

SECTION D
DEVELOPMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Background Documents: the deposited documents; views and representations received as referred to in the reports and included in the development proposals dossier for each case; and other documents as might be additionally indicated.

Item D1

Construction of a new 2 FE two-storey primary school with nursery facility, associated soft and hard landscaping and access to form a 3-19 through school at The John Wallis Church of England Academy, Millbank Road, Kingsnorth, Kent, TN23 3HG – 17/00236/AS (KCC/AS/0044/2017)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 19th June 2017.

Application by Kent County Council (Education) and The John Wallis Church of England Academy for the construction of a new 2FE two-storey primary school with nursery facility, associated soft and hard landscaping and access to form a 3-19 through school at The John Wallis Church of England Academy, Millbank Road, Kingsnorth, Ashford – 17/00236/AS (KCC/AS/0044/2017)

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

Local Member: Mr Michael Angell

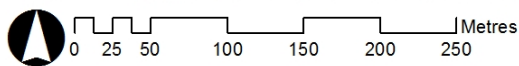
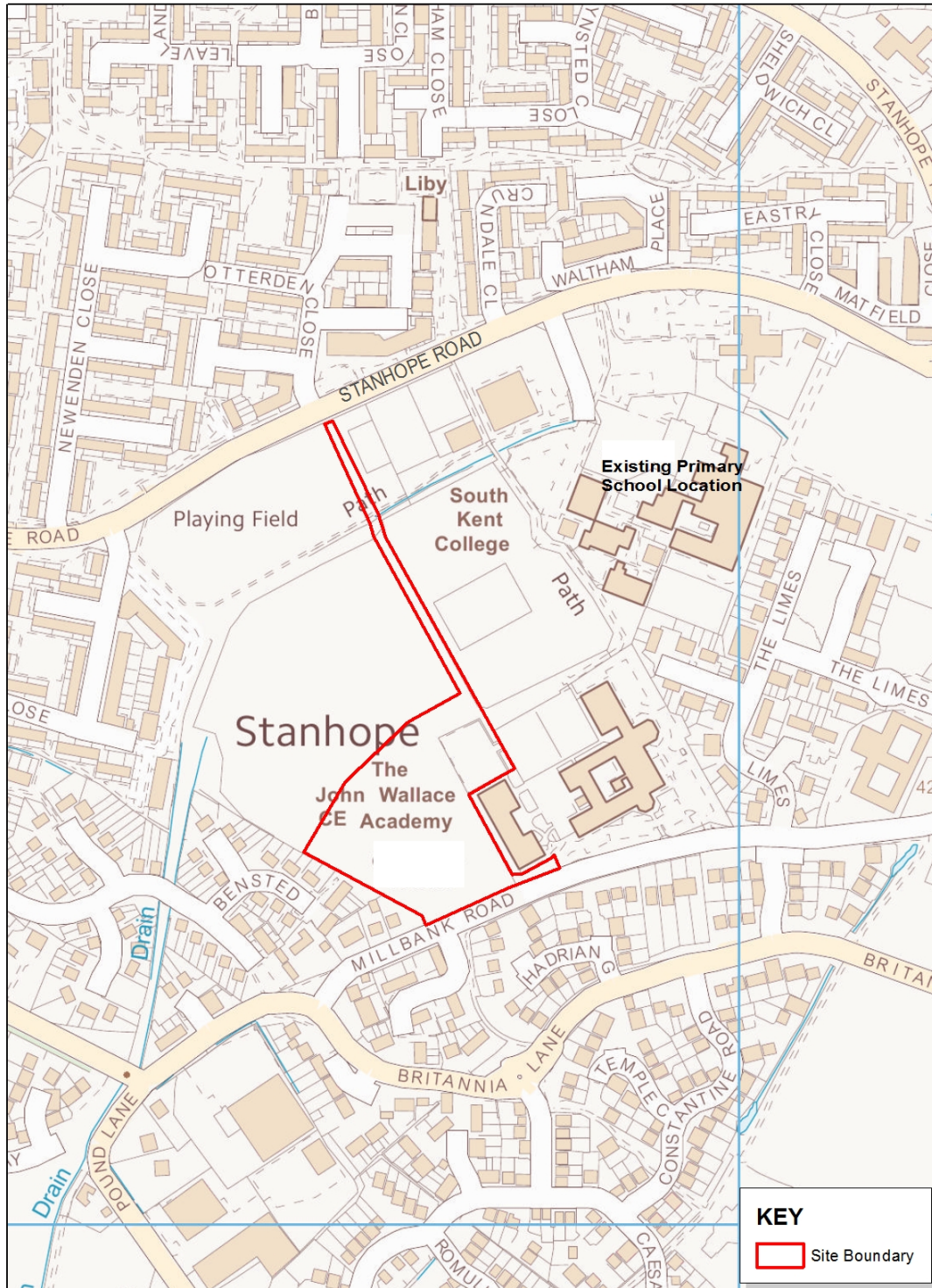
Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The John Wallis Academy (senior school) is located to the south-west of Ashford town centre in the Stanhope area. The School is located between Stanhope Road to the north and Millbank Road to the south. The school buildings are located at the south eastern corner of the site and the playing fields, including a 3G all weather pitch, are located to the north and west. The only vehicular access is from Millbank Road to the south, with additional pedestrian access from Stanhope Road. At the northern end of the site along Stanhope Road is the Academy's sports hall and alongside this some hard surfaced courts.
2. Millbank Road is a no-through road for vehicles just past the main access to the site. On site there is an existing car park providing 127 spaces which are used for staff, visitors and 6th form parking only. The academy is now formed of a mixture of original school buildings and the new buildings given approval in 2013 and completed in 2014. The new buildings are constructed from a mixture of render, brickwork and glass under a flat roof, whilst the original buildings are of brick construction with tiled pitched roofs.
3. The school site is predominantly surrounded by residential development. The southern boundary with Millbank Road is marked with a mature hedge interspersed with established trees, and a footpath runs along the length of the road up to the school access point. Past here the road is blocked off and the other end of Millbank Road can only be accessed from the western end.
4. To the north-east of the senior school lies the existing primary school, previously known as Linden Grove Primary School.

New 2FE two-storey primary school with nursery, hard and soft landscaping and access to form a 3-19 through school at The John Wallis Church of England Academy, Kingsnorth - 17/00236/AS (KCC/AS/0044/2017)

General Location Plan



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Ordnance Survey 100019238

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Proposed Site Plan



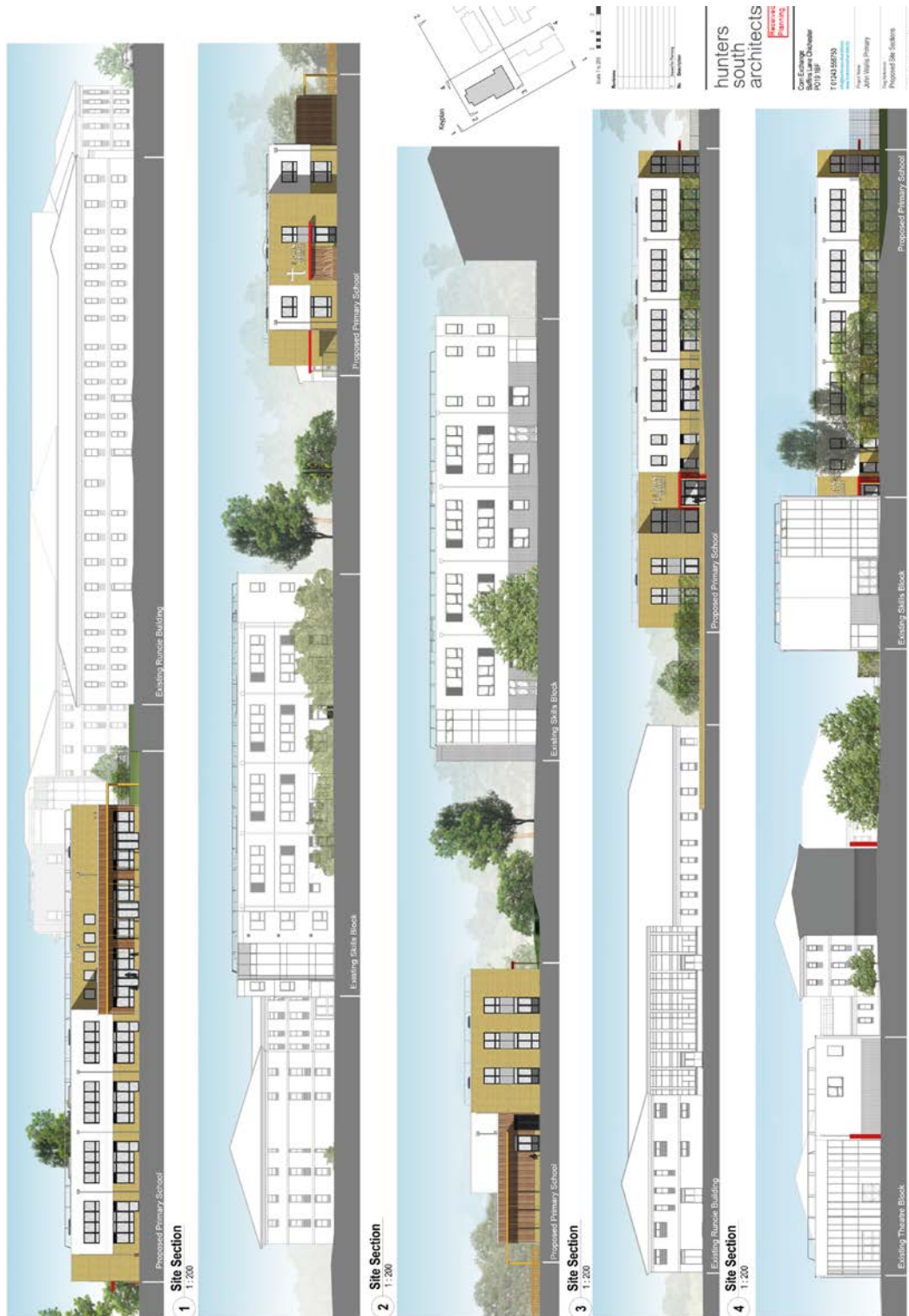
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Proposed Elevations



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Proposed Site Sections with Existing Academy



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Background

5. The John Wallis Academy has become a key landmark within the local community and has become a leading and highly respected academy in the area, with a high demand for pupil places. The incorporation of the original Linden Grove Primary School into the academy (September 2012) has provided an integrated all through school, enhancing opportunities for the local community. However the existing primary school buildings date from the 1970's, and now require a high level of maintenance and have high running costs due to inefficient energy consumption. By relocating the primary school within the main school site it would provide a safe and secure all-through campus, with modern well designed buildings and the opportunity for the primary school children to benefit from the facilities and shared resources of the senior school.

Recent Site History

6. The most recent site history relates to the 2013 permission for the reorganisation of the academy site which included the demolition of part of the existing main academy building (Hall and Gym), and the erection of a new two storey assembly/theatre building and a separate three storey teaching building, as well as the reorganisation of hard and soft landscaping and the provision of 127 vehicle parking spaces and 104 cycle parking spaces. This development was completed in 2014.

Proposal

7. The proposal is for the creation of a new 2 FE primary school, to be located almost centrally within the Academy site, and in close proximity to the existing academy buildings - just to the north of the Runcie Building, and the west of the Skills Block. The school would be a stand-alone 2 storey building which would accommodate 420 pupils and up to 54 nursery pupils, with 20 full time and 24 part time staff. The building would be constructed from materials similar to those used in the recent additions to the senior school, which would be predominantly brick but with white rendered sections at first floor level; windows and doors in a mid-grey colour; timber cladding to the nursery element; and entrances highlighted by canopies in the red academy colour. The building would have a flat roof upon which would be located an array of photovoltaic panels.
8. The school would have a rectangular footprint with classrooms located either side of a central corridor. At ground floor level would be the nursery provision, early years and key stage 1 classrooms, plus the hall and various school offices and meeting rooms. At first floor level would be the classrooms for key stage 2, plus smaller Special Education Needs (SEN) rooms and a learning resource centre. The School wish to have three classrooms of 20 children in reception and year 1, with the other years having 30 children in each form. Stairs would be provided at either end of the classroom corridor and a lift would also be provided just off the main entrance lobby. There would be no requirement for the primary school to have its own kitchen facilities as these would be shared with the senior school. The proposed school hall would be used for PE and dining facilities, but school assemblies would be held in the main Theatre Block in the senior school.
9. Access to the new primary school would share the existing vehicular access off Millbank

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Road, and provide an access road which would run along the southern boundary of the site with Millbank Road (to the west of the access), leading to a new car park providing 50 parking spaces and 2 disabled bays. Amended plans show that vehicles would be able to enter the site to access an existing drop off/pick up facility in front of the senior school (to the east of the access), and cars would then exit at the far eastern access point, following a one-way loop whilst on the site. There would be a fenced pedestrian route from the access on Millbank Road through the site to the new school. An additional pedestrian footpath is proposed from Stanhope Road to the north, which would be 3m wide and separate to the existing senior school access. The new car park and the access road would require the removal of 5 trees to allow the access road through.

10. The new primary school building would be sited on the area of the existing hard courts provided for the senior school. It is proposed that these would be relocated to the west of the Runcie Building and enclosed with fencing. A cycle shelter would be provided alongside the courts in proximity to the access, footpath and car park.

Planning Policy

11. The most relevant Government Guidance and Development Plan Policies summarised below are pertinent to the consideration of this application:

- (i) **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** March 2012 and the **National Planning Policy Guidance** (March 2014), sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England, at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications but does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However the weight given to development plan policies will depend on their consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the development plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

In determining applications the NPPF states that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

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

- Consideration of whether the opportunities for sustainable transport have been taken up and safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people;
- Achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- 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.

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Paragraph 74 of the NPPF is also relevant to the consideration of this application, it states that:

Existing open space, 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 location; or*
- *the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.*

(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.

(ii) **Ashford Borough Council Core Strategy (July 2008)**

Policy CS1 Guiding Principles: Sustainable development and high quality design are at the centre of the Council’s approach to plan making and deciding planning applications.

Policy CS9 Design Quality: Development proposals must be of high quality design and demonstrate a positive response to each of the following design criteria: character, distinctiveness and sense of place, permeability and ease of movement, legibility, mixed use and diversity, continuity and enclosure, quality of public spaces, flexibility, adaptability and liveability, richness in detail, and efficient use of natural resources.

Policy CS10 Sustainable Design and Construction: All major developments must incorporate sustainable design features to reduce the consumption of natural resources and to help deliver the aim of zero carbon growth in Ashford. Unless it can be demonstrated that it’s not technologically practical, makes the scheme unviable, or imposes excessive costs on occupiers, developments are expected to achieve the relevant BREEAM standard through energy and water efficiency, sustainable construction materials and waste reduction; reduce carbon dioxide emissions and be carbon neutral.

Policy CS15 Transport: The Council will seek to promote public transport and other non-car based modes of travel especially in the Growth Area. Development proposals must show how all highway, public transport, walking and cycling needs arising from the development will be satisfied. Developments that would generate significant traffic movements must be well related to the primary and secondary road network, and this should have adequate capacity to accommodate the

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development. Maximum parking standards will accord with national parking standards.

Policy CS18 Meeting the Community's Needs: Public open space, recreation, sports, children's play, leisure, cultural, school and adult education, youth, health, public service and community facilities to be provided to meet the needs generated by new development.

Policy CS20 Sustainable Drainage: All developments should include appropriate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) for the disposal of surface water, in order to avoid any increase in flood risk or adverse impact on water quality.

Ashford Borough Council Local Plan to 2030 (Consultation Draft June 2016)

Policy SP1 Strategic Objectives: A number of identified strategic objectives that form the basis of the Plan's policy framework as well as core principles that planning applications are expected to adhere to including, amongst other things, protection and enhancement of the Borough's historic and natural environment; the creation of the highest quality design which is sustainable, accessible, safe and promotes a positive sense of place through the design of the built form, the relationship of buildings with each other and the spaces around them, and which responds to the prevailing character of the area.

Policy SP6 Promoting High Quality Design: Development proposals must be of high quality design and demonstrate a careful consideration of and a positive response to each of the following design criteria: character, distinctiveness and sense of place, ease of movement, legibility, mixed use and diversity, public safety, quality of public spaces and their future management, flexibility and liveability, richness in detail, and efficient use of natural resources.

Policy TRA3 Parking Standards for Non-Residential Development: Sets out the parking standards for non-residential developments.

Policy TRA8 Travel Plan Assessments and Statements: Planning applications should be supported by a Transport Statement, a Transport Assessment or a Travel Plan depending on the nature and scale of the proposal and the level of significant transport movements generated.

Policy ENV9 Sustainable Drainage: All development should include appropriate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) for the disposal of surface water, in order to avoid any increase in flood risk or adverse impact on water quality, and to mimic the drainage from the pre-developed site.

Policy ENV11 Sustainable Design & Construction – Non Residential: All major non-residential development will achieve BREEAM 'Very Good' standard with at least 40% improvement in water consumption against the baseline performance of the building, unless demonstrated not to

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be practicable.

Policy ENV15 Archaeology: Planning applications on sites where there is, or is the known potential for, an archaeological heritage asset, should include an appropriate desk based assessment of the asset. In addition, where important or potentially significant archaeological heritage assets may exist, developers will be required to arrange for field evaluations to be carried out in advance of the determination of planning applications. Any archaeological recording should be by an approved archaeological body and take place in accordance with a specification and programme of work to be submitted to and approved by the Borough Council in advance of development commencing.

Policy COM1 Meeting the Community's Needs: Infrastructure and facilities required to meet the needs generated by new development, including sports, arts, community and voluntary sector space, education and health provision, open space and play areas shall be provided as the community is established.

Consultations

12. **Ashford Borough Council** raise no objection to the application subject to the satisfactory resolution of any outstanding highway matters (note: these have been resolved and addressed in paragraphs 29-31) and suggests various conditions for the application but states that it is content for the County Council to reach its own conclusion on the merits of the proposal. The conditions requested were for the standard time period for implementation, that the current school cease to be used within 3 months, the number of pupils in the school restricted to 420 and 50 nursery places, that the playing field be available for community use, materials to be approved, architectural details to be submitted, flues and vents to be approved, hard and soft landscaping to be approved, external seating to be approved, fencing and gates to be approved, sustainable drainage strategy to be approved, highway conditions as required by KCC Highways Team imposed, provision of a pedestrian crossing on Stanhope Road, cycle and scooter parking to be retained, a refuse strategy submitted, biodiversity enhancements to be included, and BREEAM standards to be met. It should be noted that these comments have not been issued as a formal letter yet due to time constraints, and therefore should any additional matters arise when the formal letter is received we will report these verbally.

Kingsnorth Parish Council have not responded to the application.

Stanhope Parish Council support the application but would like to see the Children's Centre and the services it currently provides remaining accessible via Stanhope Road as it is currently. [Note - this application would not affect the Children's Centre].

KCC Highways and Transportation Officer raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions relating to the provision of the parking spaces and cycle shelters being provided before occupation and permanently retained; a Construction Management Plan to cover issues such as parking and turning for construction vehicles

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and site personnel, wheel washing facilities etc; the securing of the use of the drop off loop on site; and the submission of an updated School Travel Plan.

Sport England raise an objection to the proposed development on the grounds that it would not meet any of the exceptions of the Sport England Playing Fields Policy or with paragraph 74 of the NPPF.

County Archaeological Officer states that there is potential for significant remains to survive on site, although previous investigations have suggested some level of disturbance in the past. Formal archaeological works are therefore needed and they recommend the imposition of a condition on any consent to secure archaeological field evaluation works.

KCC School Travel Planner confirms that the School have started their Travel Plan on the Jambusters website, and she will liaise with them over the contents.

KCC Flood Risk Project Officer is satisfied with the additional information submitted and requests the imposition of a condition regarding the submission of a detailed sustainable surface water strategy.

River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board (IDB) Officer states that details of the surface water drainage for the scheme should be subject to a condition which requires separate approval from the County Planning Authority. As the site is thought to drain to Court Lodge Dyke, which is an IDB watercourse, he requests that the River Stour (Kent) IDB be consulted on the details submitted.

Local Member

13. The local County Members (at the time the application was submitted) Mr Derek Smyth and Mr Michael Angell were notified of the application on 16th February 2017. Mr Angell has advised in writing that he has no objection to the application and he remains the Ward Councillor for Ashford South following the recent elections.

Publicity

14. The application was publicised by the posting of two site notices, an advertisement in a local newspaper, and the individual notification of 130 residential properties.

Representations

15. In response to the publicity, one letter of representation has been received. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:
 - Concerned about light pollution as a result of lighting in the new car park;
 - Removal of vegetation along the Millbank boundary with the proposed car park would make the existing school building more exposed and visible from neighbours property;
 - Increase in traffic along Millbank Road would result in more hazardous conditions for children walking to school along this no through road;

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- Should provide a drop off on the school site.

Discussion

16. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 11 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.
17. This application is being reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee due to the objections received from Sport England, and the neighbour representation received. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case are the principle of development in this location; the siting and design of the proposed building in terms of its built form (and sustainability); its siting which results in the loss of part of the playing field; the highway and transportation implications of the school relocation on the surrounding roads and the subsequent amenity impacts of this for neighbouring residents.

Principle of Development

18. The school site lies within the urban confines of Ashford town centre where the principle of development is accepted. There are no specific policy designations which apply to the school site, but it clearly has an established education use.

Siting and Design

19. The proposed school building would be sited to the north of the existing Runcie building and west of the Skills Block, and therefore would be seen in the context of the existing school buildings. The existing senior school buildings are a mixture of two and three stories in height and therefore the proposed two storey primary school building would be in keeping with its surroundings. The design of the building reflects the recent additions to the senior school, in that it would utilise a mixture of brickwork and rendered panels, with a glazed curtain wall as a feature. The nursery element of the building would be defined through the use of timber cladding, and relief to the elevations achieved through the proposed canopies, change in materials and window detailing.
20. The existing games court for the senior school, which is located in the proposed location of the primary school building, would be relocated to the west of the Runcie Building and enclosed with wire mesh fencing. Given the existing mature hedge screening along the Millbank Road boundary, the relocation of the ball court to this location would have a minimal impact on the wider area, and again would be seen within the context of the existing school buildings and playing field setting. Furthermore the car park and access road would also be tucked behind this hedge line and would replicate the existing parking layout on the senior school site, where the parking is provided along the perimeter of the site. In terms of overall siting this is clearly the best location for the parking where it would have the least impact on the existing play space and playing field

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provision. Access to the school would be provided from Stanhope Road via a pedestrian footpath and therefore access to the Children's Services referred to by the Parish Council would be maintained.

21. Overall it is considered that the proposed building would be of a design which would be in keeping with its surroundings and make a positive contribution to the wider education site. It would therefore accord with policies CS1 and CS9 of the Ashford Core Strategy and Policies SP1 and SP6 of the Draft Local Plan to 2030.

Sustainability

22. Policy CS10 of the Ashford Core Strategy relates to sustainable design and construction and requires all major developments to incorporate sustainable design features to reduce the consumption of natural resources and to help deliver the aim of zero carbon growth in Ashford. The Policy states that unless it can be demonstrated that it is not technologically practical, makes the scheme unviable, or imposes excessive costs on applicants, developments are expected to achieve the relevant BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) standard through energy and water efficiency, sustainable construction materials and waste reduction; reduce carbon dioxide emissions and be carbon neutral. Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure do not undertake BREEAM assessments for such school projects, but they work within the 'spirit' of BREEAM by working to the same environmental standards but without diverting funds away from the end development itself, towards the costly assessment rating process. The applicants have however provided a BREEAM pre-assessment in light of Ashford BC's policy which showed that the project would meet the 'excellent' rating in all of the minimum standards and mandatory elements. It is considered that whilst the proposed development will not achieve an actual BREEAM rating as set out in the Council's Policy CS10 it would meet the aims of the policy by being of a sustainable design, incorporating renewable technology, the use of sustainably resourced materials and being compliant with Part L of the Buildings Regulations.

Loss of Playing Field

23. The proposed new school building would be located on the existing hard ball courts for the senior school, and these would be relocated to an existing area of grassed playing field to the west of the Runcie Building. Sport England have objected to the application as they consider that it does not accord with paragraph 74 of the NPPF or any of the exceptions of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. This Policy states that Sport England would oppose any development that would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of, all or any part of a playing field, or land last used as a playing field unless in their judgement it meets one of the 5 specific circumstances. These are (E1) that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment area (illustrated by a quantified and documented assessment); (E2) that the development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field (i.e. changing room facilities); (E3) that the development is on land that is incapable of informing, or forming part of a playing pitch; (E4) that the playing field to be lost would be replaced by a playing field of equivalent or better quality in a suitable location; (E5) or that the development is for indoor or outdoor sports facility which would be of sufficient benefit to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field. A Playing Field Assessment was submitted in support of

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the application, which considered the amount of open space and playing fields provided at the school in relation to the needs of just the senior school, and the senior and primary schools combined. The figures show that in accordance with Building Bulletin 103 there would be sufficient space available on the new primary school site for the required sports facilities for the proposed number of pupils – and in fact there would be a surplus of 1,901m², as shown in the table below.

Proposed areas vs BB103 Requirement for a 2FE school with 54 nursery places (m²)

		Area BB103	Proposed Area	Surplus vs BB103
1	Soft Outdoor PE	7,200	7,649	449
2	Soft informal and social	1,548	1,658	110
3	Hard Outdoor PE	1,030	1,182	152
4	Hard informal and social	674	1,313	639
5	Habitat	210	770	560
	Totals	10,662	12,572	1,910

24. In relation to the exceptions set out in the Sport England policy, the Playing Field Assessment suggests that the irregular layout of the development site means it cannot all be used for playing pitch provision and that the remaining area could be efficiently used to provide the required provision for the primary school. Therefore, the applicants suggest that the scheme would accord with exception E3, in that the land is incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch. In relation to exception E5 the report suggests that the replacement of the hard courts and the utilisation of land which was not previously used to its optimum for sports provision would be of sufficient benefit to outweigh the loss of part of the playing field. Furthermore they state that such provision would be available to pupils, staff and the wider community therefore resulting in an overall improvement in sports provision and thus complying with exception E5.
25. In response Sport England state that they do not consider the land to be incapable of being used as a playing field (E3) as historic aerial photographs show that the area in question has previously been used as a pitch. In relation to E5 they state that the provision of a new sports court alone is not considered to be sufficient to meet this exception, and that insufficient information is known about the quality of this facility, for example the proposed surface. They state that the emerging Playing Pitch Strategy for Ashford states that the John Wallis site should be protected as a playing field site, and that according to the Football Association (FA) the current pitches are overplayed by 9 games a week. The pitches are used by South Ashford Football Club which has 6 teams, with the mini soccer teams playing their competitive games at the site, and the pitches also used for training. The FA suggests that the pitch provision in the area needs to be enhanced to accommodate the local demand.
26. The applicants have provided an additional plan which shows the proposed sports provision that can be made across both the primary and secondary school sites (that is within both the red line for the primary school and the blue line enclosing the secondary school). In this layout the school can provide one U11/12 football pitch (on the primary school field) and two U15/16 football pitches, a senior rounders pitch, a 6 lane running track and a senior cricket pitch on the playing field directly to the north of the proposed primary school. It should also be noted that in addition to this the senior school have

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another existing sports pitch and MUGA and would have the proposed replacement hard games court. The primary site itself has been demonstrated to meet the BB103 requirements and given that it is an 'all-through' school there would be a sharing of other sports facilities, which would be to the benefit of the Primary School.

27. The existing primary school site has a total site area of approximately 2.9 hectares, significantly in excess of what's required for a 2FE school (a minimum of 1.6 hectares). It is therefore difficult to compare what would be provided on the new site compared to what is currently provided on the 'old' site. The aim of this application is to rationalise the two sites to make a better all-through facility, and the overall sports provision would be more than sufficient to meet the school requirements. It should also be pointed out that if the primary school relocates from the old site to the academy site, the existing sports pitches would still be available for use until such time as the old school site is disposed of. The loss of any sports pitches here would therefore need to be considered in relation to any future development on the 'old' school site.
28. In my opinion the applicants have demonstrated sufficiently that they would be able to provide adequate sports facilities for the new primary school, with only a very minor loss of the existing sports field currently available to the Academy. It is therefore considered that despite Sport England's objection a pragmatic approach should be taken in dealing with this scheme, and if Members agree with this and are minded to permit the proposal, the application would need to be referred to the Secretary of State.

Highway and Transportation Issues

29. The application essentially seeks to relocate the existing primary school from its site on Stanhope Road to a location within the Academy site with vehicular access from Millbank Road. As explained in the proposal section above, Millbank Road would provide the only access for cars and would serve the new 50 space car park and also allow parents to access the site and use the existing drop off/pick up facility in front of the Academy. Pedestrian access would be provided from Millbank Road and also via a dedicated new footpath from Stanhope Road to the north. The application was supported by a detailed Transport Statement and draft School Travel Plan, and then further supplemented with some additional survey work in the form of a Technical Note which addressed initial points raised by the County's Highways and Transportation Officer.
30. The additional survey work and observations, alongside the initial report, have demonstrated to the satisfaction of the KCC Highways Team that the existing highway in the vicinity of the school would be able to accommodate the additional parking demand of the 2FE school and nursery. Given the relatively high proportion of children that walk to school and the weighting of the school catchment area towards the northern side of Stanhope Road, it is expected that the car impact on the Millbank Road side of the campus, where the main access would be located, would not be as great as it may have otherwise been. However Millbank Road would inevitably be more active with both the schools having their main entrance along here and the new school generating an increase of 60 vehicle movements on the highway network in both the morning and afternoon peak hours. Therefore in response to this concern the application now includes the use of the on-site drop off facility within the Academy and it is considered that this would minimise congestion and vehicle conflict on the highway. The applicants

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have submitted a plan showing the one way loop through the site and the drop off/collection area, and the use of this facility could be conditioned to ensure it is in place prior to occupation and subsequently always available.

31. Subject to this condition and others to include that the parking areas be provided prior to occupation and thereafter maintained, the provision of the cycle bays prior to occupation and subsequent retention, that the School Travel Plan be updated, and the submission of a Construction Management Plan, the Highways Officer has raised no objection to the proposed development and it is considered that it would accord with Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy 2008 and Policies TRA3 and TRA8 of the draft Local Plan to 2030.

Other Matters

Archaeology

32. The application has been supported by the submission of an archaeological desk based assessment report carried out by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust. The report has reference to the proposed development, historic records and the most recent development carried out in 2013/14. It states that there is a high chance that extant archaeological features, artefacts or ecofacts (these being archaeological finds that come from something living but not modified by human activity i.e. wheat seeds, sheep bones or sea shells found at inland sites which tell something about culture, diet or way of life) relating to the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods may be disturbed by groundworks within the development area. In order to mitigate this potential impact the report suggests that an archaeological watching brief on all site investigation procedures that entail groundworks should be undertaken, in liaison with the County's Archaeologist.
33. The County Archaeologist has considered the report and confirmed that the development site lies within an area of high archaeological potential associated with prehistoric and Romano British remains. The scheduled site of Westhawk Farm, Roman small town and road junction, lies just a few metres to the east. This, she states, is a fairly extensive settlement comprising roadways, defined plots, cemeteries, temples and considerable cultural material. Bronze Age and Late Iron Age remains survive nearby suggesting there was later prehistoric and Iron Age community here pre-dating the main roman period. Because of the potential for significant remains to survive on the site, formal archaeological works are needed and this could be secured by the imposition of a condition if Members are minded to approve the application. On this basis the scheme is considered to be acceptable and in accordance with the aims of Policy ENV15 of the draft Local Plan to 2030.

Lighting

34. An external lighting scheme has been included as part of the planning application. The report states that the lighting scheme has been designed with consideration to the effect of light spillage on wildlife, the surrounding environment and any adjacent dwellings, and in accordance with requirements of the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers for lighting. The scheme proposes the use of LED bulkhead lights on the building itself. These would have a hood to the upper part of the light to reduce the effects of glare. The footpaths would be lit with 1m high low-energy bollard lights, and

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the car park by low energy lighting heads mounted on 6m high columns. The lights would be controlled with a solar time clock/photocell arrangement and could also be programmed to come on and off at set periods during the hours of darkness. The external lighting layout plan shows the style of these three lights and the light spill associated with them.

35. The lights on the building would be largely screened by the existing Runcie Building, and the low level bollards would have a limited impact due to their height. The lights that have drawn concern from one of the neighbouring properties are the proposed car park lights which are shown to be 6m high. 6 of these are proposed within the car park itself, and another 2 along the access road in from the main entrance. The light spill diagram shows that the spread of the lights would not go beyond the middle of Millbank Road and these type of lights are now directional to avoid the wider light spill that used to be associated with column lights. As with other primary schools, the need for lights to be on after 6pm would only be required for special events such as meetings or parents evenings etc. Given this, the fact that the existing vegetation would be largely retained (see the landscape section later in the report) and the way the lights can be time controlled, it is considered that the impact on occupiers of neighbouring properties would be limited.

Construction

36. A condition requiring the submission of a Construction Management Plan, prior to commencement of development, is considered appropriate for this site where there are residential properties nearby to the south. This would need to include, amongst other matters, times of access to the site (to avoid school peak times), operative parking, wheel washing facilities and construction vehicles/delivery vehicle loading, unloading and turning.

Flood Risk and Drainage

37. The application was supported by the submission of a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Report, and an accompanying Drainage Strategy for the development. These documents have been considered by the County Council's Flood and Water Management Team and also the River Stour Internal Drainage Board (IDB). Further information has also been submitted from the applicant's drainage consultant providing additional information regarding the impermeable areas on site in relation to the attenuation storage facilities proposed and the use of a pumped solution to surface water drainage, and the strategies for using these options in relation to surface water drainage. The County's Sustainable Drainage Team Leader has advised that if Members are minded to approve the application a condition should be included to secure the submission of a detailed sustainable surface water strategy, and that the building shall not be occupied until the scheme has been approved and implemented. The Clerk for the River Stour IDB has asked to be consulted when the drainage details are submitted (given the fact the site drains to Court Lodge Dyke, an IDB adopted watercourse) and there is no reason why this cannot be undertaken when the submission comes in.

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Tree Removal

38. In order to accommodate the access road and new car park on site five trees would need to be removed along the southern boundary with Millbank Road. A tree survey of all existing trees and tree works was submitted in support of the application and the 5 trees to be removed have all been categorised as being Category C under the British Standard 5837 (2012), which defines them as being of low quality. There would therefore be no objection to their removal from an arboricultural point of view, albeit their replacement should be secured via condition. The remainder of the established hedge and tree line along Millbank Road would be retained and the current screening benefits this gives the occupiers of properties on the other side of Millbank Road would therefore not be lost. Whilst the concerns of the occupiers of the neighbouring property are noted, it is considered that the small number of trees to be removed would not dramatically alter the appearance of the boundary along here, and there would only be a limited difference in views into and out of the site as a result of their removal.

Landscape

39. A Landscape Strategy and Outline Plant Specification was submitted in support of the planning application which proposes both a hard and soft landscape scheme for the site. This includes not only the main playing fields, surrounding boundary treatments and hard play space, but also a sensory garden, woodland garden, school allotments, and nursery gardens. Feature tree planting is proposed near the new school building to soften its architecture and provide shade and interest for the playgrounds and amenity spaces, and these are proposed to be native tree species. It is considered that the landscape scheme is comprehensive and well thought out, but that a condition be imposed for the submission of a detailed final scheme which would take into account any changes that may occur during the detailed design and construction process. Such a condition is suggested, should permission be given, and one to cover the replacement of any trees or shrubs that die or are removed/destroyed within 5 years of their planting.

Conditions

40. A number of conditions were suggested by Ashford Borough Council, most of which have already been covered in paragraph 42 below, or addressed within the report. These include, for example, the time condition, materials details, landscape scheme, sustainable drainage, parking and cycle provision etc. There were, however, a few conditions which were suggested which I do not consider necessary for this scheme, and in my view would not meet Government guidance for imposing conditions. The number of pupils permitted at the school is governed by the size of the accommodation provided, which is adequate for a 2 form entry school only. There is therefore no need to impose a condition to restrict numbers as suggested, and in any case such a condition would not be enforceable. The existing school would cease to be used in any event once the new building is completed and therefore it would also be unnecessary to condition that it ceases to be used within any timeframe. The community already use the Academy playing fields, therefore a separate Community Use Agreement would not be required for this scheme. It is not necessary for specific architectural details to be submitted for the school building (nor have we imposed them on other similar school decisions) given its design but some matters would be covered under the other conditions imposed in any regard. The external seating placed within the School

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grounds would be a matter for the school to choose - there is no reason for the County Planning Authority to control this. The need for a pedestrian crossing on Stanhope Road has to be determined by the County Highways and Transportation Team and they have not requested such a crossing be provided. Finally the refuse strategy would not be necessary as the school would share the facilities of the Academy which has an existing refuse scheme in place.

Conclusion

41. In my view the key determining factors for this proposal are the highways and transport related issues of relocating the school, the siting and design of the new building, and the objection received from Sport England regarding loss of playing field land. In addition weight should also be given to the NPPF's clear policy support for ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places be available to meet the needs of existing and new communities, and the need to create, expand or alter schools. Subject to the imposition of the conditions suggested below I consider that the development would not give rise to any demonstrable harm as explained in the discussion above, would result in a sustainable form of development, and would meet the aims of the NPPF in relation to the guidance for school provision.

Recommendation

42. 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 to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- The submission and approval of details of all construction materials to be used externally;
- The submission of a native species landscape scheme further to the submitted landscape masterplan (drawing number LLD1046/L01 Rev 05), the requirement for it to be planted in the first planting season following completion of development; and details of a maintenance scheme for such landscaping; and details of hard landscape scheme including fencing and gates;
- Should any of the retained or new planting die, be removed or become damaged or diseased within 5 years of planting, that it be replaced with plants of a similar size and species;
- The submission of a revised School Travel Plan prior to occupation of the new school and its ongoing review via the 'Jambusters' system for 5 years, with monitoring results posted on the school's website;
- The submission of a Construction Management Plan, providing details of (amongst other matters) times of access to the site (to avoid school peak times), operative parking, wheel washing and delivery vehicle unloading and turning;
- The provision of the vehicle parking spaces shown on the submitted site layout prior to occupation, and their permanent retention thereafter;
- The provision of the cycle shelter shown on the submitted site layout plan prior to occupation and their permanent retention thereafter;

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- The drop off facility shown on drawing number PL013 Rev 1 shall be available prior to the occupation of the new school and the facility permanently retained for use by the primary school;
- The submission of a detailed sustainable surface water strategy to be submitted and approved in writing prior to commencement of construction;
- The submission of a scheme of archaeological field evaluation work to be submitted and approved in writing prior to commencement of development and the recording and reporting of any findings;
- The submission of details of roof plant and other equipment to be submitted;
- The external lighting scheme set out on drawing number WD/EC9008/008 Rev P2 (as part of the submitted External Lighting Assessment) shall be implemented as shown and the lighting controlled using a solar time clock and photocell arrangement, and timed to be switched off when the school is not in use.

43. I FURTHER RECOMMEND that the following INFORMATIVES be added:

- The registering with Kent County Council of the School Travel Plan through the “Jambusters” website following the link <http://www.jambusterstpms.co.uk>;
- That the applicant ensures that all necessary highway approvals and consents are obtained;
- To ensure that works to trees are carried out outside of the breeding bird season and if this is not possible that an ecologist examines the site prior to works commencing;
- The development should take account of the Bat Conservation Trust’s ‘Bats and Lighting in the UK’ guidance.

Case Officer: Helen Edwards

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Background Documents: see section heading
