

**Timber gazebo and two Multi-Use Goal Areas (MUGAs),
Graveney Primary School– SW/09/389**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on
6 October 2009

SW/09/0389 - Application by Graveney Primary School for the erection of a timber gazebo
and two Multi-Use Goal Areas (MUGAs) at Graveney Primary School, Seasalter Road,
Graveney, Near Faversham

Recommendation: Subject to the deletion of the MUGA element of the proposal planning
permission be granted subject to conditions

Local Member(s): Mr A.Bowles

Classification: Unrestricted

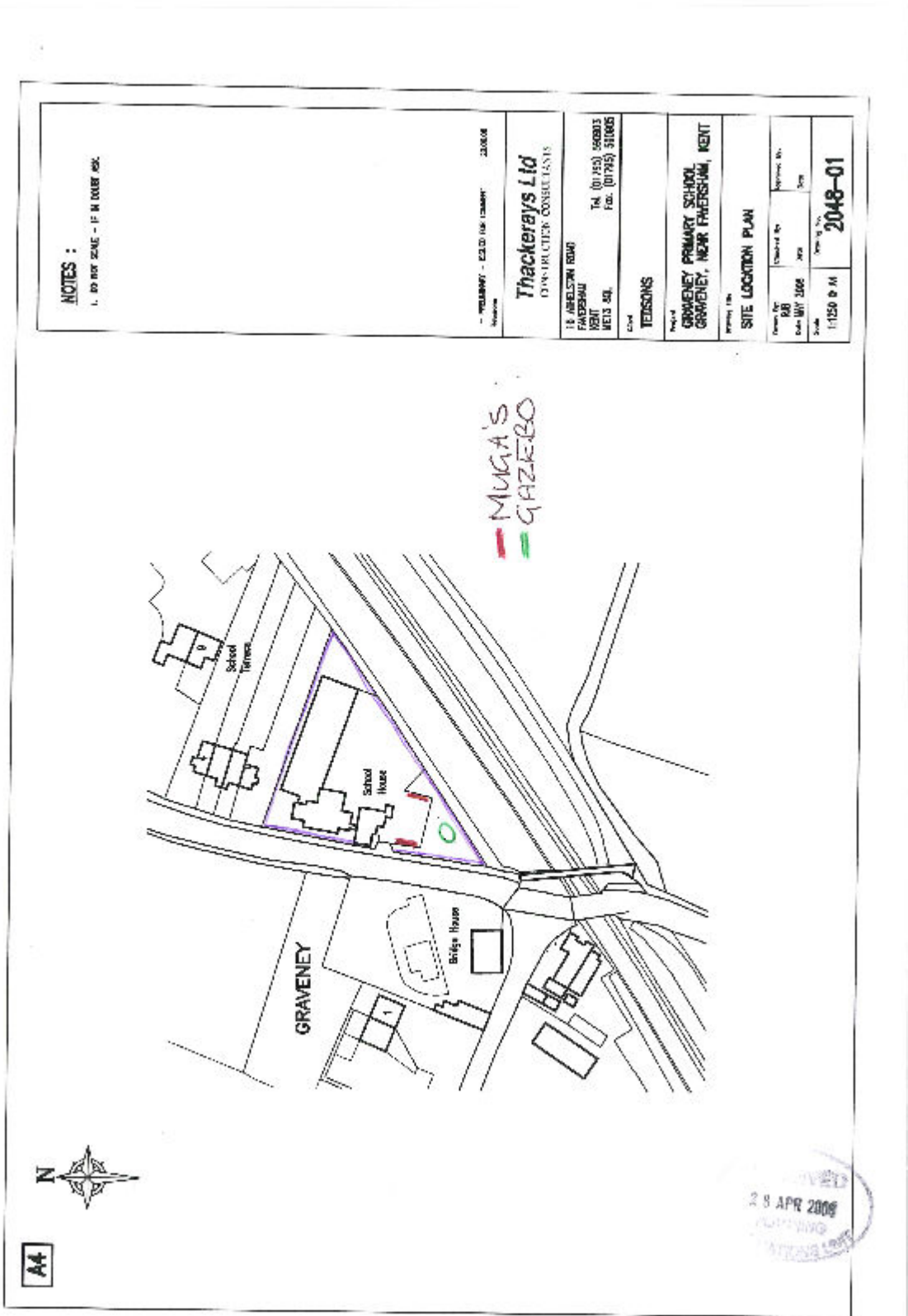
Site

1. Graveney Primary School occupies a small triangular site towards the South of the village of Graveney, and is located within the Graveney Bridge Conservation Area. The school is accessed via the adjacent Seasalter Road, which forms the Western boundary. The Faversham to Whitstable Railway forms the Eastern Boundary and the site is enclosed by residential development to the North. The main school buildings, including the Old School House, are of Victorian red brick construction and are a prominent and attractive feature of the Conservation Area.
2. The proposed timber gazebo is to be located to the South of the school, on a triangular patch of grass abutting Seasalter Road. The MUGAs are proposed to be located on a tarmac surfaced area between the main school buildings and the proposed gazebo. The School has access to a grass playing field on the opposite side of the main road.

Background

3. Graveney Primary School is confined within a small site, and has limited space for parking and recreation. The School has use of a playing field on the opposite side of the road, although this field is leased and not owned by the School itself. Recently a village car park was constructed adjacent to Graveney Bridge, with safe pedestrian access to the school site. This has enabled the staff to park off-site and therefore free up space within the school boundary. The applicant indicated the proposal is the result of consultation amongst the school community, as to the best use for the newly freed up space. It was decided that a gazebo would provide shelter and an outdoor classroom, whilst the MUGAs would improve recreation facilities for P.E.
4. The application site lies entirely within the Graveney Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Appraisal indicates that the school building 'completed in 1876, has all the familiar characteristics of a small village school and it therefore makes a crucial contribution to the street scene'. The local street scene is defined by the dominant buildings of the Post Office and 'Brick House' which lie directly opposite the proposed developments and are Grade II Listed.
5. Recent planning history includes a canopy to cover the reception play area, and in 2005 a single storey extension was approved to the North of the buildings.

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6. This application is for the construction of a timber gazebo and two Multi-Use Goal Areas (MUGAs) within the school grounds. The gazebo is proposed to be situated on a grassed area to the Southern corner of the site. It would be of octagonal shape with a diameter of 4.27 metres and a height of 2.75 metres at the centre, and would be constructed entirely of timber with a green or brown felt roof covering.
7. The MUGAs would be constructed of galvanised mesh over a black steel frame. Each MUGA would measure 3.66 metres in height and 6.3 metres in width. The MUGAs incorporate a recessed goal mouth, a basketball/netball ring and two sets of cricket stumps.
8. One MUGA would be situated to the East of the site, adjacent to the boundary with the Railway line. The other MUGA would be set facing the first – creating a semi-enclosed sports pitch area – to the Western edge of the playground, adjacent to the fence which runs along Seasalter road.
9. The applicant has submitted further information, in light of objections received, stating that they would be willing to submit a scheme of planting in order to reduce the visual impact of the MUGAs.

Planning Policy

10. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to consideration of the application:

- (i) The adopted **South East Plan 2008**

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| Policy CC1 | Seeks to achieve and maintain sustainable development within the region. |
| Policy CC4 | Expects that all development will adopt and incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques. |
| Policy CC6 | Seeks sustainable and distinctive communities that respect the character of settlements and landscapes, and achieve a high quality built environment. |
| Policy S3 | States that local planning authorities, taking into account demographic projections, should work with partners to ensure adequate provision of pre-school, school, and community learning facilities. |
| Policy BE1 | Management for an Urban Renaissance, Local Authorities will promote and support design solutions relevant to context and which build upon local character and distinctiveness and sense of place. |
| Policy BE4 | To protect, conserve and enhance the historic built environment. |

- (ii) The adopted **Swale Borough Local Plan 2008**

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| Policy E1 | General Principles of development: seeks to ensure that all development proposals are acceptable in general design, impact and amenity. |
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- Policy E15** Development will preserve or enhance features that contribute to the area's special character or appearance; proposals will respond positively to its conservation area appraisals; retain the layout, form of streets, spaces, means of enclosure and buildings.
- Policy E19** High quality design should be achieved on all proposals within the Borough.
- Policy C1** The Borough Council will grant planning permission for new or improved community services and facilities.

Consultations

11. **Swale Borough Council:** whilst no objection is raised in relation to the timber gazebo, objection is raised to the 'MUGAs' which, by virtue of their position, scale and design, would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Graveney with Goodnestone Parish Council welcomes the design and materials of the timber gazebo which is in keeping with the Conservation Area and enhances recent improvements to the school. However, they raise objection to the 'MUGAs' due to their large size and their intrusive appearance on the Conservation Area, in a prominent position adjacent to the road.

Divisional Transport Manager raises no highway objection to the proposal and notes that the proposal would result in the loss of some parking spaces, but the need would be met off-site by the recent new car park and drop-off area.

Conservation Officer comments that the MUGAs would have an adverse impact on the Conservation Area. The frames are heavy and out of scale with the location. Alternative systems and boundary treatment/planting may be advisable to reduce the impact. The proposal needs to be balanced between impact on the 'appearance' and the 'character' as the use of the school building makes a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

Local Member(s)

12. The local County Member for Swale East, Mr A.Bowles, was notified of the application on the 6 May 2009.

Publicity

13. The application was advertised in the KM Canterbury Extra on 15 May 2009, by the posting of a site notice and the notification of 2 neighbours.

Representations

14. There were no letters of representation at the time of reporting.

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Discussion

15. In considering this proposal regard must be had to Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (4) above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
16. The principal issue to consider with this application is the effect of the proposals on the Graveney Bridge Conservation Area, and as to whether the development would 'protect, conserve or enhance the historic built environment'. The responses received from the Borough Council and Parish Council indicates that they have no objections with the proposed timber gazebo, and therefore I recommend that the MUGAs are considered separately.

Location

17. The MUGAs are proposed to be located either side of the school playground; one adjacent to the railway boundary (MUGA A) and another next to the fencing that abuts Seasalter Road (MUGA B). Due to the layout of the school site, and the limited tarmac surfaced area, this is the most appropriate location for the MUGAs to be situated in order to provide a suitable rectangular shaped playing area on an all-weather surface.
18. The Parish Council suggested that the structures, or something similar, would be better placed on the playing fields on the opposite side of Seasalter Road. Whilst this option would mean that the Conservation Area is not affected, the applicant has stated that the field is leased and they are restricted in what they can do on the field. Also, the applicant stated that the MUGAs need to be fixed to a hard surface.
19. The location of the school playground means that any structure erected would be readily visible in the Conservation Area, with the school as the backdrop. MUGA B would be most noticeable when driving south along Seasalter Road. Whilst the Parish Council mention that it may be a distraction to motorists at a dangerous junction, the Divisional Transport Manager has raised no objection, so I am satisfied that there are no overriding highway safety issues associated with this proposal.

Design

20. The MUGA is of standard design made up of three sections. The middle section incorporates a recessed goal area and basketball/netball hoop, with the two side sections that act as a ball-stop barrier. The frame is to be constructed of steel posts which are to be painted black. This is the most suitable colour to reduce the impact of the MUGAs on the Conservation Area. The proposal indicates that the mesh covering, which makes up most of the MUGA, is to be left galvanised. I would recommend that if permission were to be granted then the mesh should also be painted black, in order to reduce the visual impact.
21. The sketch plan that has been submitted does not give much of an indication as to what the finished product would actually look like. The heavy vertical frame, covered with galvanised mesh, gives an 'industrial' appearance. The design is not similar to other more common MUGAs which are powder coated coloured, with rounded corners and shaped to be more aesthetically pleasing. The current proposal appears to have strong lines and right angles, giving the goal area frame a welded box appearance.

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22. The proposed gazebo is of an octagonal shape and made from timber. The roof is covered in felt. Being a natural material, timber is generally considered to be an appropriate material for construction within sensitive areas. Since it stands at a height of 2.74m at the apex and approximately 2m around the roof edge, I consider therefore that the gazebo would be a small acceptable addition to the school grounds.

Impact on the Conservation Area

23. Development plan policy requires proposals within a conservation area to preserve and enhance the special character or appearance of the Conservation Area. The Graveney Bridge Conservation Area Appraisal states that the school, completed in 1876, has all the familiar characteristics of a small village school and therefore makes a crucial contribution to the street scene. The Conservation Area is focussed around the bridge over the railway and the road junction with Sandbanks Road. Looking from this area towards the school, MUGA B would be clearly visible, with the school acting as a backdrop. (see photo). MUGA A would not easily be visible as it would sit at the back of the school site.

24. When entering the Conservation Area via Seasalter Road from the north, MUGA B would be most noticeable as there would be no backdrop for it to sit against. At 3.66m in height the MUGA would be almost twice the height of the fence, and be taller than the school sign. Therefore, I would advise that MUGA B would have an adverse 'visual' impact on the Conservation Area and it would impact on the view of a building directly referred to in the Conservation Area Appraisal as being crucial to the street scene. As currently proposed, the application offers no mitigation that might be considered to offset this undue visual harm to the Conservation Area and the local street scene. It could be argued that enhancing the use of the school contributes to the 'character' of the Conservation Area, and PPG 15 refers to the mix of uses within in a conservation area making a positive contribution to it. Recreation equipment in a playground arguably could therefore be part of the contribution that the school makes.

25. I consider that the visual impact could be reduced by the introduction of planting between the MUGA and the boundary fence. However, this would have to be tall and well-established before it begins to break up the shape and bulk of the MUGA. Therefore, in my opinion, this proposal would only be acceptable if an adequate planting scheme is submitted. In its current form, there is nothing to suggest that the MUGAs, by virtue of their prominent position and large scale, would not be a dominant and intrusive feature on the Conservation Area. MUGA B would adversely affect the visual contribution of the School buildings to the Conservation Area as it would partially obstruct the view of School House.

26. The proposed gazebo is located back from the road, on a grassed area. Due to its location, design and materials the gazebo serves to conserve and enhance the Conservation Area. In particular, it is not visually intrusive in the street scene, would be suitably screened by existing vegetation, and it would not interrupt or unduly intrude into views of the school buildings. Therefore I recommend that this element of the application is granted permission. The applicant indicated that the roof felt is to be coloured green or brown. However, I would advise that brown would be the preferred colour as it would blend in with the timber frame, and would be more sensitive to the colour of the school buildings.

Conclusion

27. Whilst MUGA A would not be easily visible, I consider that MUGA B would have an adverse visual impact on the Conservation Area. The height and materials used would result in the MUGA being intrusive in the street scene, which as currently proposed has no mitigation.

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Although the MUGAs, and activities they promote, might contribute to the school and could enhance the contribution the school gives to the character of the Conservation Area, in my opinion the visual impact of the MUGAs (in particular MUGA B) is not outweighed by that contribution. By virtue of their design, positioning and scale I consider that they would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the Graveney Bridge Conservation Area.

28. As regards the proposed timber gazebo, I consider that it is of suitable design and materials, and would therefore protect and conserve the Conservation Area, and would therefore recommend that permission be given to that element of the proposals.

Recommendation

29. SUBJECT TO the applicant deleting the proposed MUGAs from the planning application, I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED for the proposed gazebo, SUBJECT TO conditions covering:

- the standard time condition;
- the proposed roofing felt to be dark brown coloured; and
- the development be carried out in accordance with the permitted details.

Case officer – Jeff Dummett	01622 221071
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Background documents - See section heading
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