

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

Expansion of the 1 form entry primary school to 2FE, to comprise a single storey extension to the existing building, internal and external modifications to the existing building, an extension of the site to accommodate a new parking and drop-off area and associated hard and soft landscaping works, at Harrietsham CEP School, West Street, Harrietsham, Maidstone, Kent ME17 1JZ – 19/501705/COUNTY (KCC/MA/0060/2019)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 12th June 2019.

Application by Kent County Council for Expansion of the 1 form entry primary school to 2FE, to comprise a single storey extension to the existing building, internal and external modifications to the existing building, an extension of the site to accommodate a new parking and drop-off area and associated hard and soft landscaping works at Harrietsham CEP School, West Street, Harrietsham, Maidstone, Kent ME17 1JZ – 19/501705/COUNTY (KCC/MA/0060/2019)

Recommendation: Permission be Granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mrs Shellina Prendergast

Classification: Unrestricted

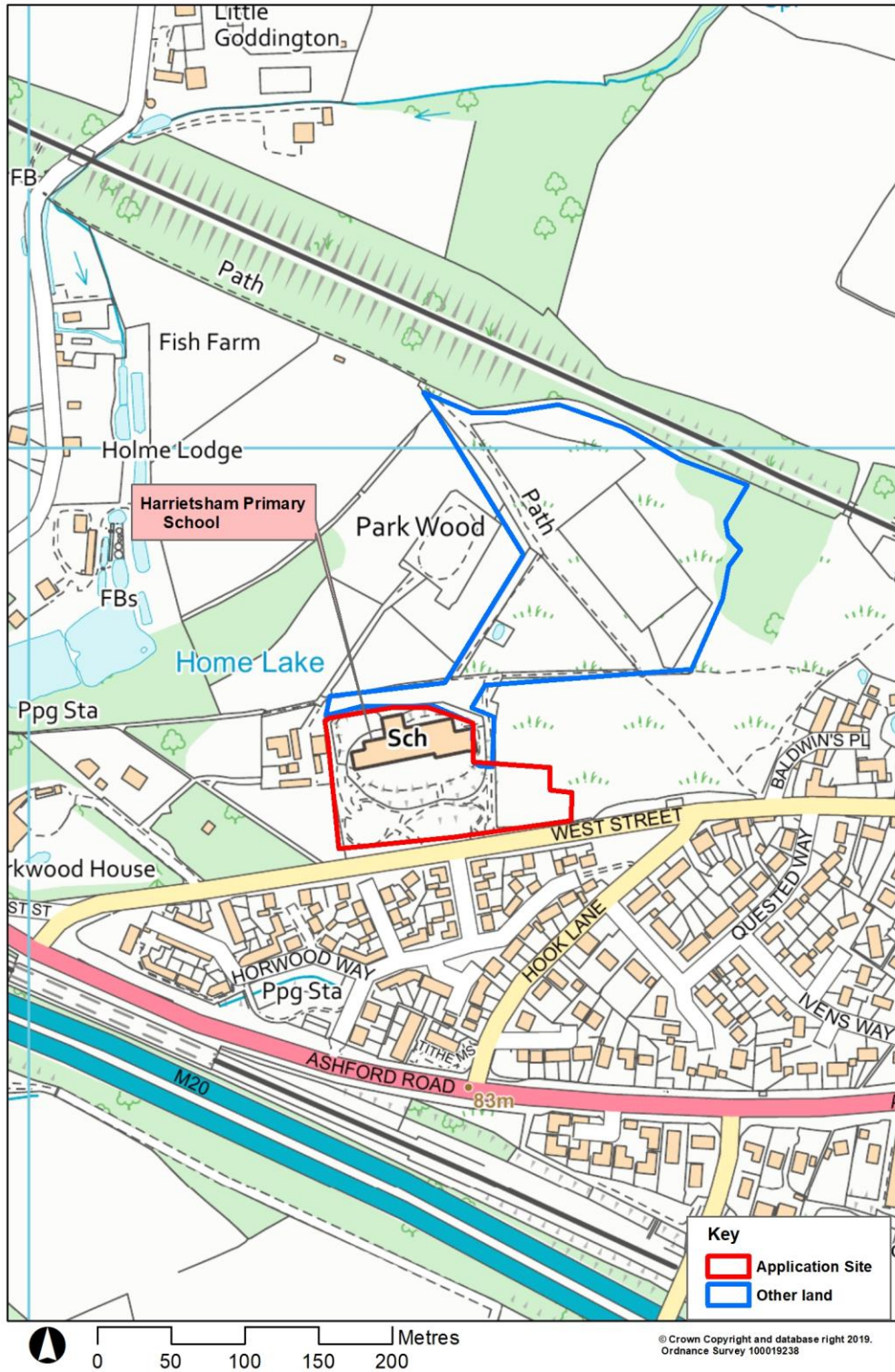
Site

1. Harrietsham Primary School is a modern single storey building which is located on the northern side of West Street. The School is set back from the road frontage and mostly hidden by existing bund planting. The land rises away from the road and the frontage for the school is landscaped and well established, with a large copper beech tree being a prominent feature. There is a single vehicular access into the school, which is barrier controlled, and leads to a parking area for staff and visitors. There is a second bell mouth at the eastern end of the school frontage, and from here there is a grasscrete access strip which runs between the existing eastern boundary of the school grounds and Tong's Meadow, which lies to the east. Along the highway are zig-zag keep clear school markings which run the length of the frontage.
2. On the southern side of West Street is a development of new housing, with access to a large part of this from Alexander Road, immediately opposite the school frontage. The village of Harrietsham lies to the south and east of the school, and the school itself falls outside the settlement policy boundary for Harrietsham – the boundary line running along West Street but including land to the south only in this area.

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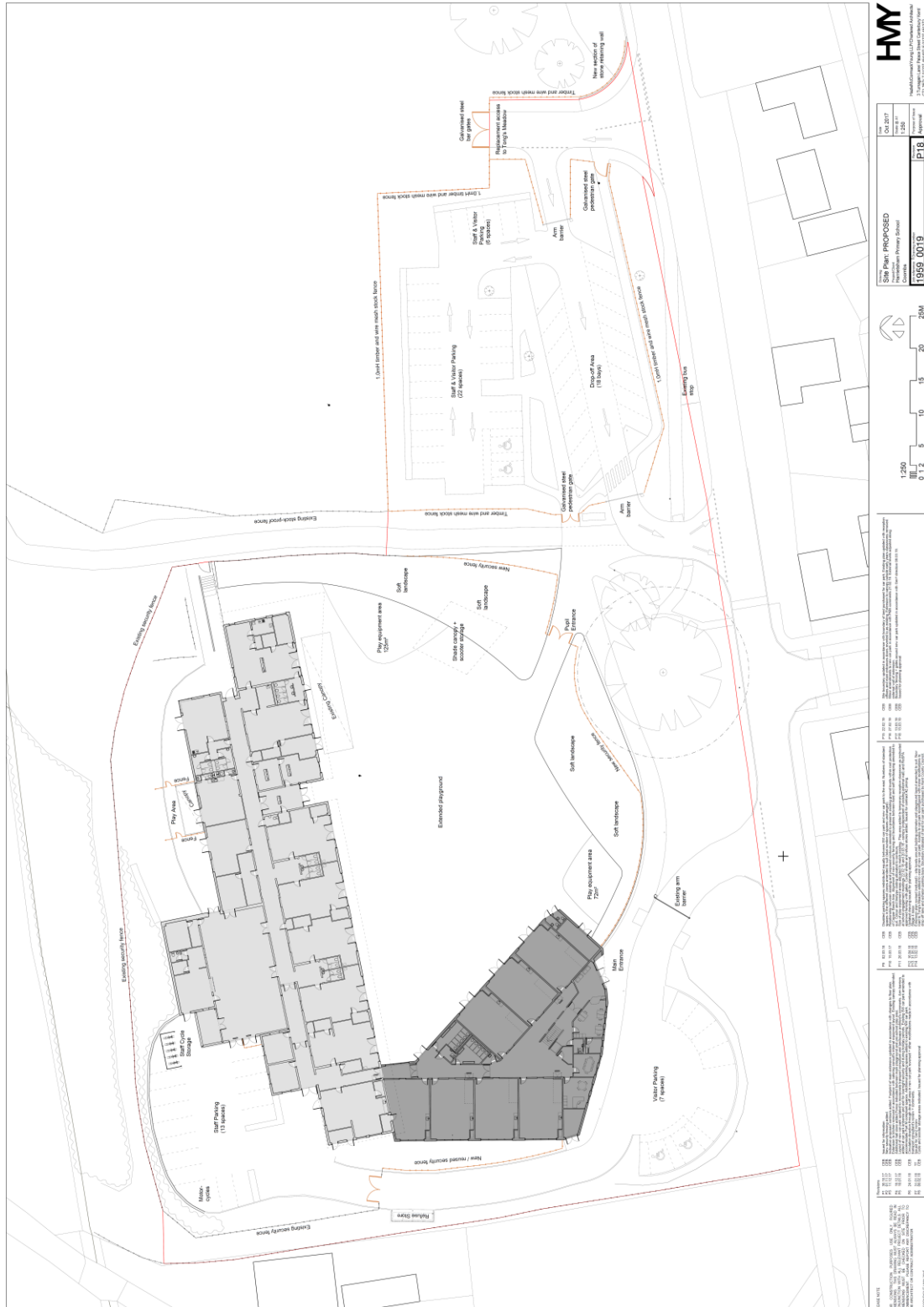
General Location Plan



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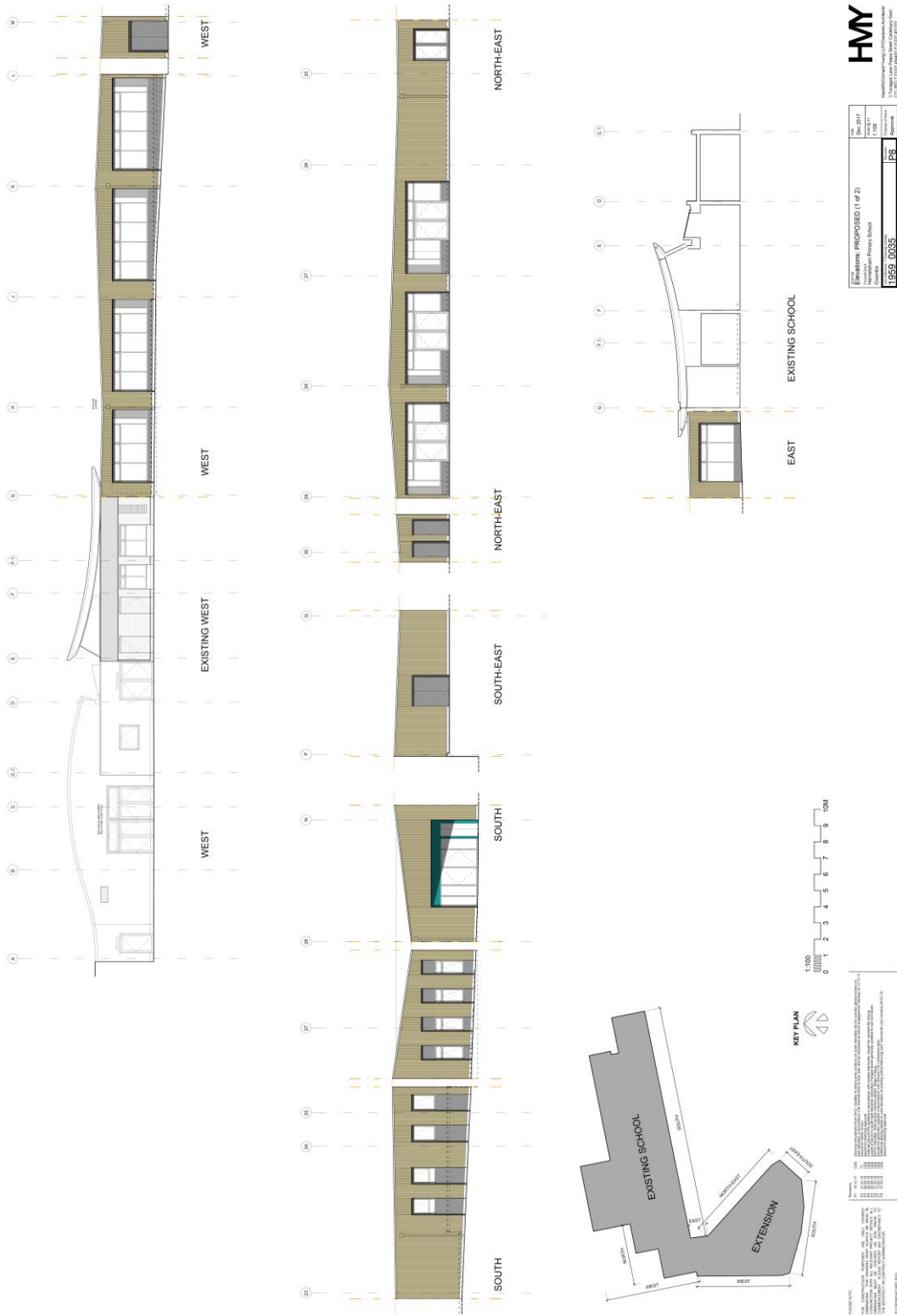
Proposed Site Layout Plan



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Proposed Elevations



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3. There is access through the car park located at the front of the school along the western boundary to a further area of parking at the rear of the school, and this route would also be used for deliveries to the school. The school building itself runs in an east/west direction across the back of the site, with the playground located in front, enclosed by the landscaped bund. The school's playing fields are separate from the main site and are located to the north-east of the building, accessed via the grasscrete pathway. A public footpath runs along the northern boundary of the site (access to the playing fields is across the footpath) and this path runs across Tong's Meadow to the east, back down to West Street near Baldwins Place.

Background / Recent Site History

4. Harrietsham Primary School originally occupied an old Victorian building on a restricted site at the eastern end of the village at the junction of Church Road with Ashford Road (A20). This was replaced with a new, modern primary school located on a greenfield site on West Street in 2006. The school opened in September 2006 and was later extended (on a footprint anticipated in the original design) to accommodate a full form of entry (1FE) in 2013. In September 2016 KCC undertook a public consultation exercise regarding the expansion of the School from 1 FE to 2 FE – increasing the school roll from 210 to 420 pupils.
5. In February 2018 a planning application was submitted to KCC for a single storey extension to the existing school to accommodate the expansion, along with a new access from West Street and new drop off and parking area (reference KCC/MA/0027/2018). The application was in abeyance whilst further surveys were carried out for the protected species known to be present on site, and in the intervening period changes were made to the design of the application which resulted in the size of the extension being reduced, and amendments being made to the configuration of the new car park and the position and design of the new access onto West Street. As a result of these changes (in particular the alteration to the red line of the planning application site) the original application was withdrawn (March 2019) and this new application submitted.

Proposal

6. The application seeks permission for a single storey extension to the school to provide accommodation to allow an expansion of the school from 1FE to 2FE. The extension would be sited on the western side of the site and project towards the road over part of the existing playground, bund and parking. The footprint would have a roughly triangular shape and would accommodate 7 new classrooms, along with a new main reception, headteacher's office, administration areas and toilet blocks. To accommodate the change in levels across this part of the site the classrooms would be at a raised level compared to the entrance area, and a flight of stairs and lift access would be provided to reach the classroom level.
7. The extension would have a flat roof in a grey membrane, although this would essentially be hidden by the external walls. The walls would be a continuous series of

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faceted surfaces, covered with vertical timber cladding. The windows would be framed with light grey coloured aluminium, with doors in a mid-grey aluminium. Fibre cement cladding panels would also be included on the elevations and aluminium louvres in the same colour as the windows would provide ventilation.

8. The access road along the western boundary would remain, and the parking at the rear of the site rearranged slightly to allow an additional 2 spaces to be accommodated here (increasing from 11 to 13 spaces). At the front of the site the number of parking spaces would be reduced from 24 spaces to 7, and this would be utilised for disabled bays and visitor parking. The existing school vehicular access from West Street and the barrier arm control would remain. At the eastern end of the site a new parking and drop off area is proposed on an area of land in Tong's Meadow – the field to the east of the school. A new access would be created to serve this area which would be utilised as an 'in only' access for the school parking area. An area of staff and visitor parking would be provided here (28 spaces inclusive of 2 disabled bays), as well as a drive through drop off area which would be 'one-way' only and provide 18 bays in a chevron layout. The exit from this new parking and drop off area would be through the existing bell mouth at the eastern end of the school frontage, by the grasscrete access strip. In total there would be 48 parking spaces provided on site, and 18 drop off bays. Although not relevant for this application, the new access onto West Street would be both 'in and out' and would be suitable for future access to Tong's Meadow. A 1m high timber and wire mesh fence would form the boundary for this new area, and there would be barrier arms at both the entrance and exit of the parking area.
9. A small extension to the existing school hall would be built under permitted development rights, and the existing canopy in front of the reception classrooms would also be extended under this application. The existing playground would be extended into the existing bund area which would then be re-landscaped and a new secure perimeter fence provided with a pupil entrance at the eastern end close to the new parking and drop off area.

Planning Policy

10. The following Guidance/Statements and Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of the application:
 - (i) **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) February 2019** and the **National Planning Policy Guidance** (March 2014), sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England, at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications but does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However, the weight given to development plan policies will depend on their consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the development plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

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In determining applications, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decisions in a positive and creative way, 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:

- That development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road would be severe;
- That developments should aim to protect or enhance biodiversity;
- Achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;

In addition, Paragraph 94 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.*

- (ii) **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. It is the Government’s view that the creation and development of state-funded schools is strongly in the national interest and that planning decision-makers can and should support that objective, in a manner consistent with their statutory obligations.

The Government believes that the planning system should operate in a positive manner when dealing with proposals for the creation, expansion and alteration of state-funded schools, and that the following principles should apply:

- There should be a presumption in favour of the development of state-funded schools, as expressed in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Local authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling the development of state-funded schools in their planning decisions. The Secretary of State will attach significant weight to the need to establish and develop state-funded schools when determining applications and appeals that come before him for decision.
- Local authorities should make full use of their planning powers to support state-funded school applications. This should include engaging in preapplication discussions with promoters to foster a collaborative approach to applications and, where necessary, the use of planning obligations to help to mitigate adverse impacts and help deliver development that has a positive impact on the community.
- Local authorities should only impose conditions that clearly and demonstrably meet the tests set out on the Planning Practice Guidance website. Planning conditions should only be those absolutely necessary to making the development acceptable in planning terms.

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- Local authorities should ensure that the process for submitting and determining state-funded schools' applications is as streamlined as possible, and in particular be proportionate in the information sought from applicants.
- A refusal of any application for a state-funded school, or the imposition of conditions, will have to be clearly justified by the local planning authority. Given the strong policy support for improving state education, the Secretary of State will be minded to consider such a refusal or imposition of conditions to be unreasonable conduct, unless it is supported by clear and cogent evidence.

(iii) The adopted **Maidstone Borough Local Plan (adopted October 2017)**

Policy SS1 **Maidstone Borough Spatial Strategy.** Paragraph 5 states that Harrietsham as a rural service centre will be the secondary focus for housing development with the emphasis on maintaining and enhancing their role and the provision of services to meet the needs of the local community. Suitably scaled employment opportunities will also be permitted.

Policy SP6 **Harrietsham Rural Service Centre.** This states that key services will be retained and supported, and that a key infrastructure requirement is for a 1FE expansion at either Lenham or Harrietsham Primary Schools.

Policy SP23 **Sustainable Transport.** The policy aims to mitigate the impact of development, where appropriate, on the local road networks.

Policy DM1 **Principles of Good Design.** Covers the principles of good design which proposed development should accord with, including reference to permeable layouts; responding to local natural or historic character and incorporating a high quality, modern design approach; high quality public realm; respecting the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties; respecting natural features such as trees and hedges; high quality design which responds to surrounding areas; maximising opportunities for sustainable development; protecting on-site biodiversity; safely accommodating vehicle and pedestrian movements; incorporating security measures to design out crime; avoiding areas at risk of flooding; incorporating adequate storage of waste and recycling; and providing adequate vehicle and cycle parking; and being flexible towards future adaptation in response to changing life needs.

Policy DM2 **Sustainable Design.** Where technically feasible and viable, non-residential developments should meet BREEAM very good standards addressing maximum water efficiencies under the mandatory water credits and energy credits.

Policy DM3 **Natural Environment.** The Policy seeks to protect and enhance the natural environment through measures to protect landscape character, avoid inappropriate development, control pollution, enhance biodiversity, maintain and manage natural assets, mitigate for climate

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changes, and positively contribute to the improvement of accessibility to natural green spaces. It seeks to ensure that where appropriate an ecological evaluation of development sites is made to take full account of biodiversity present, as well as arboricultural assessments and landscape/visual impact assessments. Further guidance is provided for internationally, nationally and locally designated sites.

- Policy DM4 Development affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets.** Part 3 states that where development is proposed for a site which includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, applications must be accompanied by an appropriate desk-based assessment and where necessary field evaluation.
- Policy DM20 Community Facilities.** The adequate provision of community facilities, including social, education and other facilities is an essential component of residential development. Where appropriate the dual use of education facilities (new and existing) should be encouraged for recreation and other purposes.
- Policy DM21 Assessing the transport impacts of development.** Proposals must demonstrate that the impacts of trips generated to and from the development are accommodated, remedied or mitigated to prevent severe residual impacts; provide a satisfactory Transport Assessment and a satisfactory Travel Plan; and comply with the requirements for the policy for air quality.
- Policy DM23 Parking Standards.** Vehicle parking for non-residential uses will need to take into account the accessibility of the development and the availability of public transport; the type, mix and use of the development proposed; whether development proposals exacerbate on street car parking to an unacceptable degree; and the appropriate design and provision of cycle parking facilities.
- Policy DM30 Design Principles in the Countryside.** Outside the settlement boundaries proposals which would create high quality design will be permitted if they meet criteria relating to materials, siting, mass and scale; impact on appearance and character of the landscape; would not result in unacceptable traffic levels; be of a scale which relates sympathetically to the existing building and rural area.

Consultations

11. **Maidstone Borough Council** raise no objection to the proposal.

Harrietsham Parish Council support the application subject to a 20mph speed limit being imposed throughout the West Street area of the School, in line with other schools

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in the County; and that there be restricted parking zones (double yellow lines) within 100m of the school and that these be rigorously enforced, including parking on the verges. They further comment that in their view the traffic survey data is out of date and there are serious traffic problems around Harrietsham Primary School, exasperated by the additional houses built since 2017; that West Street is being used as a cut through since the A20 now has a 30mph speed limit; and that they are disappointed there is no provision for the Pre-School who will lose their facility as a result of this application, and request a condition securing space for the Pre-School on site.

KCC Highways and Transportation Officer raises no objection to the application subject to the imposition of conditions to secure the provision and permanent retention of the parking spaces and drop off loop prior to occupation; the formation of the new access in accordance with a S278 agreement prior to occupation; a requirement for school staff to monitor the efficient and safe use of the drop off bays and that the barriers be open at peak times; the provision of an updated School Travel Plan within 6 months of occupation; adherence to the submitted Construction Phase Health and Safety Plan; and the provision of measures to prevent the discharge of surface water onto the highway.

Environment Agency (Kent Area) state they have no comments to make.

KCC Biodiversity Officer states that they are satisfied that sufficient information has been submitted to determine the application, and should permission be granted this should be subject to a condition to secure the submission of a detailed Ecological Mitigation Strategy for written approval by the County Planning Authority.

KCC Flood and Water Management Officer raise no objection subject to the imposition of conditions to secure a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme, and that the new building shall not be occupied until a verification report pertaining to the surface water drainage system has been approved by the County Planning Authority.

KCC County Archaeological Officer raise no objection subject to the imposition of a condition to secure archaeological field evaluation works due to the potential for Mesolithic archaeology on the site.

Local Member

12. The local County Member for Maidstone Rural East, Mrs Shellina Prendergast was notified of the application on 2 April 2019. No written comments have been received.

Publicity

13. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice, an advertisement in a local newspaper, and the individual notification of 115 nearby properties.

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Representations

14. In response to the publicity, 2 letters objecting to the application have been received. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:
- Consider the size of the expansion is unjustified and inappropriate for the location;
 - Suggests growth in Harrietsham results in a forecast demand for an additional 58-62 children, requiring 2 classrooms not 7;
 - Think the additional spaces will be taken by children outside of the village;
 - Think children should be educated locally at primary age not have to commute to school;
 - Proposal will generate hundreds of extra car journeys, which would be damaging to the environment;
 - Consider the Transport Assessment to be flawed as the vast majority of children will come from outside the village;
 - West Street suffers severe congestion at school times;
 - Proposed drop off and parking area inadequate for the huge increase in cars the expansion will generate;
 - Parents will try and park as close to the school as possible and neighbouring roads will be affected;
 - The outdoor play and sports facilities are limited with no room for expansion;
 - Consider the Ecological Appraisal is limited, without full surveys for key protected species and the mitigation proposals are inadequate;
 - Loss of habitat for Great Crested Newts (GCN) without an increase in habitat creation;
 - The chosen receptor site for CGN is already a receptor site from when the school was originally built – concern for overpopulation and territory clashes on this site;
 - Concerned that site clearance activities have already been undertaken, before planning and ecological mitigation matters have been approved;
 - Consider KCC [as applicant] are riding roughshod over rules and regulations which are there to protect the environment.

Discussion

15. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 10 above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, the proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
16. This application is being reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee due to the neighbour representations received. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case are the principle of development in this location and the education need for the expansion; the siting and design of the proposed extension in terms of its built form; the highway and traffic implications of the

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school expansion on the surrounding roads; and the ecological impacts of the proposal. Other material matters such as construction, surface water drainage, sustainability and archaeology will also be covered in the report.

Principle of Development and Education Need

17. Although the school site lies outside the settlement policy boundary of Harrietsham, the site has an established education use and therefore the principle of an extension would be appropriate and in accordance with Planning Policy SP6 which states that key services (such as schools) should be retained and supported and that a key infrastructure requirement is for a 1FE expansion at either Lenham or Harrietsham Primary Schools. The expansion of Harrietsham Primary School was commissioned in response to significant planned housing growth within the local area, both from sites identified in the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan and additional windfall permissions. Whilst it is evident that a number of housing sites have been constructed in the village or are in the process of being built out, some have not been occupied as quickly as originally anticipated. However, over the next four years there are anticipated to be 491 houses occupied within the local area which is forecast to generate the need for an additional 141 primary places in the period of 2019-2023, which are not available within any current surplus.
18. Harrietsham Primary School had its first intake of 2 forms of entry in September 2018 and would continue to expand on a yearly basis by taking an additional form of entry at reception level every year until the school is complete. Given the option of parental preference it may be that some children choose to attend the school from outside of Harrietsham itself or that they would need to be accommodated here from existing and new housing developments in Lenham, where a single form of entry primary school may not be able to accommodate all those who apply. It therefore cannot be ruled out that some children will be driven into Harrietsham to attend the school, as suggested by the objector. However the applicant does not consider it to be feasible to create half a Form of Entry in one village and half a Form of Entry in another, and because of their proximity Lenham and Harrietsham are considered as a joint area for educational planning purposes. Given the education use of the site and the Policy backing for an additional Form of Entry at either Harrietsham or Lenham, it is considered that the principle of the school expansion would meet Policy SP6 of the adopted Local Plan.

Siting and Design of Extension

19. The proposed extension to the school would project forward towards West Street and would form an arm of the school which would be located on the western edge of the site. Although it would project toward the road, the existing school is set so far back within the site, the new extension would remain set back from the road and footpath itself, with the existing landscaped bund and parking area remaining as it is currently, in terms of its appearance from the road. The extension would essentially be constructed with a continuous series of faceted wall surfaces. It would have a flat roof, but the profile of the top of the walls would rise and fall to provide interest to the facades. The nature of the curved oversailing roof on the original school would not have lent itself to be easily replicated on the extension therefore this faceted design has been proposed

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which, it is considered, would also provide a unique and complimentary appearance to the overall design.

20. Whilst the form of the extension would contrast with the original, the materials proposed are consistent with it, therefore tying the two elements together. The extension would be clad with matching timber, although this would be aligned vertically in contrast to the horizontal cladding on the original school. The windows and doors would have grey framing to match and the roof would also be clad in a grey membrane, although this would largely be hidden due to the height of the walls. The elevations would be broken up with large elements of glazing for the classrooms, with louvres serving hybrid ventilation units.
21. There would be a reorganisation of the classroom layout within the whole school, so that reception and Key Stage 1 classrooms would be located in the original school, and the new extension would accommodate the Key Stage 2 classrooms. The provision of the new main entrance in the extension would also enable an improvement in security at the school. At present access for visitors to the school is across the playground meaning it can't be secured at any time, whereas under the new layout the playground would be closed to anyone other than pupils and staff once school has started.
22. As proposed it is considered that the extension would be well contained within the whole school site and would have a limited impact on the wider street scene of Harrietsham, it being set well back from the road. The design of the extension is considered to be acceptable and the proposed use of materials would tie the two elements of the school together. The scheme would therefore accord with Policies DM1 and DM30 of the adopted Local Plan.

Access, Parking and Highways

23. The proposal includes the creation of a new vehicular access onto West Street from the land to the east of the school known as Tong's Meadow. The access has been designed to accommodate vehicular access to the rest of Tong's Meadow as well as the new school car park. For reference, although not relevant to this application, there have been a number of previous planning applications submitted to Maidstone BC for housing on this site. The access would be two way and the entrance to the new school car park would be off this new access. In terms of the school use of the new access, this would only serve vehicles entering the new car park – school traffic would not exit onto West Street from the new access. Once in the new car park and through the entrance barrier there would be a 22 space car park for staff and visitors to the north (turning right upon entry) and the 18 bay drop off area straight on. Exit from both the car park and drop off area would be through an exit barrier and out onto West Street at the current access point.
24. The application was supported by a Transport Assessment and Stage 1 Safety Audit, both of which have been assessed by the County Council's Highways and Transportation Officer. The report acknowledges that at present there is queuing and congestion along West Street during the morning and afternoon peak school periods due to the existing drop off and collection arrangements. The proposal seeks to

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address these issues by increasing on site parking provision and providing a drop off facility. It goes on to state that the intention would be for staff to monitor the use of the drop off and pick up bays to ensure their efficient use and control the opening and closing of the barriers, and this would be covered as part of a revised School Travel Plan.

25. The Highways Officer has considered the plans and information submitted and has provided the following comments. A pupil travel survey was undertaken in November 2017, for which there was a 98% response rate, and this showed that 60% of children are dropped off by car, 30% walk and 10% cycle/scooter. The staff travel survey undertaken at the same time (80% response rate) showed that 76% drive and 24% walk. It is expected that the proposal to increase the school roll from 1FE to 2FE would generate an additional 126 car trips within each of the school peak hours as well as a noticeable increase in walking trips. He points out however, that the school has a breakfast club and various after school clubs and that sibling/car sharing is not counted which would help spread/ameliorate peak demand.
26. The detailed design of the new access would be agreed as part of a S278 agreement, which the applicants are aware they would need to enter into. The access would need to be in place prior to occupation of the extension, and it is proposed that this be secured by condition. The submitted 'Construction Phase Health and Safety Plan' is considered to be acceptable by the Highways Officer, which includes details that all construction and delivery traffic would be routed to the site via the A20 and West Street to the west of the school.
27. The Highways Officer concurs with the findings of the Transport Assessment and notes that although there would be a noticeable increase in traffic and other journeys in proximity to the school during school peak periods, it is accepted that these trips would not lead to a severe impact on capacity or safety. There would therefore be no grounds to object to the application in terms of the planning guidance of the NPPF and local planning policies DM21 and DM23 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, subject to the conditions listed in paragraph 11.
28. The Parish Council have commented that they consider a 20pmh speed limit ought to be imposed outside the school, but such a speed restriction is not used for all schools, rather is considered on a case by case basis. The Highways Officer considers that in this instance speeds along West Street near the school are low anyway, and there are existing buildouts and raised tables which are physical features constructed to reduce speed limits in the area. For this school, therefore, the Highways Officer considers that a 20mph speed limit or double yellow lines are not necessary or appropriate. This could however be monitored by the School as part of the Travel Plan, depending on the effectiveness of the drop off loop, and I propose to include this in the recommendation below.

Construction

29. As noted above, the applicants have submitted a Construction Phase Health and Safety Management Plan as part of the application which the Highways Officer considers to be

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acceptable. The hours of work are included within this document, which details that site working hours would be 7.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 1pm on Saturdays and no work on Sunday's or public holidays. Furthermore, the document states that deliveries to the site would not be permitted between the hours of 8am to 9am and 3pm to 4pm Monday to Friday to avoid peak school times. Wheel washing facilities are also covered and a specification that during dry summer months water sprinklers would be utilised to suppress dust control. A condition ensuring adherence to this document is proposed and this would ensure matters of construction which could affect neighbouring residents would be taken into account.

Ecology

30. The land at Harrietsham Primary School and to the east on Tong's Meadow has been subject to various investigations for biodiversity in relation to slow worms, grass snakes, great crested newts, foraging and commuting bats and breeding birds, as well as dormice and badgers. There have been on-going discussions between the applicant and the County Council's Biodiversity Officer since the submission of the previous planning application in 2018 that was subsequently withdrawn. As a result the application has been supported by the submission of an Ecological Appraisal and an Ecological Scoping Survey, both of which have been assessed by the Biodiversity Officer.
31. In summary the Ecological Appraisal gives the following outline of the notable species on or using the site, in particular the proposed site of the new car park.

Reptiles - slow worm, lizard and grass snake	Suitable Reptile habitat on site including grassland and scrub. A good population of slow worm and low populations of common lizard and grass snake have been recorded through presence/likely absence surveys. A receptor site would be created within the Harrietsham School grounds. A trapping and translocation exercise would be undertaken.
Bats	Common and widespread use of the site by bat species (at least 5 species recorded). Majority of the activity recorded as common or soprano pipistrelle bats and noctules. Boundary features would be buffered and enhanced around the peripheries and dark corridors should be maintained around the peripheries of the car park.
Birds	Breeding and nesting bird species were recorded on site, including house sparrows and dunnock. Scrub belt should be retained and the creation of new breeding habitats made (new hedgerows), along with nest boxes to ensure continued use by local bird populations.
Dormouse	No evidence of dormice found during surveys in 2018. There is a historical record of dormice within the southern boundary of Tong's Meadow. The site provides suitable habitat for foraging opportunities for dormice but the habitat is isolated from other habitat linkages, recuing the

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	suitability of occupation. As the presence of dormice cannot be ruled out a precautionary approach required.
Great Crested Newts (GCN)	No waterbodies on site, but eight were identified within a 250m radius of the site, five of which had a low population of GCN. Site comprises suitable terrestrial habitat in the form of grassland and scrub. Trapping and translocation would form the mitigation measures for this species. A licence from Natural England would be applied for. The habitat enhancement within the offsite receptor site would ensure that more refuge opportunities are available in the long term

The Biodiversity Officer has considered the reports submitted and advises that sufficient information has been submitted to allow the application to be determined. She concurs with the findings of the report that the area of greatest ecological interest is the proposed parking area which is a mixture of rough grassland and scrub. The school grounds are primarily hardstanding and short mown grassland and these areas have minimal potential to be utilised by protected/notable species.

32. In relation to Great Crested Newts (GCN) the Officer notes that additional GCN surveys will be carried out to inform the detailed mitigation strategy and Natural England licence. The results of the 2018 surveys were largely similar to previous monitoring results and their view is that it is unlikely that the additional surveys will demonstrate a significant increase in population size and result in the mitigation strategy having to be significantly amended. Whilst the surveys are not required prior to determination of the application, they are currently being carried out as the GCN survey season covers the period March to June.
33. In relation to dormice, the Officer notes that as only two surveys were carried out, insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate likely absence from the site, however, as the development would only result in the loss of a small area of hedgerow and because additional hedgerows would be created around the car park, it would not be proportional to request further dormice surveys to be carried out.
34. Details of the mitigation strategy have been provided within the report and it proposes the following:
 - Creation of a suitable GCN and reptile receptor site within the school grounds
 - Translocation of reptiles and GCN to the receptor site
 - Implementation of a sensitive lighting scheme
 - Planting of dense hedgerows around the boundary of the proposed car park
 - Precautionary approach for the clearance of the hedgerows to create access into the proposed car park

The Biodiversity Officer is satisfied that the proposed mitigation is appropriate, and a plan has been submitted showing the proposed reptile/GCN receptor site (see plan below). In addition, confirmation by letter has been received from the School that they

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have no plans for the receptor site area, and it would be used for the mitigation area in perpetuity. Despite the concerns raised by neighbours to the site, the receptor site is considered to be appropriate. As such it is considered that from a biodiversity/ecology perspective the proposed development is acceptable subject to the imposition of a condition requiring a detailed Ecological Mitigation Strategy to be submitted, prior to works commencing. Subject to this, the scheme is considered to accord with the aims and objectives of Policy DM3 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.



Extract from Drawing Number 1959 0005 Rev P5

35. Both of the objection letters received make reference to works already carried out on the site of Tong's Meadow, prior to the application being determined and a licence from Natural England being granted. The applicant has confirmed that development has not commenced on site but that some preparatory survey work for ecology assessments has been carried out, along with the erection of temporary stock and reptile fencing around the proposed car park area. All works undertaken at the site of the proposed car park were overseen by a fully qualified ecologist within an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). The ecologist has confirmed that the work carried out was correct, undertaken at the appropriate time and minimised risk to Protected Species, particularly nesting birds. They also confirmed that no Protected Species were observed. The cutting of vegetation on the remaining meadow was not undertaken by, or instructed by, the applicants and does not form part of the school development.

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Flood Risk and Drainage

36. The application has been supported by the submission of a Drainage Statement including soakaway testing, drainage calculations and a permeable paving solution. The applicants also provided additional information regarding the soakage rate and calculations for all storm events upon request of the Flood and Water Management Team. This team have confirmed that following review of the additional information, the correct infiltration rate has been evidenced and is consistent in the drainage layout and calculations. As such they raise no objection to the application on drainage grounds subject to the imposition of conditions to secure a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme (prior to commencement of development) and the submission of a verification report prior to occupation to demonstrate that the flood risk is appropriately managed through the drainage system.

Landscape and Trees

37. The existing school site benefits from established landscaping along the boundaries of the site, the parking areas and the playground. There is a mature Copper Beech along the frontage with West Street surrounded by mown grass verges, along with some other smaller trees. The application has been supported by the submission of an Arboricultural Report and an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and accompanying tree survey and tree protection plans. A landscape masterplan has also been submitted. The proposed extension to the school would require the removal of 13 individual trees, two groups of smaller trees and two hedgerows which run along the perimeter of the existing playground, and at the edge of the new drop off area. The remaining trees and hedges would be retained and protected with 'heras' style fencing during the construction period. The Copper Beech is the only tree on site given the grading A1, and this would be protected as set out above, with a method statement required for any works within the root protection zone, such as where the proposed footpath would run underneath its canopy.
38. The proposed landscape master plan shows that the existing bund in the south-east corner of the site would be reinforced with native species trees and shrubs, and that there would be some informal planting to the site frontage in the vicinity of the Copper Beech. Some existing thicket vegetation along the site frontage at Tong's Meadow (in front of the proposed drop off bays along West Street) would also be reinforced, and the car park and drop off bays would have native species grass mix along the verges and trees to soften its appearance. Along the front of the playground a new green retaining structure would provide the secure boundary in this location, and its position would be sited to avoid the root protection area of the Copper Beech. The retaining structure would support vigorous climbing plants such as honeysuckle, rambling rose, clematis, jasmine and vine. Where the existing hedge would be removed along the eastern boundary a new hedge would be planted alongside the perimeter fencing.
39. A condition is proposed to require a more detailed landscape scheme to be submitted, in conjunction with the submitted masterplan, and this would include the stipulation that species to be planted should include those that would be suitable for bee pollination. It is considered, on this basis, that the proposed development would accord with the aims

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of Policy DM3 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and the document 'Kent's Plan Bee' (Kent County Council Pollinator Action Plan 2019).

Archaeology

40. The application has been supported by the submission of an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (Heritage Statement) carried out by Archaeology South-East in January 2018. There were a series of archaeological investigations carried out on the school site at the time of the original construction period (trial trenching, excavation and watching brief) and these identified Mesolithic/Neolithic and Late Iron Age/Roman archaeological remains. The footprint of the new extension is within the area which was subject to these previous intrusive archaeological works, however the proposed parking area on Tong's Meadow has not been subject to any investigation. The report states that those heritage assets within the existing school site have been subject to an extensive programme of archaeological works, including publication, and as such have been 'preserved by record', but there is the potential for unknown heritage assets of archaeological interest (below ground archaeological remains) in the area outside the existing school.
41. The County Archaeological Officer concurs with the findings of the report and recommends that should permission be given a condition be imposed to secure further archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specification to be agreed with them. On this basis it is considered that the proposed development would be in accordance with Policy DM4 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

Sustainability

42. The sustainability aspects of the development have been covered as part of the Design and Access Statement and this states that all new teaching spaces would have levels of daylight that would be compliant with KCC design standards and thereby reduce reliance upon artificial lighting. All internal light fittings would have low energy LED bulbs and solar control glass and blinds would be accommodated in new rooms to reduce overheating. Generally there would be natural ventilation or hybrid ventilation units to reduce energy consumption, running costs and building maintenance. Water usage would be minimised through the use of efficient taps, dual flush toilets and low water use appliances. The report states that the external envelope will be built to a standard of insulation and airtightness in excess of that required under Building Regulations and the building materials to be used would include renewable timber for the structure of the extension walls and roof as well as the timber cladding.
43. Low and Zero Carbon technologies have also been considered for this scheme, and whilst the construction methods themselves would meet Part L2 of the Building Regulations (meaning LZC technologies are not required) the proposed development includes an area of Photo Voltaic panels on the roof of the new extension which would contribute to the sustainability of the development. The combination of measures being used would ensure the scheme complies with Policies DM1 and DM2 of the Local Plan.

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Conclusion

44. In my view the key determining factors for this proposal are the principle of expanding the school, the siting and design of the extension, the highway and transport related impacts of the proposal and the ecological impacts of the development. The NPPF gives clear policy support for ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places be available to meet the needs of existing and new communities, and the need to create, expand or alter schools. In my view the development can be accommodated without detrimental impact to the local highway network, ecology, landscape, controlled waters or archaeology, all of which can be suitably mitigated by the proposed conditions. It is therefore considered that the development is sustainable, in accordance with the aims of the NPPF and the adopted Maidstone Borough Local Plan policies, and there are no material planning considerations that indicate that the conclusion should be made otherwise. I therefore recommend that planning permission be granted.

Recommendation

45. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
- The standard 3 year time limit;
 - The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
 - The submission and approval of details of all construction materials to be used externally, prior to commencement of development;
 - The provision of the new access prior to occupation, in accordance with a S278 agreement with the Highway Authority;
 - The provision and permanent retention of the vehicle parking spaces and drop off loop as shown on the submitted plans prior to the occupation of the school and their retention thereafter;
 - The submission of a detailed review of the School Travel Plan, within 6 months of occupation of the extension, including management of the drop off loop and barrier by staff, and incorporating measures to encourage sustainable transport;
 - The adherence to the submitted Construction Phase Health and Safety Management Plan for the duration of the construction activities on site, which includes the working hours of 0800 to 1800 Monday to Friday; 0900 to 1300 on Saturdays; and no operations on Sundays or public holidays;
 - Prior to commencement of development, the provision of measures to prevent surface water discharge onto the highway;
 - Submission of a detailed surface water drainage scheme prior to commencement of development;
 - Submission of a verification report covering this scheme to be approved by the Lead Local Flood Authority;
 - The submission and written approval of a detailed Landscape Scheme within 3 months of commencement of development (to include species suitable for bee pollination) and the implementation of the scheme within the first available planting season once the development is occupied;
 - Any plants or trees that die within the first 5 years after planting shall be replaced;
 - No development shall take place until the applicant has secured a programme of

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archaeological field evaluation work in accordance with a written specification and timetable to be approved in writing by the County Planning Authority;

- The submission of a detailed 'Ecological Mitigation Strategy' prior to the commencement of development, to be approved by the County Planning Authority;

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

- That the applicant ensures that all necessary highway approvals and consents are obtained;
- To ensure that works to trees are carried out outside of the breeding bird season and if this is not possible that an ecologist examines the site prior to works commencing.

Case Officer: Mrs Helen Edwards

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Background Documents: see section heading
