

**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet  
Technology College, Colyer Road, Northfleet – GR/08/138**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Unit to Planning Applications Committee on 24 June 2008.

GR/08/138 – Complete replacement of the existing secondary school on the site with a new two storey school building together with revised access arrangements, new car park, hard play areas, landscape works and the demolition of the existing school buildings (with the exception of the sports pavilion) on completion of the development at Northfleet Technology College, Colyer Road, Northfleet, Gravesend.

Recommendation: Permission be granted, subject to conditions.

**Local Members:** Mr L. Christie and Mr R. Parker

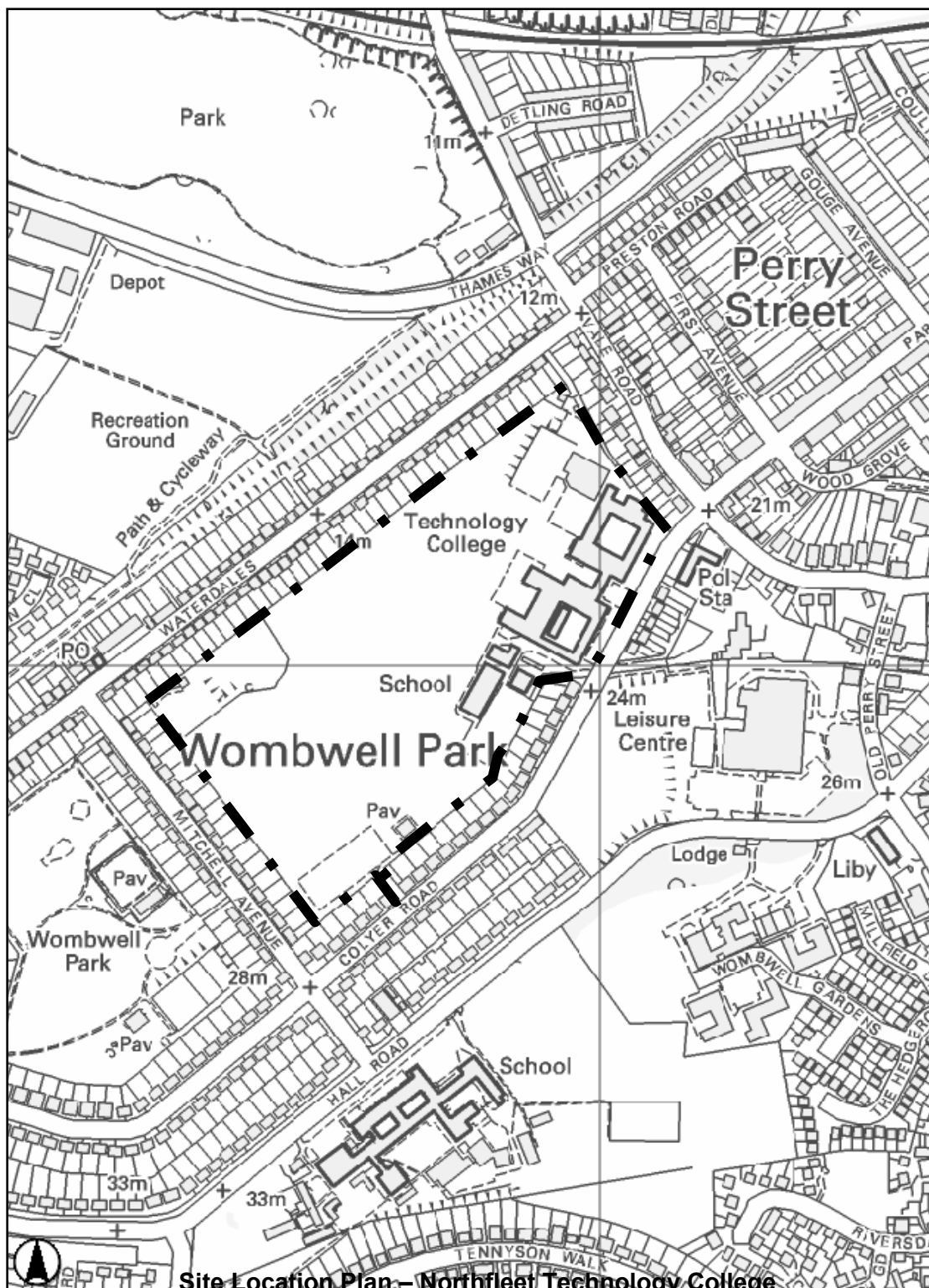
**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Site**

1. The application site forms the existing Northfleet Technology College (NTC) grounds. The College is located approximately 1.5 km south-west of Gravesend town centre, 1 km south-east of Northfleet, 1 km to the north-east of the Pepper Hill junction on the A2, and approximately 1.5 km south of the River Thames. Access to the site is gained via existing dedicated access points along Colyer Road. The College grounds consist of approximately 8 hectares of land that is enclosed by residential properties. The main site boundaries bordering the rear gardens of properties on Colyer Road, Mitchell Avenue, Waterdales, and Vale Road – see attached site location plan.
2. The existing school buildings are located at the eastern part of the grounds and front onto the north-east end of Colyer Road near the junction with Vale Road. The College consists of a mix of buildings; the main school comprises a two-storey red brick building dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with other more recent prefabricated buildings forming the balance of the accommodation on site. The footprints of the buildings are set back from the highway with part of the existing school car parking positioned on the forecourt. Playgrounds and hard surfacing are located to the north and south. The school grounds include a secondary / maintenance access point onto Colyer Road to the south-west. An existing sport pavilion is positioned toward this end of the site, with the remainder of the grounds made up of playing field and open amenity space. The topography of the site generally slopes in a northerly direction. The drawings received with the application show the highest point at the southern corner at 24m Above Ordinance Datum (AOD) falling away to the north toward properties in Waterdales. The lowest point on site is shown adjacent to the north-west boundary at 14.5m AOD, a drop of 9.5m across the site.
3. The school at present accommodates 961 pupils of secondary school age (11 to 18 years), along with 67 full and 46 part-time staff. The school currently has car parking for approximately 138 vehicles on-site.
4. The site is identified in the Gravesham Borough Local Plan Second Review (2000) Proposals Map as protected as part of an Existing Green Grid Site (Policy LT2). The Local Plan Second Review did not proceed to adoption and the green grid is not referred to in the saved policies within the First Review (1994). There are no other site-specific Development Plan Policies identified in connection with the application site

**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

**Site Location Plan**



**Site Location Plan – Northfleet Technology College**

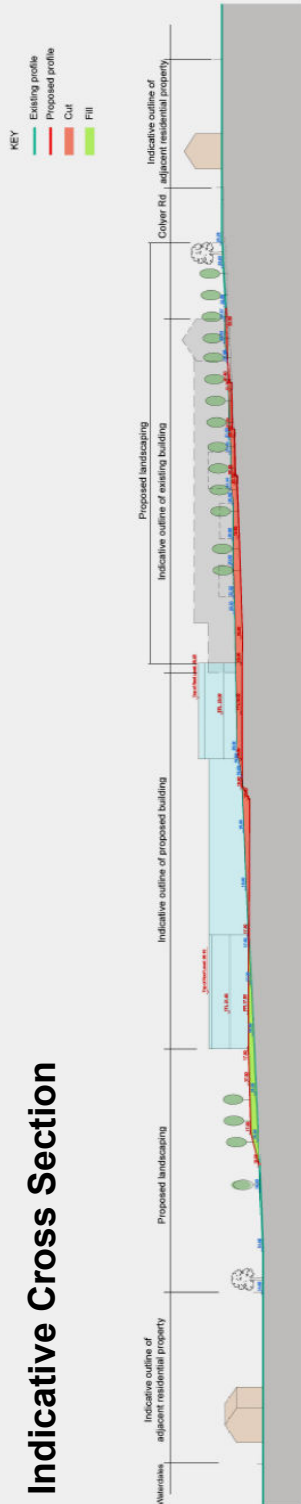
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# Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138

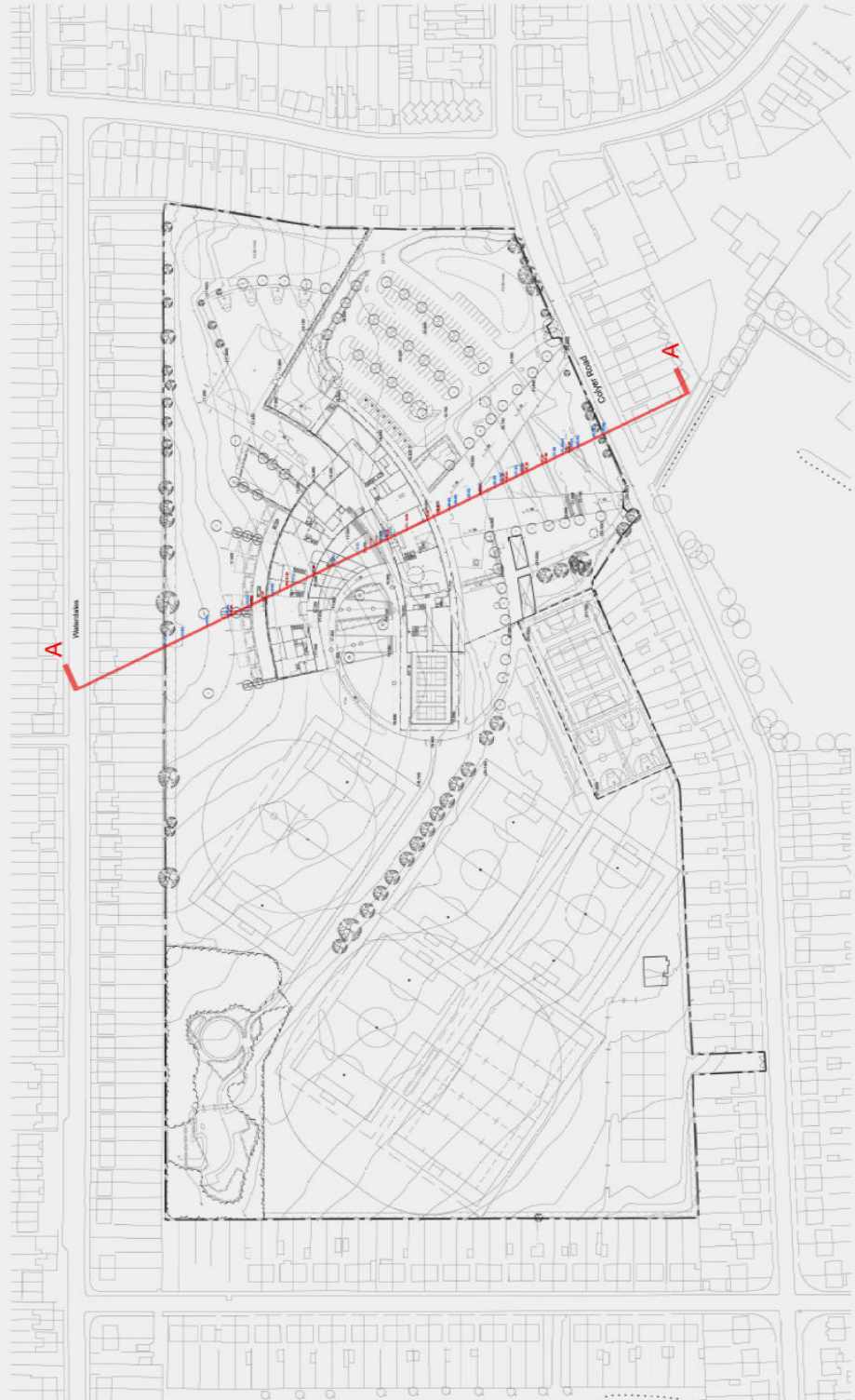


**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

**Indicative Cross Section**



Section A - A Scale 1:500@A1

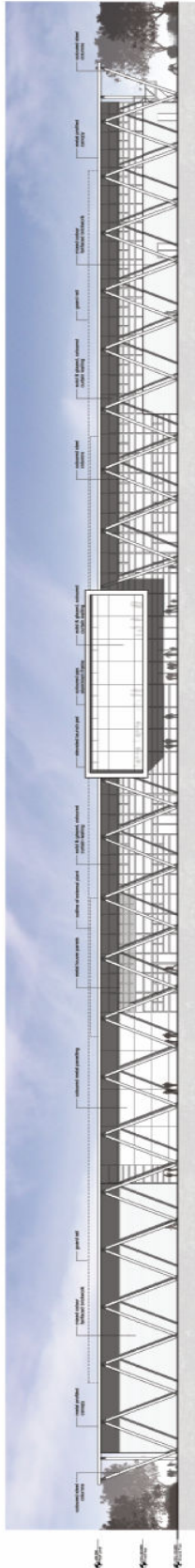


Site Masterplan Scale 1:1000@A1



## Item D8

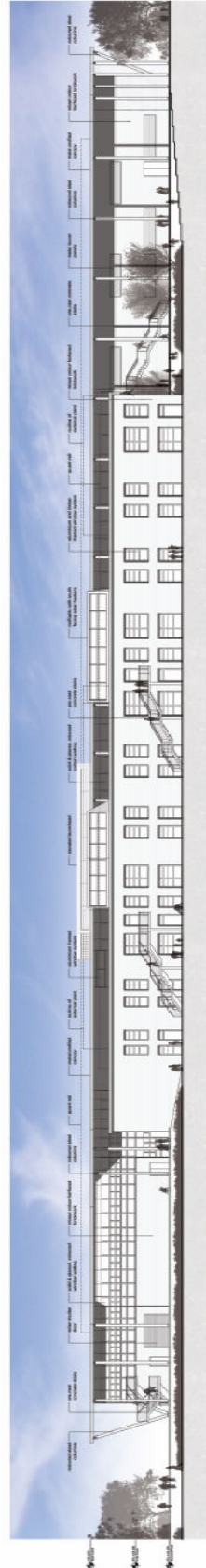
### Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138



01  
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Elevation A



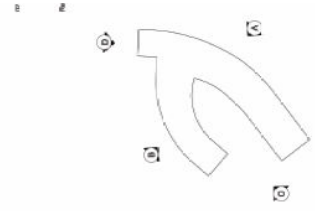
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Elevation A in context



02  
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Elevation B



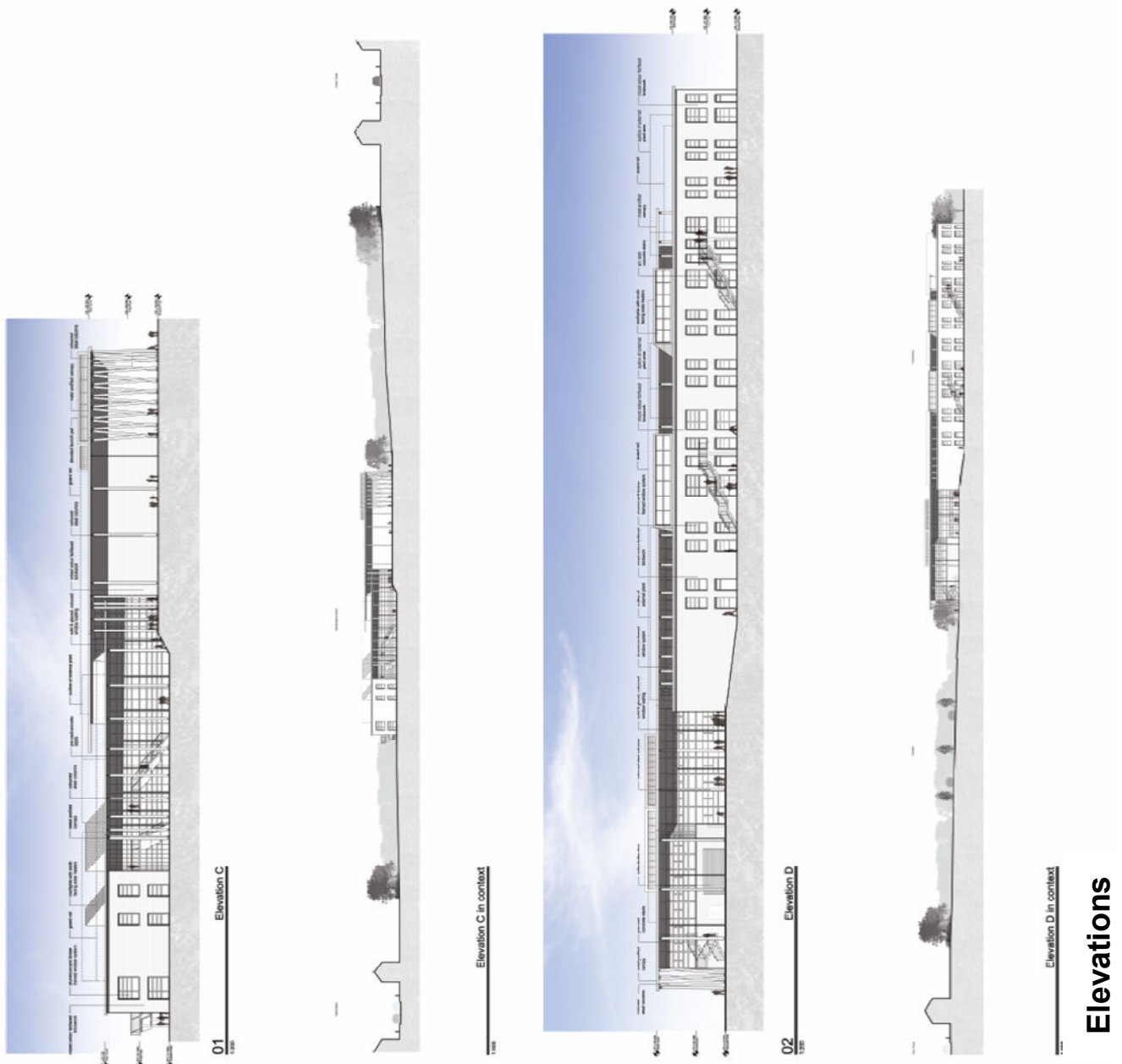
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Elevation B in context



## Elevations

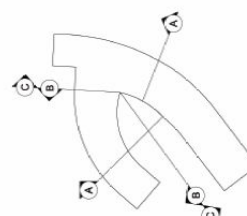
## Item D8

### Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138





## Sections



**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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**Proposal**

5. This application forms one of a number of proposals being considered by the County Planning Authority as part of central Government's Building Schools for the Future programme (BSF). The BSF programme is an initiative to transform all the Country's Secondary Schools to enable them to meet the new challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> Century education. In particular, new methods of teaching and new styles of learning have implications for the type and arrangement of spaces for schools. A move away from traditional teaching methods means less reliance on the earlier school designs of classrooms and corridors. Opportunity therefore exists for more innovative designs of school buildings with a wider variety of internal and external spaces, and greater scope for fuller use of the premises by the local community.
6. This application has been submitted jointly by Land Securities Trillium and Kent County Council Children, Families and Education, under the Building Schools for the Future programme, and proposes the redevelopment of Northfleet Technology College within the existing school grounds. This process would involve the construction of a new purpose built school building directly to the rear of the existing school buildings. The application states that the current buildings are dated, in decline, and could not be refurbished or reconfigured to provide the spaces required by the envisaged learning environment. On completion of the development all of the existing school buildings with the exception of the sports pavilion located to the south-west of the site would be demolished. The area of land created to the front of the new building where the existing school stands would form a new open amenity space / landscaped entrance and car park.
7. The application states that the new building would create flexible, multi-use spaces that reflect the College's specialism in technology and problem solving. The design of the building would also enable the College to encourage wider community use through improved sports, drama and social facilities.
8. The application proposes a modern two-storey building based around two curved blocks joined by a dining and drama hub at the north end of the structure. The new building would create approximately 10,166m<sup>2</sup> of new floor space and would accommodate a design capacity of approximately 940 pupils. The front block would house technical and physical teaching areas including art, engineering, science and sports, with the rear component accommodating mixed teaching spaces. The front and rear components of the proposal would be positioned across an existing 1.5 m level change on site with the rear building to the west positioned at the lower level (17.5m AOD). As noted above, the site generally slopes from Colyer Road (at 23.9m AOD) towards Waterdales (14.5m AOD at the lowest point on the site boundary). In the case of both blocks that form the building, the structure as proposed would at measure approximately 11m from the respective ground levels its maximum height.
9. The application proposes to site the development directly to the west of the existing buildings set back from Colyer Road within the wider College grounds. This approach would allow the existing buildings to be retained for use during the construction period minimising the disruption to the day to day operation of the College. The application includes a phasing plan that sets out each stage of the construction operation and the logistics of delivering the proposals. The phasing plans set out the construction access arrangements and site compound which would be located adjacent to the north-east boundary with properties in Vale Road. On completion of the new development the existing buildings would be demolished with the footprint redeveloped into new pedestrian and vehicle access points, informal open space, and car parking. The façade



**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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of the proposed building would, at its closest point, be approximately 46m from the boundary with nearest residential properties in Waterdales, 65m from the rear boundary with properties in Colyer Road, and 80m from the boundary with properties in Vale Road.

10. The proposed development would be finished using a modern palette of materials to create a building that the application documents confirms would reflect the technical specialism of the college. The building is proposed to be similar to an office or research building transforming the learning process and in turn the outward image of the school. The materials proposed include the use of solid & glazed colour curtain walling, mixed colour fair-facing brickwork, a metal profiled canopy roof that would overhang the building with coloured steel columns in support, metal louver panels, and an aluminium and timber framed window system.
11. The application includes the creation and adaptation of pedestrian and vehicle access points along the existing frontage with the public highway at the north-east end of Colyer Road. The main vehicle access was relocated during consideration of the application from the location originally proposed at the north end of the site 40m to the south along Colyer Road. This amendment was proposed in response to initial concerns raised by the Divisional Transportation Manager about potential conflicts with the existing local highway layout. The attached drawings show the revised layout. The application includes the provision of a new car park that would accommodate 150 vehicles including 9 disabled bays, and provision of a drop off facility.
12. The application sets out that the design and layout of the building has been heavily influenced by the desire to achieve a more sustainable form of development. The building has been designed to target an Excellent Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) rating. The design as proposed would include the provision of Biomass boilers, a Building and Energy Management System, heat recovery ventilation plant, and solar collectors to heat water for the building. The application states that layout of the building has been designed to maximise natural ventilation and daylight penetration. The approach would also enable photoelectric cells to be installed at a later date. The application includes the provision of a service yard to the north-east of the building, designed to, amongst other matters, accommodate storage of biomass fuel.
13. The application proposes to encourage wider use of the facilities by the local community in line with Government targets for broader use of school buildings. The College already accommodates some community activities outside of school hours including local sports clubs and evening classes as part of an Adult Education programme. At present the exact scope or details of the proposed community use has yet to be established. The applicant states that should planning permission be granted a community use programme would be prepared and submitted for approval. The applicant confirms that at this stage it is difficult to give an accurate assessment of the likely community use. However, the use of the site would include the outdoor sports facilities which would likely be used after school and at the weekends during daylight hours. No floodlighting proposals are included with this application. The applicant has confirmed that use of the site by the community would not extend beyond 2200 hours.
14. The application was accompanied by a Travel Plan, a Desktop Study into ground conditions, a Site Investigation Report, an Ecological Scoping Survey and Biodiversity Assessment, an Archaeological Desktop Assessment, a Tree Survey, a Statement on Sports Provision, and Phasing Plans detailing the stages of development over the predicted 2 year construction period.

## **Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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15. Reduced copies of the submitted drawings showing the site layout, cross sections and elevations are attached.

### **Development Plan Policies**

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

#### **(i) Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006:**

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Policy SP1  | Seeks to protect and enhance the environment and achieve a sustainable pattern and form of development.  |
| Policy SS6  | Seeks to improve the built and natural environment, functioning and appearance of the suburbs of the major urban areas, including the provision of services and facilities that serve local needs.   |
| Policy EN9  | Seeks to maintain tree cover and provision of new habitat as part of development proposals.  |
| Policy QL1  | Seeks all development be well designed and of high quality that respond positively to the local character. Development, which would be detrimental to the built environment, amenity, function and character of settlements or the countryside, will not be permitted.           |
| Policy QL11 | Provision will be made for the development and improvement of local services in existing residential areas and in town and district centres particularly where services are deficient.   |
| Policy QL17 | Seeks to protect open space and green networks.  |
| Policy TP3  | Local Planning Authorities should ensure that development sites are well served by public transport, walking and cycling. Travel Plans should be established for larger developments that generate significant demand for travel to promote the use of these means of transport. |
| Policy TP11 | Seeks facilities for pedestrians and cyclists to be provided in the design of new development.   |
| Policy TP19 | Seeks development proposals to comply with the respective vehicle parking policies.  |
| Policy NR1  | Seeks new development to incorporate sustainable construction techniques and demonstrate prudent use of energy, water and other natural resources.   |
| Policy NR5  | Seeks to conserve and enhance Kent's environment including the visual, ecological, historic and water environments, air quality, noise and light intrusion.  |

#### **(ii) Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) (saved policies):**

## **Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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- Policy TC0      Seeks to conserve and enhance the built environment. Particular importance will be attached to the design of new development, environmental improvement schemes, preparation of a landscape strategy for the Borough.
- Policy TC1      Presumes against new development which would cause harm to interests of acknowledged importance. Seeks new development that respects the scale and massing of their surroundings, the principles of the Kent Design Guide, the character and appearance of the existing building, the privacy and amenity of adjoining residents, and uses good quality materials that are sympathetic to the area concerned.
- Policy TC7      Seeks applications to assess of archaeological implications, and where appropriate ensure that satisfactory investigation and recording take place.
- Policy TC10      Seeks new development to include submission of details of landscaping proposed. Proposals that would result in the destruction\of protected trees and woodlands, other important landscape features, and habitats of nature conservation value will not normally be permitted
- Policy LT3      Seeks to ensure the protection of playing fields, unless sports and recreation facilities can best be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site; or alternative provision of equivalent community benefit will be quickly made available; or there is an excess of sports pitch provision and public open space in the area, taking account of the recreation and amenity value of such provision, including the contribution of the playing fields to the quality of the local environment.
- Policy LT4      Supports the use of educational playing fields and sports facilities by the general public subject to suitable timing and management arrangements.
- Policy P3      Seeks new development to make provision for vehicle parking, in accordance with the Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards, as interpreted by Gravesham Borough Council, unless justified as an exception.

### **Consultations**

17. **Gravesham Borough Council** – The Borough Council welcomes the regeneration of the Northfleet Technology College, however requests clarification of a number of points prior to making final comment.

The Borough Council notes there would be significant space to the front of the proposed school, and the school being set back also would result in green space to the rear of the site being lost. The current school fits in well with the street scene and creates a pleasant urban frontage. The frontage of Colyer Road would be altered significantly by the proposal and the proposed sleek and modern school would be extremely noticeable.

Raises initial concerns over the original vehicle access arrangements due to the proximity of the access to the junction between Colyer and Vale Road.

**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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Notes the proposed construction compound would be located close to the properties on Vale Road. The Borough Council requests that measures be put in place to seek to minimise any disturbance to the residents surrounding the site. The comments note that the proposed car park and hard-surface play area would also be near to the rear of properties along Vale Road, and could cause disturbance to these properties, particularly when used out of normal school hours. The Borough Council requests that further information be required on the access arrangements, signage, lighting and security of the site during out of hours activities. The Borough Council notes that the College aims to welcome and encourage wider community use, including access to better sports, drama and social facilities.

The Borough Council notes the materials proposed as part of the building and the risk of vandalism to the windows.

The Borough Council has forwarded comments from their Public Health & Community Wellbeing Department with reference to the leisure provision on site. The comments note that the amount of playing fields available for informal/formal recreation would be reduced. From the information received the department objects to the potential loss of playing field as part of the new development. Request clarification of the existing provision and use compared to the proposed arrangements? Seeks clarification of the effects on use of the playing fields during building work? Welcomes the provision of new sports hall and fitness rooms. Seeks reassurance that the design and layouts would meet the standards produced by Sport England. Requests to see the community use policy.

The Borough Council has forwarded comments from their Regulatory Services Department. The comments raise no objection subject to details of external lighting to be submitted for approval, the control of noise levels from any plant and equipment associated with the building.

Following receipt of further information from the applicant addressing the points set out above the Borough Council has confirmed they have no further comments to make in relation to the application and welcome the regeneration of the site, subject to appropriate conditions covering ground contamination matters.

**South East England Development Agency** – no objection. The Agency supports the application commenting that *“the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) identifies Thames Gateway Kent as a Diamond for Investment and Growth which has the potential to use its concentration of people, employment, knowledge and built assets to become an economic catalyst for the region. A key factor in ensuring the delivery of the Diamond is improving educational attainment and skills. Therefore, the Agency welcomes the development of a centre for excellence in Gravesham to support the Engineering and Technology Clusters.*

*The Agency welcomes references to:*

- *Delivering a highly sustainable building to achieve an ‘Excellent’ BREEAM rating.*
- *Utilising grey water systems.*
- *Utilising renewable energy technologies (biomass and solar).*
- *Providing secure cycle storage on site.”*

**South East England Regional Assembly** – no objection. The Assembly comments that on the basis of the information provided, it is considered that the proposed development would not materially conflict with or prejudice the implementation of the

**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG9 and Alterations) or the draft South East Plan (March 2006). The Assembly recommends conditions covering measures to promote alternatives to the car and an agreed travel plan, provision of an appropriate level of car and cycle parking, incorporation of water and energy efficiency measures and the promotion of renewable energy and sustainable construction, measures to secure a high quality design relevant to the context, appropriate measures to prevent and mitigate against noise and air pollution, and protection and mitigation measures to protect and enhance biodiversity.

**Sport England** – raises an objection to the application, on the grounds that the development would result in the loss of at least one grass football pitch from the playing field. The comments note that the material received accompanying the application fails to address the requirements of Sport England's policy and the guidance contained in PPG17 regarding the proposed loss of playing field land. Given the lack of information regarding the justification for the proposed loss of playing field land and the extent of the proposed indoor provision, it is Sport England's opinion that the application fails to demonstrate that the proposals meet with any of the specific circumstances outlined within their Playing Field Policy.

Sport England recommends that if the proposed development is to maximise its potential benefit to sport then further information addressing the following points would be expected:

- The adequate phasing of the development to ensure that there is no detriment to the sport provision;
- All new sporting provision (indoor and outdoor) would be developed in accordance with Sport England's and the relevant Governing Bodies design guidance;
- Prior to opening of the new school buildings the school should develop and adopt a Community Use Scheme and Sport Development Plan which has been approved by the County Planning Authority in consultation with Sport England.

A further statement has been received from the applicant addressing the playing field issue and the provision of sports facilities which has been forwarded to Sport England. Any further comments received concerning this information prior to the Committee meeting will be reported verbally.

**Environment Agency** – the Agency's comments note that the surface water drainage is to discharge to the existing system and raise no objection to the continued use of soakaways at the location provide they are discharged into clean uncontaminated ground and are kept clear of the denehole present on site. Seeks appropriate pollution prevention control measures and requests a condition covering a site investigation and remediation strategy for ground contamination, including in the area of the fuel tanks which are to be removed. The Agency recommends that any visibly contaminated or odorous material encountered on site, during the development work, must be investigated, and a closure report for all remediation works carried out should be submitted for approval.

**Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment** – were unable to comment on the scheme.

**Police Architectural Liaison Officer** – no comment received on writing this report. Any views received prior to the Committee meeting will be reported verbally.

**The Divisional Transportation Manager** – comments as follows in relation to the



**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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highway aspects of the application:

*“Following the submission of amended plans and supporting information regarding the above application, here is the formal KHS response to the proposals:*

*The proposed relocation of the new vehicular access onto Colyer Road as indicated on drg. No. NTC-L-L-(90)X01 Rev 2 is strongly supported by KHS and addresses the concerns previously raised with regard to proximity. It is understood that the timescale involved in carrying out a formal Safety Audit in relation to the detailed design of the access will not allow this to be completed prior to the application being reported to the Planning Committee and it is therefore strongly recommended (as also suggested by the applicant) that a planning condition be secured requiring a combined stage 1&2 Safety Audit to be carried out prior to any works commencing on site with any resulting concerns being addressed within the detailed access design.*

*It has been confirmed by the applicant that the gated access onto Colyer Road serving the playing field facilities is to be restricted to maintenance use only. It is however strongly recommended that a condition be secured preventing use of this access at all times for either pedestrian or vehicular movements other than for maintenance purposes. Furthermore, it is recommended that details of how this maintenance access will be facilitated and policed be submitted for approval prior to works commencing on site as part of this condition.*

*In addition it should be noted that as part of the redevelopment of the site, it is strongly recommended that a condition be secured ensuring that the existing school travel plan accompanying the site be reviewed and updated to reflect the proposed new site arrangements and that this travel plan then be reviewed, in conjunction with KCC on an annual basis to ensure that the aims of the plan continue to be aspired to and that the plan continues to reflect the way in which the school operates in the future.*

*Finally, it is recommended that a condition be secured restricting week day construction traffic movements to a time period which does not conflict with peak hour school movement times during school days - i.e not between 08:00 and 09:00 or 14:45 and 15:45.”*

**The County Council’s Landscape Advisers** – raises no objection. Recommends that a full landscape scheme be submitted giving details of species, plant sizes, planting densities, as well as a five-year maintenance schedule. Recommends the applicant follows the tree protection guidelines set out in BS5837:2005 – *Trees in Relation to Construction* to ensure the continued health of all existing trees during construction. Recommends the applicant reviews their design in terms of planting along the western and northern boundaries to ensure shadows cast into adjacent properties are kept to a minimum, and that additional screening measures for the car park are considered using informal groups of small-medium trees within the grass areas on either side of the entrance route.

**The County Council’s Archaeological Officer** – raises no objection, subject to conditions requiring implementation of a programme of archaeological work to ensure features of interest are properly examined and recorded, details of any below ground excavation are submitted, and a programme of building recording.

The Archaeological Officer notes the site has potential to contain Palaeolithic and further prehistoric remains, as well as, Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Romano-British evidence.

**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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**Local Members**

18. The Local County Members Mr. L. Christie and Mr. R. Parker were notified of the application on 12 February 2008.

**Publicity**

19. The application was publicised through a newspaper advert, the posting of 2 site notices and the notification of 195 neighbouring properties. 13 neighbouring properties were subsequently re-consulted concerning amendments to the scheme including the movement of the proposed vehicle access 40 metres south along Colyer Road.

**Representations**

20. 1 letter of representation objecting to the proposal has been received from local residents. It raises no objection in principle, to the improvement of the educational facilities at this school. However concerns are raised based on the design principles and potential for adverse impacts to residential amenity associated with any proposed changes to the functioning/opening hours of the site. The main points raised can be summarised as follows:

- The building is inappropriate in terms of siting and design.
  - The basic design principles for this development include few planning objectives and are almost entirely education and finance orientated. The main objective was confirmed to be, creating a new building whilst retaining the existing school buildings during construction. Whilst it is understood that this would be financially beneficial and result in the least disruption for pupils, it is not consider that this takes into account the proper planning of the site.
  - The proposed site layout results in an inefficient use of land, with a large area of under utilised space in front of the building and a significant alteration to the character of the surrounding street scene in Colyer Road. The loss of the frontage building would weaken the street scene and undermine the importance of the school use in the area. When viewed from Colyer Road the main feature will be a large car park and landscaped 'gallery', which would present a far weaker frontage than the existing building.
  - The set back location and the ultra modern design of the building do not take into account the local context and as such, would result in a development which appears totally out of place and undermines the character and amenity of the surrounding area.
- Excessive car parking.
  - In line with government policies, the school travel plan indicates that a 10% per annum reduction in children being brought to school by car is an important objective. How will this objective be realised if the parking provision at the site is substantially increased and dedicated car drop off facilities are provided? The proposed facilities are more likely to encourage car usage. The level of car parking proposed (150 spaces) is more akin to a town centre car park, than a suburban secondary school. Therefore an objection is raised to this feature as it provides excess capacity and ultimately leads to a large area of the site being hard surfaced and unable to be utilised for educational purposes.
- Noise/Disturbance

**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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- At present properties on Vale Road experience very little noise/disturbance associated with the use of the school. This is due to the main parking and play areas being located on the front and western side of the site. The existing car parking area adjacent to property in Vale Road is little used. The proposed development would re-locate the main car park and drop off point, hard and soft play areas and service yard immediately to the rear of property in Vale Road, resulting in a substantial increase in noise/disturbance throughout the day and the potential for light spill at night. An objection is raised to this adverse impact on the residential amenity. Requests that it would be preferable for mitigation measures to be put in place to reduce this impact. In particular, the hours of use for the service area, car park and play areas should be controlled by planning condition and appropriate screening should be provided adjacent to the boundary with residential property.
- Similarly the construction access and compound are proposed to be located at the rear of property in Vale Road. Concern is raised at the potential for noise/disturbance, light spill and dust impacts associated with this arrangement. Requests that the applicant provide details of how these impacts would be mitigated. Reiterates the request regarding screening and controlled hours of operation.
- Extended use of the facilities.
  - The application details set out that the school would be used by the wider community during evenings and weekends and there would be an open air performance area. The school's web-site sets out that adult education and evening classes would be provided. In addition, it is expected that the weekend use of the sports pitches will continue. Whilst the greater accessibility is welcome, some clarification as to the exact nature of this community usage and the location and use of the open-air performance area is requested. Exactly what facilities would be available and over what opening times and in particular, how would they be accessed. Strong objection is raised to the use of the proposed car park and performance area late into the evening, as property in Vale Road would undoubtedly suffer from noise/disturbance from both people and vehicle movements. Requests confirmation as to whether the parking area is proposed to be lit and if so, how the lighting would be designed so as to avoid any adverse impacts to residential property.
- Additional Boundary Fencing
  - The application details suggest that additional boundary fencing is proposed. However no details have been provided. Properties in the locality have experienced security problems associated with persons being able to access them via the school site. Therefore additional protection is welcome. Requests the opportunity to comment on any proposed boundary treatment adjacent before it is erected.

**Discussion**

21. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (16) 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

**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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consultation and publicity. Issues of particular relevance include siting, design and appearance, highway impacts, landscaping, sports provision, impacts upon residential and local amenity, security and community use.

**Siting, design and appearance**

22. Policy QL1 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan and Policies TC0 and TC1 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review require new developments to be of high quality and well designed, to respect the scale and massing of their surroundings and to protect the privacy and amenity of adjoining residents. This application proposes the complete demolition of the existing school buildings, and the construction of new teaching and ancillary accommodation, car parking & landscaping, with the exception of the retained sports pavilion. The application proposes to replace old and unsuitable teaching accommodation with high quality new accommodation, designed for new ways of learning and enhanced use by the local community.
23. This particular school site has been the subject of previous piecemeal changes to the mix of activities on the site, due to earlier falling rolls and reorganisations. In particular the existing school buildings became under occupied and various Education office and administration uses have also been accommodated in recent years. The BSF Programme provides a new and realistic opportunity to completely re-style the accommodation and to re-instate a full range of education uses on the site, whilst simultaneously enhancing the opportunities for the shared use of the new facilities with the local community. Accordingly, the wholesale demolition of the existing buildings, with their regimented corridors and classrooms, would provide for an entirely different form of buildings with a wider variety of internal spaces.
24. The external form of the new buildings would be significantly different, in terms of shape, appearance and positioning on the site. In terms of their mass the new buildings would be essentially two storeys in height, but taking advantage of the sloping ground form to the rear to avoid excessive roof height. The roofing would also be generally flat in profile to reduce its impact in the local townscape. The surrounding development is largely residential, so it would not be appropriate in my view to reflect the domestic scale of architecture in this new development. The use of modern external materials, would give the building a markedly different visual appearance, and one which would contrast with neighbouring buildings. However, the locality is not one where townscape conservation is a key issue, and there is no readily identifiable character or style worthy of replicating in the new development.
25. The positioning of the building on the site presents more of a challenge. In particular, various options for where to site the new buildings and spaces were extensively explored at the pre-application stage. Both the Borough Council and the local community contributed to that process. The notion of building on the existing footprint was investigated but not considered overall to be a key objective, given the expanse of land elsewhere on the site and the ability to use the sloping contour of the site to provide a more interesting campus style development. Moreover, the idea of setting the buildings further into the site was favoured so as to provide a more open, less austere and more inviting street frontage, greater physical separation from neighbouring buildings and more 'breathing space' around the new buildings. Re-building on the same footprint would also have the marked disadvantage of having to operate the school for a couple of years out of a plethora of temporary buildings, either on the part of the site currently proposed to be used for the new buildings or on the playing fields to the western end.
26. Given that it would be possible to easily achieve the minimum separation distances from

**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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neighbouring properties, and that the new building would not exceed two storeys in height, I consider that the position of the new buildings is entirely acceptable, and note that it has not been contested by most adjacent residents. However, the point has been raised that there would be the creation of a large open space to the front of the site which would be visually unappealing if it was to be little more than a large car park. This matter too was discussed with the Architects at the pre-application stage and the intention is to provide a sensitive mix of pedestrian walkways, parking spaces and structural landscape planting. Whilst I would agree that there would be a significant change to the street scene, I do not consider that to be a retrograde change since it would provide a more inviting aspect than maintaining the current building line, whilst including a transition zone of semi-public realm/meeting space for the new College, for both students and the local community alike. Subject to receipt of further information concerning the detailed landscaping arrangements proposed to Colyer Road, including details of tree planting and appropriate fencing/ railings, I would not raise any objection to the approach proposed.

27. Overall, I consider that the proposed design is of a suitably high standard and would sit comfortably within the site, providing an identifiable landmark without unduly impacting on neighbouring properties nor making an ostentatious imprint on the wider townscape. Were this innovative building design and form to be sited to the front of its site, I would have greater concerns over its impact on the street scene, but by receding it further into the site where it nestles at a lower level, these concerns are overcome.

**Highway Impacts and Car Parking**

28. Following initial concerns over the location of vehicle access arrangements originally proposed the Divisional Transportation Manager has considered amended arrangements as set out in the site layout plan above. He has confirmed that he is now satisfied with the proposals and raises no objection subject to conditions covering submission of a Safety Audit on the access arrangements prior to any works commencing on site, the access onto Colyer Road serving the playing field facilities to be restricted to maintenance use only and details to be provided as to how this will be policed on site, the School Travel Plan to be updated to reflect the proposed development and the plan subsequently reviewed annually with the County Council, and week day construction traffic movements restricted to a time period which does not conflict with peak hour school movements.
29. I note that the proposed development would involve the direct replacement of the existing facilities and does not constitute an increase in the size of the school. The application states that the design capacity of the building (940 pupils) is below that of the current school roll (961 pupils). The application includes an existing School Travel Plan and states that due to the proximity of the community served by the College approximately 2/3rds of the pupils attending the site travel on foot. The College has an established pattern of movements associated with the facilities it also has good access to the public transport network. I note that the application includes provision for cycle parking (approximately 155 spaces). This facility would accord with the provisions set out in the Kent Vehicle Parking Standards, which recommends a minimum of 134 spaces for a college of this size.
30. Members will note that the objection received from a nearby resident raises concern over the scale of car parking proposed in the application (150 spaces). I note that whilst the College appears to enjoy some success with the policy to encourage sustainable means of transport, it is inevitable that a facility of this nature will and does attract a significant number of vehicle movements. The existing car park provides 138 spaces on site. I



**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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note the increase in the number of spaces proposed, however this would be well within the maximum levels for a secondary school of this size set out in the Kent Vehicle Parking Standards. The Divisional Transportation Manager has not raised concerns over the car parking arrangements. The proposed facilities would include provision for 9 disabled parking bays and an area for setting down and picking up pupils on site away from the public highway. This would be in line with the recommendations set out in the Parking Standards. The proposal also allows for a clear segregation between pedestrian and vehicular traffic attending the site. On this basis, I consider the proposed arrangements accord with Policies TP3, TP11 and TP19 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan and Policy P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan, and, subject to the conditions recommended by the Divisional Transportation Manager, would not raise objection to the highway aspects of the application.

**Landscaping**

31. The application includes a tree survey and provides an indicative landscape masterplan that details the retention of a number of prominent trees around the site. The trees to be retained include an avenue that divides the playing field and form a key part of the landscape. The application details that all trees designated to be retained would be protected by appropriate fencing during construction in accordance with *BS5837:2005 – Trees in relation to Construction*.
32. The proposal would involve the loss of approximately 9 trees under the footprint of the building and the associated hard surfacing. The indicative landscape scheme identifies that a substantial number of new trees would be planted in mitigation for the loss and to assist in integrating the proposed development into the landscape. The scheme also shows structural planting around the main site boundaries in addition to the new boundary fencing proposed. The applicant has requested that should planning permission be granted the full details of the landscape scheme be subject to a planning condition.
33. I note the recommendations made by the County Council's Landscape Advisers, particularly with regard to the design of the landscape scheme proposed. The comments recommend that any planting on the boundary should be carefully selected and positioned to minimise shadows cast into properties to the north and west of the site. The landscape advice also suggests that the applicants consider additional screen planting around the car park and entrance routes. In this instance, I am satisfied that the above points could be addressed through a condition requiring that an appropriately detailed landscape scheme be submitted for approval.
34. The application is accompanied by a Biodiversity Assessment, which identifies the possible presence of reptiles, bats, hedgehogs and nesting birds within the survey site. The Assessment recommends a number of mitigation measures during construction. These measures included the amenity grass on site to be regularly mown to discourage reptile movements, reptile fencing installed at appropriate locations, measures taken to protect against the presence of bats and nesting birds when undertaking works to trees, and at least one further bat survey closer to the when demolition of the buildings would take place. There are no other significant ecological habitats or existing water bodies on or close to the site, so no special provision needs to be made. However, Planning Policy Guidance 9 requires developers to make provision for the enhancement of biodiversity, and to this end the development includes provision of a habitat area and pond at the western side of the playing field.

35. Therefore, subject to appropriate conditions including tree protection measures during

**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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construction, submission of a full landscape scheme, and the development to be carried out in accordance with the precautionary measures and mitigation strategies detailed in the Biodiversity Assessment, I consider that the proposed development would accord with Policy EN9 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan, and TC0 and TC10 of the Adopted Local Plan.

**Sports Provision**

36. The proposed development has inevitably prompted concerns from Sport England because of the potential net loss of playing field involved by siting the new buildings deeper into the site. This matter was also considered in pre-application discussions, which I understood had included Sport England. Whilst their further views are currently still awaited, it needs to be borne in mind that the BSF Programme involves several schools in the Gravesend area and the enhanced provision for sport is a key element of the Programme. In this regard, it is important to consider the total package of enhanced sports provision at Gravesend Schools which the BSF Programme will bring about, as most will have a much improved range of both indoor and outdoor facilities, plus considerably enhanced opportunity for use by the local community. It may be that one or two of the schools would end up with a reduced size of playing field, but that would be compensated by the extended provision at other schools, the qualitative improvements in currently underused parts of the existing playing field, and the wider provision of modern indoor sports facilities.
37. Clearly, further consideration is needed by Sport England, and unless this is available in time to report to the Committee Meeting, I would recommend that any decision is taken subject to resolution of this outstanding matter.

**Amenity Impacts**

38. Policy QL1 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan and TC1 of the Gravesham Local Plan require new development that respects the privacy and amenities of residential properties. The application has caused some concern with local residents regarding the potential impacts that may result from the redevelopment of the site on adjoining properties. A development on this scale would have local impacts and it is important that the Planning Authority takes account of these in coming to its decision.
39. The proposed relocation of the College building away from Colyer Road would result in a change to the out look of many of the adjoining residential properties. However, the setting of the building toward the centre of the site, whilst moving the footprint of the development closer to properties in Waterdales, would increase the separation between the buildings and properties in Colyer Road and Vale Road. This approach overcomes any major concerns regarding the potential for overlooking and loss of privacy. Properties in Waterdales to the north-west would be closest to the proposed building with approximately 46m separating the façade of the building from the boundary line, with over 70m to the façade of the nearest residential properties. This is well within the accepted limits for preserving privacy between facing windows. However, I note that the proposed building would be located to the south-east of properties in Waterdales and in an elevated position, at the closest point approximately 3m higher than the rear gardens. This change in levels would ultimately add to the overall scale of the building when viewed from this quarter, increasing the perceived height of the building and the potential for overbearing or overshadowing to occur. As set out above, I am aware that the applicant has taken this into account in preparing the design approach and has used the levels of the site to sit the closest wing of the building into the landscape. Given the scale of the building and the distances involved, I am satisfied that the proposal would

**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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have an unacceptable impact in terms of the position, scale or massing in relation to the surrounding environment.

40. Concern has been raised by a nearby resident about the potential for activity and noise associated with the site during construction, and following completion of the development, to impact on residential properties, particularly outside of normal school hours. At present the grounds have a relatively open boundary with neighbouring properties. The proposed development would include the provision of a weldmesh fence to the boundary and structural planting. Whilst in time the proposed planting would mature to provide some mitigation, at present there is limited mitigation provided by the existing boundary treatment. The landscape scheme would offer an opportunity to enhance the boundary treatment.
41. The proposal would move the built development on site away from properties in Vale Road and Colyer Road; however, inevitably some activity within the school would take place close to the boundaries. In particular, the position of the site access and compound proposed during construction, the northern side of the proposed car park and the service road and yard for the building would be located opposite properties on Vale Road. The extension to the multi-use games area (MUGA), located to the rear of properties on Colyer Road would also increase the hardstanding adjacent to the site boundary.
42. Comments received from Gravesham Borough Council's Regulatory Services Department recommend the need for a condition controlling the noise generated by any plant or equipment associated with the final building. I would suggest that that would be appropriate should planning permission be granted. The use of the proposed facilities outside of normal school hours for community activities has the potential to cause disruption through noise from activities, associated vehicle movements, and potentially through light pollution later into the evenings. I would suggest that the latter could easily be controlled through the submission of an external lighting scheme for the development. I note that there is no floodlighting to sports facilities as part of the proposals, and there is no reason why a carefully designed and controlled lighting scheme should impact on nearby residents. Noise from the car park could impact on residential properties particularly after school hours. However, the extent of the disruption is highly dependent on the frequency and scale of this use. The applicant has stated that no community use would continue beyond 2200 hours. I also note the extent of the car park proposed. It is unlikely that any community use would generate as large number of vehicle moves as a normal school day, as such the spaces closest to the building would be used most frequently. That would increase the distances between vehicles and the rear of property in Vale Road. I also note that as a result of the revised vehicle access arrangements the route of traffic entering the site has been moved away from this boundary; whilst the road to the service yard passes close by, frequent use of this route is unlikely to occur outside of normal school hours.
43. Other noise concerns relate to activities on site during construction. Whilst the construction access and compound would be adjacent to the rear boundaries of residential properties in some instances, I note that the route would largely follow an established access, albeit widened to accommodate the type of traffic expected. Should the site be developed in the manner proposed I cannot see how the proposed construction arrangements could be accommodated on site without passing by, or being located close to, residential properties. Subject to conditions covering the control of hours of operation during construction, measures to suppress dust generated by construction and demolition, I would not raise an objection to the proposed arrangements. I note that the bulk of the construction work would be located toward the

**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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centre of the site away from the boundary with Vale Road. I would recommend that the construction of the development be limited to standard hours of operation being 0800 to 1600 hours Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays) and 0900 to 1300 hours on a Saturday only.

**Security**

44. The redevelopment of a public building of this nature should take account of the security implications of the site and ensure measures are in place to limit the opportunities for crime. The Borough Council has raised a point concerning the extent of the glazing shown in the building and the opportunities this would offer for vandalism. In response to this point, the applicant has stated that a number of improvements to the existing site security would be made as part of the development work. These include the provision of new perimeter fencing and internal fencing to divide the more public areas from the remainder of the school. The building itself would be covered by CCTV monitoring and a zonal alarm system. In addition to this the immediate surroundings of public areas, the car park, entrance and circulation areas would benefit from low level lighting, with the immediate vicinity around the building itself lit by bulk head lighting. The application states that all external lighting would either be extinguished after use of the site had ceased, or would be controlled by sensors and therefore be extinguished unless triggered by an intruder. I also note that by opening up the front of the site, and by virtue of the surrounding residential properties the area surrounding the school would benefit from natural surveillance. Subject to appropriate conditions, including the submission of an external lighting scheme, I would not raise a planning objection to the proposals on security grounds.

**Community Use**

45. The BSF Programme specifically seeks to address the use of the new accommodation and facilities by both the local community and local organisations. That would not be just sports uses but other community activities, such as adult education, library/IT use, and informal meeting space. Sport England and the Borough Council have identified the need for a Community Use Agreement and this could be a condition of any planning consent.
46. However, there are both highway and residential amenity impacts arising from extended community use, as identified in the responses from residents. The on-site parking and access provisions have been purposely designed to cater for extra movements of pedestrians, cycles and vehicles both during the school day and outside of school hours. In particular, some careful separation of accesses and parking areas has been proposed, together provisions within the School Travel Plan. Since the site is surrounded by residential properties on all sides, there is the scope for some noise and disturbance for adjoining residents, but given the separation of the buildings from the nearest properties, and the existing juxtaposition of sports pitches with neighbouring housing, I do not consider that there would be any significant change in the amenity impacts resulting from the use of the site outside school hours, or intrusion for residents. The position of car parking to the front of the site does have the potential for some late night disturbance for adjacent housing, but that needs to be balanced against the alternative notion of positioning the new buildings immediately adjacent to residents and the loss of privacy that that might involve. In order to minimise the possibility of late night disturbance, I would recommend that Members seek to impose hours of use conditions on any planning consent the applicant has confirmed that use of the site by the community would not extend beyond 2200 hours.

**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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47. Whilst more precise details have been requested by the Borough Council on the proposed community uses, it is not possible at present to furnish these because it is a matter for the College and local organisations to negotiate what level and range of activities the new facilities could sustain. Clearly, there is a range of stakeholders involved in the use of these BSF Schools, and the coordination of which activities occur at which site is not a matter for the Planning Authority. Insofar as the potential for detrimental amenity impacts is concerned it remains open to the Planning Authority to impose strict controls over hours, days and frequency of such uses. In the event that no consent is given, then there would be no such controls over the uses that existing schools such as this can currently accommodate.

**Conclusion**

48. In considering the above proposal, subject to the resolution of concerns raised by Sport England and the provision of appropriate planning conditions as set out below, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not have significant harm the local environment and would be acceptable in terms of its siting, design and appearance, highway implications and impacts upon residential and local amenities.

49. I consider that the application accords with the relevant the Development Plan Policies, and consider that the benefits to the community of redeveloping the College to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century outweigh any detrimental impacts the proposal may have and I therefore recommend that planning permission be granted.

**Recommendation**

50. SUBJECT TO the further views of Sport England, I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions including the following matters:

- the standard time limit;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- the submission of details of all materials to be used externally;
- the submission of details of all external plant;
- the submission of a scheme of landscaping, its implementation and maintenance;
- measures to protect trees to be retained;
- the submission of details of the fencing arrangements proposed;
- the submission of details of surface water drainage;
- the submission of details of a combined stage 1&2 Safety Audit on the access arrangements proposed;
- the submission of details of the cycle parking proposed;
- the submission of details of further site investigation, mitigation measures, and a closure report in line with the Environment Agency's recommendations on ground conditions;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the precautionary measures and mitigation strategies detailed in the Biodiversity Assessment.
- a programme of building recording;
- a programme of archaeological work;
- the submission of details of all below ground excavation;
- the submission of details of all external lighting;
- the provision of a Community Use Agreement and Sports Development Plan, including details of types of activities, scale and hours of use;
- the School Travel Plan to be updated to reflect the proposed development and the plan subsequently reviewed annual review with KHS;



**Replacement of existing secondary school. . Northfleet Technology College – GR/08/138**

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- hours of working during construction;
- week day construction traffic movements restrict to a time period which does not conflict with peak hour school movements;
- the submission of details of a method statement to control noise and dust generated during construction;
- the submission of details of the contractors compound, access, storage areas, vehicle parking and associated facilities;
- measures to prevent the deposit of mud on the public highway;
- noise controls on plant and equipment associated with the building;
- the access onto Colyer Road serving the playing field facilities to be restricted to maintenance use only, details to be provided as to how this would be facilitated and policed.

Case officer – James Bickle	01622 221068
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Background documents - See section heading
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