

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

Detached two classroom building, Speldhurst Primary School, Speldhurst, Royal Tunbridge Wells – TW/18/884 (KCC/TW/0005/2018)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 13 June 2018.

Application by Kent County Council and Speldhurst Primary School for the construction of a detached two classroom building in the rear of the school site. Including the installation of an external door within the rear of the existing building for access. Relocation of existing timber storage shed – Speldhurst Primary School, Langton Road, Speldhurst, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN3 0NP (Ref: KCC/TW/0005/2018 and TW/18/884).

Recommendation: Planning permission to be granted, subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr J McInroy

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Speldhurst is located about 3 miles from Tunbridge Wells, and it is approximately equidistant between Southborough, Langton Green and Penshurst. There are many historic buildings in the village including a church, and a public house that dates back more than four hundred years and sits within the Speldhurst Conservation Area. The site is also situated in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Some of the roads in the village are too narrow to have pavements on both sides. Parking in the village is restricted and much of it is at the roadside.
2. The school is situated to the south of Speldhurst village and is accessed off Langton Road, which in turn is accessed off Penshurst Road, which is the main road running through the village. The school buildings are located to the front of the school site, which is to the east of the school site, with the staff parking area located to the southernmost part of the site frontage. As already mentioned the school buildings front onto Langton Road and currently has one gated entrance for children and parents, and a separate access for staff and visitors, which leads to the old school house. The school playing field is located to the rear of the school site and is bounded by the gardens of residential properties to the north, south and west. There is also a currently unused pedestrian access to the school site in the north-west corner from Penhurst Road. A site location plan is attached.

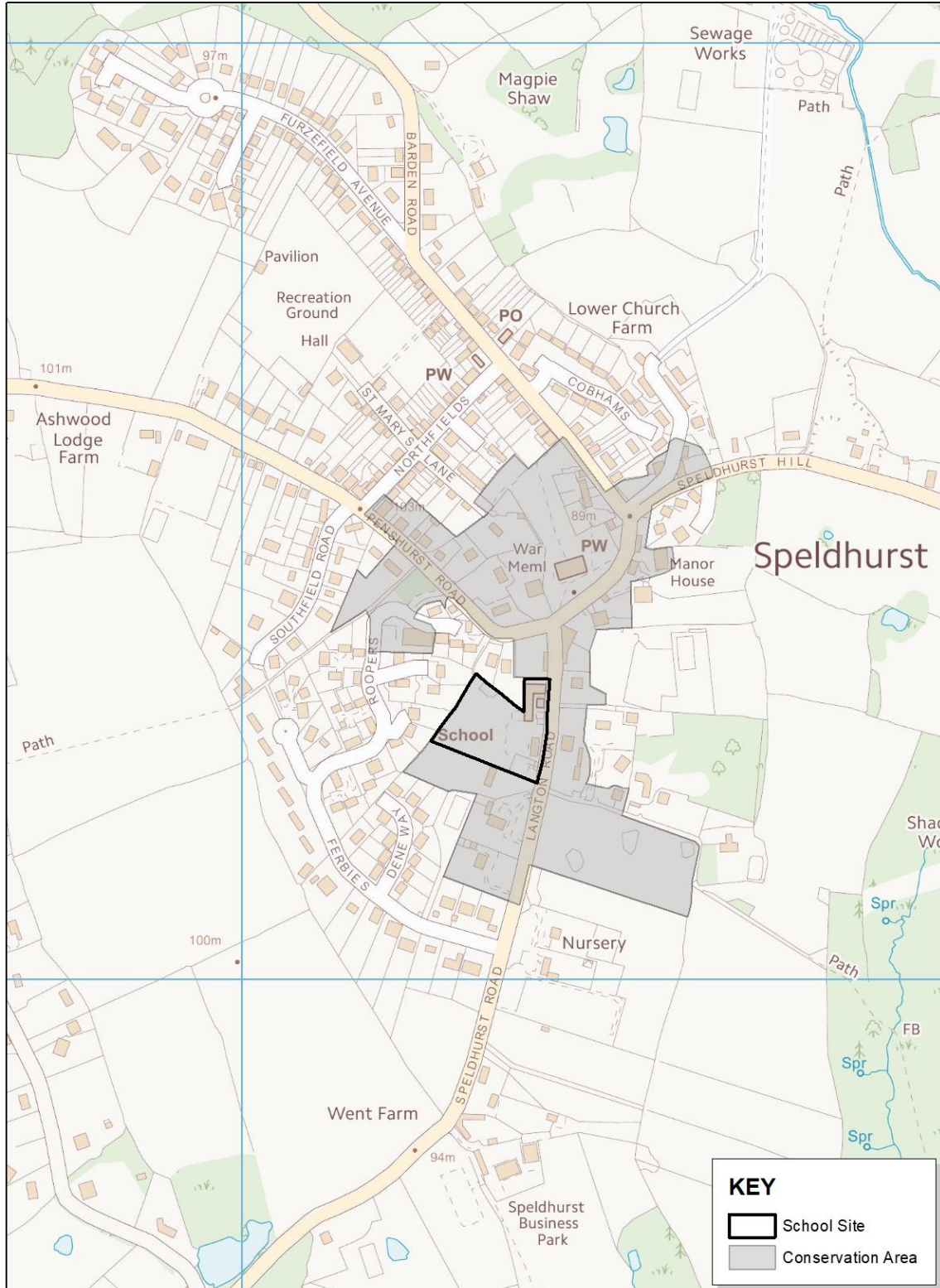
Background

3. The original school building dates back to 1857 and is a Grade II Listed Building. This building was later extended to the west to form an additional classroom. In 2002 the building was further extended to the south to form a school hall. In 2007, two further classrooms were added to the south and then in 2015 the building was finally extended to create another classroom.

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Detached two classroom building – Speldhurst Primary School, Langton Road, Speldhurst, Tunbridge Wells – TW/18/884

Site Location Plan

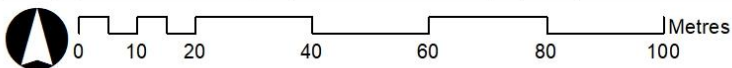
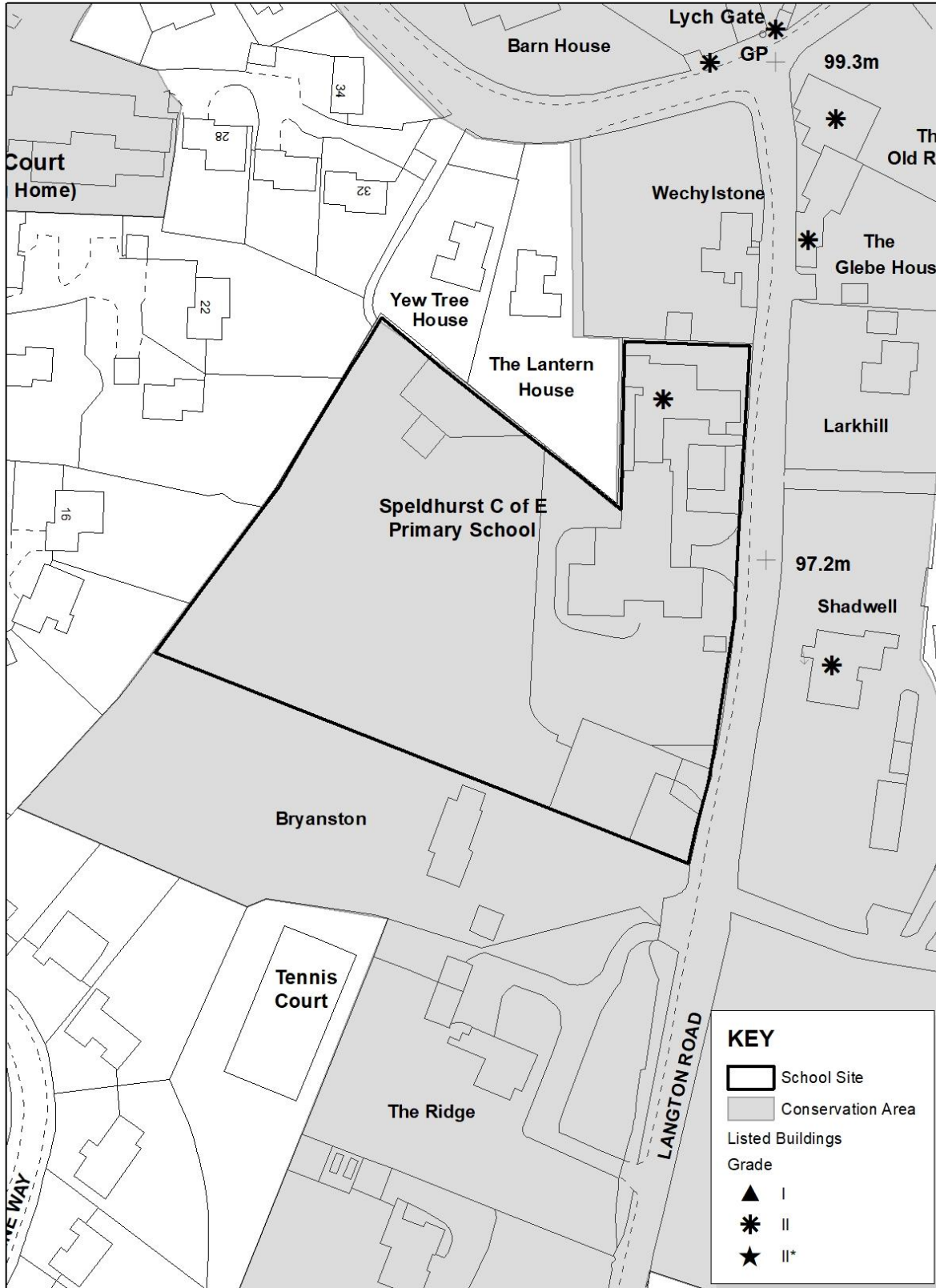


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Ordnance Survey 100019238

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Site Location Plan



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**Detached two classroom building – Speldhurst Primary School,
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Proposed site plan



13500

**Detached two classroom building – Speldhurst Primary School,
Langton Road, Speldhurst, Tunbridge Wells – TW/18/884**

Proposed classroom elevations

A3 SHEET

Scale bar

NOTE:
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North East Elevation 1

South East Elevation 1

South West Elevation 3

Underside of Roof 2765

Finish Floor Level 0

North West Elevation 4

KEY TO PROPOSED MATERIALS

1. Thermowood timber cladding contrast
2. Plastic coated steel in Green Blue Colour, RAL 5001
3. EPDM fatra rubber membrane
4. PVC double glazed windows with opening sashes with 100mm restrictors
5. External fire ext'doors powder coated steel security grade
6. Entrance doors powder coated aluminium glazed door
7. Yellow stock brickwork to match existing

Client
The School Governors of Speldhurst CE Primary School

Project
New Classroom Block

Title
Proposed Classroom Elevations

Scale
1:100@A3

Date
24.11.17

Drawn By
MA

Checked By
PMC

Project No.
A160708

Drawing No.
A (1)310

Revision
C

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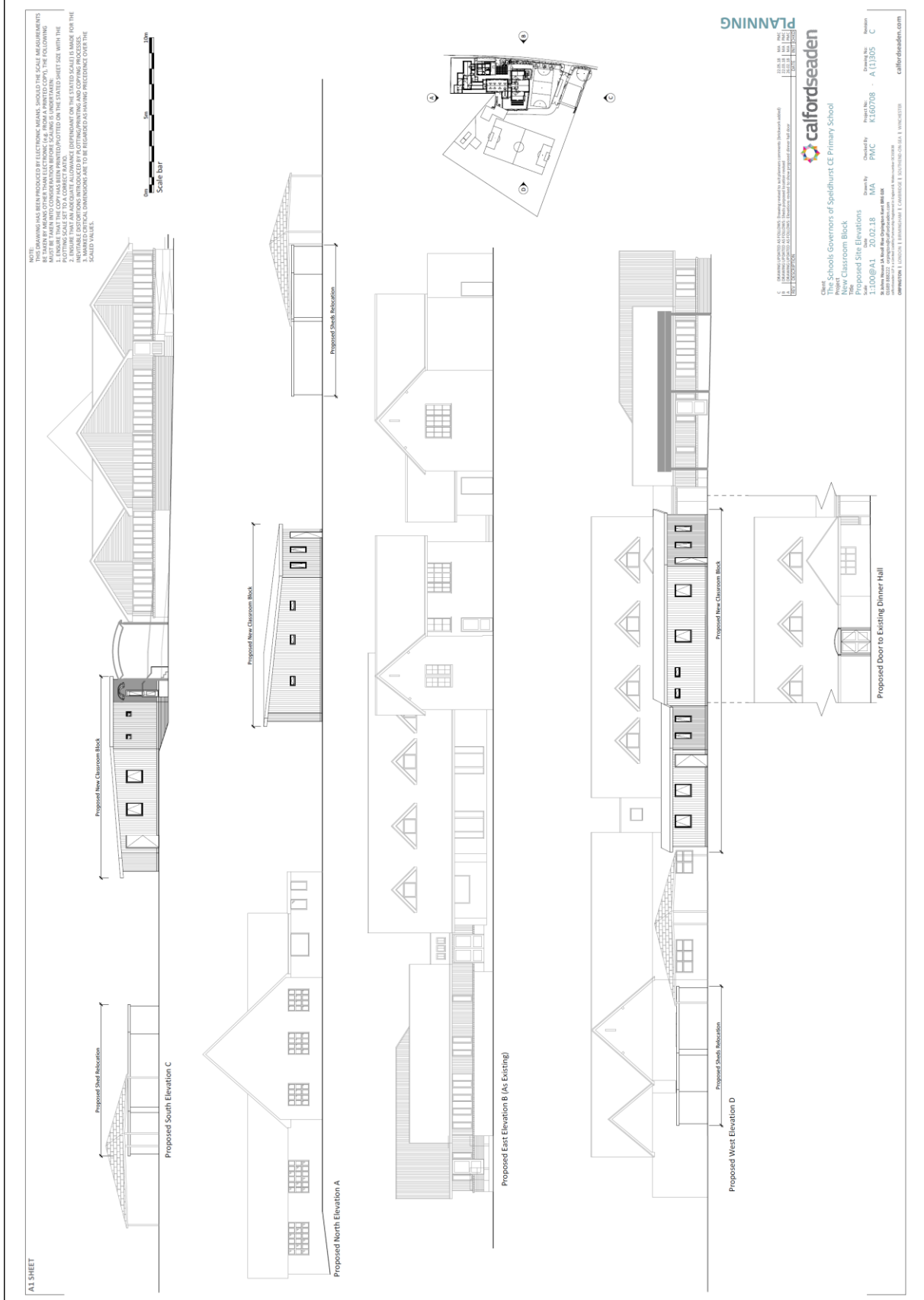
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| REV | DESCRIPTION | DATE | INT | CHKD |
|-----|--|----------|-----|------|
| C | DRAWING UPDATED AS FOLLOWS: Drawing revised to suit planners comments (brickwork added) | 22.05.18 | MA | PMC |
| B | DRAWING UPDATED AS FOLLOWS: Elevation labels revised | 26.02.18 | MA | PMC |
| A | DRAWING UPDATED AS FOLLOWS: Drawing title revised from (Proposed Elevations) to (Proposed Classroom Elevations). Ramp and stairs added | 20.02.18 | MA | PMC |

PLANNING

Detached two classroom building – Speldhurst Primary School, Langton Road, Speldhurst, Tunbridge Wells – TW/18/884

Proposed site elevations



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4. Speldhurst is a small Church of England Primary School which currently has 144 pupils with 5 mixed age classes of children from Reception to Year 6. The school employs 9 full and part time teaching staff and 6 Learning Support Assistants. School hours are 8.50am to 3.15pm with the school gates opening in the morning at 8.40am. The school offers a daily Breakfast Club which operates from 7.40am to 8.40am. Additionally, during the week there are school clubs on two mornings beginning at 8.00am, and on most afternoons there are after school clubs which usually finish at 4.15pm.
5. The school currently has an intake of 20 pupils per year and there is an extensive waiting list. The school was judged as 'Outstanding' from both Ofsted and in the recent SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspections. The school have stated that there is a need to improve the classroom provision for pupils as the existing spaces are limited to deliver the current curriculum, with certain classrooms below the Local Education Authorities (LEA) space requirements and recommendations contained within DfE's Building Bulletin 103 Area Guidance for Main Stream Schools.
6. The pupils are currently taught in mixed age groups and in limited and often inappropriate spaces. To achieve the requirements of the new National Curriculum, children would need to be split into smaller single year groups. However, there is insufficient space to accommodate this. At present there are 6 classrooms available for teaching 7 year groups. The proposed development would provide the accommodation to enable the School to move to a one Form Entry (1FE) and to increasing the school roll from 144 pupils to 210 pupils over a proposed period of 3 years.
7. This proposal would increase parental choice within Speldhurst and allow more children to attend their local primary school. The school currently takes just 20 pupils per year and as a result there is an extensive waiting list. In 2017 the school received 117 applications for the 20 places available in the Reception class. The furthest intake in 2017 (excluding siblings) was 0.426miles, which is within the village. The proposed increase in pupils from 20 to 30 per year group is supported by the Area Education Officer.

Recent Planning History

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

| | |
|--------------|--|
| TW/15/501948 | Proposed extension to form a new classroom. Granted with conditions. |
| TW/11/836 | Provision of an early years canopy. Granted with conditions. |
| TW/11/686 | Provision of outdoor classroom. Granted with conditions. |
| TW/04/3174 | Two new classrooms with toilets and store and surrounding landscape works. Granted with conditions. |

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Proposal

9. The planning application proposes a detached two classroom modular block to the rear of the existing school building and would be located on an existing area of hardstanding. The proposed single storey building has been designed to be limited in footprint to two standard sized classrooms with minimum sizes for non-teaching areas and would also include dedicated toilet facilities. The form of construction is modular and would meet with the Government criteria for modern Schools. The appearance of the proposed building would match the existing school building as much as possible with the proposed timber cladding and brick plinth matching the existing materials on the school site. The design of the building has been mindful of the Conservation Area and AONB that the proposed building would sit within. The proposed new two classroom block would be constructed using a timber frame construction, double glazed windows, powder coated aluminium external doors, timber weatherboarding and a single ply membrane to the shallow mono pitched roof.
10. As part of the planning application it is proposed to relocate the existing two storage sheds to another area of existing hard paving, as they currently sit within the area of the proposed two classroom block. To gain access to the existing school buildings, it is proposed to install a new external door from the school hall. As this part of the school forms part of the Grade II Listed Building (whilst being a relatively new extension it was built onto the old school building and thus by virtue of this, the whole of building is now deemed to be Listed), the applicant would need to apply for Listed Building consent from the Borough Council for these proposed works. The application also proposes new steps and a ramp to the modular classroom to provide level access to the new building.
11. To accommodate the proposed increase in pupils, it is proposed to employ an additional two permanent members of staff. There is sufficient capacity within the school's staff car park to be able to accommodate this proposed increase in staff and therefore there are no proposals to provide any additional staff parking spaces.

Planning Policy Context

12. The most relevant Government Guidance and Development Plan Policies summarised below are appropriate to the consideration of this application:
 - (i) National planning policies and policy guidance are set out in the **National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)** and the **National Planning Policy Guidance (March 2014)**. These set out the Government's planning policy and guidance for England and are a material consideration for the determination of planning applications. It does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However, the weight given to development plan policies will depend on their 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:

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- Supporting a prosperous rural economy by promoting the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages.
- Achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity.
- The promotion of healthy communities.
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, including protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, and
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

In addition, Paragraph 72 states that: *The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools, and work with school's promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.*

Draft Revised National Planning Policy Framework (March 2018)

A draft review of the NPPF was published on Monday 5th March 2018. The text has been revised to implement policy changes as a result of previous Government consultation on papers such as the Housing White Paper, National Planning Policy, Planning and Affordable Housing for Build to Rent, and Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places. In so far as the review is applicable to the consideration of this planning application, the section relating to the delivery of school facilities remains largely unchanged with similarly worded text regarding the need to ensure sufficient choice of school places to meet the needs of existing and new communities.

The sustainable transport chapter emphasises that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stage so that potential impacts can be addressed and opportunities realised. It reiterates the current advice that the planning system should support sustainable development in preparing local plans and dealing with planning applications. Development, it states, should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if the residual cumulative impacts on the road network or road safety would be severe.

Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development (15 August 2011) sets out the Government's commitment to support the development of state-funded schools and their delivery through the planning system.

(ii) Tunbridge Wells Borough-Local Plan 2006 (Saved Policies):

- Policy EN1** Seeks all proposals to be compatible in nature and intensity with neighbouring uses and not cause significant harm to character and amenities of the area in terms of daylight, sunlight, privacy, noise or excessive traffic generation. Seeks the design of the proposal to respect the context of the site and not cause significant harm to residential amenities.

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- Policy EN5** Seeks to ensure that proposals would preserve or enhance the Conservation Area and that the siting, scale, layout, use of materials and landscaping would preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area in which the proposal would be situated.
- Policy EN25** Seeks to ensure that proposals located within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty would have a minimal impact upon the landscape character of the locality and it would respect local building styles and materials.
- Policy TP4** Seeks to ensure that any additional traffic generated by the proposal has adequately been assessed.
- Policy TP5** Vehicle parking in connection with development proposals will be restricted to the maximum necessary having regard to local highway conditions. Kent County Council's Vehicle Parking Standards, adopted by the Council, will be applied to such development proposals.

(iii) Tunbridge Wells Borough Core Strategy 2010

- Core Policy 3** Promotes sustainable modes of transport and requires development proposals which would have significant transport implications to be accompanied by a transport assessment and travel plan showing how car based travel can be minimised.
- Core Policy 4** Seeks to ensure that the Borough's Heritage Assets, including Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas are conserved and enhanced and special regard will be had to their settings.
- Core Policy 5** Promotes and encourages sustainable design and construction principles and best practice.
- Core Policy 14** Promotes and encourages development in the villages and rural areas that would be appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement.

Consultations

13. **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council:** Raises no objection, subject to Kent County Council Highways and Transportation being satisfied with regard to potential traffic implications arising from the increased school capacity.

Speldhurst Parish Council: Raises no objection. The Parish Council fully supports this application and considers it crucial for the future of the school.

Environment Agency: Has no comments to make.

Sport England: Raises no objection.

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County Conservation Officer: Raises no objection.

Kent Highways: Raises no objection and has the following comments:

The planning application documents have stated that a large percentage of new pupils would be local to the village, and this includes many on the waiting list that are currently being driven to alternative schools outside the village. The school's admission policy gives priority to those living closest to the school. Therefore, whilst inevitable that some additional trips would be generated by the proposal, this policy plus additional measures which can be implemented (see below) would aim to reduce vehicle trips by encouraging walking trips.

The Transport Survey has shown that, whilst cars do park on Langton Road, traffic can filter around the parked vehicles during the two short school peak times. The staff parking area is sufficient for both the existing and proposed members of staff (20 spaces). The Mid Kent Highways Manager has confirmed that a 20mph speed limit will be installed throughout the village by the end of the summer and it will include Langton Road and the School. This scheme is being promoted by Speldhurst Parish Council, as part of a separate proposal.

The School Travel Plan sets out a number of practical solutions to reduce car use amongst parents in the future, including:

- Investigate creating an access to the school grounds from Peshurst Road, thereby encouraging families to walk into school, reducing the concentration of traffic on Langton Road. This would encourage more children to cycle to school, either accompanied or unaccompanied.
- Provide a 'Walking Bus' from the George and Dragon car park to the school.
- Create a drop-off zone outside the school.

Monitoring of the School Travel Plan should be conditioned to ensure these targets are appropriate. In addition the implementation of the pedestrian access from Peshurst Road, which is nearer than the current access to the main residential area of the village, will be a vital asset in encouraging walking and cycling to the school.

School Travel Planner: Raises no objection.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Officer: No comments were received.

Local Member

14. The local County Member Mr McInroy was notified of the application on 14 March 2018. Mr McInroy is supportive of the planning application and has the following comments to make:

'I should like to add my support for the proposed extension to Speldhurst Primary School. The school is consistently over-subscribed for preferences and has this year (2018 intake) received 126 applications for its 20 places. From what Speldhurst residents inform me, there are many local children, in walking distance of the school, who are currently unable to obtain school places. I have heard from residents, councillors and Speldhurst Primary School itself and, as the local County Councillor, I strongly urge the Committee to approve this application.'

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Area Education Officer

15. The Area Education Officer, Mr Jared Nehra, is supportive of this planning application and has the written in support to increase the capacity at Speldhurst Primary School;

'The proposed increase of ten places per year group i.e. 70 (N.B. the School has advised that based on the current pupil numbers it would be 66 additional pupils) additional Primary school places in total, will add to the choice available to parents in Tunbridge Wells West planning area. Kent County Council's forecasts of the demand for pupil places in the Tunbridge Wells area indicates a small surplus of places in the medium term, which would indicate a 'Basic Need' for additional provision. Nevertheless, KCC anticipate that the additional places proposed would benefit pupils in the local area and create minimal negative impact on other schools.

Speldhurst Primary School is a popular and successful school, consistently oversubscribed on preferences. Therefore, additional places at Speldhurst will enable additional pupils to be allocated their parents' preferred school in future. Speldhurst Primary School is rated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, the highest possible judgement, which indicated the excellent quality of education it provides to its pupils. I am pleased to note that the school's proposals will increase the facilities available to serve its pupils in future.'

Publicity

16. The application was advertised by the posting of a site notice, the notification of 14 neighbours and an advertisement was placed in the local newspaper on 16 March 2018.

Representations

17. A total of 24 letters of representation have been received to the application from local residents. Of these 6 letters objected to the application; 16 letters were in support of the application, and 2 letters did not state whether they objected or were in support of the application. The main points raised in relation to this application can be summarised as follows:

Objection

- More children will be driven into the village by car making the traffic problem even worse.
- There would be an increase in traffic and so need to organise my day to avoid Langton Road during school drop off and collection times.
- We do not require a bigger 'village' school.
- Large majority of pupils live outside the village. This will attract more children from outside the village.
- With the school's current admission sibling first policy this will continue to be a problem.
- Need to provide parking facilities as part of this application.
- Parking and traffic movements outside school is already difficult and potentially dangerous. Langton Road is reduced down to a single lane which results in arguments and long traffic delays. The School expansion would make this worse.
- Twice a day due to the parking we have no direct line of sight in either direction when exiting or entering our drive.

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- There is a dog bone marking outside my property but many park over it or use the driveway for reversing.
- Concerned about safety of children.
- Traffic calming will need to be provided as part of this planning application.

Support

- It is necessary to enable the school to become a one form entry school and ensure it can best support the village community now and into the future.
- Unable to get my child into the school despite living within close proximity of the school as the school currently only takes 20 pupils a year.
- It seems wrong that children living in the village are forced to attend another school in the surrounding area when they could walk to their local school. This is detrimental to the environment, adding to air pollution and making the roads busier and not conducive to village life.
- The school's expansion to a one form entry would secure the school's future.
- If my child had been allocated a place at Speldhurst Primary School then we would have been able to walk to school, instead we will be forced to drive out of the village in order to get to school.
- We take advantage of the agreement between the School and the George and Dragon pub and always use the car park for dropping off and picking up.
- The proposal would bring a huge positive impact on the lives of the children and parents who value a placement at Speldhurst Primary School from both educational and social perspectives.
- The School is a valuable asset to the village community.
- It is extremely inconvenient and not to mention upsetting that my children cannot attend school together, and so I have to make additional car journeys to take one of my children to a different school.
- The village school should be for all the children living in the village.
- Whilst split classes have obviously not affected the excellent teaching in the school, time is spent each day with children moving about to different classes in order to have year lessons – time which could be spent in a more productive way.
- The traffic issues are nothing to do with the village or school but motorists that are using the village as a short cut.

Discussion

18. In considering this proposal regard must be had to Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 12 above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
19. This application is being reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee due to the letters of representation received which object to the planning application. The main issues relating to this application include need, design and location within the AONB, heritage, and highway considerations.

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Need

20. As outlined in paragraph 12 of this report, the National Planning Policy Network (NPPF) supports the provision and retention of community facilities as a means of place making and promoting healthy communities. Paragraph 70 underlies the important social role of the planning system contributing to sustainable development and healthy communities. Decisions should be made which guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day to day needs. It should also ensure that established facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable and retained for the benefit of the community.
21. Additionally, Paragraph 72 of the NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement and to development that would widen choice in education. They should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools, and work with school's promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted. There is similar strong policy support in the Government's Planning Policy Statement for Schools (2011).
22. The proposed development would give the school an additional 2 classrooms which would enable the school to teach the existing pupils in year groups, which is a requirement of the new National Curriculum, rather than the current mixed aged groups. It would also enable the school to expand to a 1FE school and increase its roll from 144 pupils to 210 pupils over a 3 year period. If the planning application was to be successful, then an extra 30 pupils would join the school in September 2018, with the remaining 36 pupils phased over the following two years as waiting lists permit. Last year (2017 intake) demand for places at the school was oversubscribed with 117 applications received for the 20 places. The furthest intake for 2017 (excluding siblings) was 0.426 miles from the school, which is within the village envelope. The Headteacher has also confirmed that her pupil waiting list is constantly growing and she has recently added 3 more children who live within the village to her waiting list.
23. The expansion of the School to a 1FE of 210 pupils would provide the long term viability of the school. The additional income that the expansion would generate would secure the financial viability of the school and hence the continuing future of local provision of Primary Education within Speldhurst Village. Without the school going to a one form entry, the current Funding Formula would lead to an ever decreasing deficit budget within the next three years. As over 70% of a school's budget being spent on teaching staff, there is very little scope to cut any further costs to ensure the future of this school. This proposal would also increase parental choice where more pupils would be able to attend an Outstanding school within a short distance of where they live.
24. The NPPF states that Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. The NPPF further states that Planning Authorities should give great weight to the need to create expand or alter schools. The Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development (15 August 2011) further sets out the Government's commitment to support the development of state funded schools and their delivery through the planning system. Support for the provision of school places is heavily embedded in the NPPF and local planning policy, and I consider that the need for the development should be given significant weight in this instance. There is considerable

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demand for school places in Speldhurst, throughout the whole school, and to ensure the future provision of Primary education in Speldhurst, I would not raise a planning objection on this matter.

Design and location including impact upon the AONB

25. The school site is located within the Speldhurst Conservation Area and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Development Plan Policies promote high quality design, and through the siting, scale, layout and use of materials and landscaping, seek to preserve and enhance the character of Conservation Areas, and within AONB's great weight is given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty. Whilst the proposed building is a modular construction, the materials that have been chosen to compliment and copy the existing buildings on the school site, so to ensure that the impact on the surrounding environment is minimised. The proposed cladding on the outside of the building would match in colour and design with the extension built in 2007. A brick plinth is also proposed to mimic the brick plinth already on this school building. The County's Conservation Officer has noted the proposed design and materials and has raised no objection.
26. The siting of the proposed new classroom block in the rear area of the school grounds, which would be beside the playground area, would limit the effects on the appearance of the existing building from the Conservation Area and limit views of this building from either Langton Road or Penshurst Road. There is vegetation and planting near to the proposed building which would further shield views of the structure. The chosen location and minimum size of the proposed development would ensure that the impact on the surrounding environment is minimised. The proposed development is located in a discrete position away from the Listed Building on the school site.
27. Members will note that the whole school site is also located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As mentioned above, the proposed location of the building has been chosen to limit the effects upon the wider landscape character of the High Weald AONB. Views of the proposed building from adjoining properties would be partly shielded by the existing vegetation around the site and views from the public highway would be very limited. The building would also respect the local building style in that it would mimic the existing buildings on the site and it would be matching in terms of the proposed materials. It will also be noted that there has been no objection received to the proposed location or design of the proposed building.
28. In the light of the above, I do not consider that the proposed building would have a detrimental impact on the landscape character of the AONB. However, in order to control the development and to ensure the satisfactory appearance of the proposed development, I consider that final details of all materials to be used externally should be submitted pursuant to condition, should permission be granted. Subject to the imposition of this condition, I consider that the design and layout of the proposed development to be acceptable and is in accordance with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council 2006 (Saved Policies) Policy EN25, and Tunbridge Wells Borough Core Strategy (2010) Core Policy 14, and I would therefore not raise a planning objection on this matter.

Heritage Considerations

29. As outlined above, the whole of the school site falls within the Speldhurst Conservation Area, and the original school building is a Grade II Listed Building. Development Plan

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Policies require development to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of a Conservation Area and the setting of Listed Buildings. It is also worth noting that Historic England define harm as a change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset. The NPPF requires the impact on the significance of the heritage asset to be considered in terms of either 'substantial harm' or 'less than substantial harm' as described within Paragraphs 132 to 134 of that document. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes it clear that substantial harm is a high test, and recent case law describes substantial harm in terms of an effect that would vitiate or drain away much of the significance of a heritage asset.

30. The layout has been designed to create a new classroom block to the rear of the external area of the Key Stage 1 classroom extension which was completed in 2007. The siting of the proposed new classroom block in the rear area besides the playground area would limit the effects on the appearance of the existing building from the Conservation Area and is remote from the areas of the school which are of historic importance. It should also have no impact on the vistas or views of the village nor the Conservation Area and it would only be seen from within the rear gardens of the properties that border the school's playing field.
31. As the proposed building would fall within the Speldhurst Conservation Area, the chosen materials would be in keeping with the existing materials used on the school buildings. The chosen location and minimum size of the proposed development would ensure that the impact on the surrounding environment is minimised. A shallow mono pitched roof has been provided in keeping with the form of construction, as well as limiting the impact of the development in terms of height, shading and in protecting the existing views across the school boundaries.
32. The location of the proposed building has been chosen and orientated so as not to interfere with the existing trees along the site boundary, as well as not to affect the root zone. It is also planned not to disturb the established planting and bushes along this site boundary that would 'soften' the visual appearance of the proposed building. It is also intended to minimise the area of the proposed building encroaching upon the playing field, so as not to affect the current marked out pitches and the designated run-off areas. Finally, the location has also been chosen so to minimise the travel distance between the proposed building and the point of access with the existing school hall.
33. The proposed development is located in a discrete position away from the Listed Building and will not be visible within the wider Conservation Area. There will be no loss of historic fabric as a result of this proposal. An external door is proposed to be created within the main school building which would provide direct access to the school hall. Whilst this part of the building forms part of the Grade II Listed Building, it is within the part of the newer extension built onto the Listed Building. The external door should not in my view detract from the Listed Building, however it does need a separate Listed Building consent from the Borough Council. It should also be noted that the County's Conservation Officer has noted the proposed design and materials and has raised no objection. It is therefore considered that no harm would result to the Listed Building and Conservation Area.
34. In conclusion, subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the submission of final details of all materials to be used externally to ensure that they match the existing where appropriate, I consider the siting, massing and design of the proposed building to be appropriate for the site and do not consider that the development would detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, or affect the setting of nearby

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Listed Buildings. Additionally, I am proposing to attach an informative drawing attention to the need for separate Listed Building Consent. Finally, I also consider that the design and layout of the proposed development to be acceptable and is accordance with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council 2006 (Saved Policies) Policy EN5, and Tunbridge Wells Borough Core Strategy (2010) Core Policies 4 & 5 and I would therefore not raise a planning objection on this matter.

Highway Considerations

35. The planning application proposes to expand Speldhurst Primary School to a one Form Entry (1FE) school, and thus increasing the school roll from 144 pupils to 210 pupils over a 3 year period. It is also proposed to increase the number of staff by 2 permanent members of staff but there are no plans to provide any additional staff parking as there is currently availability within the staff car park.
36. A total of 6 letters of objection were received which all objected to this planning application on highway grounds. The objections received were mainly about the potential increase in traffic that an extra 66 pupils would generate from outside Speldhurst and the parking in Langton Road during school drop off and pick up time, which results in passing vehicles struggling to pass the parked school vehicles. However, it must be noted that the additional capacity could actually result in less traffic journeys by enabling some families to be accommodated at Speldhurst Primary School and therefore not having to undertake split journeys to other schools, as well as those families now being able to walk to the school.
37. The application is supported by a Survey of Traffic and Parking Statement and a School Travel Plan. The survey that was carried out included both the traffic and parking outside the school and carried out during both the morning drop off and the afternoon pick up and was carried out over a 4 day period. The school already has a breakfast club, so some children had already been dropped off earlier. Therefore, the majority of pupils arrived in time for school starting time of 8.50am. It was noted that cars had already started to arrive as early from 8.28am on one of the mornings surveyed, and the maximum number of cars parked was 20 cars. Most of the cars in the morning drop off had left the site by 8.55am. In the afternoon parents had started to arrive as early as 3.00pm for the 3.15pm finish. The peak number of parked vehicles in the afternoon was 23 cars and most vehicles had left the site by 3.30pm. However, it is worth noting that the afternoon school collection does not coincide with the afternoon rush hour.
38. The school does not have a dedicated parking or drop off area for parents, and as the main entrance to school is located in Langton Road, the majority of the parent's park in this road. It was noted from the parking survey that whilst Langton Road is reduced down to a single traffic lane during the school drop off and pick up times, traffic did continue to flow and drivers were generally courteous to each other. It is also noted that the morning drop off coincides with the morning rush hour, so there is likely to be more traffic during this time.
39. Whilst objectors stated that there could be increased traffic from outside the village if the school was allowed to expand, this might not necessarily be the case. Currently children who have not been granted a place at Speldhurst Primary School, are being driven to schools in another village and so add to the current traffic flow through the village. If these children were to be offered a place at the expanded village school, then this trip could be removed from the highway network. Some parents already have children at Speldhurst Primary School and are currently driving to the school already. In addition,

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some families have not been able to get all of their children into Speldhurst Primary School and are therefore having to drive to more than one primary school. If these parents are able to get all of their children into an expanded Speldhurst School, then it would not increase the current trips to school or add to the current parking numbers.

40. The School Travel Plan shows that currently 70% of the school pupils live in Speldhurst. Additionally, over the last 5 years the catchment area of the school has also decreased significantly. As already mentioned, Speldhurst Primary School is one of the most over subscribed schools in Kent and the current catchment area for pupils (excluding siblings) was 0.426 miles of the school site. The school currently has a waiting list of pupils that live within the village, but they are unable to get a place at the school as they currently only take 20 pupils in the Reception class.
41. The school is aware of issues associated with the school drop off and pick up and regularly reminds parents of the need to respect the parking limitations outside the school's neighbouring properties. The school also encourages parents to use the nearby George and Dragon public house car park as a drop off point. Through the School Travel Plan the school is planning to introduce a Walking Bus from this car park, where there is the potential for up to 25 families being able to use this initiative. The school is also looking into the possibility of expanding the school drop off times in the morning (currently drop off is between 8.40am and 8.50am) from 8.30am to 8.50am and to provide a 'Drop-off' point which would be manned by staff. Another initiative is to investigate the opening of the gate to the rear of the school playing field which leads to Penshurst Road, which would encourage more of the pupils to walk to school.
42. There are also plans to introduce a 20mph speed limit throughout the village and including Langton Road. This is being promoted by Speldhurst Parish Council and is separate to this planning application. It is planned to happen within the next 3 months. This proposal should help to reduce the speed of traffic travelling through the village.
43. Paragraph 32 of the NPPF states amongst other things that development should not be refused on transport grounds unless the cumulative impact is severe. However I do not consider the cumulative impact to be severe in this instance and advise that a highway objection is not warranted. The initiatives that the school is proposing would minimise the limited additional congestion and short term impacts that may occur. In addition, Kent Highways have acknowledged that a large percentage of new pupils would be local to the village and this includes many on the waiting list that are currently being driven to alternative schools outside the village. It has also been acknowledged that the school has a number of initiatives in the School Travel Plan, which could further reduce the number of vehicle trips to and from the school. The proposal has been assessed and is in accordance with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council 2006 (Saved Policies) Policy TP4 and TP5, and Tunbridge Wells Borough Core Strategy (2010) Core Policy 3, I would therefore not raise an objection on this matter.

Conclusion

44. This proposal seeks to provide a modular two classroom building to the rear of the existing school buildings, and to relocate two storage sheds which are currently located in the area of the proposed development. In my view, the development would not give rise to any significant material harm and is in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies. I do not consider that the development would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area within which the school is located or would affect the setting of

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nearby Listed Buildings, the AONB or unacceptable impact on the local highway. The development is in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework and has strong planning policy support in the Planning Policy Statement for Schools (2011). Subject to the imposition of the conditions and informative as outlined throughout this report, I consider that the proposed development is acceptable, I therefore conclude that the development is sustainable and recommend that permission be granted subject to conditions.

Recommendation

45. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED subject to the following condition covering the following:

- The standard 5 year time limit;
- The development carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- The submission of details of all materials to be used externally;
- Measures to protect trees to be retained;
- Details of any external lighting to be provided;
- Hours of working during construction to be restricted to between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays;
- Measures to prevent mud and debris being taken onto the public highway;
- The implementation of the School Travel Plan;
- Monitoring and regular update of the School Travel Plan; and
- The submission of a construction management plan, including lorry routing, access, parking and circulation within the site for contractors and other vehicles related to construction operations.

46. I FURTHER RECOMMEND that the applicant be advised of the following informative:

- Attention is drawn to the need for Listed Building Consent for the new double doors to the school hall.

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| Case officer – Lidia Cook | 03000 413353 |
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| Background documents - See section heading |
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