

Creation of 3G Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) with fencing, floodlighting and associated features, Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 7BT – MA/18/502882 (KCC/MA/0084/2018)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 11 September 2019.

Application by Maidstone Grammar School for the creation of 3G Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) with fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone, ME15 7BT (Ref: KCC/MA/0084/2018 and MA/18/502882).

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

Local Member: Mr R Bird and Mr D Daley

Classification: Unrestricted

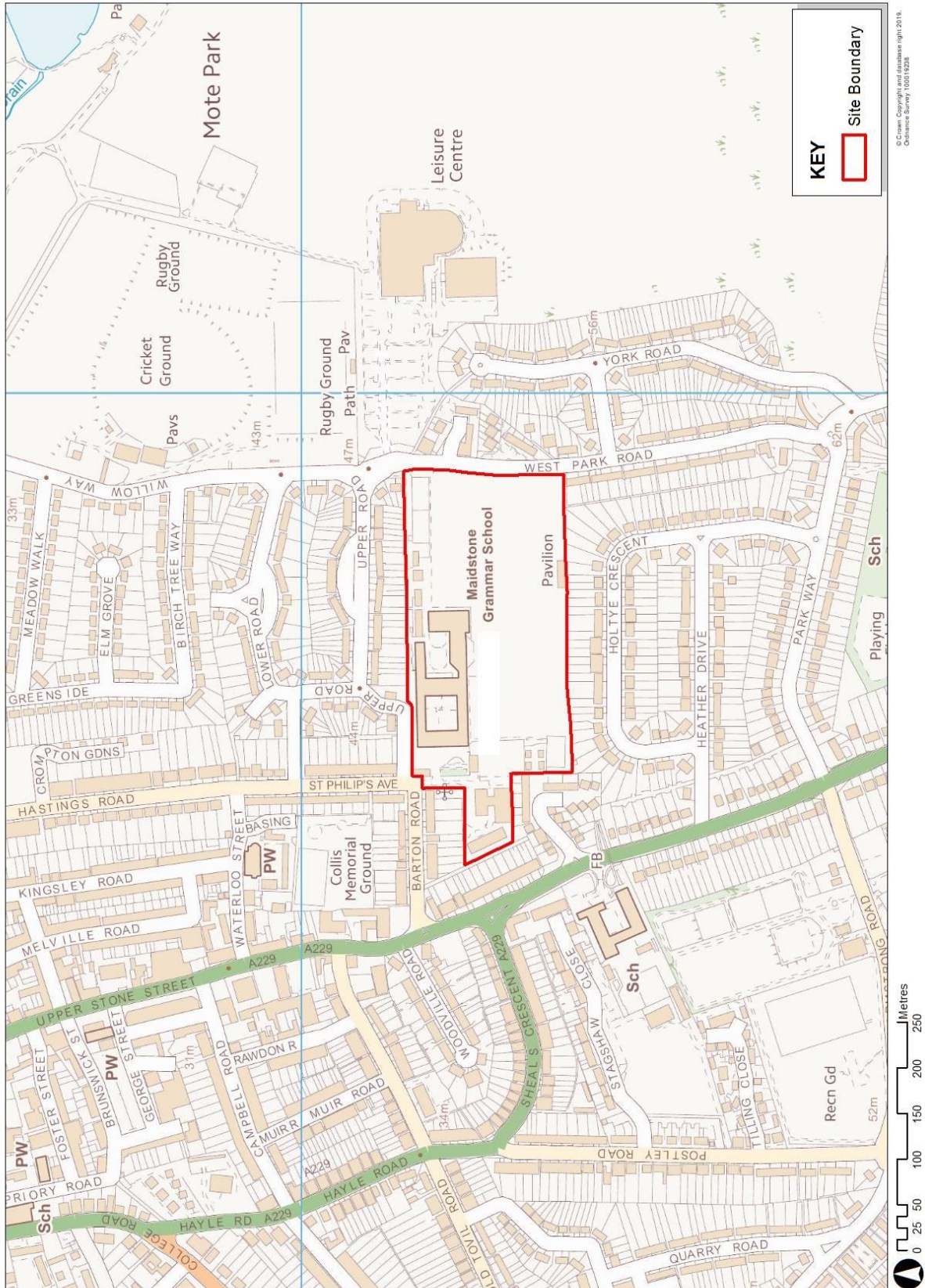
Site

1. Maidstone Grammar School is located off Barton Road, which is to the south east of Maidstone and is in a predominantly residential area. These residential properties surround the site. Mote Park and Maidstone Leisure Centre are located to the east of the school site and are accessed off West Park Road which runs along the school's eastern boundary. The main vehicular and pedestrian entrances to the school are located off Barton Road but there is also a pedestrian entrance from West Park Road. The school consists of buildings of varying size and age, the original building dating from the 1930's. Most of these buildings are in the north western corner of the school site and along the northern and western boundaries. The school's playing field makes up the remainder of the school's site. The original sports pavilion is located on the southern boundary backing onto gardens of the residential properties in Holtye Crescent. A new pavilion has been recently constructed in the south west corner of the site replacing old and unused mobile buildings that were located at this location. A site location plan is attached.
2. The School has completed a variety of new buildings within the past ten years which were commissioned to provide up to date facilities for the existing and proposed additional pupils. In addition to the new sports pavilion, the school has also recently erected a new arts block to provide new music rooms, practice rooms and performing arts studio, which is located at the end of the row of school buildings along the northern boundary. The School has also demolished an existing single storey classroom block which was located close to the northern boundary of the school site and erected a two-storey block to provide new science laboratories and IT classrooms.
3. Between the existing school buildings, which are located to the northern and western boundaries and the southern boundary of the school site is an L-shaped grassed playing field. The playing field has a fall of about 5 metres across the field from the southeast to the northwest. The southern boundary of the school site is defined by a wall or a close boarded wooden fence with chain link fencing above the wall or wooden fence with significant hedges and trees located along both sides. Adjoining this boundary there are two storey residential properties which are accessed from Holtye Crescent.

Item D2

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

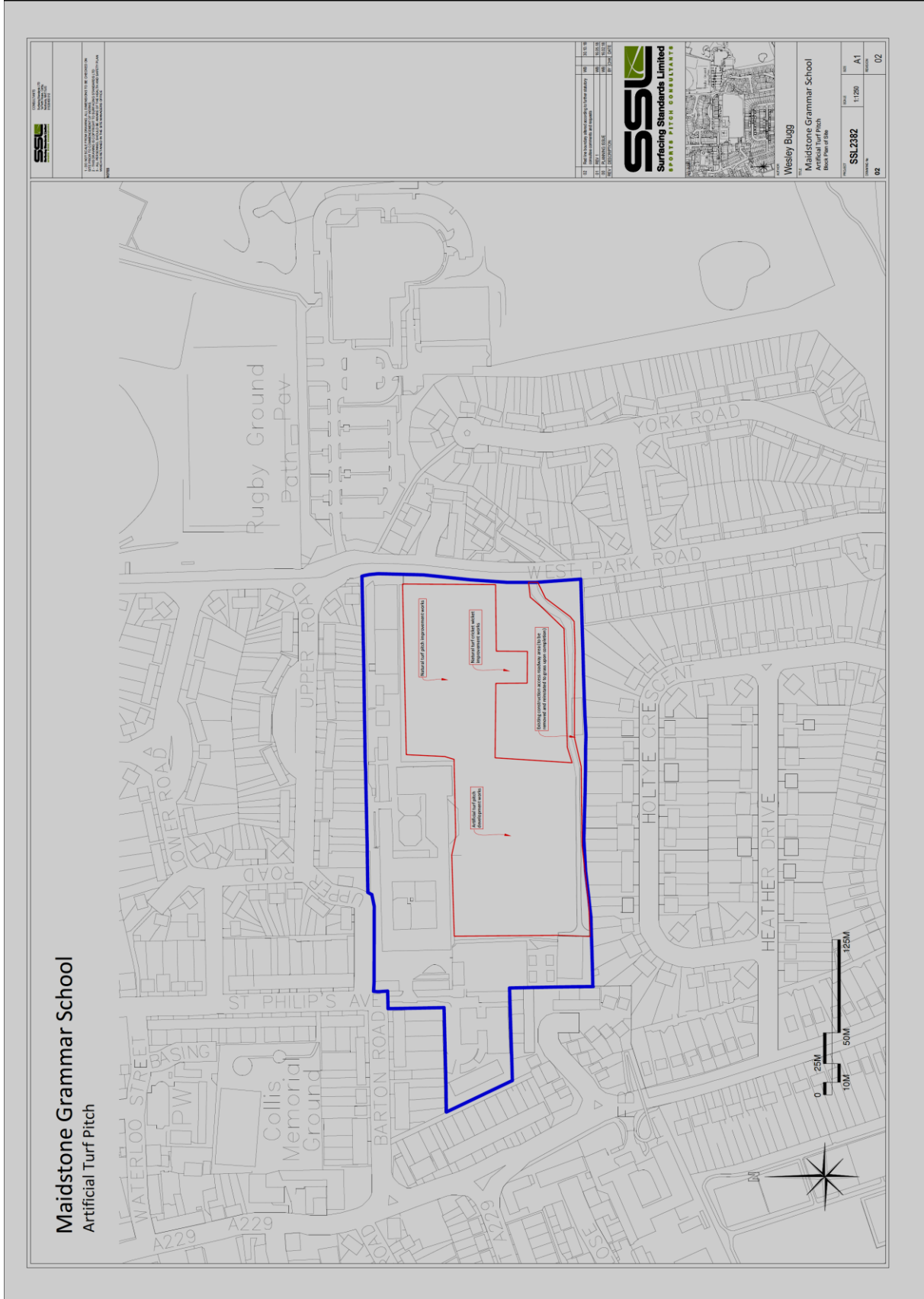
Site Location Plan



Item D2

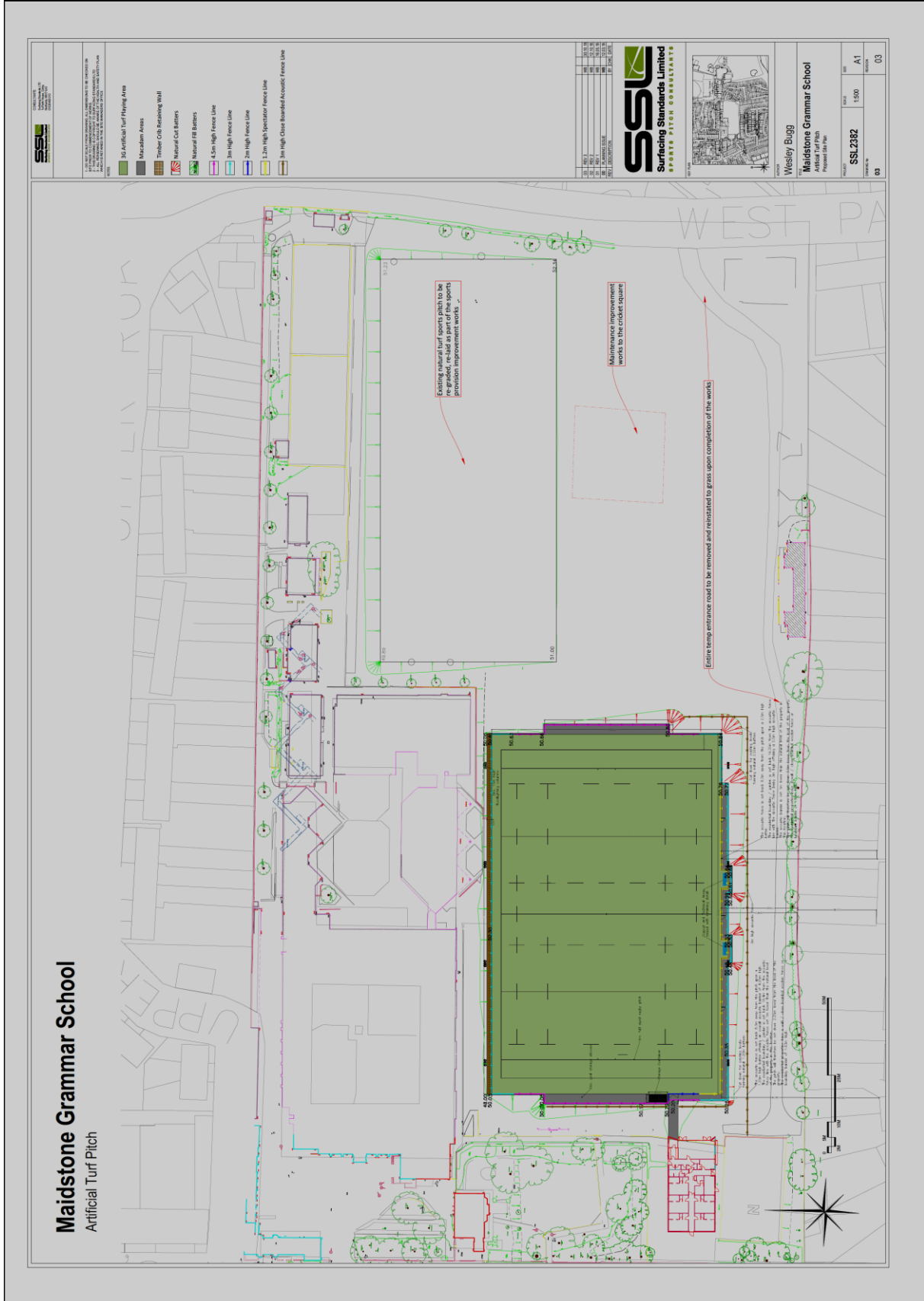
Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Site Location Plan



Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Proposed Site Plan



Item D2

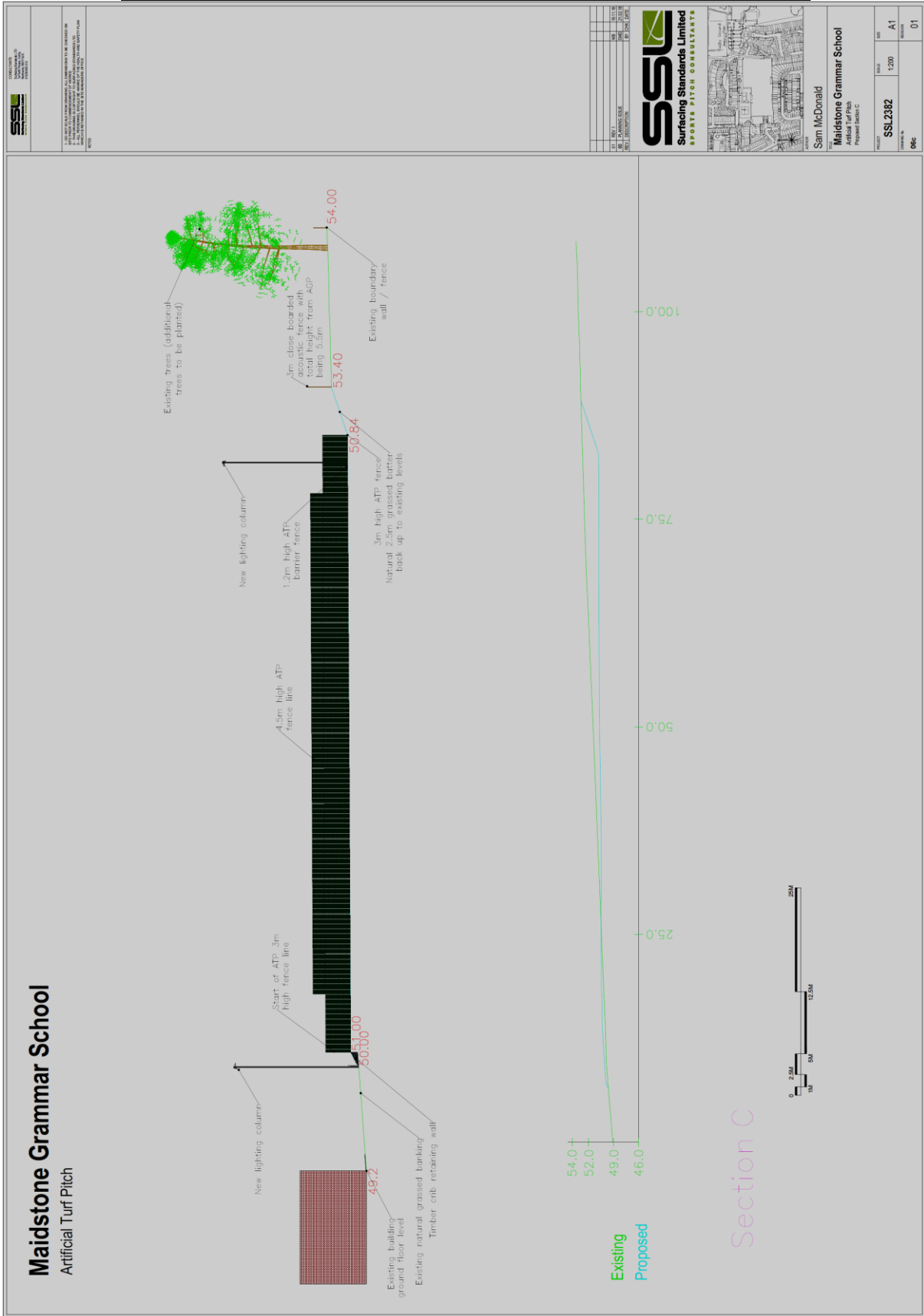
Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Proposed Cross Section (western end of ATP) Plan



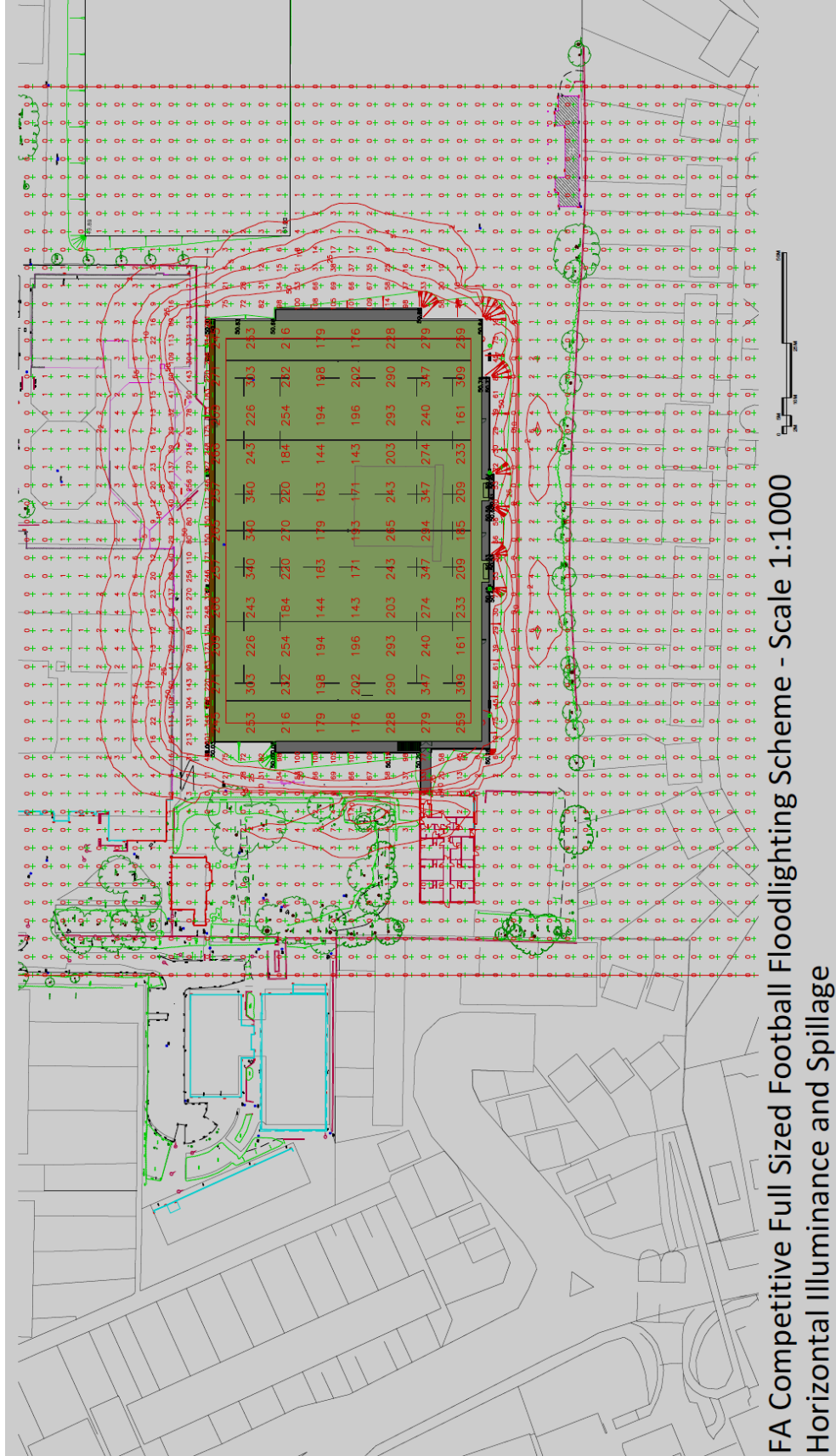
Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Proposed Cross Section (eastern end of ATP) Plan



Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Proposed Floodlighting Plan

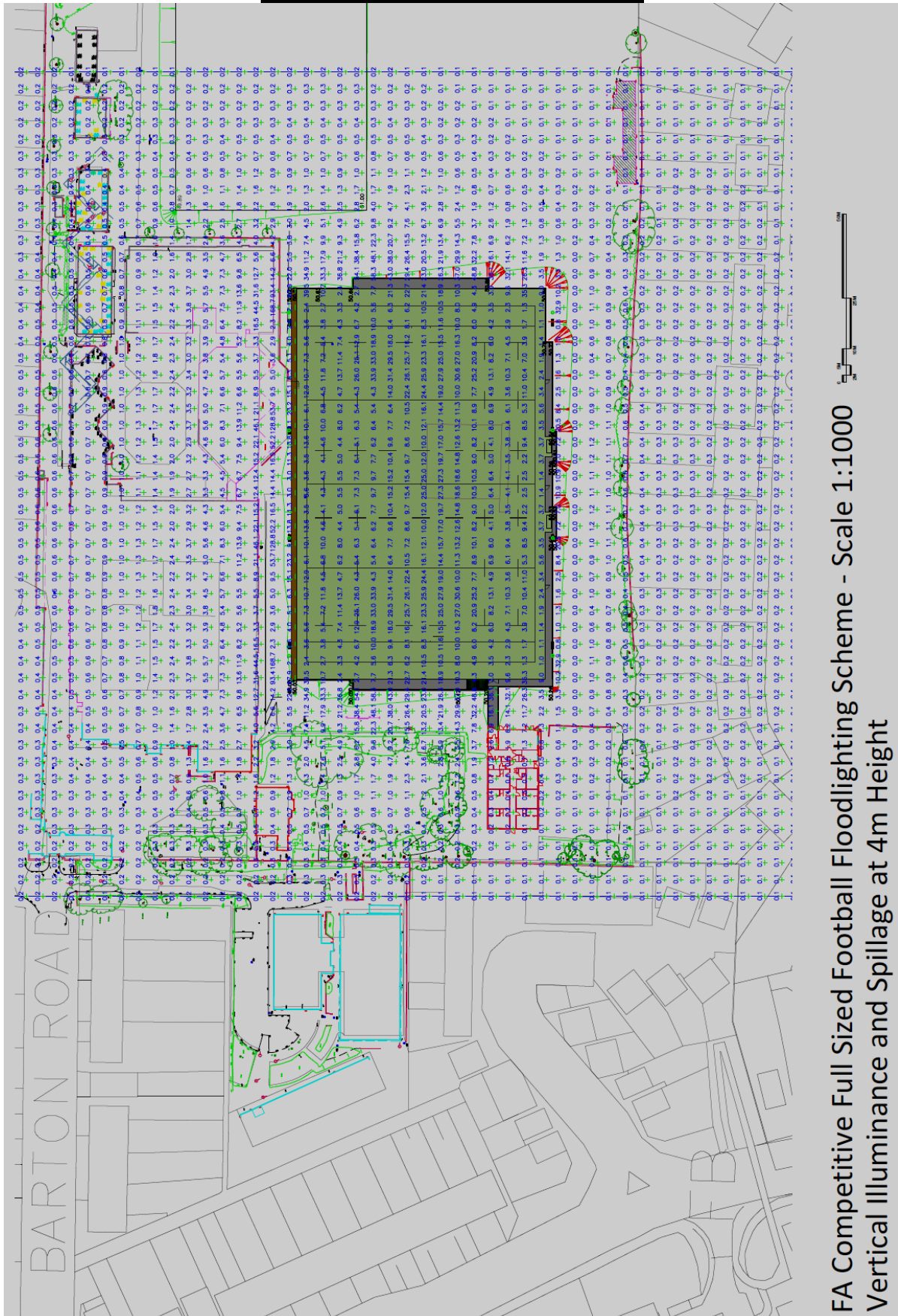


**FA Competitive Full Sized Football Floodlighting Scheme – Scale 1:1000
Horizontal Illuminance and Spillage**

Item D2

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Proposed Floodlighting Plan



Item D2

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Existing Playing Markings Plan



Item D2

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Proposed Playing Markings Plan



Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Background

4. Maidstone Grammar School has a long history dating back to 1549 and earlier occupying various premises with the town and moved to its current site in 1930. In 1993 the School moved from taking pupils from age 13 to age 11 and the first of the new intake at the age 11 had to pass the 11+ exam to gain entry to the school. At that time the school had five forms of entry (5FE) with a Planned Admission Number (PAN) of 150 pupils per year group, giving a school roll of 750 pupils. However due to the demand for grammar school places, the school was required to move to a 6FE in the late 1990's and the PAN was increased to 175 pupils per year group with five additional school places available for appeals, so the school had 6 forms of 30 pupils. This was a school roll of 900 pupils. The PAN of 175 was always surpassed but not enough to have required an additional form of entry which could not be accommodated within the existing buildings and grounds provision. Some creative timetabling was already required to accommodate the existing students because of a lack of specialist accommodation and inadequate playing field provision, which was inadequate for the existing numbers.
5. In 2015, the School was approached by the Local Education Authority, because of under-provision in grammar school places around Kent including the Maidstone area, to take in an additional form of entry thus becoming a 7 FE each year with a PAN number of 205 pupils. The school was required to carry out a curriculum analysis to determine the additional provision that would be needed and this identified that there was a shortage in specialist accommodation for Science, Computing, English, Maths and Physical Education. As the school site had not grown in terms of site size, any new buildings would have to be built within the existing footprint of the school. There was no capacity to use any of the playing fields to build on because the school was already underprovided for a school of its size. The School has already put strategies in place to protect the playing fields so that the physical education curriculum time and school team sports would be protected as much as possible.
6. The Education Committee endorsed the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2016-2020, which identified the need for additional secondary school places in the Maidstone district. The proposal was to expand Maidstone Grammar School to provide an additional 175 selective school places over 5 year to meet the predicted future demand in the Maidstone District. The proposed increase in the PAN was expected to start in 2018 but this was bought forward to September 2017.
7. The school roll in September 2016 was 1232 pupils including the sixth form. This is before the school became a 7 forms of entry (FE) establishment. In September 2018 the school roll was 1302 and again this included the sixth form. Please note that these figures show the first 2 years of the 7FE expansion programme. Finally, the school roll as expected from September 2021 is 1489 and again this includes the sixth form.
8. Furthermore, the number of appeals for school places far surpasses the number of places that the school can offer, and the school confirmed that recently they had 75 appeals. Additionally, since 2017 the school has accepted more than the 205 planned admission numbers (PAN) and so has class sizes of 30, 31 and 32. For this current year, and with some further adaptations to rooming, the school will be able to offer places for up to 222 pupils, without moving to an 8 forms of entry, which is not physically possible based on the insufficient classroom space.

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

9. The number of teaching staff has also increased at the school. In 2016 the total teaching staff (teaching and support staff) was the equivalent of approximately 99 members of staff. In the 2 years since the school became a 7FE school, the total staff numbers increased to 106 and it is envisaged that the school will be taking on at least 2-3 new members of staff over the forthcoming years to accommodate the proposed increase in pupil numbers. The school has confirmed that the school has 97no. car parking spaces, 3no. disabled parking spaces, 4no. motorcycle spaces and space for 125no. cycles. There are no plans to provide any more parking spaces as a result of this planning application as when it is intended for the community to use the ATP, it would be out of school hours and the staff car park would be available. Current school hours are between 8.40am and 3.30pm Monday to Friday.

Recent Planning History

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

MA/18/504116	Retrospective application for a new grasscrete fire appliance path for access to new pavilion. Removal of existing poor quality trees and creation of additional car parking spaces along boundary of current car park. Granted retrospective planning permission.
MA/17/502397	Proposed new single storey pavilion changing facility with supporting club room/teaching space and office accommodation. Granted with conditions.
MA/17/500731	Non-material amendment to relocate the proposed Arts Block building 700mm to the west. Granted with conditions.
MA/16/507442	Proposed new 2-storey performing arts block to provide new music classrooms, practice rooms and performing arts studio space with associated stores and offices. Granted with conditions.
MA/16/507463	Demolition of existing single storey classroom block and erection of new 2-storey block to provide 3 additional science labs and 2 IT classrooms with additional storage and associated prep space. Granted with conditions.
MA/14/504889	Proposed extension and refurbishment of the existing sports pavilion. Granted with conditions.
MA/13/796	Proposed recladding of existing walls and roof to existing sports hall. Granted with conditions.

Item D2

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Amendment following submission

11. The planning application has been slightly amended following the first consultation process. This planning application as originally submitted proposed longer opening hours for the artificial turf pitch on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays throughout the whole of the year. The proposed original hours and days were as shown in the table below;

Monday to Friday	8.00am to 9.30pm
Saturday	9.00am to 6.00pm
Sundays and Bank Holidays	9.00am to 6.00pm

12. The planning application as originally submitted also proposed a 3m high acoustic fence only along the southern boundary of the artificial turf pitch (ATP).
13. As a result of the objections received to the application, the applicant proposed to reduce the hours and days that the ATP would be open by reducing the hours over the weekend between June and August as well as being shut during all Bank Holidays. The applicant also proposed that on a Friday the ATP would close at 6.30pm throughout the year, but requested that a clause could be looked at that would allow Friday evening usage up to 9.30pm up to 23 days throughout the year, for the occasion that booking and demand might require it through the winter months for cancelled or re-scheduled fixture congestion. The hours have subsequently been further amended as set out in paragraph (29). It is those revised hours that are considered in the discussion section of the report.
14. The applicant also proposed further to reduce the levels of the proposed ATP to the southern side of the pitch so that proposed ATP would be cut more into the slope of the playing field and thus lowering further the proposed ATP. An additional acoustic barrier is also proposed to the western side of the ATP and a short section of the eastern side (to add to the already proposed southern acoustic fence). With the proposed further reduced levels of the ATP, the proposed excavated material would be utilised to re-level and improve the existing football pitch. The amended application also proposes improvements to the existing cricket wicket facility to counter the loss of the undersized youth cricket wicket.
15. Furthermore, the lighting information has been updated to show that dark corridors would be achieved behind the proposed acoustic fence to encourage and continue bat migration and feeding patterns around the site. The revised details of the application also now included the temporary access roadway from West Park Road, which is currently still in place due to the recent construction of the new pavilion, and which would be removed upon completion of the proposed ATP and the area reinstated back to grass.

Proposal

16. The planning application (as amended) seeks permission to create a new external 3G artificial turf pitch (ATP) with associated features including;
- Installation of a new artificial turf pitch (ATP) to form a full-sized playing enclosure 116m x 74m for rugby union with new artificial grass pitch surface with a playing area sized 106m x 68m and associated technical areas to accommodate a 15v15 rugby

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

- pitch. It would also be capable of supporting a football pitch that would measure 94m x 68m.
- Installation of pitch perimeter fencing and associated gated entrances to form a playing enclosure around the field of play.
 - Installation of new hard standing areas adjoining the ATP perimeter complete with associated porous asphalt surfacing for pedestrian access, and maintenance and emergency services. It would be compliant with DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) regulations.
 - Installation of eight 15m high floodlighting columns, with a total of 20no. luminaries (3no luminaries on the 4 corner floodlight columns and 2no luminaries on the 4 middle floodlight columns).
 - Installation of an 3m high acoustic fence to the southern and western boundaries of the ATP, and a short section to the eastern boundary.
 - Improvement and maintenance to the existing cricket square.
 - Re-levelling and improvement to the existing natural turf football/rugby pitch.
 - Removal of the existing temporary construction access roadway from West Park Road and reinstatement to grass upon completion.
 - A storage container measuring approximately 6.0m x 2.5m x 2.6m high within the ATP enclosure.
17. The proposal seeks to construct a new artificial turf pitch (ATP) that would enhance the quality of the playing field and main rugby pitch onsite and would provide increased usage in comparison to the existing grassed rugby pitch, for the benefit of the school and its partner organisations and community groups for rugby along with football. It is proposed that the ATP would be used during normal school hours and days as well as during weekday evenings and at weekends via pre-arranged and structured community access. This proposed intensification of use is made possible by the introduction of an artificial grass pitch surface, which would be more durable in comparison to natural turf, especially during winter weather conditions, plus the proposed provision of floodlighting.
18. As mentioned above, the proposed ATP would result in the loss of a usable grassed playing field that holds a junior cricket square and a rugby pitch. However the current playing field has a 5m fall across the length of the field but it is proposed to correct this fall by digging into the ground and lowering the highest point of the field (nearest to the residential properties to the southern boundary) to ensure that the playing surface would be in line with rugby and football requirements for a 3G pitch and would have a maximum fall of 1%. The proposed alterations to the levels of the development area and site would be achieved by using a balanced cut/fill exercise that would bring the north west side of the pitch up in levels by 1.6m. The north east side would rise up by 800mm and due to the steep bank leading down to the school buildings, then the entire north length of the ATP would require a retaining structure.
19. The south western corner of the pitch would also be reduced in level by 1.25m and the south eastern corner would be reduced by 2.5m. The entire southern side of the pitch would have a naturally reinstated grassed bank from the pitch leading back up to the existing levels. Upon the grassed banking a 3m high close boarded wooden acoustic fence would be placed and be a permanent fixture.
20. The Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) playing surface would comprise of a 3G artificial grass containing a 60-65mm pile and would be partially in-filled with silica sand, which is proposed for stability, and granulate rubber, which is proposed for performance. It is proposed that the pitch would be a coloured green grass with white and blue coloured

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

line markings for football. This would be consistent with current Rugby Football Union technical requirements to deliver adequate performance characteristics for the intended activities. This proposed surface type is recognised as the most suitable artificial playing surface for community rugby competition play, training and development.

21. Perimeter ball-stop fencing is also proposed around all sides and ends of the ATP to provide a ball stop and to offer a degree of security. It is proposed to be a steel open mesh fencing powder coated in a dark green colour and would be 4.5m high to the goal ends (to the east and west ends) and 3m high to all other surrounds and boundaries of the ATP and enclosed pathway. The proposed interior fencing within the enclosed macadam pathway would reduce to 1.2m in height. It is also proposed to provide a storage container which would measure approximately 6.0m wide x 2.5m deep x 2.6m high which would be located within the fence line of the enclosed pathway/spectator area. Synthetic rubber inserts are proposed to be installed to all fencing mesh panels and to all post fixings. This would reduce noise, rattle and vibration from ball impacts. The proposed acoustic fencing has also been included to mitigate any adverse effect to the closest residential properties.
22. As part of the planning application is it also proposed to provide 8no. 15m high floodlights, which would be located around the periphery of the ATP. The floodlighting masts are proposed to be a finished galvanised and be self-coloured and would be mounted with a total of twenty (20no.) luminaries c/w 2kW lamps, with 3no luminaries on the 4 corner floodlight columns and 2no luminaries on the 4 middle floodlight columns. The lighting design has been produced with back shields to the southern side in order to mitigate and reduce any spillage from the proposed lighting to the nearby residential properties. It is proposed that the floodlights are built around the ATP to facilitate use during evenings and throughout the winter months, thereby enabling the facility to be used to its full potential by local community sporting and recreational groups.
23. It is not proposed to affect any existing trees on the site. Additional planting to the south of the proposed development would be implemented and would offer further screening into the school grounds from the residential properties and vice versa. Additional planting is also proposed to the eastern boundaries of the playing field and this would ensure a 4m wide bat friendly planting area that would offer and attract foraging and feeding locations and passages for bats away from the proposed ATP and from the proposed artificial lighting. All the surrounding soil would be reinstated to grass.
24. The applicant has confirmed that the existing onsite parking arrangements offer ample space to accommodate users of the proposed pitch. As it is proposed to hire out the ATP after school has finished for the day during term time, or during the weekends or during the school holidays, the car park which has parking space for 97no. vehicles and 3no. disabled parking spaces and is used by staff during the school day, would be available during these out of school hours times. The school would ensure that school usage of the proposed ATP and the hiring out of the ATP would not overlap and/or impact on each other. The proposed development would not alter the transport access to the site, which would remain the same with access via the main school entrance off Barton Road, with use of the school car parking areas. The applicant has confirmed that there are no plans to open the gates off West Park Road, with no access other than through the main school entrance off Barton Road. Equally the applicant has confirmed that green travel opportunities including walking and cycling will also continue to be promoted by the school whenever possible.

Item D2

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

25. The proposed hours and days of usage of the ATP (which have been subject to consultation) are shown in the tables below but have been further amended as set out in paragraph (29) below. During school term time it is proposed that the school would use the ATP Monday to Friday between 8.00am and 5.30pm, and Saturday mornings between 9.00am and 1.00pm. The proposed community use hours during school term time proposed were Monday to Thursday between 5.30pm and 9.30pm, Fridays between 5.30pm and 6.30pm, Saturdays between 1.00pm and 4.00pm from June to August, and between 1.00pm and 6.00pm from September to May, and Sundays between 9.00am and 6.00pm from September to May and between 9.00am and 2.00pm from June to August. During the school holidays, the ATP would also be available during the normal school day as well.

From 1 September to 31 May

Monday to Thursday	8.00am to 9.30pm
Friday	8.00am to 6.30pm
Saturday	9.00am to 6.00pm
Sunday	9.00am to 6.00pm
This facility is to be closed and not utilised during all bank holidays	

From 1 June until 31 August

Monday to Thursday	8.00am to 9.30pm
Friday	8.00am to 6.30pm
Saturday	9.00am to 4.00pm
Sunday	9.00am to 2.00pm
This facility is to be closed and not utilised during all bank holidays	

26. The applicant is also requesting a clause that would allow Friday night use up to 9.30pm for up to 23 days throughout the year for the occasion that booking and demand requires it through the winter months for cancelled and re-scheduled fixture congestion.
27. The proposed community use would be for the ATP only. The table below provides an estimate of the probable maximum users of the ATP. Please note that the 25% of spectators for youth football is based on driving to the venue and supervising children. Clearly the worst-case scenario event is the 6no. 5v5 pitches. The applicants figures below are also based on the number of possible persons using the ATP, rather than the number of cars, and on the very worst-case scenario that competitive matches are played with referees on each of the 6no. football pitches at one time.

Sport	Players	Subs	Coaches	Refs	Total	Pitches	Total times number of pitches	Spectators (0% adult football & 25% for youth football)
2no Adult rugby (15 a side with 8 subs)	30	16	2	3	51	1	51	0

Item D2

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

2no adult football (11 a side with 7 subs.	22	14	2	3	41	1	41	0
9v9 football	18	8	2	1	29	2	58	15
7v7 football	14	8	2	1	25	2	50	13
5v5 football	10	4	2	1	17	6	102	26

28. It is proposed that the ATP would be operated and managed by the School, through a combination of existing caretaking and booking arrangements with additional staff recruited to oversee the use of the ATP when it is proposed to be open to the public. This would ensure that the users of the ATP would have left by the allocated times and to ensure that the floodlighting would also be switched off by the proposed curfew. It is proposed to provide changing facilities in the new pavilion building. It is also proposed to establish an annual sinking fund to cover the costs of the long-term facility maintenance and refurbishment, such as the replacement of the ATP surface and/or floodlighting infrastructure.

Further amendment to the proposed hours of use

29. From the public consultation carried out, it is evident that the nearest neighbours to the proposed AWP have concerns about the proposed amount of community usage during out of school hours, during the weekends and school holidays. The school has taken these objections into consideration and they are proposing to reduce the amount of community usage further as a means of addressing the objections received. The proposal is now not to have any community usage on the ATP on a Sunday throughout the whole year. However, the applicant has requested permission for occasional Sunday usage purely by the school during daylight hours, which is what the school currently does depending on how well the school teams do in interschool and national competitions. This currently takes place for extra training or playing of matches including the occasional small interschools tournaments. The applicant advises that this should not be more than six times per year. The request of allowing Friday night use has also been reduced from 9.30pm to **8.00pm** for up to 23 days throughout the year for the occasion that booking and demand requires it through the winter months for cancelled and re-scheduled fixture congestion. Please refer to the tables below for the revised proposed hours of use.

Revised hours from 1 September to 31 May

Monday to Thursday	8.00am to 9.30pm
Friday	8.00am to 6.30pm
Saturday	9.00am to 6.00pm
Sunday	No community use
This facility is to be closed and not utilised during all bank holidays	

Item D2

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Revised hours from 1 June until 31 August

Monday to Thursday	8.00am to 9.30pm
Friday	8.00am to 6.30pm
Saturday	9.00am to 4.00pm
Sunday	No community use
This facility is to be closed and not utilised during all bank holidays	

Planning Policy Context

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

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

In determining applications, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should 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:

- Consideration of whether the opportunities for sustainable transport have been taken up and safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people;
- Achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- Taking a positive approach to applications that make more effective use of sites that provide community services such as schools, provided this maintains or improves the quality of service provision and access to open space and making decisions that promote an effective use of land while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions;
- Ensure that planning policies and decisions provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, by planning positively for the provision and use of shared spaces and community facilities such as sports venues or open spaces to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

- Meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding and incorporating SuD's;
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment;
- Ensure that planning policies are based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Through access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation, an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities can be achieved;
- Ensure that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive places which enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs through the provision through the provision of sports facilities.
- Ensure that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, are not be built on unless the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location;
- Planning policies and decisions should prevent unacceptable risks from pollution and land instability and should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location;
- Planning policies and decisions should aim to avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development; and to mitigate and reduce to a minimum other adverse impacts on health and quality of life arising from noise from the development, whilst recognising that development will often create some noise;
- Encourage through good design and planning policies the requirement to limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

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)** which sets out the Government's commitment to support the development of state-funded schools and their delivery through the planning system. In particular, the Policy states that the Government wants to enable new schools to open, good schools to expand and all schools to adapt and improve their facilities. This will allow for more provision and greater diversity of provision in the state funded school sector, to meet both demographic needs, provide increased choice and create higher standards.

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

(iii) Maidstone Borough-Local Plan 2017 – Adopted October 2017- Policies:

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.

Proposals need to respect the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties and uses and provide adequate residential amenities for future occupiers of the development by ensuring that development does not result in, or is exposed to, excessive noise, vibration, odour, air pollution, activity or vehicular movements, overlooking or visual intrusion, and that the built form would not result in an unacceptable loss of privacy or light enjoyed by the occupiers of nearby properties.

Policy DM3 Natural Environment. Proposals need to ensure that new development protects and enhances the natural environment by incorporating measures that retain a high quality of living and to be able to respond to the effects of climate change.

Policy DM4 Development affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets. Ensure that new development affecting a heritage asset incorporates measures to conserve, and where possible enhance, the significance of the heritage asset and, where appropriate, its setting.

Policy DM7 Non-conforming uses. Proposals for development which would create, intensify or expand noisy uses, or which could potentially generate volumes or types of traffic unsuited to the locate area, will only be permitted where they do not, by way of their operation, cause nuisance to residents or users in the vicinity.

Policy DM8 External Lighting. Proposals must demonstrate that the minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose is proposed, the design and specification of the lighting would minimise glare and light spillage, and the lighting scheme would not be visually detrimental to its immediate or wider setting particularly intrinsically dark landscapes.

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.

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

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.

Sport England Guidance

31. **Sport England's Planning for Sport Guidance (June 2019)** which sets out Sport England's support of the NPPF and the importance of promoting healthy communities and achieving sustainable development. The document mentions that many educational sites have very good sports facilities which are often underused out of normal school hours. Sport England's Use our School toolkit provides a resource to support schools in opening their facilities to the community and keeping them open. The document also covers issues such as community use agreements and provides guidance on how they should be well managed and to provide a safe environment as well as setting out how the community use is intended to operate. The document also suggests co-locating new facilities and services to provide an increased opportunity to be active as well as supporting community use of existing sports facilities. There is a good practice guidance on design to enhance existing or new sport and physical activity provision. It also mentions lighting of outdoor sports facilities which can provide extended hours that a facility can be used and is considered to be critical to the long-term viability of a facility. The significant advances in lighting technology over the recent years should be recognised and that it can minimise the impact on local amenity and neighbouring properties. Whilst it is recognised in the document that noise associated with sport and physical activity provision can range from various sources such as the voice of players and balls hitting boards on artificial grass pitches, however with appropriate siting and suitable mitigation measures, it is considered that in the vast majority acceptable noise levels can be achieved without adversely affecting surrounding uses.

Consultations

32. The consultees have the following comments to make on the planning application as amended with the proposed hours of use as set out in paragraph (25). (N.B. not the further reduced hours set out in paragraph (29)).

Maidstone Borough Council: Maintains a continued objection to the proposed application for the following reason:

The proposed development will result in significant detriment to adjacent residential amenity by way of increased noise, disturbance and nuisance, and the submitted acoustic assessment report has failed to demonstrate the proposed development will protect and maintain the amenities of surrounding residential occupiers. As such the proposal is contrary to policy DM1 and DM7 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017.

Item D2

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Maidstone Council therefore recommends that the application is refused for the above reasons and the benefits of providing the proposed 3G pitches does not outweigh the harm identified. However, if KCC are minded to approve the scheme regardless of this objection, Maidstone Council recommends that appropriate conditions are imposed to minimise the impact including restricting the hours of use and requiring the submission and approval of a management plan which should set out how potential future complaints will be considered.

Kent Highways: Maintains no objection subject to conditions, including the imposition of a Construction Management Plan condition, and has the following comments:

Initially I note from the information provided however that it is intended that community use is limited to the artificial turf pitch only. I would recommend therefore that this is included as a condition to any approval notice. *[This is considered in paragraph (84) below.]*

It would appear that the 'worst case'/most intensive scenario for community use would be 6, 5 a-side pitches which may generate, at a generous allowance of an 80% person to car ratio, approximately 100 cars. A plan has been provided which demonstrates that approximately 97 car parking spaces are available within the school complex. I also understand that 'there is a large overflow car park to the hard-standing courts.' This has not been shown but presumably this is the courts at the eastern end of the school next to West Park Road. It is also noted that this area is adjacent to the car park to Maidstone Leisure Centre.

In capacity terms and considering potential impacts to surrounding roads it would appear therefore that community use, outside of school times (this has also been stipulated/confirmed), can be accommodated, off the public highway, and I write on behalf of this authority that I have no objection to this proposal.

I note the information regarding weekday, Saturday, Sundays and Bank Holiday times for community use to occur. Apart perhaps for the suggested morning weekday start time, it is not considered that the traffic generated unduly conflicts with other peak hour traffic movements. The operating times are considered in this case to largely be an amenity issue for determination by the planning authority. In this regard an approval for an initial temporary period of say 2 to 3 years may be helpful/appropriate.

Finally, the issue of coaches has not been discussed but at an expected maximum attendance of 128 people and coaches usually having a capacity of ~ 50 people, it is not considered that coach arrivals should present any particular issues greater than current school activities that involve coaches.

Archaeology: Maintains no objection subject to a condition and has the following comments:

The applicant has provided a Desk Based Assessment (DBA). This DBA provides helpful information on the location of the anti-tank trap and background data on the archaeological potential. I have also received additional information on proposed groundworks.

Having viewed this information and made a site visit to appreciate the ground levels and potential impact of the scheme, I am now more confident that groundworks will not

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

impact on the anti-tank trap. There is still some potential for groundworks to impact on earlier archaeology, but this can be addressed through fieldwork covered by condition post consent.

The County Council's Flood Risk Team (SuDS): Maintains no objection subject to conditions and has the following comments:

The proposed drainage strategy for the artificial pitch at Maidstone Grammar School would be sufficient. We do advise that the additional surface water from the creation of the 3G pitch is fully drained via infiltration either below the pitch or through the use of additional soakaways rather than connecting through the school surface water drainage system. The underlying strata is the Hythe Formation (Ragstone) in which there is a risk of encountering loosely infilled features known as 'gulls'.

The installation of soakaways may lead to ground instability if these features are present and are inundated with water. No ground investigation details appear to have been provided to determine the potential instability risks associated with infiltration drainage into these deposits.

Should you be minded to grant planning permission for the above development, we recommend that conditions are attached that require the provision of a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site and an operation and maintenance manual for the proposed sustainable drainage scheme is submitted and approved.

KCC's Biodiversity Officer: Maintains no objection subject to a condition and has the following comments:

A bat activity survey has been submitted in support of this application and it has detailed that at least 4 species of foraging/commuting bats have been recorded within the site and there is a known long eared roost within the pavilion building, particularly along the site boundaries. A lighting plan has been submitted to address previous concerns that the proposed development would result in an increase in lighting on the site boundary and negatively impact foraging/commuting bats. Due to the location of the known roost we accept that the proposed development would not directly impact bats entering/leaving the roost.

The submitted plans do demonstrate that the proposed fencing will result in a significant decrease in light spill on to the site boundaries. The ecology survey details that additional planting along the southern and eastern boundaries will be carried out to enhance the site for foraging/commuting bats and reduce the light spill further (once it has established). It is recommended that if planning permission is granted a hedgerow management plan is produced and implemented as a condition of planning permission.

Environment Agency: Has no comments to make on the planning application as the application is assessed as having a low environmental risk.

Sport England: Initially raised objection to the planning application because it was not considered to accord with any of the exceptions to Sport England's Playing Fields Policy or with Paragraph 74 of the NPPF. However Sport England agreed to re-consider its position subject to the satisfactory resolution due to the lack of a community use agreement that would justify the loss of the playing field. Following receipt of the amended documentation, Sport England now raises no objection and has the following comments to make;

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Further to our previous response I have reconsulted the relevant National Governing Bodies (NGB) regarding the additional information provided.

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) is supportive of the proposal as it would add to the floodlit pitch capacity in the local authority. The Playing Pitch Strategy identifies a pitch deficit in the area, with particular reference to Mote Park, where there is a significant overall shortfall in pitch capacity. This would concur with the reasoning for the school not to look at additional capacity at this site as a solution to their needs (Strategic Context – Para 4.8; Design and Access Statement).

Currently, the 2 non-floodlit rugby pitches at Maidstone Grammar are highlighted within the Playing Pitch Strategy as being available for community use but not currently utilised. An accessible rugby compliant floodlit Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) would potentially contribute to the current peak demand shortfall of floodlit training areas should an appropriate Community Use Agreement be in place. The RFU would welcome early consultation on the Community Use Agreement to ensure community accessibility to the AGP from a pricing and availability perspective. The RFU would also request that, in line with the FA competition recommendation at Para 4.8 within the Design and Access statement (Community Use), that use of the AGP should not commence until certification to World Rugby Regulation 22 is evidenced.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has also confirmed that the amended proposal has addressed the issues for the provision of cricket at the site with the enhanced quality of the fine turf square.

The ECB would like to see a more specifically worded Community User Agreement which incorporates cricket. Whilst the existing one confirms current users of the cricket facility, there is no specific mention of future access of the site by community cricket clubs.

In conclusion, given the above assessment, Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to this application as it is considered to meet exception 5 of the above policy. The absence of an objection is subject to a community use agreement condition being attached to the decision notice should the local planning authority be minded to approve the application.

Amey: Lighting - Has the following comments to make:

The scheme has been designed in line with BS EN 12193 (Light and lighting – sports lighting), the Institution of Lighting Professionals ‘Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light GN01:2011’ and good industry practice.

Amey: Noise - Has the following comments to make:

In summary, is satisfied that the main level of noise from the ATP would be acceptable subject to the provision of the 3-metre noise barrier and correct installation of the ball stop fencing, and consideration to whether use of the facilities up to 9.30pm is appropriate as at this time there is increased potential for an adverse impact on the local community to occur.

Further commented that the overall noise assessment (as revised), based on computer noise modelling and assessment of noise impacts over an hourly period, in addition to the assessment of maximum (dB L_{AMAX}) noise levels, is robust and no further detailed, technical noise assessment is required. However, the main concern is the

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

unquantifiable effects associated with excessive shouting and foul language which often accompanies, male five-a-side football games and similar activities if it goes unchallenged. It is suggested that any noise management plans prepared by the applicant in support of this scheme, should include a strictly policed behaviour policy for the facility's users, with adequate training and support provided to staff to ensure user-behaviour is suitably controlled. This should not be a generic, non-specific management plan and should be agreed with the County Planning Authority prior to the facility's first use. The nature, character and timing (i.e. evenings and weekends) of the noise from the venue has the potential to disturb local residents, the degree to which this occurs being a subjective matter. At face value, the fact that the development may give rise to occasions of elevated noise should not be a reason for refusal of planning permission, but the County Council should be satisfied that any such noise can be suitably controlled and minimised, as far as reasonably practicable, to enable the development to be permitted.

Amey: Landscaping: - Has the following comments to make:

The proposed planting largely addresses the environmental and light-pollution related considerations raised in the submitted reports in the long term. To reduce the impact of the proposed lighting to the surrounding residencies, it is suggested that trees should be extra heavy standard trees (14-16cm) along the southern border of the site. It is suggested that consideration should be given to increasing the number of additional trees creating planting groups out with the boundary hedge line with additional trees to be planted where required to create a full barrier and screen the new development from the residencies in the short term, as well as in the long term. Furthermore, seeding or planting that will help stabilise the newly formed batters, as well as enhance the habitat opportunities of the site should also be considered.

Local Member

33. The local County Members Mr Bird and Mr Daley and adjoining local Member, Mr Cooper were notified of the application on 24 May 2018 and of the revised proposals on 17 December 2018. Mr Cooper, as adjoining local County Member, made the following comments on the amended proposals:

'I am unable to comment as I am a member of the Planning Committee.'

Publicity

34. The application was advertised by the posting of a site notice and the notification of 110 neighbouring properties and an advertisement was placed in the local newspaper on 1 June 2018. The reconsultation resulted in the notification of all the people that made representations on the planning application as originally submitted and the reconsultation also included the original 110 neighbours that were originally consulted on the planning application.

Representations on the planning application as originally submitted

35. Letters of representation have been received both in opposition of the application as originally submitted and in support. A total of 104 representations have been received objecting to the application and a total of 145 in support, whilst 2 representations raised concern, and which can be summarised as follows;

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Objections

Residential Amenity

- Impact arising from noise and lighting for properties in the vicinity of the site will be unacceptable.
- Adverse effect on residential amenity of neighbours, by reason of noise, disturbance, light spill, overlooking and loss of privacy. There will still be an increase in ambient light from the floodlighting affecting the properties in this densely populated area of Maidstone.
- Noise levels and extensive opening hours of the pitch which are a severe intensification over the current use, would create a constant interruption for almost all waking hours, seven days a week, having a severe impact on the quality of life for surrounding residents.
- The Noise Impact Assessment highlights the devastating impact on residential amenity the proposed application would have even if both acoustic barriers were in place. The predicted ambient noise levels will be close to 50 decibels from the activities on the pitch alone. This is 'moderately annoying' by World Health Organisational Standards.
- Mitigation measures will not be effective.
- Visual impact of the noise barrier and lighting is unacceptable providing a negative visual impact of the development. Currently the visual impact is one of playing fields, red brick school buildings and the North Downs. The imposition of the noise barrier would not be in keeping and be overbearing to resident's and would have a disproportionate loss of existing views.
- Adverse impact upon quality of life for surrounding residents in Beech Hurst Close and Holtye Crescent (in particular) as well as Heather Drive, Barton Road, St Philip's Avenue and Upper Road.
- Use of pitches 7 days a week is unacceptable.
- Impact from anti-social behaviour.
- Result in the loss of privacy and increase security risk.
- This is overdevelopment in a defined space.

Parking and Highway

- There will be a dramatic increase in traffic during weekday evenings and at weekends.
- There is not enough parking provided by the school and that local parking on busy residential roads is not viable in the long term. Traffic congestion, particularly during the week between 1700 and 1800 is already heavy in nearby Loose Road, Park Way and West Park Road.
- Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan polices clearly indicates that this facility would have a detrimental effect on residents of Holtye Crescent and surrounding roads.

Need

- No justification in terms of the additional students being taken on by the school or no justification for building a state-of-the-art sports pitch and then using it as a playground during break and lunch times.
- Other locations on site should be explored further away from residents.
- Few qualms about the use of these facilities for the benefit of scholars, it is the out of hour's usage which creates the greatest concern.
- There is no need for this facility as there is an availability of pitches in the Maidstone area at various times throughout the week and weekend. The site is proposed

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

directly opposite Mote Park Leisure Centre and not more than 300yds away from the all-weather pitch in Armstrong Road.

- Placing this facility in Mote Park would make it more accessible to local groups and if managed independently remove the financial burden on the school.
- Maidstone Borough Local Plan makes no reference to a need for increased sports facilities of this nature or any desire to increase the number of AWP's in the Borough.
- The extended hours of use are way beyond the normal school hours we are accustomed to and have accepted because it is a school. This proposal turns it into a business which is unsuitable in such a built-up area.
- The boys at the school have managed perfectly well for the last 88 years with a very large grassy field, do they really need this or is it just a money making scheme for the school?

Hours

- The extended operating hours challenge good neighbourliness, fairness and undermines the character of the neighbourhood with inappropriate new uses.
- Renting out this facility during weekends, bank holidays and school holidays for non MGS activities will cause interference with the residents reasonable enjoyment of his land.

Biodiversity

- The presence of light during day and night is likely to affect the natural behaviour of bats.
- Create risks to wildlife and to biodiversity, particularly priority species.

Health

- Concern about the health issues surrounding 3G pitches.
- Create risk to health and to the environment resulting from the use of 'rubber crumbs' and their loss into the watercourse.

Other

- Residents object to the construction and running of an unrelated external sports club simply because without the income from external hire would mean that the school wouldn't be able to afford to maintain the facility. Figures of how much is needed and over what sort of period, to justify the large number of hours proposed has not been provided.
- There is no justification in terms of benefits to the immediate neighbouring community. Benefit is only to those outside the community whilst the negative effects are only felt by those inside the local community.

Support

- This is a growing school and it desperately needs this facility so that the children have somewhere to play at break and lunchtime. The existing playing provision is totally inadequate for the children at the school.
- The school needs modern sports facilities to enable it to deliver the quality teaching it is known for and in this day and age where sport is an essential part of the curriculum it should be a priority.
- This facility would mean that the PE Department could offer the full spectrum of sports and exercise needed to meet and surpass the current curriculum requirements.

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

- With obesity levels at the highest for teenagers currently, the need for spaces which can be used in all weathers is vital to the health of these boys and girls at such an important time in their lives, both of health and mental well-being.
- It will help the students in all-weather condition. During the winter months, when the weather is not very good, many sports classes get cancelled due to waterlogged pitches etc.
- The facility is much needed as it would not only enable the rugby and football teams to be better prepared for matches against other schools but would also give the school an outside area to play on when they are unable to utilise the field due to bad weather.
- Synthetic grass pitches require less maintenance than natural surfaces as they don't get muddy and worn out from heavy use and weathering.
- The all-weather pitch would bring a guarantee of all year-round sports for the school.
- It would enhance the school's reputation as a rugby playing school.
- Allow the school pupils to participate in outdoor activities when normal grass pitches would be unplayable.
- We need to do all we can to promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage students to participate in sport and that means all through the year, something that the current grass pitch cannot effectively deliver.
- In addition to the 3G pitch benefitting the students, this is a much-needed local facility which would allow it to generate enough income to pay for itself.
- The school currently has an inadequate amount of playing field space and this situation will only worsen as pupil numbers increase over the coming years.
- All weather sports pitches are in very short supply in the Maidstone area, but the few that exist are over-subscribed and there is a great need for more such facilities. It would support the real need for additional playing provision for outside clubs to hire.
- Innovative approach to providing modern facilities to its students whilst minimising the financial impact to the school and government.
- Hope that the school will be able to support the local community with the hiring out of these facilities.
- It would not just benefit the pupils, but also the local community.

Comments from Helen Grant, Member of Parliament for Maidstone and The Weald

This new all-weather surface is vital to allow the school to continue to offer a full physical education programme as its expansion for a six to a seven form entry intake continues. The new facility will provide the school with greater resilience against increased wear and tear and against inclement weather; allowing students to partake in more P.E. lessons and outdoor activities. It will also provide benefits to the wider local community with it being made available to sporting clubs and groups from outside of the school. Furthermore, I am also encouraged that the school have taken reasonable precautions to assuage the concerns of neighbours including: reducing the size of the pitch, implementing an acoustic fence and choosing specially designed lighting.

I have always been an enormous supporter of improved grassroots sports facilities across Maidstone and the Weald. High quality sports facilities play a vital role in offering people of all ages the opportunity to partake in physical activity, which clearly provides significant physical and mental health benefits. They also have an enormously beneficial social impact providing people with the opportunity to enjoy companionship and offering worthwhile and productive activities for the community to enjoy.

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

For all of the reasons above, I support this application and very much hope that it will be granted. I would be grateful if my comments could be given due consideration as this application is considered by KCC.

Comments from Maidstone Rugby Club

The rugby club has been in existence for nearly 138 years and has excellent ties with many schools. One of the longest standing is with Maidstone Grammar School. We do use each other's facilities on frequent occasions and inclement weather and pitch conditions are always a tremendous challenge. The area is in need of a 3G artificial pitch, not just for rugby, but other sports as well and MGS would be an ideal location. Not only would it strengthen the sporting opportunities in Maidstone at grassroots level but would also increase the interest in a variety of sports that will of course benefit the wider community. As a community club we see the far-reaching benefits a local artificial pitch can potentially offer and we would be very keen to work with MGS to use the pitch in the future.

Comments from Aylesford Football Club

As a coach at Aylesford Football Club, I am writing to express my support for the plan to build an artificial pitch at Maidstone Grammar School. I feel this is much needed facility for the local community. As a football club Aylesford has always struggled to get facilities to train on, especially during the winter months when it is darker and flood lights are needed. We are quite near to Cobham Sports Club which has its own 3G pitch but we are still unable to train there as it is always fully booked. We have also tried all other places with floodlights but we face the same problem of no availability.

Representations on the planning application as amended (as set out in paragraph 16-28 above)

36. A reconsultation was undertaken and all the neighbours that were consulted on the planning application as originally submitted were notified of the proposed changes, as well as the members of the public that had sent in representations on the original application. The reconsultation on the amended proposals attracted a further 49 objections and 2 letters of support, which can be summarised as follows:

Object

Residential Amenity

- Strongly object to any use outside school hours as floodlights, noise and additional traffic brought to this area would have a serious adverse effect on the living environment for all residents.
- Residents will be affected by the sound of balls banging on perimeter fences, referee whistles and crowd and player shouting.
- The proposed adjustments do not go anywhere near far enough to address the problems that would have to be endured by local residents.
- The noise measurements taken at the pitches did not include supporters, families and cheering and therefore is not a true reflection. The noise of whistles objection raised by Maidstone Borough Council has not been addressed.
- This development would infringe my own and my families right to a private life and enjoyment of my home.

Item D2

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

- The increased usage of persons within the playing field during weekends and evening would mean a visual intrusion into the rear windows of my property for an unreasonable length of time.
- The applicant cannot with any degree of certainty demonstrate that the proposed development would not have a significant impact on residential amenity.
- The design of the acoustic barrier and landscaping has changed but this makes no change to the intolerably high noise levels that would be suffered by nearby residents, 63 decibels for whistles and 61 for footballs hitting fences.
- This equates to completely changing the acoustic characteristics of the location and surrounding area and would lead to significant behavioural changes (closing windows, not being able to sleep during the evenings, not using gardens during the weekend) amongst local residents.
- The noise and light will affect the wildlife in the area, particularly the bats who we regularly see in the evenings whose activities would be affected by the floodlights.

Need

- The sports pitch is totally inappropriate in a residential area such as ours and there is no need for it as there are several other all-weather pitches in the area.
- Unacceptable to use the pitch as a commercial venture by the school seven days a week into the evening.
- Restrict the proposal to just an artificial surface, without floodlights and sound barrier, to be used during normal school hours in line with the current grass playing field.
- There is no demand for the facility outside of the school and other facilities have been advertising recently as they are failing to fill their available slots.

Hours

- Unhappy about the extended hours of floodlight and sports late into the evening.
- Note that the school has reduced the hours of use from the original proposal but these are still in excess of acceptable hours.
- Whilst some amendments have been made, the use should be restricted to normal school hours, and Saturday mornings.
- The revised application has included a clause to increase use on Friday nights until 21.30 hours on 23 Fridays a year. This could constitute the whole summer period.

Parking and Highway

- The school currently has 95 parking spaces and use Mote Park for their students to park indicating that they do not have enough room to accommodate their own staff and pupils on a daily basis.
- Beech Hurst Close is the first road in the area coming out of Maidstone that is not permit parking and we already have major problems with people using the road as a free car park.

Other

- Cannot justify the construction of a leisure centre in a residential area simply because the school cannot afford the maintenance costs of the proposed facility.
- The headteacher stated that the project was not a commercial exercise although in a newsletter to the parents it was referred to as a 'new funding stream'.
- The proposed planting scheme is totally unsuitable and a hedge planting would be more suitable and better for wildlife.

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

- It is surprising that the school would go ahead with the scheme in view of the claim that the rubber crumbs used in construction could result in children suffering ill-health.

Support

- This will provide a facility to ensure pupils have access to an outdoor space for exercise all year round and promote the playing of team sports.
- There would be significant benefits to current and future pupils (and facility users) in terms of health and other educational opportunities.

Discussion

37. In considering this proposal regard must be had to Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (30) above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
38. This application is being reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee due to the objection from Maidstone Borough Council and the letters of representation received objecting to the planning application. In this case the key determining factors, in my view, are need and the principle of the development, location, amenity impacts (including proximity to residential properties, visual impacts, lighting and noise), school and community use and hours of use, access and parking, drainage, archaeology, ecological matters, and construction. In the Government's view, the development of schools is strongly in the national interest and planning authorities should support this objective, in a manner consistent with their statutory obligations. In considering proposals for the creation, expansion and alteration of schools, the Government considers that there is a strong presumption in favour of state funded schools, as expressed in the National Planning Policy Framework and reflected in the Policy Statement for Schools. Planning Authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling such development, attaching significant weight to the need to develop state funded schools, and making full use of their planning powers to support such development, only imposing conditions that are absolutely necessary and that meet the tests set out in paragraph 55 of the NPPF.

Need and principle of development

39. As referred to above in the background section of the report, the proposal arises due to expansion of the school which is already taking place to meet demand for selective secondary school places in the Maidstone area. Additional accommodation to meet curriculum requirements has already been constructed on the site but there is also a need to address a shortfall in available recreation and sports facilities for the existing and future increase in pupil numbers. The development of the new buildings has reduced the amount of space available for pupils at lunch time and break times. In addition, the use of the playing field is limited by weather conditions.
40. The applicant states that the school has an existing shortfall of 2.1 hectares of playing field provision against the Department for Education (DfE) recommended standards (as

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

set out in Building Bulletin 103 – Area Guidelines for Mainstream Schools). With forecast growth in pupil numbers, this shortfall would increase to approximately 2.6 hectares by 2021, without any additional facilities. The suitability and increased durability of artificial surfaced areas is recognised in Building Bulletin 103, where it is noted that they offer the potential for more intensive use and that they can be counted twice “as they can be used for significantly more than the seven hours a week assumed of grass pitches”. The proposed ATP would therefore significantly reduce the current shortfall in playing field provision.

41. The School has considered options for off-site additional provision at Mote Park. Leaving aside any safeguarding issues, the School do not consider it to be a realistic proposition as it has only 1-hour lessons meaning that pupils would not have sufficient time to have a high-quality PE lesson as they would have to fit in both time to get changed and walk to Mote Park within that available hour. Consequently, the School has concluded that an artificial pitch within the school’s grounds would be a more suitable option. It would result in a significant improvement for the school over current limitations and would be available for break and lunch times in addition to meeting the sport curriculum requirements. Support for the provision of school places is heavily embedded in the NPPF and supported by Local Plan Policy DM20, and as this proposal arises from the expansion of the school, I consider that the education need for the proposed development should be given significant weight in this instance.
42. As outlined in the proposal section of the report, it is also proposed that the ATP (Artificial Turf Pitch) is used by the community outside of school hours. The applicant considers that this is necessary to fund the costs of future maintenance and refurbishment of the facility although that in itself is not material to the determination of this application. However, in addition the applicant has established that there is a need for such a facility for wider community use and this is verified by the findings of the Maidstone Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). In a report on the PPS, considered by the Borough Council’s Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee in February this year it was noted that an addition of 0.84 was needed to 3G pitches to meet future demand for football use.
43. Policy DM20 of the Borough Local Plan seeks to ensure, where appropriate, that dual use of education facilities (existing and new) including for recreation are encouraged, a planning policy objective which is well established. In addition, the NPPF sets out that the provision of sports facilities that enable and support healthy lifestyles is an aim that should be achieved in planning decisions. Sport England in recently published guidance outlined in paragraph (31) above endorse this aim and amongst other things sets out its support for community use of school sports facilities.
44. There is in my view strong planning policy support for the proposed development and use. Furthermore, given the ATP would be located on the playing field, the principle of such use is already well established. However, it does raise some significant issues in respect of the location, details of the proposed development and intensification of use which are considered below.

Location on the playing field

45. The proposed location of the ATP has largely been determined by the ‘L’ shape of the playing field and the existing summer and winter layouts of pitches and markings. The location would result in the need to re-arrange some pitches and markings at the

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

eastern side of the playing field, including for example, the location of the running track. The proposals also involve some releveling works of this part of the playing field with surplus soils arising from construction of the ATP. This is the largest part of the playing field and would accommodate two rugby pitches, the senior cricket square that is proposed to be improved, a running track, practice grids, cricket nets and an area for shot put. To locate the ATP on this part of the playing field would leave an area of playing field of unusable width for most formal sports and a loss of overall sports provision.

46. Following an initial objection from Sport England, as noted in paragraph (32), it is satisfied that the proposal meets its policy exception 5 providing a sport facility of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.
47. Accordingly, no objection is raised subject to a condition requiring a community use agreement being imposed if planning permission is granted. As referred to in the Sport England response, the Rugby Football Union and the English Cricket Board would wish their interests to be addressed in the community use agreement and this could be covered by an informative.
48. The proposed location of the ATP does make the most effective use of space without leaving unusable areas to either side of it and minimises the overall loss of grass pitches and markings for summer and winter sports. Whilst it would lead to loss of part of the playing field, the ATP would provide an enhanced facility which can be used more effectively in comparison to natural turf. However, there are other issues to consider in determining whether the location is acceptable in planning terms and these are considered below.

Amenity Impacts

Proximity to Residential Properties and Visual Impact

49. Although the location of the ATP does make the most effective use of the playing field for sports use, and is acceptable to Sport England, objection is raised by local residents to its location on amenity grounds. The impacts of the lighting of the pitch, and noise associated with its use, will be discussed later in this report, but the principle of the location in terms of privacy and visual impact are considered below.
50. The existing area of playing field upon which the ATP is proposed is on a gentle slope, with land levels increasing in height by approximately 5-metres across the field (northwest to southeast) from the school buildings and the southern school boundary, beyond which lie the gardens and rear elevations of the nearest properties in Holtye Crescent. The ATP perimeter ball stop fencing would be between about 21 and 26 metres away from the southern boundary with Holtye Crescent properties. The rear façade of these properties is shown on the submitted drawings to be between 47 and 55 metres from the perimeter ball stop fencing. However, it should be noted that the ordnance survey base does not show the rear extensions that have been added to these properties and therefore the distances are actually less. An existing games court and the sports pavilion lie between the proposed ATP and the western school boundary with properties in Beech Hurst Close which would be about 50-metres away from the ATP perimeter ball stop fencing. One of these properties which is end on has its end wall close to the boundary and the rear façade of those that face onto the boundary are set

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

back by about 10-metres being about 60-metres from the ATP perimeter ball stop fencing.

51. It is proposed that site levels would be altered by using a balanced cut/fill exercise which would bring the north side of the pitch up by between 0.8 and 1.6 metres. On the south side the ATP would be cut into the site, which would lower the ground level by 1.25-metres at the south western corner of the proposed pitch and 2.5-metres at the south eastern corner. The playing pitch surface would therefore generally be at a lower level than the existing playing field, which it should be noted is currently used for informal recreation as well as sports use. In addition, a 3-metre high acoustic fence is proposed to be installed to the south side of the pitch, set back by up to about 8.3-metres from the edge of the pitch at the top of the embankment created by the cutting in of the pitch. It would return a short length to the eastern end of the pitch. A 3-metre high acoustic fence is also proposed along about 70% of the western end of the pitch set back by about 4-metres from the edge of the pitch. In addition to the acoustic benefits of such fencing (discussed later in this report) it would also provide a significant improvement to the screening and privacy between the pitch and the properties in Holtye Close and Beech Hurst Close.
52. Although there are some views through the existing boundaries, adjoining properties already benefit from screening at garden level with a combination of walling, fencing and planting, and by sheds at the end of some of the gardens. Boundary trees also provide some filtering of views at the higher level. Additional landscaping to the southern boundary is also proposed which includes a mixed native hedge. Given that this area of the school site is already used for sports and recreation, and the fact that the pitch would be lower than the existing ground level and the addition of the visual screening afforded by the proposed 3-metre high acoustic screens, I am satisfied that the development as proposed would not have an adverse impact on the privacy of local residents from overlooking.
53. With regard to visual impact, local residents express concern regarding the impacts of the acoustic fencing, ball stop fencing and lighting columns on the outlook from their properties, including impeding views of the North Downs in the distance to the north of Maidstone. First, it must be remembered that private views are not afforded protection and that the loss of a view is not a material consideration in the determination of a planning application. It is also important to note that the development is surrounded by built development, whether that be private residential properties or school buildings, and that development of this nature is not out of context within an urban environment. However, the visual impact of the proposed fencing and lighting columns during daylight hours are discussed below.
54. There would be eight 15-metre-high galvanised finished light columns. The four end columns would support 3 luminaires each and the four middle columns 2 luminaires each, and the casings finished in raw aluminium. These would be visible in the immediate locality but given that they would be 30-metres apart and some distance away I do not consider they would be overly dominant in views across the site or block available views of the North Downs. Should the columns be lowered in height, a greater number of them would be required to achieve the necessary level of illuminance on the pitch and likely to have more of an impact.
55. A 3-metre high perimeter ball stop fencing is proposed along the southern and northern sides of the pitch returning on the corners to meet up with 4.5-metre high ball stop fencing behind the goal areas on the ends of the pitch. Some lengths of 1.2-metre high

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

internal fencing demark an area for spectators along the southern side and a short section of 2-metre high fencing alongside the gateway onto the pitch. These are proposed to be finished in a dark green colour. Clearly the enclosed area would be visible across the site particularly with the higher fencing at the ends of the pitch. Views from West Park Road which is some 150-metres away to the east and from the properties that are on the opposite side of that road would be screened to a significant extent by the existing boundary hedge. Views from the properties to the west and south would be interrupted by the intervening 3-metre high acoustic fencing which given the lower level of the pitch would hide much of the ball stop fencing. Whilst that would be the case, concerns have also been expressed about its visual impact. However, given the presence of the existing boundary with adjoining properties already referred to in paragraph (50) above, and that the acoustic fence is some 15-metres or more away from properties to the south and 50-metres away from properties to the west, I neither consider that it would be overbearing or have a significant adverse impact on the outlook from these properties. Furthermore, on the southern boundary the existing boundary would be enhanced by the proposed planting once it becomes established. With regard to this the County Council's Landscape consultant has suggested consideration also be given to some additional tree planting along this boundary and if permission is granted the applicant could be asked to consider this by way of an informative.

56. It is acknowledged that views of and across the playing field would be altered with the introduction of the ATP compared with the current open playing field particularly with the introduction of the vertical elements of the development (i.e. lamp columns and fencing). However, these elements are not uncommon within a playing field environment and would be seen alongside and against the backdrop of existing school buildings. The artificial turf pitch surface would largely blend with the adjoining playing field. A storage container is also proposed within the ATP enclosure at the western end. This would be shielded from views from the west and south and in longer views from the east against the backdrop of the fencing. Subject to it being finished in an appropriate colour I do not consider its location would be unacceptable. With regard to the re-levelling and improvement to part of the remaining grassed area of the playing field there would be little noticeable change in its overall appearance once completed.
57. Having considered the concerns about privacy above, I am satisfied that the development as proposed would be acceptable in terms of proximity to residential properties and that it would not result in loss of privacy from overlooking. With regard to the visual aspects considered above, I am also satisfied that the development would not have a significantly adverse visual impact, would not be overbearing on adjoining properties or unduly impact on their outlook or views from the wider locality. In the light of the above and subject to conditions covering the proposed storage container, fencing, and planting, I consider that the development would accord with the aims of Policy D1 of the Local Plan and the NPPF policies in these respects. However, the impact of the floodlighting itself, and use of the pitch, including noise associated with its use, also need to be considered and assessed.

Lighting Impacts

58. It will be noted that objections have been received to the proposed floodlighting scheme and the potential adverse effect it could have upon neighbours in terms of light spill, the effect on the enjoyment of their gardens, light shining into rear first floor windows affecting their sleep, ambient light, and the length of time and times that it would be switched on.

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

59. Policy DM8 sets out that proposals for external lighting must demonstrate that the minimum amount of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose is proposed and that its design and specification minimises glare and light spill, and that it would not be detrimental to its immediate or wider setting. The NPPF requires that the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity is limited through the encouragement of good design.
60. The number of columns and luminaires proposed has already been referred to in paragraph (54) above and in the proposal section of the report. The scheme has been designed to provide adequate lighting performance to meet Rugby Football Association requirements for varying types of play which require a 200 LUX maintained average horizontal illumination level at a minimum average uniformity of 0.60. This is also well within the requirements for football.
61. The lighting design seeks to comply with the recommendations within BS EN 12193:2007 Light and Lighting - Sports Lighting to ensure good visual conditions for all those involved in sport. The lighting design has also taken account of the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) guidance (GN01:2011) on the reduction of obtrusive light which (in addition to other guidance) categorises the environment into five zones relative to the type of lighting environment, ranging from E0 (Dark) to E4 (High District Brightness). The applicant has assessed the school as being within Zone E2: rural surrounding, with low district brightness, for example a village or relatively dark outer suburban location.
62. The proposed Philips OptiVision MVP507 is an asymmetric down lighting luminaire with a flat glass allowing a lower tilt value to the horizontal minimising direct upward light, light spill and glare. The specification indicates that to minimise direct upward light into the atmosphere all luminaires have a zero upward light ratio without use of additional accessories. The luminaires on the southern side of the pitch would be fitted with back shields to minimise light spill. Control switches and time clocks would be installed to the floodlights to ensure they would not remain on later than the permitted (curfew) times. It should also be noted that the floodlighting would not need to be used throughout the whole of the year as during the lighter summer months, it would unlikely be required.
63. Lighting calculations have been provided using specialist design software provided by Philips Lighting. These include the illuminance levels achieved on the pitch and the cut off/light spill levels beyond the pitch. The average illuminance at the initial installation would be 295 lux with a minimum average uniformity of 0.61. The lighting would naturally reduce through depreciation, dirt and other natural elements over time so a maintenance factor of 0.80 (i.e. a 20% reduction in performance) would result in an average illuminance of 236 lux with a 0.61 minimum average uniformity.
64. The calculations show the horizontal and vertical illuminance levels on the pitch with the 0.80 maintenance factor applied and the horizontal and vertical spill levels beyond the pitch at the initial installation without the maintenance factor applied. Initially, the vertical illuminance was calculated at 1.8-metres based on an open site without taking account of changes in site levels or the acoustic fence. Revised calculations have been provided to show vertical illuminance at 4-metres above the pitch level to demonstrate the effect of the acoustic barrier to display dark corridors around the back to encourage and continue bat migrating and feeding patterns around the site. These illuminance and spill levels have been superimposed on an ordnance survey plan to show the relationship with adjoining properties: first, to show the horizontal illuminance and spillage; and secondly, the vertical illuminance and spillage. The calculations for the horizontal

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

illuminance demonstrate that there is a sharp reduction in the lighting levels beyond the pitch and the light spillage largely contained within the school site with values of 1 lux or less at the site boundary and beyond. The calculations for the vertical illuminance at a height of 4-metres above pitch level show levels of less than 1 lux at and beyond the school boundary. These levels would be below the pre-curfew limitation of 5 Lux for light intrusion into windows for Environmental Zone E2.

65. It is acknowledged that the floodlighting would be seen from adjoining properties and other views in the locality. However, the design of the lighting scheme, including the type of lighting proposed and aiming angles, mean that the impact of waste upward light, light spill beyond the pitch and glare would be minimised. The use of shields on the floodlights on the southern side of the pitch significantly reduces the potential light spill. Our lighting consultant (Amey) has advised that the scheme has been designed in line with BS EN 12193, ILP guidance for the reduction of obstructive light (GN01:2011), and good industry practice, and raises no objection. In view of the above considerations, I am satisfied that in operation the scheme would be acceptable and its design accords with Local Plan Policy DM8 and the NPPF requirement to limit the impact of light pollution on local amenity. If permission is granted, I consider that a condition should be imposed to ensure that the floodlights are installed in accordance with the submitted details (including the back shields to the southern luminaires) and that they are tested prior to use to demonstrate that to be the case and any necessary adjustments made. Subject to this I would therefore not raise an objection to the proposed floodlighting scheme. However, taking further account of the objections raised by residents, the overall acceptability of the floodlighting would depend on the extent of the hours they would be in use, and this is discussed in the section below.

Noise Impacts

66. Given the all-weather surface, the inclusion of floodlighting and the proposed community use there would be an intensification over the current use of the playing field which the applicant advises does already include some community use in addition to school use. It will be noted that objections have been received about the intensification, the noise levels arising from balls hitting fences, referee whistles, players and spectators shouting, and the extensive opening hours seven days a week, all having an unacceptable impact on the quality of life for the surrounding residents.
67. Policy DM1 of the Local Plan requires that proposals respect the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties and uses and provide adequate residential amenities for future occupiers of the development by ensuring that development does not result in, or is exposed to, (amongst other things) excessive noise and DM7 presumes against noisy uses that would cause a nuisance in the vicinity. The NPPF sets out that decisions should aim to avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life; and to mitigate and reduce to a minimum other adverse impacts on health and quality of life arising from noise from the development, whilst recognising that development will often create some noise.
68. The proximity of nearby residential properties and distances from the ATP are set out in paragraph (50) above. In order to mitigate the noise impact arising from the ATP, as already referred to above, it is proposed to erect 3-metre high noise fencing to the southern boundary and to part of the eastern and western boundaries. With the reduced levels of the site the pitch would be between 4.25-metres and 5.5-metres below the top of the acoustic fence to the southern boundary where residential properties are closest. In addition, it is proposed to install synthetic rubber inserts to all fencing mesh

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

panels and to all post fixings to reduce noise, rattle and vibration from ball impact. The applicant also proposes an intention to produce a noise management plan, to include measures to deal with swearing and anti-social behaviour, to set out the right of the School to ban users who do not comply, a direct means for neighbours to be able to report excessive noise or anti-social behaviour to the School so that it can be investigated and dealt with quickly, complainants to be kept informed of progress regarding any complaint to the School, and school staff to have a written action plan to deal with complaints.

69. A noise assessment using typical noise levels for both rugby and football was submitted with the application which was revised to include an assessment against the existing noise climate and to take account of existing site levels and the proposed acoustic barrier. Background noise levels were measured at the last three hours of the proposed hours of use between 6.30pm and 9.30pm which would be considered to be the most sensitive time. The existing noise climate at these times was determined by local and distant road traffic and that voice would be the primary source of noise from the ATP.
70. Noise criteria for equivalent noise levels have been derived from World Health Organisation (WHO) guidance in WHO1999 as this is considered the most relevant document which includes sports noise within its scope. The highest predicted noise level from the ATP at the facades of the residential properties and within the gardens is 47dB $L_{Aeq,1\text{ hour}}$. This falls below the 50 $L_{Aeq(T)dB}$ WHO threshold for the onset of moderate community annoyance for the more onerous single worst case 1-hour period. It is stated that on this basis the equivalent noise level from the ATP at the nearby noise sensitive dwellings is considered acceptable in terms of noise impact.
71. The noise assessment also considers separately noise from the three following sources:
 - Voice - The predicted maximum noise level from the highest individual source location is in the order of 48dB $L_{Amax(fast)}$ at the nearby noise sensitive residential properties.
 - A whistle - The predicted highest maximum noise level from the highest individual source location is 63dB $L_{Amax(fast)}$ at the nearby noise sensitive residential properties.
 - A ball hitting a fence - The predicted highest maximum noise level from the highest individual source location is 61 dB $L_{Amax(fast)}$ at the nearby noise sensitive residential properties.
72. The applicant's acoustic consultant is not aware of any noise criteria for maximum noise levels during the day but considers a higher maximum noise level is likely to be permissible. There is night time maximum noise criterion of 45dB $L_{Amax(fast)}$ for bedrooms at night in BS8233:2014 (Guidance on sound insulation and noise reduction for buildings) and WHO1999. With sound reduction through an open window this would equate to 60dB $L_{Amax(fast)}$ outside a dwelling. The difference between the daytime and night time equivalent noise criteria in both WHO and BS8233:2014 is 5 decibels, the applicant's acoustic consultant considers that it may therefore be that a 5 decibel increase to the maximum noise level is appropriate.
 - The predicted maximum noise levels from voice are lower than the criteria for more sensitive night time rooms and the criteria derived for daytime. The noise is therefore considered acceptable and is not expected to have a significant adverse impact.

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

- The predicted maximum noise levels from a whistle at the residential properties are within the derived daytime criteria. The noise is therefore considered acceptable and is not expected to have a significant adverse impact.
 - The predicted maximum noise levels from ball impact at the residential properties are 1 decibels higher than the night time criteria and within the derived daytime criteria. The noise is therefore considered acceptable and is not expected to have a significant adverse impact.
73. The predicted noise levels have also been assessed against the existing noise climate using the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) guidelines for Environmental Noise Impact Assessment. This concludes that the proposals are likely to result in a minor or moderate impact on the existing noise climate. However, the assessor states given that the noise level is below a level at which it is expected to cause the onset of community annoyance and the fact that maximum noise levels are also not considered to result in adverse impact, the actual impact of noise on noise sensitive residential properties is not expected to be significant. Nevertheless, the result indicates that noise from the proposed pitches would be noticeable above the existing noise climate at noise sensitive properties and therefore it would be necessary to ensure suitable control measures are implemented and maintained to address the type and content of this sound. The applicant's acoustic consultant therefore considers that a noise management plan should be implemented and the rubber inserts to be placed between the fencing panels and posts to minimise vibration and rattling from ball impact.
74. The applicant's acoustic consultant stated that when the conclusions of his assessment are compared against the criteria of the National Planning Practice Guidance on Noise the proposed ATP would have 'no observed adverse effect'. That is where noise can be heard, but does not cause any change in behaviour, attitude or other physiological response; and where noise can slightly affect the acoustic character of the area but not such that there is a change to the quality of life. However, it will be noted that the perception of residents is otherwise, as detailed in the summary of representations in paragraphs (35) and (36) above. The objection of Maidstone Borough Council in this respect set out in paragraph (32) above will also be noted.
75. The County Council's noise consultant is satisfied that in the main the level of noise from the ATP would be acceptable subject to the provision of the 3-metre noise barrier and correct installation of the ball stop fencing, and consideration to whether use of the facilities up to 9.30pm is appropriate as at this time there is increased potential for an adverse impact on the local community to occur. He also considers that the overall noise assessment (as revised), based on computer noise modelling and assessment of noise impacts over an hourly period, in addition to the assessment of maximum (dB L_{AMAX}) noise levels, is robust and no further detailed, technical noise assessment is required. However, he does raise some concerns about the unquantifiable effects associated with excessive shouting and foul language which often accompanies, male five-a-side football games and similar activities if it goes unchallenged. He suggests that any noise management plan prepared by the applicant should include a strictly policed behaviour policy for the facility's users, with adequate training and support provided to staff to ensure user-behaviour is suitably controlled.
76. Arguably based on the noise technical assessment taking account of the site topography and the inclusion of 3-metre acoustic barrier the noise levels as a result of the development should not give rise to excessive noise being experienced by local residents or significant adverse effects to health or quality of life. However, it is clear that the nature, character and timing of the noise from the ATP does have the potential

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

to cause some disturbance to local residents. This is more likely to be the case in the evenings and at weekends and this would appear to be one of the main concerns of local residents. The proposed hours for evening and weekend use are set out above in paragraph (29) above. The hours are proposed to allow some use by the School outside of normal hours as currently takes place on the playing field but also for more extended community use than currently takes place.

77. Whilst the ATP would provide more opportunity for use during the school day compared to grass pitches, I do not consider that an objection to school use on noise grounds would be justified bearing in mind the long-established education use of the site. Neither do I consider that it would be justified in respect of the School's own use of the facilities outside of normal school hours as already takes place on the playing field. In my opinion, given the reduced pitch level and the provision of a 3-metre acoustic fence I consider that the overall balance of acceptability in terms of the potential noise impact from the ATP lies in the extent and timing of the community use and proper behaviour management through the implementation of the proposed noise management plan to include measures to deal with excessive noise and anti-social behaviour.
78. It will be noted that the hours of use have been reduced twice since the application was originally submitted. As a result of the reiterated objections received to the second consultation exercise and discussion with the School in the light of the advice from our noise consultant, the School has agreed to amend the proposed hours further. (These are also considered in the section below.) These now include no community use at all on a Sunday and a reduction in the Friday evening hours. These hours are set out in paragraph (29) above. This means that with the exception from possible occasional use by the School itself, there would otherwise be at least one day in seven when there would no activity taking place on the ATP. In addition, there would be more limited use on a Friday evening during the months September to May inclusive, with no use after 6.30pm on at least 16 occasions and on the 23 occasions proposed that may be needed, it is now proposed to finish by 8.00pm.
79. With these further changes to the hours of use proposed (i.e. no community use of the ATP on Sundays and more limited use on Friday evenings), I consider that they would now give local residents more reasonable periods of respite from the potential noise disturbance arising from use of the ATP and would otherwise be acceptable provided that a noise management plan is also implemented. In that respect, should planning permission be granted a condition should be included requiring the noise management plan to be prepared by the School and submitted for the approval of the County Planning Authority before the ATP is first brought in to use, to include measures to deal with excessive noise and anti-social behaviour. Given the revised hours for community use of the facility and subject to them being conditioned along with conditions requiring the implementation of all the noise mitigation measures discussed above, I do not consider that a planning objection could be sustained on noise grounds.

School and Community Use and Hours of Use

80. As already discussed above the proposed ATP would meet the school's need to address a shortfall in available recreation and sports facilities and a wider community need for such a facility. There is also strong planning policy support to both for school and community use. Nevertheless, there has been considerable objection to the proposal particularly in relation to the impact on local and residential amenity. The proximity to residential properties, visual amenity, the impacts of the floodlighting and noise impacts are discussed in the sections above. With the all-weather surface and the inclusion of

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

floodlighting the facility would result in more intensive use than use of the existing playing field. This is particularly the case in terms of extending the use into the evenings and weekends for community use. In addition, it would be available for use during the school holidays for daytime community use although in the application it is stated that this is subject to sufficient demand to justify opening the facility. It is also possible that during the summer months when the demand to play football and rugby is generally less the ATP may be less intensively used, although that cannot be assumed.

81. In terms of the School's use of the facilities, including use outside of normal school hours, I do not consider it could be argued to be unacceptable bearing in mind the long-established education use of the site. Further, as I understand some community use already takes place, and the planning policy support for community use and dual use of school facilities, I do not consider community use of the facility should be ruled out entirely. Given the consideration particularly to the floodlighting and noise impacts discussed above, to my mind the acceptability of community use of the ATP turns on the proposed hours of use and proper management of the facility.
82. The proposed hours of use which have been reduced twice since the application was originally submitted are set out fully in the earlier sections of the report. The 8.00am start time on weekdays is to accommodate use by pupils for informal recreation before school registration. The 9.30pm finish time for evening use from Monday to Thursday is compatible with finish times for similar facilities at other schools. The amended hours now include no community use at all on a Sunday and a reduction in the Friday evening hours during the months from September to May inclusive, with no use after 6.30pm on at least 16 occasions and on the 23 occasions proposed that may be needed, it is now proposed to finish by 8.00pm. As concluded in paragraph (79) above the revised hours would, in my view, now give local residents more reasonable periods of respite from the potential noise disturbance arising from use of the ATP. Similarly, this would also mean the floodlights would not be in use and at other times they would not need to be used during summer months in any case.
83. If Members are minded to grant permission, the amended hours of use, including no community use of the ATP on a Sunday, should be controlled by a condition. In addition, as the School have indicated they may occasionally wish to use the ATP on a Sunday, I would recommend that the condition also excludes the use of the floodlighting as well as community use on a Sunday.
84. Community use is fully supported by Sport England which in raising no objection has made that subject to a community use agreement condition. In its response Sport England also include the views of the England and Wales Cricket Board and that it wishes to see community use of the cricket square addressed in the community use agreement. However, in assessing the Highway implications of the proposal which are considered below KCC Highways & Transportation (H&T) raise no objection, subject to the ATP only being available for community use, and not the rest of the school's playing field and for that to be conditioned. The applicant's agent had confirmed that only community use of the ATP was proposed. However, I understand that the school would still wish to be able to allow community use of the remainder of the playing field when the ATP is not in use. With the established use of the School playing fields, the School already benefits from such use over which there are no controls. Therefore, whilst I consider that it would be appropriate to impose a condition precluding use of the rest of the external playing field facilities when the ATP is in community use because it allows more intensive use, I do not consider it reasonable to preclude such use when the ATP is not in use.

Item D2

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

85. As already discussed in the noise section of the report above, proper behaviour management through the implementation of the proposed noise management plan to include measures to deal with excessive noise and anti-social behaviour would also be essential. I understand that it is planned to have a dedicated member of staff employed to oversee the running of the AWP and to ensure that the management plan is being enforced as well as amongst other things ensuring that all the floodlights are switched off by the curfew and that all the community users have left the school premises.
86. In the light of the above considerations, I consider that school use of the ATP with some additional community use would be acceptable subject to appropriate conditions to control the use, as discussed above. With the revised hours and other controls in place I do not consider it would result in significant detriment to local, residential or visual amenity and would therefore accord with the aims of the Local Plan and the NPPF in these respects.

Highway Matters – Access and Parking

87. Local residents have raised objection to this application on highway, access and parking grounds, and consider that the development would result in an increase in traffic during weekday evenings and at weekends. It is considered by residents that there would not be enough parking provided on the school site, and that parking on local residential roads is not viable in the long term. Additionally, residents have commented that traffic is particularly heavy during the working week between 17.00 and 18.00 hours, especially in nearby Loose Road, Park Way and West Park Road, which are the most likely routes for users of the proposed ATP to access the site.
88. The revised hours of use are set out in paragraph (29) above. The school would use the proposed ATP until 5.30pm Monday to Friday and on Saturday mornings until 1pm and the very occasional use on a Sunday during daylight hours. The school day finishes at 3.30pm so the majority of pupils would have left the school site by the time the community use is proposed to commence (apart from those that may be playing sport on the ATP) and the majority of school staff would have also left the site and vacated the school car park. Any members of the public arriving to use the ATP would have the use of the 97 space car park which is accessed via the main school entrance off St Phillips Avenue/Barton Road.
89. Kent County Council Highways & Transportation (H&T) have been consulted on this application and raise no objection, subject to the ATP only being available for community use, and not the rest of the school's playing field. H&T assessed the likely vehicle numbers that community use of the site would generate and, when considering the worst-case scenario, concluded that there was sufficient on-site car parking to accommodate community users of the ATP. H&T are also aware that the school has an area of existing hard standing that could be used as an overflow car park, if it was ever required. Therefore, the level of existing on-site car parking is considered to be acceptable in this case.
90. H&T also considered the impact of community users of the facility accessing the site in terms of the potential impacts on the surrounding local roads and the wider highway network. H&T advise that it would appear that the proposed increase in traffic movements could be accommodated, as vehicle movements would be outside of normal school hours and would not unduly conflict with other peak traffic movements.

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

91. H&T raise no objection to the proposed development, subject to the submission of a construction management plan and a condition ensuring that only the ATP is made available for community use, not the remaining school playing fields. However, as discussed in paragraph (84) above I consider that it would only be appropriate to impose a condition precluding community use of the rest of the external playing field facilities when the ATP is in community use. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal would increase traffic to the site, it is considered that additional vehicle movements would be outside school hours and, for the most part, outside of the peak traffic hours. Additionally, the school has an existing 97 space car park which H&T consider adequate to accommodate vehicles associated with community use of the facility. I therefore consider that a further condition be imposed, if permission is granted, to ensure that on-site car parking would always be available when the ATP is in use outside of school hours. Subject to the imposition of the conditions outlined in this paragraph, I am satisfied that the development would not have a significantly detrimental impact on the local highway network.

Drainage

92. The Environment Agency have no comments to make on this application, and the County Council's Flood Risk Team (SuDs) raise no objection subject to the imposition of conditions. The Flood Risk Team require the submission of a detailed Sustainable Surface Water Drainage Scheme prior to the commencement of the development, and the further submission of an operation and maintenance manual prior to occupation of the development (or within an agreed timeframe). Should permission be granted, the conditions as outlined above would be imposed upon the consent to ensure that drainage of the site was both sustainable and effective.

Archaeology

93. An archaeological Desk Based Assessment (DBA) has been produced to provide an assessment of the potential heritage issues on this site. It is known that the school site, notably the school buildings nearest to Barton Road, have been built upon the site of a Roman Villa. The DBA report concluded that there was a high potential for Roman remains to be found, and high potential for modern remains, relating to a WWII anti-tank trap ditch having survived within the proposed development area. The County Council's Archaeologist is satisfied that the proposed ground levels of ATP should not impact on the WWII anti-tank trap ditch and that, whilst there was still some potential groundworks that could impact upon earlier archaeology, this could be addressed through fieldwork covered by a condition, should planning permission be granted. I therefore recommend that, should permission be granted, a written specification and timetable for a programme of archaeological works be submitted prior to commencement of the development. Subject to that condition, I am satisfied that the development would not have a detrimental impact upon archaeological interests.

Ecological Matters

94. Concern has been received about the presence of the proposed lighting during the day and night and that it is likely to affect the natural behaviour of bats. A bat survey report has been submitted and it detailed that at least 4 species of foraging/commuting bats have been recorded within the site. It is also stated that it is known that there is a brown long-eared roost within the old pavilion building. However, the report states that as the light levels are expected to remain as at present around the old pavilion itself, the

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

emergence time of the brown long-eared bat roosting in this building should not be impacted by the proposal. The report also states that no other roosts are known on or near the site.

95. The Bat Survey Report considers that the lighting proposal now ensures that there is no spillage to the southern boundary allowing a dark corridor for bats, as well as reduced spillage to the western boundary. Additional planting to the southern and eastern boundaries would further lessen any impact providing new foraging opportunities. It is concluded in the report that the proposed floodlit artificial turf pitch would have a negligible impact onto the local bat population. The County Council's Biodiversity Office has recommended that the hedgerow be allowed to grow as bushy as possible and that a hedgerow management plan is required by condition, if planning permission is granted.

Construction

96. Given that there are nearby residential properties, if planning permission is granted it would, in my view, be appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours construction to protect residential amenity. I recommend that works should be undertaken only between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays. It is also good practice on school sites for contractors to be required under the terms of their contract to manage construction traffic/deliveries to minimise conflict with traffic and pedestrians at the beginning and end of the school day.
97. I also consider it appropriate that details of a Construction Management Strategy be submitted for approval prior to the commencement of the development. That should include details of the location of site compounds and operative/visitors parking, details of site security and safety measures, lorry waiting and wheel washing facilities, details of how the site access would be managed to avoid peak school times, and details of any construction accesses. This document should also include the proposed removal of the existing construction access roadway from West Park Road (that was installed to construct the new pavilion) and proposals to reinstate the area back to grass and reinstate the missing section of hedging to the site boundary at the access point. Such a strategy would also address the conditions required by Highways and Transportation with regard to the construction of the development. Therefore, should permission be granted, a Construction Management Strategy would be required pursuant to condition and the development would thereafter have to be undertaken in accordance with the approved strategy.

Other matters

Concerns about possible health risks from 3G pitches

98. Objections have been raised about the possible health risks surrounding 3G pitches and that they might create a risk to health and the environment resulting from the use of 'rubber crumbs' and their loss into the watercourse. Sport England has issued a document of frequently asked questions, which was updated in April 2018.
99. The document used information from the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) which had recently carried out an exhaustive EU-wide study and found no reason to advise people against playing sport on 3G pitches with rubber crumb. This advice is based on ECHA's evaluation that there is a very low level of concern from exposure to substances

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

found in the granules. Sport England have confirmed that they are confident that 3G pitches in this country are suitable for use given that the concentration limits in the EU's regulations are set to minimise any risk to the users. In addition, ECHA reported on the 28 February 2017 that it had "*...found no reason to advise against playing sports on synthetic turf containing recycled rubber granules as infill material*".

100. Furthermore, the document states that the regulations for tyres came into force in 2010. Since then pitches have had to comply with specific concentration limits for polycyclic-aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). In each case the restriction is expressed as a "concentration limit" which must not be exceeded. The concentration limits include safety factors in order to minimise the risk to the user. The Environment Agency is one of the bodies responsible for enforcing the regulations in this country and its analysis and enforcement work shows a high level of compliance.

Conclusion

101. This application seeks permission for the creation of a new external 3G artificial turf pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features for school and community use. It also includes releveling and improvement to part of the remaining area of the playing field, an improvement to the remaining cricket square and reinstatement of the existing construction access to grass upon completion of the development. The proposal essentially arises from the expansion of the school and the need to address a shortfall in playing field space and the ability of the School to meet curriculum needs for sport and to provide additional space for pupils at break and lunch times. A demand for community use of the ATP has also been identified. I accept that there is an identified need for the facility for which there is strong planning policy support in the Development Plan and in the NPPF to meet community facilities both for education and for sport and recreation. The objections and concerns of local residents to the proposal particularly relating to the community use are acknowledged and therefore the potential impacts arising from the development have been given careful consideration.

102. The main impacts arising from the proximity of the development to nearby residential properties, the visual impact of the development, the impact of the floodlighting and noise from use of the ATP, the hours of use, traffic and parking issues, and other matters are discussed in some detail above. In conclusion, taking account of the proposed changes in the site levels, the existing boundary treatment and additional planting of new hedgerow, a well-designed lighting scheme, the proposed 3-metre acoustic barrier providing visual screening as well as noise mitigation, the further reduced hours which now include no community use on a Sunday, the implementation of a noise management plan, appropriate measures to deal with drainage, archaeology, ecology and construction I consider that there is no overriding reason to withhold planning permission. In the light of this and subject to these matters being covered by appropriate conditions, I do not consider that the development would result in any significant adverse impact in respect of visual, residential or local amenity, or on the local highway network or drainage, archaeology and ecology interests, and consider that it would otherwise accord with the aims and objectives of Local Plan policies and the NPPF. I recommend accordingly.

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

Recommendation

103.I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO conditions, including conditions covering:

- The standard 3 year time limit;
- The development carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- No development shall take place until the applicant has secured a programme of archaeological field evaluation work in accordance with a written specification and timetable to be approved in writing by the County Planning Authority;
- No development shall take place until a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme has been submitted for approval, and thereafter shall be implemented as approved;
- An operation and maintenance manual for the proposed sustainable drainage scheme is submitted and implemented as approved;
- No development shall take place until a construction management plan, including lorry routing, access, parking and circulation within the site for contractors and other vehicles related to construction operations has been submitted for approval and thereafter shall be implemented as approved;
- Measures to prevent mud and debris being taken onto the public highway;
- Measures to protect the existing trees during construction;
- Hours of working during construction to be restricted to between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays;
- Hours of use of the Artificial Turf Pitch limited to the hours specified in paragraph 29, including no community use or use of the floodlighting on Sundays, and limiting the amount of Friday evening use between 6.30pm and 8.00pm to 23 occasions between 1 September to 31 May;
- When community use of the ATP takes place no other external playing field facilities shall be in community use at the same time;
- A Noise Management Plan to be submitted for approval to include measures to deal with excessive noise and anti-social behaviour, as discussed above, and thereafter shall be implemented as approved;
- Details of all fencing, including the acoustic fencing to be submitted for approval, within 3 months of the date of the decision, and thereafter implemented as approved, maintained and retained;
- Details of the retaining structure to the north side of the pitch to be submitted for approval approved within 3 months of the date of the decision; and thereafter implemented as approved;
- The mesh fencing to include synthetic rubber inserts between the panels and all post fixings;
- On site car parking to be available at all times when the ATP is in use out of school hours;
- A community use agreement is submitted and approved before use of the ATP commences;
- Lighting levels not to exceed those specified within the application;
- Lighting to be installed in accordance with the submitted details and specification unless otherwise approved in writing by the County Planning Authority, and checked on site prior to the first use and any necessary adjustments made;
- Extinguishing of floodlighting when pitch is not in use;
- Hedge and tree planting scheme to be implemented as submitted within first

Item D2

Proposed 3G pitch with associated fencing, floodlighting and associated features – Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road, Maidstone – MA/18/502882

- planting season and maintained for a period of not less than 5 years;
- A hedgerow management plan to be submitted for approval within 3 months of the date of the decision;
- No tree removal during the bird breeding season;
- Re-levelling of the north eastern part of the playing field and reinstatement in accordance with the submitted details;
- The construction access road to be removed upon completion of the proposed works and reinstated and grass seeded, and the access and dropped kerb off West Park Road be removed, made good and the boundary hedge reinstated.

104.I FURTHER RECOMMEND that the applicant BE ADVISED of the following informatives:

- In preparing the community use agreement the applicant should take account of the interests of the Rugby Football Union and the English Cricket Board; and
- The applicant is requested to consider the suggestion of Amey Landscape for the planting of additional trees.

Case officer – Lidia Cook

Tel No.03000 413353

Background documents - See section heading
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