

Erection of two storey classroom block with additional site car parking at Wentworth Primary School – DA/16/1328 (KCC/DA/0213/2016)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 7th December 2016.

Erection of two storey classroom block alongside the existing school providing 7no classrooms and a group room with additional site car parking at Wentworth Primary School, Wentworth Drive, Dartford, DA1 3NG – DA/16/1328 (KCC/DA/0213/2016)

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr J Ozog

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

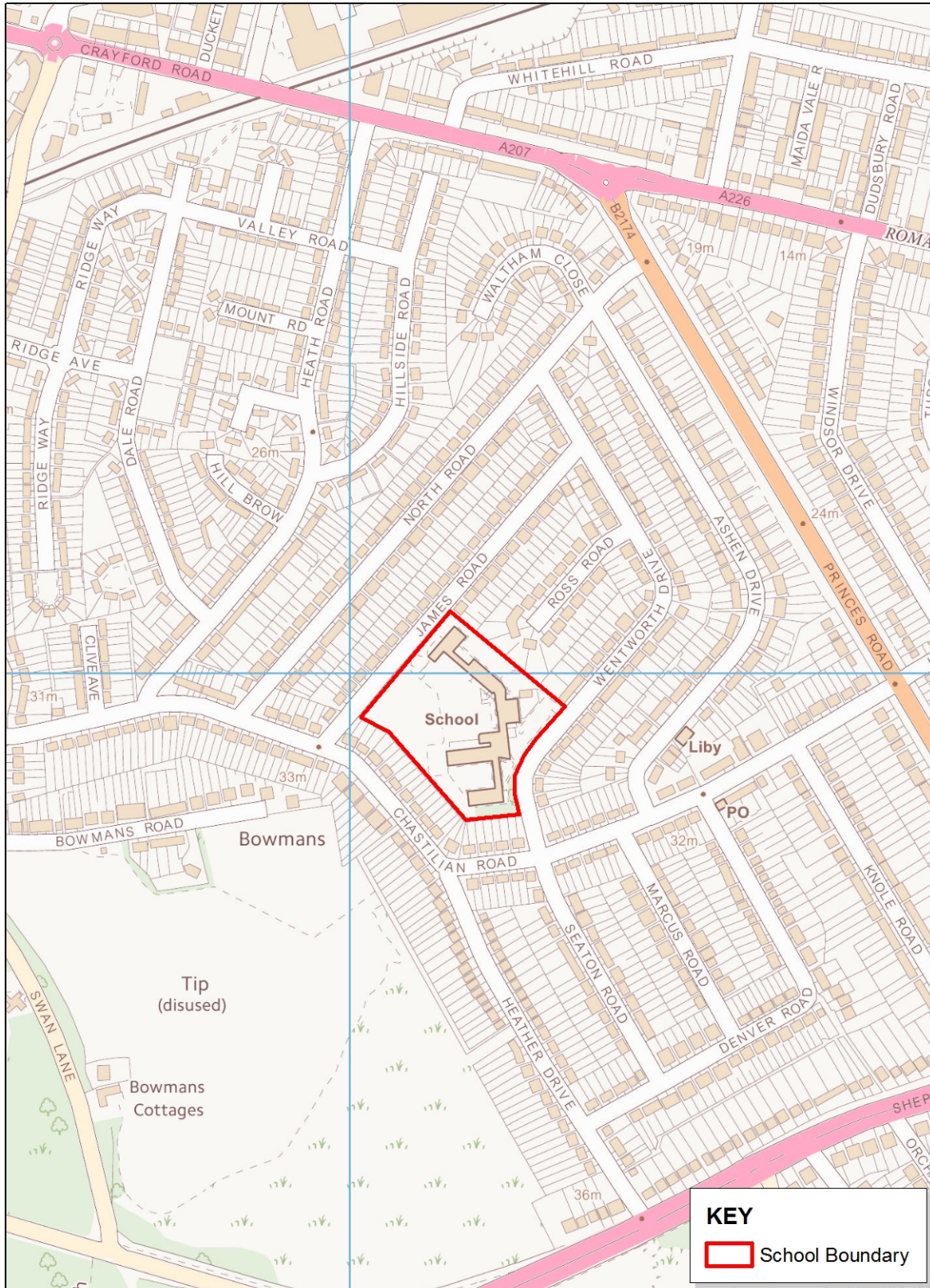
1. Wentworth Primary School is located in a residential area to the west of Dartford Town Centre and to the south east of Crayford. The main entrance to the school is on Wentworth Drive and a secondary entrance is on James Road. There is car parking on site near to both access points.
2. The school buildings are located to the north, east and south of the site enclosing the hard surface play areas and the playing fields which are located to the west of the site.
3. The nearest residential property to the proposed two storey building is approx. 45 metres (147 feet) north east of the proposal in Ross Road, which is a cul-de-sac. To the east the nearest residential property is approximately 54 metres (177 feet) in Wentworth Drive and to the south property is located approximately 92 metres (301 feet) in Chastilian Road. To the west the nearest residential property is located in James Road and Chastilian Road, between 79 metres (259 feet) and 88 metres (288 feet) away. The additional parking proposed is to the east of the site accessed via the main entrance in Wentworth Drive.

Background

4. The proposed development is located within a site which has been used for education since the 1950's when the school was known as the Dartford Heath Farm County Primary School. This proposal would allow an expansion to a 3 FE school, in permanent classrooms.
5. The application includes details of the public consultation that had been carried out in July 2016 by the applicant prior to the application being made to the County Planning Authority. A number of concerns were raised at that time including those regarding the increase in pupil numbers and the effect on traffic, parking at drop off and pick up times, disruption and loss of playground space. Copies of various responses from the public to the pre-application planning consultation are included within the application.

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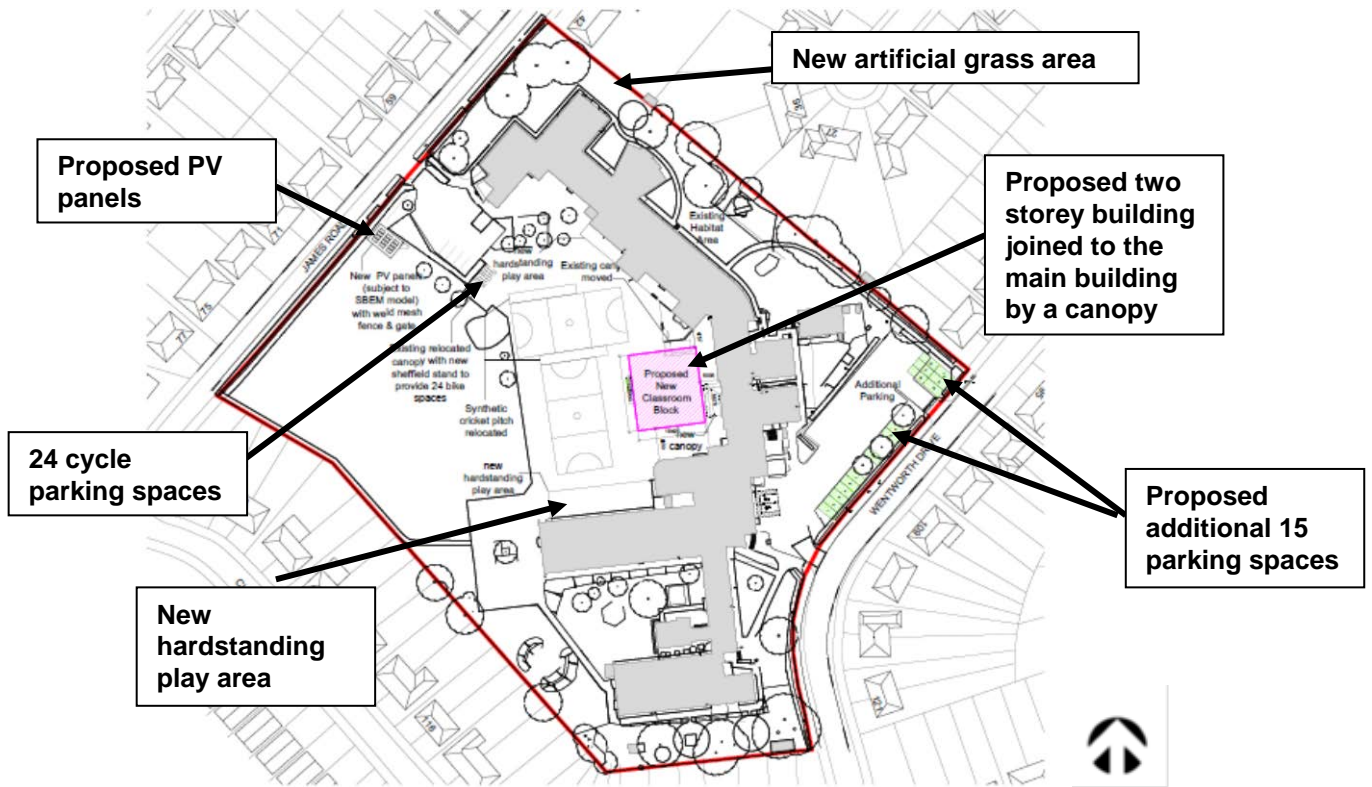
General Location Plan



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Location of Proposal within school site

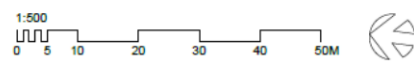
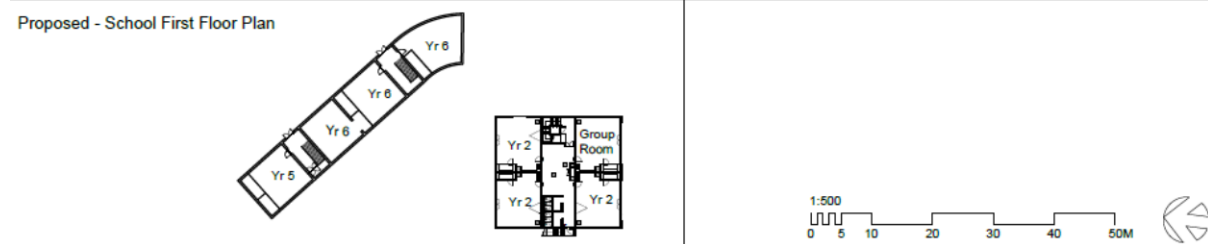
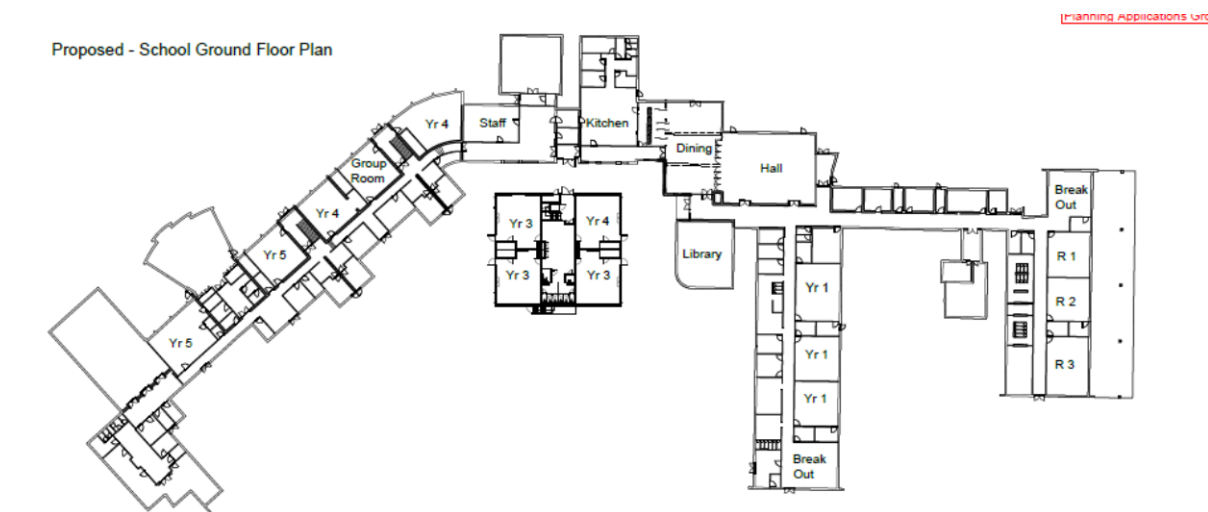


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Existing Floor Plan



Proposed Floor Plan



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Existing east elevation viewed from front of school



Proposed east elevation viewed from front of school

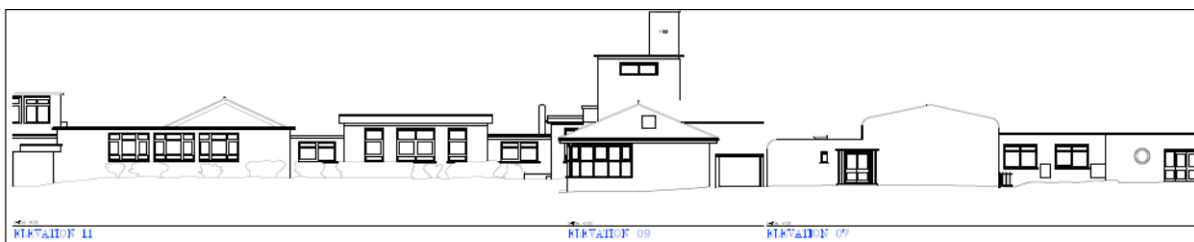


View of east elevation which joins the main school building



- MATERIALS**
1. Insulated render
 2. Single ply (grey) pitched roof
 3. Single ply flat roof
 4. Aluminium fascia/soffit and concealed gutter.
 5. Aluminium double glazed windows/doors.
 6. Coloured insulated panels.
 7. Timber sleeper planting beds.
 8. Aluminium framed canopy with polycarbonate covering.
 9. Aluminium louvers.
 10. Aluminium FDS06 door.
 11. Suncatcher
 12. External metal escape staircase
 13. Windcatcher

Existing west elevation viewed from playground at rear of site

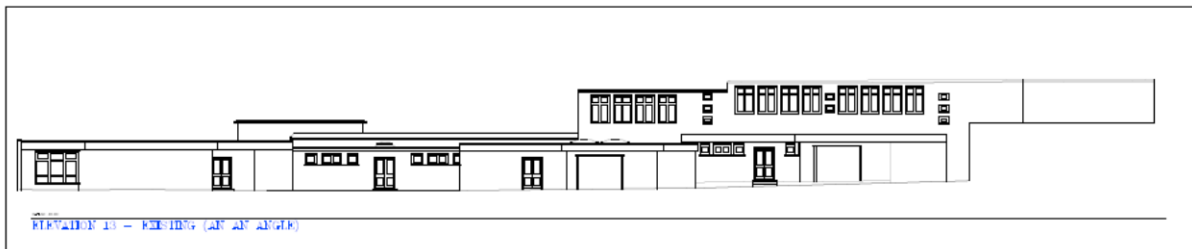


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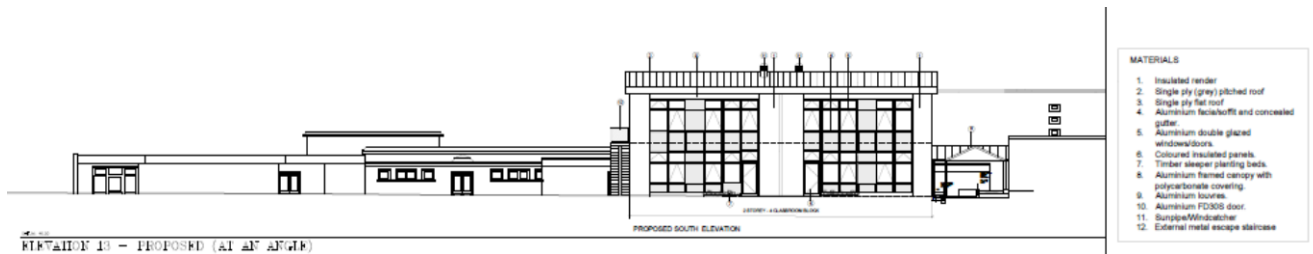
Proposed west elevation viewed from playground at rear of site



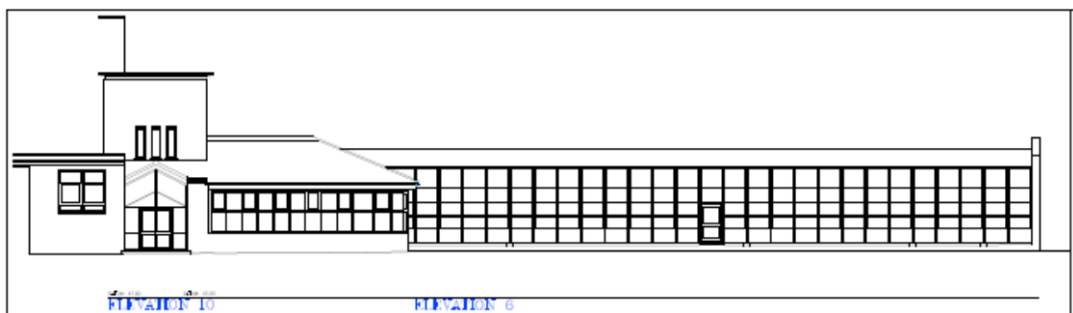
Existing south elevation



Proposed south elevation

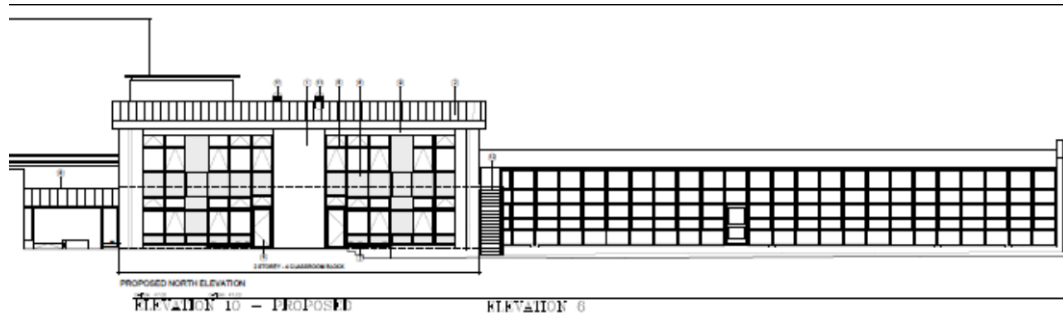


Existing north elevation



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Proposed north elevation



Existing view from NW corner of playground



Proposed view from NW corner of playground



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Site History since 2002

6. Granted by Kent County Council

DA/09/508 - Single storey extension to Wentworth School to form an ICT suite.

DA/06/867 - Extension to form new conference room and office.

DA/04/1134 - Proposed library extension.

DA/02/1005 - New teaching block.

DA/02/665 - Proposed additional car parking.

DA/02/636 - Proposed external ramp.

7. Granted by Dartford District Council

16/00242/FUL - Demolition of existing garage and erection of a single storey extension to provide a new caretaker's room, new glazing, windows and cladding to north and south blocks and new covered walkways to both blocks.

04/00887/FUL - Siting of a detached single storey building to provide a new nursery block.

Proposal

8. The application is for a 773 sqm (8320.5 sqft) two storey classroom block to provide 7 classrooms and a group room with connecting canopy to the existing school and an additional 15 car parking spaces. The proposed classroom block is located on an existing hard surface play area adjacent to the main school building.
9. The proposed 15 additional car parking spaces are located to the east of the existing car parking spaces at the Wentworth Drive car parking area on an existing grass surface. It is proposed that these would be a grasscrete surface and that the car parking spaces would form a double bank of parked cars as a managed parking system for staff parking. In total, there would be 61 car parking spaces including 2 disabled bays, split between the parking at the main entrance and the smaller car park area at the James Road entrance. 24 new cycle parking spaces are also proposed.
10. The proposal includes an area for photo voltaic cells, which would be fenced and gated using weld mesh, located at ground level to the northwest of the site, west of the James Road entrance.
11. According to the applicant, the capacity at the school as at July 2016 was 507 pupils, 65 staff (not all full time). It is expected that by 2023 with the proposed two storey building block, the school roll would be 647 pupils and 83 staff. There would be 140 additional pupils at the school in 2023 and 18 additional members of staff.

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12. The applicant stated that the increase in capacity would start in September 2016 with an additional 20 pupils to provide a 3FE reception year. It is stated that this increase can be accommodated in the existing school as a single bulge year if the application for the two storey block is unsuccessful. Otherwise the application if successful would allow the school to admit an additional 20 children to reception each year until 2023.
13. The two storey building would have external dimensions of some 18.5 metre (60.7 feet) by 21 metre (68.9 feet) with a 5 degree pitched roof. The height of the building to the eaves is proposed to be 6.65 metres (21.81 feet) and to the ridge 7.52 metres (24.67 feet). It is proposed to be located 5 metres (16.4 feet) south of the main building corridor and 4.8 metres (15.7 feet) east of the junior classrooms and some 9 metres (29 feet) west of the library building.
14. The materials proposed are an off-white render finish; vertical bays of polyester powder coated aluminium windows, louvres and navy blue coloured insulated panels. A darker render colour is proposed for the recessed plinth. The roof is proposed to be grey single ply membrane with upstands at regular centres. The roof fascia, soffit and downpipes are proposed to be mid grey RAL colour aluminium to match the colour proposed for the windows.
15. Level access is proposed to the building and between the proposed building and the existing school and a platform lift is proposed for access to the first floor of the extension. An external metal escape staircase is proposed to the west elevation.
16. It is not proposed to remove any trees as a result of the proposal.
17. The applicant advises that a key aim in the design and construction of the proposal is sustainability and the reduction of carbon emissions, including the reduction of heat loss; use of cross laminated timber in construction material; natural ventilation including using windcatchers: minimising artificial lighting by the use of large windows and sunpipes and providing photo voltaic cells located at ground level to the west of the site in a fenced compound. Underfloor heating is proposed in the classrooms.

Planning Policy

18. **(i) National Planning Policies** are set out in the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012)** and the **National Planning Policy Guidance (March 2014)**, which 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).

The NPPF states that, in determining applications, 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

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sustainable development in relation to this development proposal, the NPPF guidance and objectives covering the following matters are of particular relevance:

- consideration of whether the opportunities for sustainable transport have been taken up and safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people;
- achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- the great importance that the Government attaches to ensuring that a 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.

Development Plan Policies

(iii) The adopted Dartford Borough Local Plan 1995 Saved Policies (2011)

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|------------|---|
| Policy B1 | Development proposals should be appropriate for the location and should not have a detrimental amenity impact on the local area. A high standard of design should be implemented in proposals with layout, materials, adequate infrastructure, access and parking taken into consideration. |
| Policy B3 | Development proposals should incorporate appropriate hard and soft landscaping measures within development proposals with retention of existing trees. |
| Policy B14 | Development proposals should provide access for, and otherwise make suitable provision wherever possible, to meet the needs of disabled people, the elderly, and the less mobile. |
| Policy H12 | Proposals for non-residential development should not have an adverse impact on the amenity of existing housing areas. |
| 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. |
| Policy T28 | Environmental improvements and traffic management schemes will be encouraged, particularly in residential areas, to enhance amenity and conditions of safety. |

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(iv) The adopted **Dartford Core Strategy (2011)**

- Policy CS15 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.
- Policy CS21 Seeks effective provision of community services.
- Policy CS22 Seeks to protect sport recreation and cultural facilities unless it can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer needed or an equivalent replacement facility in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility is provided elsewhere.
- Policy CS23 Seeks to minimise carbon emissions including through energy efficiency and use of renewable energy. The Council will require all new development to demonstrate that reductions in energy use through passive design and layout of development have been explored and applied, where practical.
- Policy CS24 Seeks to manage flood risk and in Water Source Protection Zones, SUDS will need to demonstrate that any surface water run-off infiltrating the ground will not lead to deterioration of groundwater quality.
- Policy CS25 Seeks to manage the supply and quality of water and waste water / sewerage treatment capacity serving the community, to protect and enhance the quality of surface and groundwater.

(v) Emerging Dartford Development Policies Plan (Publication (Pre Submission) Document 2015)

- Policy DP1 **Presumption in Favour of 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 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.

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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 DP4 Transport Access and Design: Development should be of a design and layout to promote walking, cycling and public transport use through provision of attractive and safe routes. Proposals should include appropriate vehicular access arrangements. Development will only be permitted where proposals ensure that the layout and siting of access is acceptable in terms of residential amenity, highways capacity and safety, free flow of traffic, cyclists and pedestrians, and visual impact. The extent and nature of proposed car parking provision, taking into account any existing provision as relevant to the development, must be in full accordance with the adopted Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

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).

Consultations

19. **Dartford Borough Council** originally raised an objection to the proposal for the following reasons:

- The proposed new teaching block would be sited on existing hard surfaced play areas, and it is not clear that suitable replacement play provision would be provided. The proposed new hardstanding play area to the south of the proposed classroom block is already being used as hard surfaced play space, and the proposed hardstanding area to the north of the site is right outside classrooms and unlikely to be fully utilised. Consequently, it appears that the proposal would result in a loss of hard surfaced play area, which would be unacceptable.
- The proposal states that the scheme would result in an increase of 140 new students attending the school and the submitted travel plan highlights that there will also be an increase in staff numbers. Dartford Council's Parking Standards SPD requires 1 space for pupils / visitors / clients per 2 classes and 1 space for employees per 15 pupils. Consequently, this scheme would generate an additional demand for 14 car parking spaces within the site (10 for staff and 4 for pupils / visitors / clients). The scheme is currently unacceptable as the proposed parking spaces are undersized and do not meet the criteria in Dartford's parking standards SPD, and the separation distances between existing and proposed parking spaces in the north of the car park are substandard and do not allow proposed parking spaces 10, 11 and 12 to be used. Therefore, the parking provision needs to be revised in order to provide the additional required parking

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provision. Failure to provide the required parking provision would likely lead to increased indiscriminate on street parking to the detriment of highway safety of the adjacent roads.

In addition the Borough Council stated:

- The use of tandem parking spaces may be acceptable subject to the agreement of a car parking management plan.
- It is the opinion of the Dartford Planning Authority that increased pupil numbers may lead to increased on street parking demand in the local highway network, which may lead to congestion and highway safety issues. Kent County Council Highways must be consulted in order to assess the potential impact of the proposal.
- Dartford Planning Authority considers the appearance of the proposal to be acceptable, subject to the details of the external materials being agreed.

In response to this objection, the applicant made some amendments to the size of the parking spaces. Additional information was provided in relation to the building design and justification of location of the proposed classroom block on hard surfaced play area and expected use of play spaces. As a result of this, Dartford Borough Council confirm that the proposed car parking spaces and the separation distance between the existing and proposed parking spaces comply with Dartford's Parking Standards SPD. They note that some of the existing spaces have a reduced depth of 4.8m which is slightly below the 5m required in the Parking Standards SPD and that the acceptability of these smaller parking spaces would be for Kent County Council to determine. In addition, the objection to the provision of hardstanding is removed although it is requested that all new play space is fit for purpose.

20. **Environment Agency** have no objection to the proposal subject to conditions relating to surface water drainage and dealing with unforeseen contamination.
21. **Kent County Council Highways and Transportation** have no objection to the proposal. However, they ask the applicants to provide £5000 funding towards the costs of providing waiting restrictions at the junction of Chastilian Road and Wentworth Drive, i.e. the costs of the Traffic Regulation Order and the costs of lining works. They state that during their site visits to this school it was evident that double yellow line waiting restrictions are required at the junction of Wentworth Drive and Chastilian Road to prevent parents parking around the junction and blocking visibility splays. If the school is expanded as proposed then there will be more parents searching for parking places close to the school, thereby increasing pressure at this location. A condition is requested requiring a simple construction management plan, and committing the applicants to the following:-
 - Before vehicles leave the construction site, their wheels will be inspected and cleaned free of any mud, stones and other detritus so that no deposits are left on the public highway;
 - No HGVs will be permitted to reverse onto or off the public highway unless under the supervision of a banksman.

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An Informative is also requested with regard to helping the school address issues of "bad parking" near the school. It is recommended to the school that they instruct parents of older children to park further from the school so relieving pressure for parking in the most popular areas near the school entrances. This has the additional benefit of giving older children more exercise.

No objection has been received in response to additional information provided by the applicant regarding the proposed layout of the additional car parking spaces, although it is noted that the minimum size of parking spaces required by the Dartford Borough Council Parking standards SPD is 2.5m by 5m. It is suggested that any spaces that are only 4.8m long should be lengthened towards the adjacent bushes although in practice it is likely that cars would overhang the verge adjacent to the bushes and so longer cars could still be accommodated without this change.

22. **Kent County Council Ecological Advice Service** advise that the proposal will have no biodiversity implications.
23. **Kent County Council School Travel Planner** comments that the School Travel Plan submitted meets the County Council criteria for school travel plans.
24. **Kent County Council Flood and Water Management (sustainable drainage)** advise that the proposal is not major development and falls outside of their remit as a statutory consultee.

Local Member

25. The local County Member, Mr Jan Ozog was notified of the application on 18th August 2016.

Publicity

26. The application was publicised by the posting of two site notices, and the individual notification of 115 residential properties.

Representations

27. In response to the publicity, 6 letters of representation have been received. A summary of the main planning issues raised/points made to date are set out below:

Need

- For the school expansion project only 5 additional classrooms are needed yet the planned building has 8.
- The building is too big for the need to accommodate the extra children.

Design

- A preference for a split development as displayed at a previous meeting.
- The style of building comes in packaged format and not bespoke for the needs of the school.

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- The style of the building is not in keeping with the original school and has no similar features to the original building.
- It is in the middle of the playground.
- It is not properly connected to the school, it only having a covered walkway.
- Considers that the proposal is an awful, ugly, huge construction and that its location, size and design is completely wrong for Wentworth.
- Considers that classrooms should be located at ground level, to be safer in meeting the needs of young children as stairs and lifts have problems for the young.
- That there will be loss of light to some classrooms.
- Unused space around the perimeter of the site could be utilised more sympathetically than this proposal.
- Requests consideration of building on top of the original school, even if this is more disruptive short term.

Loss of playground and space

- The proposal would have a detrimental effect on the current pupils as it takes away outside play area and affects the flow of the playground.
- Too many children in a small space and loss of children's space.

Traffic and parking

- Wentworth Drive is unable to take any increase in traffic and on-street parking would be excessive.
- The number of near misses in Wentworth Drive contradicts the findings in the Traffic Impact Assessment dated 5th Aug 2016.
- The Parking/Travelling to School impact would not be manageable with existing conditions. Conditions need to be amended with the addition of a drop off/pick up area and a crossing on James Road and Chastilian Road for safety.
- The traffic survey's were carried out during Summer Term, when more walk to school than on a cold January day.
- Concerns for the safety of children, especially when cars are dropping off/picking up at beginning and end of school.
- Concerns about an increase in inconsiderate parking and verbal abuse.
- Parents park across and block driveways.
- Questions whether additional parking within the school grounds would be sufficient for those already unable to park inside the school plus the new teachers.
- Requests yellow lines on the junctions of Wentworth Drive with other roads.
- Asks that the parking issue be looked at.

Noise and disruption

- Disruption to children learning
- Neighbouring noise nuisance

Procedural comments

- Has tried to be involved in this process since going to a meeting at the school in February but has found that information was later changed by the applicants and was

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not informed about the structural changes in the plans.

Discussion

28. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 18 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. Issues of particular relevance in this case include need, location, design, and parking and access matters and whether the development is sustainable in light of the NPPF.

Need

29. National planning policy attaches great weight to proposals seeking to expand schools and the need for school development. The applicant has stated that this proposal would allow the School to expand to a 3FE school and given the location of the site within the Dartford urban area, close to the border with London Borough of Bexley the demand for school places is likely to be high.
30. The existing floorplan at the site shows the school to currently have 15 classrooms for reception year and years 1 to 6. There are two “breakout” rooms. The proposal would add a further 8 rooms comprising 7 classrooms and 1 group room. The proposed floorplan for the whole site would then have 21 classrooms, 2 group rooms and 2 “breakout” rooms. The proposal therefore allows for additional classrooms as well as an increase to the number of group rooms; break out spaces and for reorganisation of classroom space across the whole site in order for there to be sufficient classrooms and group rooms for a 3FE school. The provision of hall and dining space and library and learning resource space would not change although there would be alterations to the use of the space, including removal of internal hall doors and reconfiguration of the dining hall and kitchen servery arrangements.
31. The applicant states that all schools need to have specific alternative areas to support specific educational needs and one to one interventions. At this site, sufficient alternative areas are needed to support an expansion and the educational requirements of a 3FE school and all of the proposed new accommodation has been identified by the applicant as an educational requirement for the school. Given the planning policy weight to ensuring that there is a sufficient choice of school places to meet the needs of existing and new communities; National guidance that Local Authorities should take a proactive and positive approach to meeting this requirement and development plan policy CS21 which seeks the provision of community facilities close to the population that they serve, I see no planning objection in principle to the need for the development, including the need for sufficient break out rooms and group rooms to support an educational requirement.

Design and location within the site

32. National Planning Policy seeks to achieve good design and planning guidance states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the

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opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. It also states that Applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in developing the design of the new development should be looked on more favourably.

33. In this case, the Applicant has carried out pre-application consultation with the community before submission of the application. However, it would appear that the design has changed over time. In the applicant's justification for the proposal it states that a split development was looked at which involved a building at both ends of the school. The feasibility of this was rejected by the applicant in favour of a two storey centrally located proposal. However, neighbour comments indicate some preference for earlier design proposals and not the proposal taken forward by the applicant to this planning application.
34. Dartford Planning Policy B1 seeks to ensure that development proposals are appropriate for the location and that they should not have a detrimental amenity impact on the local area, whilst encouraging a high standard of design with regard to layout, materials, infrastructure, access and parking. For extensions to buildings this includes using materials which match or are compatible with the original building. Policy S6 requires a high quality and standard of design in new development.
35. There have been no objections to the design from Dartford Borough Council subject to details of the external materials being agreed. However, there have been neighbour representations objecting to the design as detailed in paragraph 27 above.
36. This proposal is centrally located on existing hard space playground and is close to the existing buildings enclosed between the northern and southern sections of the building and behind the frontage to the school at the east. It is connected to the corridors of the main building by a 5m long single storey corridor under a canopy.
37. No amendments have been made to the design following the applicant's consideration of the neighbour comments received although a justification statement has been provided in which the applicant explains their proposal as being based on centralised teaching spaces and the longer term strategy for the school.
38. The applicant states that a centralised teaching space is a preferable option to that of building two separate extensions each end of the school, one of which would be connected to a 1950's steel framed building which is currently in use for early years teaching and which was originally built as a convalescent hospital. This is because of the very long corridor lengths that would result and because in the longer term the steel framed 1950's buildings will need to be replaced. According to the applicant these were not built as teaching spaces and are in a poor state of repair with limited insulation and high running costs, poor environmental conditions and overheating. To add a new building to one which needs replacement would not be sustainable. They state that the building design proposed would allow for further future extension to provide classrooms to replace those in the two 1950's buildings when they are demolished. This would in turn provide space for new external play areas.
39. However, it is important to note that this particular application does not include demolition of the 1950s buildings and does not include replacement classroom space

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for this, nor does it provide the new external play area space in place of the 1950s buildings. These would need a separate planning application to progress. Furthermore, the planning application for this proposal has not been presented as part of a phased development and must be considered as a standalone development for the expansion to a 3FE school. It is however appreciated that the feasibility of adding to buildings which in the near future may need demolition is an important consideration to the design proposal, along with a desire for a sustainable longer term solution.

40. I consider that the proposed building is appropriately connected using a covered walkway and canopy to the existing buildings at the site and that the location close to the centre of the school is acceptable in terms of limiting impacts elsewhere to residential amenity and playing field land.
41. Not all of the buildings at the site are single storey and in my view the two storey nature of the proposal with the ridge height of 7.52 metres (24.67 feet) would not be out of place when sited amongst buildings ranging in height from 6.43 metres (21.09 feet) to 8.89 metres (29.16 feet). The existing site includes a mix of one and two storey flat roof buildings and one storey buildings with a pitched roof. This can be seen in the existing elevation drawings above.
42. Most of the buildings at the site are brick built, with the exception of the reception and early years 1950's buildings which are in a steel framed building with brick gable ends, metal riveted panels and windows set in a metal frame; and the render finish of the ICT suite (DA/09/308) and the timber clad conference room (DA/06/867). However, the applicant proposes that the external finish would be colour insulated render, double glazed windows with coloured panels. The applicant was asked to consider that the use of brick as an external material finish might be more in keeping with the existing buildings at the site and as a result provided an external render justification statement.
43. The proposed building style is designed to contrast in appearance to the rest of the school, to reflect a different period of construction and different construction technique. The applicant considers that insulated render contributes more to the sustainability of the proposal than a traditional brick finish and has lower heating costs. Given that surrounding residential property is predominantly two storeys using a rendered external finish, and given that other more recent buildings permitted at the site have incorporated a render finish, I do not consider the use of render to be visually inappropriate in this location. Moreover, similar materials have been used on various school developments across the County, in comparable residential locations.
44. I also do not consider the scale and massing of the building to be inappropriate in this location given the mix of existing buildings at the site. The building is partially screened by existing school buildings from the nearest residential property in Wentworth Drive and the west elevation is sufficiently distant to properties in Chastilian Road and James Road to not be overbearing. Views from the north and south would be partially screened by the existing buildings at the site.
45. In my view, the proposed floor layout means that the building would not affect light to classrooms at the lower levels of the school, given that there are corridors between the proposed building and the existing classrooms to the north and that to the south classrooms face towards the south. At the upper level, the building is located sufficiently far away from the existing buildings so as to not detrimentally affect light to the existing

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buildings. The applicant would have had regard to building regulation requirements in relation to light and shading in the design of the building. Furthermore, the light colour of the render and the extensive window space to elevations facing the existing school buildings would reduce the bulk of the proposal when viewed from the other nearby school buildings.

46. The location of classrooms at ground floor and first floor level, using stairs and lifts as appropriate, is not unusual for school sites and in my view the learning environment therefore reflects the challenges of everyday life. Planning policy does not preclude this use of the use of two storey buildings for primary schools and I am satisfied that the proposal includes arrangements for inclusive access.
47. Furthermore, whilst the design is similar to that used elsewhere, including most recently that considered by Members in October 2016 in relation to The Brent Primary School (DA/16/1306), it is considered in this Report in relation to the special characteristics and location of the Wentworth Primary School.
48. With regard to the design of the 15 additional parking spaces proposed, I consider that the applicant has provided additional information to demonstrate that all of the proposed spaces are useable; subject to the submission of a car parking management plan which I am satisfied can be required by condition. Whilst the proposed spaces do not all meet the size standard for width as set out in the emerging Development Plan Policy DP4 in relation to the Dartford adopted SPD on parking standards (2012), it should be noted that the location of 9 of the spaces in front of existing spaces means that the proposed width (2.4m) needs to match the existing width which is 2.4m for the existing spaces, in order to successfully operate the managed double bank parking system. The existing car parking spaces at the school measure 4.8m by 2.4m. All of the 15 parking spaces proposed would be 5m long and 6 of the spaces would be 2.5m wide. Given that Dartford Borough Council confirms that the proposed 15 parking spaces comply with the Dartford Parking Standards SPD and that there is no objection to the parking provision by Kent County Council Highways and Transportation, I conclude that the design and layout of the proposed new parking is acceptable. Furthermore, given that the existing spaces at the site are already in use despite being slightly below the SPD Parking Standard of 2.5m by 5m, I conclude that the design of the existing parking layout is acceptable. Parking issues are also discussed further in relation to Highways issues below.

Sustainability and water management

49. As outlined in paragraph 17 of this report, the building design includes attention to sustainability requirements including the use of photovoltaic cells at ground level so as to be also used by the school as a learning resource. The proposal therefore demonstrates that this element of sustainability has been considered within the design.
50. The Environment Agency advises that the site overlies a Principal Aquifer and is within a Source Protection Zone 1 for a public water supply. I am satisfied that a condition can be used to control infiltration of surface water into the ground; to require a remediation strategy to be submitted and implemented as approved in the event that unsuspected contamination is found during development. Furthermore, as the site is located in a sensitive setting requiring attention to pollution prevention measures the Environment Agency would anticipate that construction would be governed by a Construction

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Environment Management Plan and all relevant pollution prevention measures fully implemented. I am satisfied that the applicant can be advised of this and the Environment Agency Developers Guide by an informative should Members decide to grant permission.

Loss of playground and outside open space

51. National planning policy seeks to achieve healthy communities and guidance is that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land including playing fields should not generally be built upon unless specific exceptions apply. The proposal does not impact on playing field provision as it is located on an area of hardstanding, currently used for hard play, close to the school buildings.
52. The proposal has attracted objection from neighbours because of the location on hard surface playing space and loss of this space. It has also been suggested by a neighbour that a location on the school field would be a preferable location.
53. In the Borough's emerging planning policy, parts of the school site, (such as the school playing field) are designated as open space and adopted planning policy (Core Strategy Policy CS14) and emerging planning policy (DP24) seeks to protect and enhance existing open spaces. However, the hard surface play space that would be lost as a result of this proposal is not specifically protected in planning policy as it is not designated as open space.
54. Whilst the footprint of the two storey proposal would remove 386.7 sqm (4162 sqft) of the hard surface of the playground and the canopy link to the main building would also result in a further 44 sqm (473.6 sqft) loss, the applicant has sought to limit the footprint of the proposal with a two storey design and the location near to the school does not impact school playing field policy. The applicant has also been undertaking improvements to other external play areas within the site in order to offset the loss of 386sqm (4161 sqft) hard surface playground area should permission be granted. This includes a new artificial grassed area of 500sqm (5381.5 sqft) and replacement of an existing tyre play area with tarmac amounting to 200sqm (2152.78 sqft). These surfaces would allow use in all weathers.
55. The loss of 386.7 sqm (4162 sqft) of existing hard surface play area which has no specific protection in planning terms because it is not playing field, green space or open space, would not in my view be sufficient grounds to justify refusal of the proposal when balanced against the strong policy support for schools development. Whilst the proposal would require the outdoor space to be reorganised in order to ensure that the new space is used efficiently and effectively, and to ensure that the space works well for the number of children at the school, I do not consider that the change in itself should justify refusal of the proposal and consider that the flow of the playground and use of play space being more a playground and playtime management issue for the school than a planning issue.

Highways and traffic issues

56. National Planning Policy and Local Planning Policy seeks to address the highways and traffic impacts of development proposals. The NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative

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impacts of development are severe. The NPPF indicates that the travel plan is a key tool for promoting sustainable transport.

57. The applicant has submitted a Traffic Assessment which includes recommendations in relation to mitigation of the additional traffic that the proposal is likely to generate. The application also includes an updated School Travel Plan containing objectives to reduce the number of staff, children and parents travelling to school by car and to increase travel by cycling and to restrict the impact of dangerous vehicle behaviour in the vicinity of the school.
58. However, the expansion of the school roll that would result from this proposal has attracted neighbour objection because of the perceived highways and traffic impacts. Dartford Borough Council also commented that in their opinion increased pupil numbers may lead to increased demand for on street parking which may lead to congestion and highway safety issues particularly if the parking design layout prevents some of the proposed spaces from being used. The applicant has submitted additional information with regard to the proposed parking design layout which has addressed this issue.
59. Planning policy seeks to ensure that there are appropriate measures in place to address the impacts of development on the highway. The Highways Authority has raised no objection to this proposal. However, the Highways Authority considers that the proposal might result in more parents searching for parking places close to the school, thereby increasing pressure at this location and so consider that it is necessary for waiting restrictions in the form of double yellow lines to be provided at the junction of Chastilian Road and Wentworth Drive. The purpose of the waiting restrictions would be to prevent parents parking around the junction and blocking visibility splays.
60. The applicant has confirmed that they will fund the £5000 towards the costs of the Traffic Regulation Order and the costs of lining works. A contribution toward the funding of highway works responds to Dartford Local Plan Policy T28 and to neighbour concerns about safety and congestion in the nearby residential area. It would also help to address one of the neighbour comments that putting yellow lines on the junctions of Wentworth Drive with other roads would help with the street parking problem.
61. The Dartford Borough Parking SPD states that appropriate provision should be made for the setting down and picking up of children and for car parking for parents/carers taking children to and from school, in a safe environment and in a manner that does not unduly interfere with the operation and use of the public highway. This provision is on surrounding roads. Neighbour representations include concern that the problem of on-street parking will be exacerbated and that the proposal does not include a drop off / pick up facility within the site.
62. Dartford Borough Council also expressed concern about increased indiscriminate on street parking, congestion and highway safety issues and the potential for this to increase if adequate parking provision is not provided within the site. However, following amendments to the proposed parking spaces sizes the proposed parking meets the Dartford Borough Council Parking Standards SPD.
63. The applicant has undertaken a parking stress survey. This indicates that Wentworth Drive between Chastilian Road and Ross Road, James Road and Chastilian Road and Seaton Road are the favoured drop off and pick up parking locations. It suggests that

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more use could be made of some of the local roads such as Wentworth Drive between Ross Road and North Road, North Road, Denver Road, Marcus Road and Heather Drive. The applicant suggests that parents be encouraged to use these roads also.

64. The Traffic Impact Assessment states that there is limited assistance from the school at drop off and pick up times and that help from the staff at these times can help to make the process more efficient, recommending that the school considers putting measures in place to help parents during school pick up and drop off times. The School Travel Plan does not appear to include a task relating to this however.
65. One neighbour requests the addition of a drop off/pick up area and a crossing on James Road and Chastilian Road for safety. However a drop off/pick up facility is not included in the application and given the Highways Authority comments the proposal is considered acceptable with waiting restrictions and so there would be no grounds to reject the proposal on the basis of it not including a drop off/pick up area. A crossing facility is also not included in the application although the Traffic Impact Assessment recommends that Kent County Council considers the installation of a formal crossing point in order to make the road crossing safer for pedestrians travelling to school. The School Travel Plan includes a task in the Spring and Summer terms 2017 for the school to write to Kent Council Highways to request a review of crossing facilities and road signs near to the school. Given that the Highways Authority consider that the proposal without a new crossing facility would not be unacceptable on highways grounds, inclusion of a school crossing facility within the application is not required. Once further details of possible locations for a crossing facility emerge as part of the school crossing facility review within the School Travel Plan the school can take this matter forward outside of the planning process.
66. There are no objections to the parking provision within the site from the Highways Authority, although as discussed above it is noted that the size of existing parking spaces do not fully meet the Dartford Borough Council parking standards which were adopted in 2012. As these are existing spaces and currently functioning, I do not consider that a reconfiguration of the existing parking spaces would be required as a prerequisite for this proposal.
67. However, one of the neighbour representations concerns whether the additional parking proposed within the school grounds will be sufficient for those already unable to park inside the school plus the new teachers. The application states that there would be an increase from 65 staff to 83 staff between 2016 and 2023 and the proposal would increase the on-site parking for staff and visitors to 61 spaces. The Parking Assessment carried out by the applicant indicates that currently 55 staff requires parking at the site and there is space for 46 staff, meaning that 9 cars park informally on site or on surrounding roads. If this proposal is granted the applicant estimates that 70 staff would need to park at the site and there would be 61 spaces. This would mean that there would still be a requirement for some informal car parking on site or on surrounding roads. The applicant also states that there would be a shortfall in provision for visitor parking on site and this might need to be met by parking on surrounding streets. Dartford planning policy T23 concerns the provision of adequate off street parking facilities within development proposals and the Supplementary Planning Document on Parking Standards (adopted July 2012) provides guidance on the number of parking spaces required for non-residential primary schools. The proposed parking is in accordance with the Parking Standards for staff and visitors to the school.

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68. Whilst the parking on site would not provide enough spaces for all of the staff and visitors to the site, the amended parking provision layout meets the planning policy requirements for primary schools with regard to the number of spaces. Whilst 9 of the proposed spaces are no wider than the existing spaces at the site, all of the proposed spaces are 5m long and 6 of the proposed spaces are 2.5m wide. I conclude that given the spaces are all at least 2.4m wide they are fit for purpose and the proposal will in my view meet the planning policy requirement to provide the required number of spaces on site for staff subject to being appropriately managed.
69. Concerns relating to the impact on parking and inconsiderate parking in the vicinity of the school have been made. There is a local concern that Wentworth Drive does not have capacity for a traffic increase and that near misses and safety of children is an issue and that the Traffic Impact Assessment includes an assessment of the capacity of the roads surrounding the school and states that a number have extra capacity to accommodate drop off and pick up traffic. Given the view of no objection from the Highways Authority and their request for an Informative to the School to instruct parents of older children to park further from the school so relieving pressure for parking in the most popular areas near the school entrances, I consider that the capacity on surrounding roads is adequate for the additional traffic that would be generated by this proposal.
70. Verbal abuse and antisocial behaviour are not something that the Planning Authority can control. However, these behaviours could in part, be addressed through School Travel Plan actions working to achieve better driving behaviour and greater consideration to the neighbouring environment, in conjunction with local wardens and PCSOs. This issue was included in the Traffic Impact Assessment and the School Travel Plan includes tasks to discourage drivers from parking badly near to the school. The County Council's School Travel Planner and the School may be able to provide information to parents explaining the importance of safe parking and general highway safety as part of the Responsible Parking Initiative, which should be included in the School Travel Plan.
71. One of the neighbour comments concerns the accuracy of data within the Traffic Impact Assessment with regard to the near misses on the roads. It is normal procedure to only include the official police crash data within the Traffic Impact Assessment and this does not include near miss data. The timing of the Traffic Impact Assessment July 2016 survey of car journeys has been taken into account in the Highway response to this application.
72. In summary, I consider that this proposal meets the planning policy requirements with regard to highway and traffic impacts and as there is no highway objection to the proposal I conclude that the impact in this case is not so severe as to warrant refusal on highways grounds, subject to the provision of yellow lines which the applicant has agreed to.

Amenity Issues and Construction Matters

73. Planning policy requires consideration of the impact of proposal to amenity. Comments have been received from the neighbour publicity with regard to the proposal and disruption to children's learning and neighbourhood noise nuisance. Noise is likely to

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result from the proposed construction activity although this would be a temporary impact during the period of construction activity.

74. Given that the proposal is located in a residential area, if planning permission is granted it would in my view be appropriate to impose a condition restricting the development works to be undertaken only between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 hours on Saturdays with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays. It is also good practice on school sites for contractors to manage construction activities so as to minimise conflict with traffic and pedestrians and neighbouring residential properties at the site.
75. I consider that a condition can be used should Members decide in favour of the proposal to require a construction management strategy to be submitted before development commences and this can include the details of the location of site compounds; operatives and construction visitor vehicle parking; wheel cleaning facilities and details of how the site access would be managed to avoid peak school times and to ensure that no HGVs reverse onto or off the public highway unless under the supervision of a banksman and details of the construction accesses arrangements. It can also include details of procedures to be adopted to minimise and respond to neighbour complaints during the construction period.

Other matters

76. Neighbour comments received regarding communication regarding the applicant's proposals at the site indicate that there is some dissatisfaction with the pre-consultation process undertaken by the applicant. Whilst national planning policy indicates that proposals that evolve taking account of the views of the local community can be looked upon more favourably, it is clear that the application can only be decided based upon what has been submitted. The applicant's pre-application processes and local communication are not something for which the planning authority is responsible.

Conclusion

77. Given the presumption in favour of sustainable development and that planning proposals should be granted if they accord with planning policy without delay, I conclude that the development would not give rise to any significant material harm; is in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the development plan policies and accords with the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy Statement for Schools (2011). Subject to the imposition of the conditions referred to below, I consider that the development would not have a significantly detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area by virtue of the design and location proposed and would not have a significantly detrimental impact on the local highway network or local amenity and would accord with the principles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF. Therefore, I recommend that permission be granted subject to appropriate conditions.

Recommendation

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

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- the standard time limit;
- that the development be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- the submission of details of external materials;
- that highways works (provision of double yellow line waiting restrictions at the junction of Wentworth Drive and Chastilian Road) are carried out (subject to a Traffic Regulation Order) before first occupation of the building, or in accordance with a timetable to be agreed with the Highways Authority;
- provision of the car parking and cycle parking spaces detailed in the application prior to occupation;
- the submission and approval of a car parking management plan prior to occupation;
- the submission and approval of a construction management strategy including details of the location of site compounds; operatives and construction visitor vehicle parking; wheel cleaning facilities and details of how the site access would be managed to avoid peak school times and details of any construction accesses; details of procedures to be adopted to minimise and respond to neighbour complaints during the construction period;
- that no HGVs reverse onto or off the public highway unless under supervision of a banksman;
- hours of working during construction being restricted to between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 hours on Saturdays with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays;
- submission and approval of drainage design layout and that no drainage for the infiltration of surface water drainage to the ground is permitted other than with consent of the Planning authority;
- that if contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then a remediation strategy be submitted detailing how it will be dealt with;

79. I FURTHER RECOMMEND that the applicant BE ADVISED of the following informatives:

- to request that the school instruct parents of older children to park further from the school to relieve the pressure for parking in the most popular areas nearer to the school entrances;
- the inclusion of the Responsible Parking Initiative within the School Travel Plan;
- with regard to preventing water pollution and that construction be governed by a Construction Environment Management Plan;
- to signpost the Environment Agency Developer's Guide and pollution prevention advice.

Case Officer: H Mallett	Tel. no: 03000 411200
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Background Documents: see section heading
