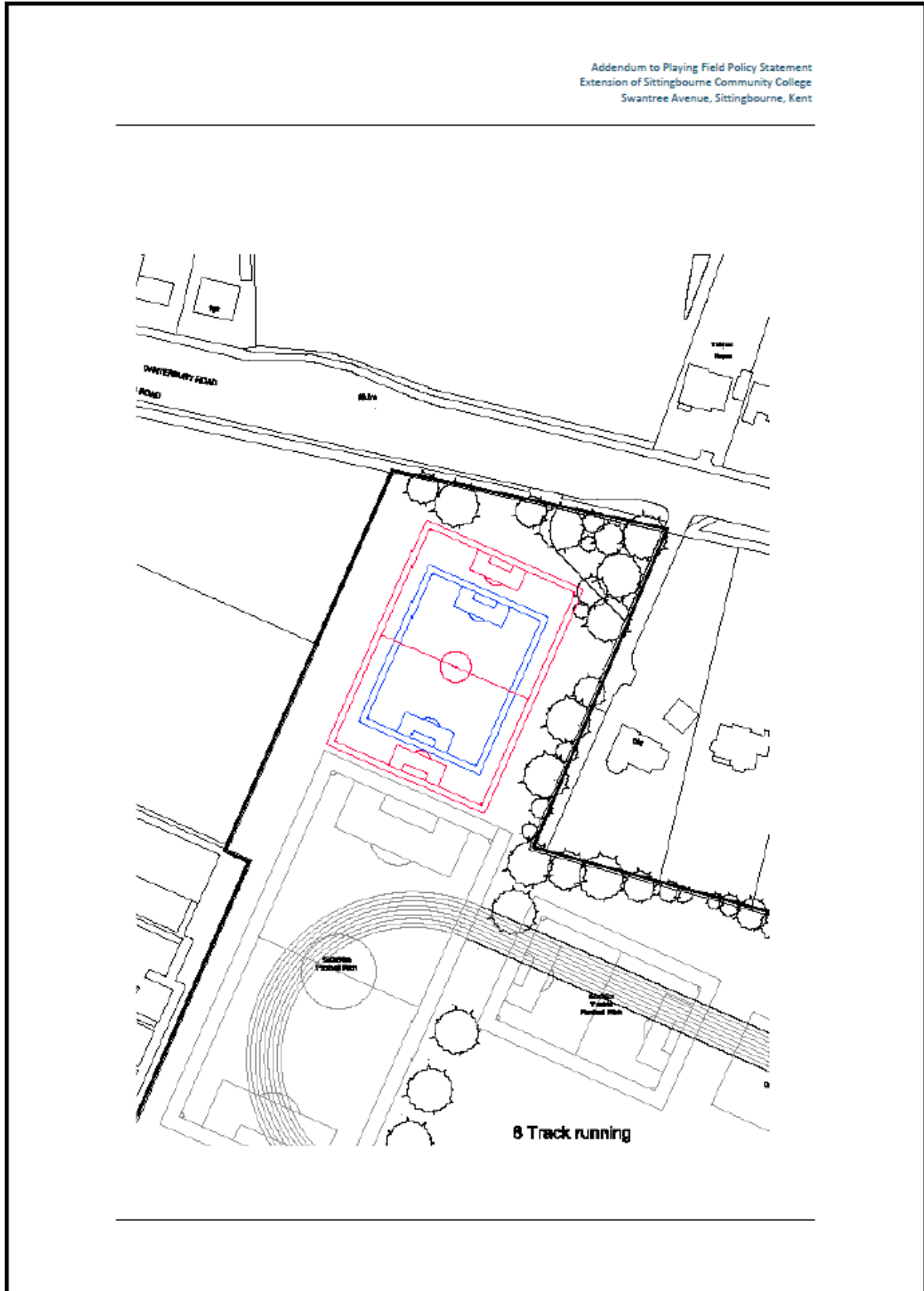
Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

Proposed coach and taxi parking area



Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

Drawing showing a 5v5 and a 7v7 size football pitch



Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

Background

5. Planning permission is sought for the proposed expansion of Sittingbourne Community College in order to make better use of the site and to provide additional facilities. The proposed development forms part of Kent County Council's Basic Need Expansion Programme. Due to changing demographics in the area, with an increasing birth rate and immigration, there is increased demand for secondary school places. The Kent Commissioning Plan (2015-2020), a five year rolling plan that sets out future plans for Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent, forecasts that the increased demand for secondary school places shows no sign of reducing over the forecast period.
6. Sittingbourne Community College specialises in performing arts, sports and engineering. It has Academy status and is part of the Swale Academies Trust. The pupils are divided into three communities; Chaucer, Darwin and Austen. Austen is the sixth form community, whilst Darwin and Chaucer encompass the year 7-11 students. The school currently has 7 forms of entry for Years 7 to 11, which is 1050 pupils. The school also has a sixth form totalling 225 pupils. In total there are currently 1275 school pupils at this school and around 200 teaching staff.
7. To meet the demand for school places and associated school accommodation, the school requires five additional classrooms (in addition to the 8 class bases lost through the proposed development), four science laboratories, an activity space, a drama studio, increased administration spaces and an enlarged external dining and learning resource facilities.

Recent Planning History

8. The most relevant recent site planning history is listed below:

SW/16/504350	Erection of temporary building to provide 2 classrooms. Granted planning permission on 24 June 2016.
SW/11/395	The erection of a single storey extension to the existing main building to provide a new speech and language unit within the existing campus. Granted planning permission on 6 May 2011.
SW/11/81	Erection of 1.8m galvanised steel palisade security fencing along two boundaries to west and south of playing fields, replacement of emergency access gates within 1.8m palisade paired gates. Granted planning permission on 4 May 2011.
SW/10/332	Installation of 2no mobile classroom units. Granted planning permission.

Proposal

9. This planning application has been submitted by Kent County Council's Property and Infrastructure Support and it is proposed to increase the school from a 7 form entry (FE) to a 9FE for Years 7-11. It is therefore proposed to increase the number of school pupils in Years 7 -11 by 300 pupils from 1050 to 1350 and stagger the intake over a 5

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

year period starting from September 2016. The school also has a sixth form which has 225 pupils and there are no plans to expand the sixth form. Therefore there are currently 1275 pupils at the school and it is proposed to increase this to 1575 in total by 2020.

10. The school currently employs 125 full time members of staff and 97 part time members of staff. In total this number equates to approximately 200 full time equivalent members of staff. It is proposed to employ an additional 20 members of staff.
11. A planning application (ref. SW/16/504350) was submitted at the same time as this permanent expansion planning application for two temporary mobile classrooms to accommodate the additional 60 pupils that were expected to start at this school from September 2016. Permission was granted under delegated powers on 26 June 2016 and it is intended to use these two mobiles for a period of 2 years and thereafter to be removed by the end of January 2019.
12. The proposal comprises of a number of improvements and alterations to the existing school with the most significant addition being a new three storey building located centrally within the school site and providing general classroom space. The application also includes a new two storey extension to provide a drama studio, activity space and administration offices, as well as a new entrance to the school. All of the proposed alterations and improvements are located within the existing built form of the school and would not be prominent from outside of the site. An extended covered area and a new refuse storage facility is also proposed, with resurfacing of the external areas throughout the site forming part of the improvement works.
13. The application also makes provision for the removal of an existing two class modular block and a bin store as well as some internal alterations to create a suite of science classrooms and the creation of larger and more useful classroom spaces. The proposal would also involve the re-planning of the existing car park to improve on-site parking efficiency, as well as associated landscape works.
14. Additionally a hard surfaced area to form a new coach and taxi drop off space is proposed at the northern end of the school site, with an access directly off the A2. This part of the site is currently grassed but does not form part of the school's playing pitch stock. It is proposed to have 11 coach spaces and 6 taxi drop off spaces, with on-site turning facilities. A new access is proposed from the A2 and coaches and taxis would enter and exit the site from this new vehicular access point. A pedestrian route is proposed from the new drop off parking area to the main school, delineated by a grasscrete path.

Planning Policy Context

15. 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. It 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

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

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; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people; and that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe;
 - Achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
 - The great importance that the Government attaches to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities, and that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools;
 - That access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation are important in their contribution to health and well-being, and therefore that existing open space, sports and recreation facilities should not be built on unless the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality.
- (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.
- (ii) The adopted **Swale Borough Local Plan (Saved Policies) 2008** constitutes the current adopted development for the Borough and can be summarised as follows:

Policy SP1 *Sustainable development:*

Proposals should accord with the principles of sustainable development, and ensure that proper and timely provision is made for social and community infrastructure.

Policy SP7 *Community services and facilities:*

Planning policies and development proposals will promote safe environments and a sense of community by increasing social networks by providing new services and facilities, and safeguarding essential and viable services and facilities from harmful changes of use and development proposals.

Policy C1 *Existing and new community services and facilities:*

The Borough Council will grant planning permission for new or improved community services and facilities, and particularly those that include provision for wider public use.

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

- Policy E1 *General development criteria:*
Development proposals should: accord with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise; reflect positively characteristics and features of the site and surroundings; and protect and enhance the natural and built environments.
- Policy E10 *Trees and hedges:*
Development proposals should protect and retain trees as far as possible and provide new tree planting to maintain and enhance the character of the locality.
- Policy E19 *Design quality and distinctiveness:*
Development proposals should be of high quality design and respond positively to design criteria.
- Policy T1 *Safe access to new development:*
Where appropriate the Borough Council will require the submission of a comprehensive Transport Assessment and Travel Plan with planning applications.
- Policy T3 *Vehicle parking for new development:*
Development will only be permitted if appropriate vehicle parking is provided, in accordance with the adopted KCC Parking Standards
- Policy T4 *Cyclists and pedestrians:*
New development proposals should have regard to the needs and safety of cyclists and pedestrians, including the disabled, and cycle parking facilities should be provided in a convenient, secure and safe location.
- Policy T5 *Public transport:*
Where appropriate the Borough Council will expect the submission of a Travel Plan as part of a Transport Assessment.
- (iv) The draft **Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan Main Modifications** (June 2016):
- Policy DM6 *Managing transport demand and impact:*
Development generating a significant amount of transport movements will require a Transport Assessment (including a Travel Plan). Priority is given to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, including the disabled, through the provision of safe routes which minimise cyclist/pedestrian and traffic conflict within the site and which connect to local services and facilities, with safe and efficient delivery of goods and supplies and access for emergency and utility vehicles.
- Policy DM7 *Vehicle parking:*
Until a Supplementary Planning Document can be adopted, the Borough Council will continue to apply extant Kent County Council vehicle parking standards to new development proposals.

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

Policy DM14 *General development criteria:*

All development proposals should accord with the policies and proposals of the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, respond positively to meeting the challenge of climate change, reflect the positive characteristics and features of the site and locality, conserve and enhance the natural and/or built environments, be both well sited and of a scale, design, appearance and detail that is appropriate to the location, and cause no significant harm to amenity and other sensitive uses or areas. Development proposals shall also meet a high standard of landscaping, and provide safe vehicular access, with convenient routes and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and parking and servicing facilities in accordance with the County Council's standards.

Policy DM19 *Sustainable design and construction:*

Development proposals will include measures to address and adapt to climate change in accordance with national planning policy and where appropriate, will incorporate items such as use of materials and construction techniques which increase energy efficiency and thermal performance; reduce carbon emissions in new development; promotion of waste reduction; design of buildings which will be adaptable to change and reuse over the long term, and a demonstration of a contribution to the network of green infrastructure and biodiversity. All development proposals shall include measures to address climate change, using materials and construction techniques which increase energy efficiency, reduce waste and reduce carbon emission, and make efficient use of water resources. All new non-residential developments shall aim to achieve BREEAM 'good' standard or equivalent, and all new non-residential developments over 1,000 sq m gross floor area should aim to achieve the BREEAM "Very Good" standard or equivalent as a minimum.

Consultations

16. **Swale Borough Council:** Raises **no objection** to the planning application, subject to a landscape condition.

Bapchild Parish Council: Has no comment to make.

Kent County Council Highways and Transportation: Raises **no objection** to the application and comments as follows:

"The application documents include drawings to show off-site highway works to provide a ghost right turn lane for the proposed new access. I am satisfied that the details are acceptable to demonstrate that the principle of the highway works can be achieved within the highway land available, and would be able to be progressed through to detailed design as part of the required Section 278 Agreement process. The submission was accompanied by a Stage 1 Road Safety, complete with Designers Response and subsequent Audit Team's comments and I agree that the minor amendments suggested by the Audit Team process can be considered during the detailed design stage. I am satisfied that parking provision within the site is appropriate for the proposed staff numbers. Consequently, I have no objections to the

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

proposals in respect of highway matters subject to the conditions covering matters such as a Construction Management Plan; measures to prevent mud on the highway; for the coach and taxi parking area to be available for use for the use intended and for a detailed design of the scheme being progressed and implemented accordingly.”

County Ecology Officer: Raises **no objection** subject to the habitat area being retained and enhanced.

School Travel Planner: Raises **no objection** subject to an updated School Travel Plan being conditioned and for the School to submit this via the Jambusters website.

Sport England: Raises **objection** to the proposed coach and taxi drop off area of the planning application for the following reasons;

“The new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop off area would appear to be sited on an existing area of playing field. Locating these aspects of the proposed development on the existing playing field would prejudice the use of the playing field.

In the light of the above, Sport England **objects** to these aspects of the proposed application because they are not considered to accord with any of the exceptions to Sport England’s Playing Field Policy or with Paragraph 74 of the NPPF.”

Furthermore, Sport England raises **no objection** to the proposed various extensions to form the additional classrooms, as they are proposed to be located on land that is incapable of forming, or forming part of a playing pitch, and would not result in the loss, or inability to make use of any playing pitch.

Environment Agency: Raises **no objection** to the planning application, subject to conditions and informatives to control potential risks from ground contamination and infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground, and to ensure no piling or other foundations using penetrative methods are incorporated without permission.

Local Member

17. The local County Members, Mr Lee Burgess and Mr Roger Truelove, as well as adjoining County Members, Mr Mike Baldock and Mr Andrew Bowles, were notified of the application on 23 May 2016.

Publicity

18. The application was advertised by the posting of site notices, and the notification of 341 neighbours.

Representations

19. Two letters of representation have been received, objecting to the application. The main points of the objection can be summarised as follows:

- There is no parking provision for the endless stream of cars that block Swanstree Avenue.
- Cars are parked on grass verges, across driveways and backed up around cul-de-sacs, which makes it impossible at times to get on our own driveways.
- Put more parking within the school so residents have a clear road once again.

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

- Questions whether the right choice been made to locate these extra school places at the Sittingbourne Community College?
- Due to the traffic queues on the A2 on the approach to the Swanstree Avenue traffic lights and buses would have to cross this queue to access the bus/taxi drop off area.
- There is a substantial amount of pedestrian and bicycle traffic on the A2 pavement by the bus/taxi drop off area.
- The location of the bus/taxi drop off area removes the ‘green’ separation between the edge of Sittingbourne and Bapchild.

Discussion

20. In considering this proposal regard must be had to Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (15) above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of 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.
21. This application has been reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee following the receipt of objections from two local residents and Sport England. Sport England’s objection is to the loss of playing field and the two neighbour objections are made on traffic grounds, local congestion and lack of parking around the school site.

Need

22. As outlined in paragraph 15 of this report, great emphasis is placed within planning policy generally, specifically paragraph 72 of the NPPF, on the need to ensure a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs to existing and new communities. The NPPF states that Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. The NPPF further states that Planning Authorities should give great weight to the need to create expand or alter schools. The Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development (15 August 2011) further sets out the Government’s commitment to support the development of state funded schools and their delivery through the planning system.
23. The applicant has identified growth in the demand for secondary school places within the Swale area, and a future need which will be outstripped by demand unless additional places are provided. Support for the provision of school places is heavily embedded in the NPPF and local planning policy, and I consider that the need for the development should be given significant weight in this instance.

Impact upon playing field

24. Sport England has objected to the planning application on grounds that the proposed development would appear to be sited on an existing area of playing field and would prejudice the use of the playing field and does not therefore accord with the exceptions to Sport England’s Playing Field Policy. It is Sport England’s policy to oppose any planning application which would result in the loss of playing field land unless it is

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

satisfied that the application meets with one or more of five specific exceptions. The gist of these exceptions are incorporated within paragraph 74 of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

25. Sport England also considers that the application does not accord with the exceptions of paragraph 74 of the NPPF, which states:

Existing open spaces, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- *an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
 - *the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable locations; or*
 - *the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.*
26. Much of the proposed development is located within the central area of the site amongst the existing built form and has no impact upon the playing fields located within the school site. However the proposed coach and taxi drop off area is located on an area of the site that is currently grassed and part of the school's grounds. This area is not currently used by the school as a playing field due to the close proximity of the A2. There are also existing grass playing pitches and an existing artificial playing surface within the site boundary. These adequately meet the schools needs in relation to the provision of playing pitches at the site.

27. The school currently has a significant number of playing pitches that includes:

- 5 senior grass football pitches;
- 2 junior grass football pitches;
- 1 senior grass rugby pitch;
- 1 senior all weather artificial football pitch, and
- 2 seven aside football pitches.

The pitches listed above provide a comprehensive set of playing pitches that adequately meet the schools playing pitch needs. The quality of the existing provision of playing pitches is also high, with the site being mostly level and the pitches provide excellent playing surfaces.

28. It is also relevant that the Swale Playing Pitch Strategy (Swale PPS) identifies the Sittingbourne Community College site as having spare football capacity in the Sunday AM peak period, further supporting the view that there is adequate provision at this site. The Swale PPS, whilst not yet adopted, is considered to provide *carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs* identified by Sport England as being necessary to demonstrate over provision.
29. Whilst Sport England considers that the proposal would result in the loss of playing field land, they have accepted that this part of the site cannot be used for senior football due to size limitations. However they believe that it could be used for junior or mini soccer (5v5 or 7v7) and state that there is a demand for this type of playing pitch in the Sittingbourne area. Please refer to the drawing on page 12 to see the size of the marked out pitches as suggested by Sport England.

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

30. The larger 7v7 pitch is tight to the boundaries and would be impacted by existing trees in the north east corner of the site, which are proposed to be retained. These trees form an important part of the landscaping for the proposed development. They play an important role within the street scene and make a positive contribution to local visual amenity. Given the playing pitch provision at the school, it would not be appropriate to remove these trees in order to accommodate a playing pitch.
31. The close proximity of the A2 to the immediate north of the site would also present conflict and harm to highway safety from sports balls potentially leaving the site and causing a hazard to vehicular traffic. Furthermore the site already provides two 7v7 size football pitches and it is considered that there is an excess of provision at the site for this form of playing pitch.
32. Whilst the 5v5 pitch could be accommodated in this part of the site, it is considered that the proximity of the road would also be a significant constraint, due to the potential danger caused by users of the highway from potential misplaced footballs. Furthermore, it is also relevant that the area of the site that Sport England consider to have potential for use as a playing field land is not currently used by the school as a playing pitch due to the close proximity of the A2 and it is generally accepted by the school that the close proximity of this road is a severe constraint to the area being used for any form of outdoor sport.
33. It could be argued that the proposed coach and taxi drop off site would be located on an area incapable of being used for marking out playing pitches or part thereof. On that basis, the proposed development would meet policy exception E3, in that the development would only affect land incapable of forming a playing pitch or part thereof and does not adversely affect existing pitch provision on the site.
34. In my view, this is a relatively small encroachment onto an area that is currently not used by the School for any form of outdoor sport that has to be balanced against the need for the development and wider benefits to the community of this educational facility and the strong policy presumption in favour of new school facilities. The school currently has generous playing fields and marked out pitches, and this area is deemed to be located too close to the A2 to be of any sports benefit to the school. I do not therefore consider there is any basis for a planning objection on the grounds that the development would lead to an unacceptable loss of playing field that would affect the ability of the School to use the wider playing field. I am satisfied that an assessment of the School's current sporting facilities has been carried out and concluded that the school has adequate sporting facilities. As such it is considered that the application would accord with Paragraph 74 of the NPPF and under the circumstances, I would therefore not raise a planning objection to the proposal on grounds of loss of playing field.

Transport Issues

35. This planning application proposes to increase the school from a 7 form entry (FE) to a 9FE for Years 7-11. It is therefore proposed to increase the number of school pupils in Years 7 -11 by 300 pupils from 1050 to 1350 and stagger the intake over a 5 year period starting from September 2016. The school also has a sixth form which has 225 pupils and there are no plans to expand the sixth form. Therefore there are currently 1275 pupils at the school and it is proposed to increase this to 1575 in total by 2020. It is also proposed to increase staff numbers from 200 full time equivalent members of staff by an additional 20 members of staff.

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

36. The application was supported by the submission of a Transport Statement and a School Travel Plan, which considered the impact the development, would likely to have on capacity of the existing highway network and the parking demand on the surrounding streets. Kent Highways has considered both documents and the calculations of the existing trip attractions and the proposed number of additional vehicles that are likely to be associated with the proposed increase in pupil and staff numbers. It has also been noted that a separate coach and taxi drop off area is proposed as part of this application, which would remove the need for any coaches or taxis to drop off school pupils in Swanstree Avenue, which is a major source of congestion in this road due to there not being enough internal space to hold all the coaches and taxis at this school.
37. Whilst it is proposed to increase the number of pupils at this school by 300 incrementally over the next 5 years, from the information in the School's Travel Plan, a high proportion of the current secondary school pupils arrive at this school by coach or public transport. In a recent hands-up survey carried out at the school this was shown to be 37% of the current school pupils. The school is currently serviced by 10 buses/coaches. In terms of taxi numbers an assessment was carried during the last academic year where there were 16 taxis daily bringing the students to and from school. The School expects this to be between 18 and 20 in the next academic year. Most of the students being collected by taxi attend the School's deaf department.
38. The proposed dedicated parking area would provide 11 coach bays and 6 taxi bays to the north of the school and via a new access point off the A2. This would therefore remove the need for any coaches or taxis to use Swanstree Avenue in the future and would relieve this road of the traffic problems associated with coaches and taxis having to spill out and park out in Swanstree Avenue to either drop off or collect school pupils.
39. The proposed new coach and taxi parking area would also provide adequate turning space within the site and there would be an internal footpath from the school buildings to this new facility as well as a sheltered waiting area. Staff would continue to be present on-site to oversee students boarding and disembarking the bus services.
40. This proposed coach and taxis parking area would only be used during the morning and afternoon peak and so the number of vehicles needing to access this area would be very low and relatively infrequent. An assessment has been carried out in terms of numbers and an origin and destination survey of the vehicles that would be using this new parking area. Based on information provided by the school, a fair assumption has been made that the majority of the buses and taxis accessing the proposed parking area would turn right into the site off the A2. In order to accommodate these right turning vehicles, it has been considered appropriate to provide a new right turn lane adjacent to the entrance to the drop off facility.
41. There is currently sufficient scope to provide a new 35 metre long and 3 metre wide right turn lane into the proposed new drop-off facility by slightly altering the existing hatched central road markings. The proposed right turn lane would have storage capacity for up to two coaches and a taxi at any one time, which is expected to be more than sufficient to accommodate the demand without causing delay to the eastbound lane of the A2. The assessment also concluded that the proposed new right turn lane would result in a slight reduction in the capacity of the existing right turn only lane at the signal controlled junction of the A2 Canterbury Road and Swanstree Avenue/Vincent Road. However there would still be an adequate amount of right

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

turning lane remaining for the right turning traffic during the school peak times as not to have an effect upon the operation of these traffic signals.

42. An assessment of the traffic lights and how the proposed right turn facility could affect the operation of these lights has been undertaken by an external highway consultant and checked over by the County's Highway Engineer. There has also been an Outline Safety Audit undertaken for the proposed scheme. Both assessments have been accepted by the County's Highway Engineer as being acceptable subject to a few minor alterations identified from the Outline Safety Audit that would need to be incorporated into the Detailed Design stage of the highway scheme. On this basis, Kent Highways have raised no objection to this element of the planning application.
43. The objection raised by a local resident regarding coaches not being able to cross the queue of traffic in the westbound direction, would be addressed through the provision of a dedicated right turn lane for the school traffic to the new coach and taxi parking area. Traffic would also get used to there being a new access point to the school for coaches and taxis and would anticipate this movement across the A2.
44. Through the information provided by the external highway consultant and the assessment carried out by the County's Highway Engineer, the proposed site layout and internal circulation space is considered satisfactory and would not give rise to conditions prejudicial to highway safety or the free flow of traffic on the adjoining highway. In my view, I consider the design and layout of the proposed right turning lane and coach and taxi drop off area to be acceptable and subject to a detailed design of the highway scheme being undertaken, I would not therefore raise a planning objection on this matter.
45. Concern regarding the traffic created by the school and the lack of parking within the school site was also raised by a local resident. The school currently has 152 parking spaces in total, of which 126 are designated as staff parking spaces. A parking survey within the school site was undertaken as part of this planning application submission. The observed peak demand for parking within the school grounds was that 115 parking spaces were occupied. Based on this survey, this demonstrates that there was a surplus of 28 parking spaces within the school site. The predicted additional demand for parking generated by staff is 17 parking spaces. The applicant concluded that this proposal could be absorbed by the current on-site parking provision.
46. The proposal for the expansion of Sittingbourne Community College does not therefore include any additional off-street parking. As part of this proposal, Car Park 4 within the school would be redesigned to accommodate a total of 28 standard parking spaces and 3 disabled parking spaces. This would result in the loss of 9 parking spaces within the school site. However the applicant has concluded that all the parking demand is expected to be adequately accommodated within the site as there is sufficient spare parking capacity already. Kent Highways is satisfied that parking provision within the school site is appropriate for the proposed staff numbers and has raised no objection to this application on parking grounds.
47. On-street parking opportunities within the vicinity of the site have been considered as part of the planning application. To assess the current level of on-street parking in Swanstree Avenue and other surrounding roads nearby the school site, a parking survey was undertaken. Kerb side parking within a 200 metre distance of the schools access points has been surveyed, which is around a 2.5 minute walk. In total the

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

parking survey demonstrated that there are 130 parking opportunities within the parking study area, and in areas where there are no current parking restrictions.

48. Together with the proposal to remove all coaches and taxis associated with the school from Swanstree Avenue, and adequate parking spaces currently within the school site to accommodate the current and proposed members of staff, this demonstrated that there are free parking spaces within the study area and that not all the parking in this area can be assumed to be associated with this school.
49. Furthermore the school currently has no on-site parking facilities for parents and so all parents that drive to school have to park on the public highway. From the information in the School Travel Plan, only about 20% of the current school pupils are driven to school. Whilst it is accepted by Kent Highways that there may be some additional congestion in the area at school start and finish times, these are of short duration and only during term times.
50. In conclusion, it will be noted that the school is proposing to remove the traffic congestion caused by the coaches and taxis that currently access this site via the current entrance in Swanstree Avenue. The policy guidance given in NPPF Paragraph 32 states among other things that development should not be refused on transport grounds unless the cumulative impact is severe. I do not consider that to be the case in this instance. The introduction of mitigating measures to reduce that impact, as discussed above, makes the application acceptable in highway terms. Under the circumstances, I would therefore not raise a planning objection to the proposal on highway grounds.

Design and layout

51. Development Plan Policies promote high quality design, sustainable development and significant improvements to the built environment. The proposed new buildings would be two and three storey buildings which would complement the existing one and two storey buildings. The locations of the new buildings have been proposed in order to minimise any external visual impact, with designs that are complementary and subordinate to the existing locations. They would integrate acceptability within that site with no adverse local amenity impacts.
52. The proposed new coach and taxi parking area would not affect the general appearance of the location as the openness of this area would be maintained, and would not in my view result in the loss of the 'green' separation between Sittingbourne and Bapchild. As this parking area would only be used during the morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up times, the rest of the time, this area would be clear of parking. Two trees would have to be removed in this location and only a short section of hedge would have to be removed to create a new vehicular entrance to this site. In addition, it is proposed to plant some additional trees to provide further screening of the parking area. I am also satisfied that there sufficient separation of the parking area from the residential property to the east such that there would be no significant adverse amenity impact.
53. Members will note that no objection has been received to the proposed location or design of the various extensions to the school. However in order to control the development and to ensure the satisfactory appearance of the proposed development, I consider that final details of all materials to be used externally and details of the proposed landscaping should be submitted pursuant to condition, should permission

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

be granted. Subject to the imposition of these conditions, I consider that the design and layout of the proposed development to be acceptable and I would therefore not raise a planning objection on this matter.

Sustainability

54. The emerging Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan Main Modifications (June 2016), Policy DM19 states that all new non-residential development over 1000sqm gross floor area should achieve a BREEAM 'Very Good' standard, or equivalent. The applicant advises that the building has been designed to meet the principles of a BREEAM rating of 'very good', and that the building design would meet, and exceed, the energy calculations required under Building Regulations Part L 2013. The development has been designed to be as sustainable as practicable, with passive solar design to promote natural daylighting, and passive ventilation, enabling the building to exchange warm stale air for cool fresh air. South facing breeze soleil would also provide shading and reduce summer over-heating. In addition, measures such as eco-flush toilets are proposed to minimise water resource use, and external materials have high sustainable credentials in terms of sourcing and performance.
55. Further, although not necessarily required to meet energy efficiency targets and building regulation requirements, given the height and orientation of the building, the applicant has included an array of PV panels within the scheme in this instance, with an indicative area marked on the roof plan. The applicant advises that the array would offset carbon emissions from the building emission rate by a further 11% in this instance. Ongoing management of the development would also ensure that users of the building understand the sustainable design principles and technologies incorporated into the building, and that the school continue to manage and use those efficiently. Minimisation of waste and recycling would also be encouraged. In considering the sustainable design credentials of the proposed building, including the provision of an array of PVs, I am of the opinion that the building design is sustainable and accords with the underlying principles of relevant Development Plan Policies.

Conclusion

56. In summary the proposal seeks to provide additional secondary school places to meet local need and is in accordance with planning policy to support the improvement of local infrastructure, as set out in the Swale Borough Local Plan (Saved Policies); the draft Swale Borough Local Plan "Bearing Fruits"; the NPPF and the Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development. I consider that, subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, the proposed development constitutes sustainable development and provides an appropriate level of new off-street parking facilities including for coaches and taxis. Kent Highways are satisfied that this proposal is acceptable in highway terms, subject to the imposition of conditions. 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 school. 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. I do not consider there are any material planning considerations that indicate that the conclusion should be made otherwise.
57. However given the Sport England objection, should Members be minded to grant permission, the County Planning Authority is required to consult the Secretary of State

Two and three storey buildings and new access and parking area for coach and taxi drop-off at Sittingbourne Community College – SW/16/504626

for Communities and Local Government at the National Planning Casework Unit and not grant planning permission until the Secretary of State has first had an opportunity to consider the application. The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009, requires that the Authority may only proceed to determine an application once the Secretary of State has had an opportunity to consider whether or not to call in the application for his own determination, subject to his decision I recommend permission be granted subject to appropriate conditions.

Recommendation

58. I RECOMMEND that the application BE REFERRED to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and SUBJECT TO his decision, PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:

- The standard 5 year time limit;
- The development carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- The submission of details of all materials to be used externally;
- A scheme of soft and hard landscaping and its implementation and maintenance;
- Measures to protect trees to be retained;
- No tree removal during the bird breeding season;
- The habitat area being retained and a scheme of enhancement being agreed and implemented;
- Details of any external lighting to be provided;
- Submission of details to deal with the potential risks associated with ground contamination;
- Submission of a verification report;
- No infiltration of the surface water drainage;
- No piling or any other foundations using penetrative methods to be used;
- Provision and permanent retention of new coach and taxis parking area prior to the occupation of the proposed development;
- Visibility splays to be provided as approved and to be maintained;
- Hours of working during construction to be restricted to between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays;
- Measures to prevent mud and debris being taken onto the public highway;
- The submission of a construction management plan, including lorry routing, access, parking and circulation within the site for contractors and other vehicles related to construction operations;
- A detailed design of the highway scheme to be undertaken and implemented accordingly;
- The submission of a revised School Travel Plan, via the Jambusters website and be the placed on the school's website and for the Travel Plan to be reviewed annually.

Case officer – Lidia Cook	03000 413353
---------------------------	--------------

Background documents - See Section heading
--