

SECTION D  
DEVELOPMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Background Documents: the deposited documents; views and representations received as referred to in the reports and included in the development proposals dossier for each case; and other documents as might be additionally indicated.

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**Item D1**

**Demolition of existing single storey teaching block and erection of detached two storey teaching block with single storey activity studio, car park extension and associated landscaping works at Mayfield Grammar School, Pelham Road, Gravesend, Kent DA11 0JE - GR/20/156 (KCC/GR/0019/2020)**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 10 June 2020.

Application by Kent County Council for Demolition of existing single storey teaching block and erection of detached two storey teaching block with single storey activity studio, car park extension and associated landscaping works at Mayfield Grammar School, Pelham Road, Gravesend, Kent DA11 0JE - GR/20/156 (KCC/GR/0019/2020)

Recommendation: The application BE REFERRED to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and SUBJECT TO his decision, and the receipt of a signed Memorandum of Understanding, PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions.

Local Members: John Burden & Lauren Sullivan

Classification: Unrestricted

**Site**

1. Mayfield Grammar School is a selective secondary school for girls, located approximately 1km south-west of Gravesend town centre. The surrounding area is predominantly residential on all four sides, with Old Road West running to the south of the site, Pelham Road to the west, Lennox Road East to the north, and The Avenue to the east. Vehicular access to the school is from Pelham Road, leading to an on site parking area. Pedestrian access is also provided from this road, plus there are additional pedestrian access points from Lennox Road East and The Avenue. The school site is roughly rectangular in shape with the main school buildings being located to the north-west of the site, and a smaller single storey annex building (to be demolished as part of this application) being located along the western boundary behind the houses in Pelham Road. Tennis courts are located in the north-eastern corner of the site, and the remainder of the site is laid out as playing fields. In addition to this site the School has a second site called 'The Isaac Newton Site' further along Pelham Road to the north.
2. The main school building is a traditionally designed brick and tile building set over two floors, and many of the original features such as the bell tower have been retained. This building creates a courtyard area inside. There is a second two storey building with a pitched tiled roof, sited to the north of the main school, and then two flat roof buildings on this part of the site which are later additions, which house the science block and the kitchens. At present there are mobile classrooms sited on the tennis courts and the remainder of the courts are being used for temporary parking facilities. Whilst the

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school is set behind residential properties to the north, west and south, the school boundary is visible along The Avenue where it is marked by the original brick wall, with mesh fencing above. At the northern end of the wall, wooden access gates are inserted for a pedestrian access and double gates for access to an electricity sub-station.

3. In terms of the wider area, the school site is well served by public transport, with bus routes running in the vicinity of the site at regular intervals with extra services provided at the beginning and end of each day. Gravesend train station is approximately a 15 minute walk to the school. To the south of the school site (on the southern side of Old Road West) is a large cemetery founded in 1658, and further to the east is Gravesend Cricket Club. The school itself lies outside of, but is adjacent to, 'The Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area' and is also close to the 'Darnley Road Conservation Area' which lies to the east.
4. There are currently 1137 pupils on roll, which includes a current sixth form cohort of 230 (both boys and girls) along with 130 staff members, 55 of whom are full time.
5. Please see Appendix 1 for General Location Plan, Location Plan showing Conservation Areas, Site Location Plan, Proposed Site Layout, and Proposed Elevations.

**Background**

6. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015 the Minister of State for Schools announced that the Government would fund a further phase of the Priority School Building Programme (PSBP), with a value of around £2 billion. The new phase is a five-year programme (operating between 2015-2021) to undertake major rebuilding and refurbishment projects in those schools and sixth form colleges in the very worst condition. PSBP is a condition led, block replacement programme with the aim of replacing time-expired buildings. The programme guidelines as set by the Secretary of State do not allow PSBP to provide facilities other than those required for the School's Published Admissions Number (PAN) in 2014.
7. As part of the programme, 277 schools nationally have been selected to have at least one of their buildings (or blocks) rebuilt or refurbished, and this includes Mayfield Grammar School. The Department for Education's PSBP has identified a time expired block on the Mayfield Grammar school site as needing either replacement or refurbishment. Following a full feasibility study it was agreed the relevant block would be demolished and replaced by a new block, being the most cost-effective long-term solution given the building's existing condition.
8. In this instance, as well as fulfilling the requirements of a replacement block, the proposals seek to deliver new accommodation of a size which will accommodate the 1FE expansion currently underway to meet local education need. The proposals therefore represent a joint venture between the Department for Education and Kent County Council as the Local Education Authority.

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**Recent Site History**

9. There is extensive planning history for this site dating back to 1978, as set out in the submitted Planning Statement. Since 2018 the following applications have been submitted and determined by KCC:

GR/18/0148: Proposed extension to provide new kitchen and servery facilities – Approved 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018.

GR/18/0510: Demolition of existing temporary teaching block (2 classrooms) and erection of 2 storey extensions to both west (Phase 1) and east (Phase 2) wings of existing Science Block to provide 4 classrooms – Approved 11<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

GR/18/681: Proposed new electric substation and switchgear enclosure; provision of new gate within the existing boundary wall to provide a vehicular access to the substation; relocation and replacement of the guard rail between the pedestrian access and the road – Approved 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2018.

KCC/GR/0025/2020: Section 73 application to vary conditions 2 and 12 of planning permission GR/18/0510 (Science Block extension) regarding alterations to the cladding proposed and minor alterations to fenestration – Approved 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020.

10. In 2015 Gravesham Borough Council determined an application for the demolition of an existing annex and the erection of a two storey teaching block with ancillary accommodation, formation of playing field area and stationing of four mobile classrooms (reference 20140339). This was for the demolition of the annex which is the subject of this planning application (behind the houses on Pelham Road), but with the replacement two storey building on the same part of the site. This permission was never implemented.

**Proposal**

11. The application seeks approval for the demolition of an existing single storey teaching block located to the rear of the houses in Pelham Road, in the south-west corner of the site. Once demolished this part of the site would be laid out as an extension to the on-site car park providing space for an additional 20 cars to park. In addition, two of the existing parking spaces would be provided with electric vehicle charging points. Vehicular access to the site would be maintained from Pelham Road and a new 1.8m high steel mesh fence would be provided around the perimeter of the new parking area, with a double access gate provided for maintenance of the sports field.
12. A new two storey building is then proposed to be constructed to the east of the original school building, between this and the boundary of the site on The Avenue. The building would be sited on an area of existing playing field. The building would have a 'U' shaped footprint with the footprint remaining in line with the front elevation of the original building, so as not to encroach onto the main section of the playing field. The building is proposed to be constructed from brick with a pitched tiled roof. The two storey elements extend along the playing field and The Avenue elevations, with a single storey element projecting into the centre of the site. This single storey element would have a mono-

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pitch roof, and a canopy over the entrance in the 'courtyard' area created by the footprint of the building.

13. At ground floor level the building would accommodate an activity studio (the single storey element), activity stores and changing rooms; the headteacher's office, administration office, staff work room, seminar room and conference room; a general science laboratory and science store; 5 general classrooms, 3 music classrooms; 8 music practice rooms and an ensemble practice room and music store; plus two stairwells and one lift riser. At first floor level there would be 6 more general classrooms; 6 ICT Business Studies rooms and an ICT Hub; and a large Library Resources Centre and Study Area for 6<sup>th</sup> form students.
14. There would be a regular pattern of fenestration on the elevations with grey frames, and a number of velux rooflights proposed and wind catchers for ventilation. Guttering, door frames and plant doors would also be provided in the same grey colour. Long slit windows would be inserted on the gable and side elevations of the activity studio and a feature 'stacked' window provided on the northern gable elevation of the building.
15. A temporary construction access would be created from The Avenue, just to the south of the existing sub station and pedestrian access which are marked by the wooden gates within the boundary wall. The construction access would be 8.3m wide and would require the removal of one of the highway trees to allow vehicles to access the site. Upon completion of the development the access would be reduced in width to 4.8m and new double wooden gates inserted, to match the existing ones. The access would then be retained as an emergency entrance for the school. The highway tree would be replaced upon completion and an additional 3 trees would be provided elsewhere in The Avenue to mitigate the short-term loss of the tree.

**Planning Policy**

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

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.

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In terms of delivering sustainable development in relation to this development proposal, the NPPF guidance and objectives covering the following matters are of particular relevance:

- That development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road would be severe (para 109);
- That the creation of high quality places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities (para 124);
- That access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation are important in their contribution to health and well-being, and therefore that existing open space, sports and recreation facilities should not be built on unless the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality (para 96,97);
- That in determining applications account should be taken of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses; the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (para 192);

In addition, Paragraph 94 states that: *The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools.*

- (ii) **Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development** (15 August 2011) sets out the Government’s commitment to support the development of state-funded schools and their delivery through the planning system. It is the Government’s view that the creation and development of state-funded schools is strongly in the national interest and that planning decision-makers can and should support that objective, in a manner consistent with their statutory obligations.

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

- There should be a presumption in favour of the development of state-funded schools, as expressed in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Local authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling the development of state-funded schools in their planning decisions. The Secretary of State will attach significant weight to the need to establish and develop state-funded schools when determining applications and appeals that come before him for decision.
- Local authorities should make full use of their planning powers to support state-funded school applications. This should include engaging in preapplication discussions with promoters to foster a collaborative approach to applications and,

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where necessary, the use of planning obligations to help to mitigate adverse impacts and help deliver development that has a positive impact on the community.

- Local authorities should only impose conditions that clearly and demonstrably meet the tests set out on the Planning Practice Guidance website. Planning conditions should only be those absolutely necessary to making the development acceptable in planning terms.
- Local authorities should ensure that the process for submitting and determining state-funded schools' applications is as streamlined as possible, and in particular be proportionate in the information sought from applicants.
- A refusal of any application for a state-funded school, or the imposition of conditions, will have to be clearly justified by the local planning authority. Given the strong policy support for improving state education, the Secretary of State will be minded to consider such a refusal or imposition of conditions to be unreasonable conduct, unless it is supported by clear and cogent evidence.

(iii) The adopted **Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2014)**

**Policy CS01 Sustainable Development:** Planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF and this Core Strategy.

**Policy CS10 Physical and Social Infrastructure:** Support will be given to proposals and activities that protect, retain or enhance existing physical and social infrastructure, or lead to the provision of additional infrastructure that improves community well-being.

**Policy CS11 Transport:** New developments should mitigate their impact on the highway and public transport networks as required. Transport Assessments and Travel Plans should be provided and implemented to ensure delivery of travel choice and sustainable opportunities for travel. Sufficient parking in new development will be provided in accordance with adopted parking standards which will reflect the availability of alternative means of transport and accessibility to services and facilities.

**Policy CS12 Green Space, Sport and Recreation:** The Council will seek to make adequate provision for and to protect and enhance the quantity, quality and accessibility of green space, playing pitches and other sports facilities, in accordance with an adequate and relevant evidence base.

**Policy CS18 Climate Change:** Development will be directed sequentially to those areas at least risk of flooding. Proposals in areas at risk of flooding must be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (in accordance with national policy and Environment Agency standing guidance) and a Flood Risk Management Plan to demonstrate that they are adequately defended. The Council will seek to minimise the impact from new development on waste water systems. In particular the Council will require that surface water run-off from all new development has, as a minimum, no greater adverse impact than the existing use; require the use

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of Sustainable Drainage Systems on all development where technically and financially feasible. The Council will seek to manage the supply of water in the Borough. All non-residential development of 1000m<sup>2</sup> and above should meet the BREEAM 'excellent' standards of water efficiency and include provision for the collection of rainwater. The Council will seek to reduce the overall carbon footprint of the Borough.

**Policy CS19 Development and Design Principles:** New development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It will conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment, integrate well with the surrounding local area and meet anti-crime standards. The design and construction of new development will incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques, be adaptable to reflect changing lifestyles and be resilient to the effects of climate change. Specific design criteria to consider are listed in the Policy.

**Policy CS20 Heritage and the Historic Environment:** The Council will accord a high priority towards the preservation, protection and enhancement of its heritage and historic environment as a non-renewable resource. Proposals and initiatives will be supported which preserve and where appropriate enhance the significance of the Borough's heritage assets, which include the Borough's urban Conversation Areas.

(iv) The adopted **Gravesend Local Plan First Review (1994) – Saved and Deleted Policies Version 2014**

**Policy TC3 Development Affecting Conservation Areas:** Where development is acceptable in relation to other policies, it will be carefully judged for its impact and will be expected to make a positive contribution to the conservation area. The Council will expect the application to contain sufficient details to enable the impact of the proposal upon the conservation area to be assessed.

**Policy TC7 Archaeological Sites:** In order to determine a planning application, the Borough Council may require the developer to provide additional information in the form of an assessment of the archaeological or historic importance of the site and the likely impact of development.

**Policy T1 Impact of Development on Highway Network:** The Local Planning and Highway Authorities will consider the impact on the transport system and on the environment of traffic generated by new development and will wish to ensure that all proposed developments are adequately served by the highway network.

**Policy P3 Vehicle Parking Standards:** The Council will expect development to make provision for vehicle parking in accordance with Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards. All vehicle parking provision should normally be made on the development site.

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**Consultations**

17. **Gravesend Borough Council** consider that the proposals would not have an adverse impact on the appearance of the Conservation Area but note that material choices will be critical for the scheme to respond positively to the residential buildings in the conservation area. They concur with the objection raised by Sport England based on the loss of playing field land. They wish to see sufficient parking facilities to serve the expanded school and the impacts of additional traffic movements should be addressed. Impact on residential amenity for the residents in The Avenue and Lennox Road East should be taken into account, as well as disturbance for the residents in Pelham Road from the new parking area. Suitable planning conditions should be imposed on any consent given.

**Sport England** raise an objection to the application, as they consider the proposal fails to meet any of the five exceptions to Sport England's Playing Field Policy or with Paragraph 97 of the NPPF.

**Environment Agency (Kent Area)** raise no objection subject to the imposition of conditions regarding a watching brief during demolition and foundation works; that if contamination is found during development that hasn't been previously identified that a remediation strategy be submitted; that there be no infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground without consent; that piling or other penetrative foundation methods shall not be used without permission; and that only clean and uncontaminated water should drain into the surface water system.

**KCC Highways and Transportation Officer** raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions ensuring the access from The Avenue is closed and only used for emergency purposes post construction; that the temporary parking arrangement on the tennis courts for 20 vehicles must be retained until the new car park is constructed and open for use; that 2 EV charging points be provided and 2 further spaces provided with passive provision during construction (10% of the proposed parking provision); that unless otherwise agreed the on-site parking areas shall only be used for staff and visitors; that a Construction Management Plan be submitted for approval prior to works commencing; and that an informative be included that cycle parking provision be monitored regularly and any additional provision provided as necessary.

**KCC Arboriculture Manager** raises an objection due to the need to remove the highway tree to allow for the construction access.

**KCC Conservation Officer** raises no objection to the scheme.

**KCC Biodiversity Officer** Raise no objection subject to the imposition of conditions requiring the submission of a bat mitigation strategy; that any lighting condition takes into account the Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note; that the Construction Management Plan ensures that the demolition strategy ensures that mammals or their young are not killed or injured during demolition; and that the ecological features set out in the Ecological Enhancement Plan have been implemented prior to completion of the development.



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**KCC County Archaeological Officer** raises no objection to the application subject to the imposition of a condition ensuring the works are carried out in accordance with the submitted and agreed Written Scheme of Investigation.

**KCC Flood and Water Management Officer** raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions regarding compliance with the detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme submitted; that the building shall not be occupied until a verification report has been submitted and approved by the County Planning Authority; and where infiltration is to be used it is only allowed in areas where it has been demonstrated that there is no risk to controlled waters or ground stability.

**KCC Transport Planner Schools** has commented that the submitted School Travel Plan requires some additional information before it could be approved under the 'Jambusters' system, but that this could be secured via a planning condition.

**Local Member**

18. The local County Members for Northfleet & Gravesend West, Mr John Burden and Lauren Sullivan were notified of the application on 24 February 2020. No written comments have been received.

**Publicity**

19. The application was publicised by the posting of four site notices (one on each residential street surrounding the site), an advertisement in a local newspaper, and the individual notification of 129 nearby properties.

**Representations**

20. In response to the publicity, 10 letters have been received objecting to the application, and a further 2 letters that sought clarification regarding the submitted plans. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:

- Loss of privacy for residents in The Avenue as a result of the first floor windows in the new building;
- Loss of outlook from The Avenue properties due to the location of the new building, and therefore loss of value of these houses;
- Suggest the new build should be constructed in the location of the building to be demolished;
- The Avenue is often gridlocked at school drop off and pick up times and is not suitable for construction vehicles as well;
- Children's safety would be put at risk due to use of The Avenue by construction vehicles;
- Would result in more congestion in Lennox Road East and impact on parking for residents;
- Lennox Road crossroads is already a black spot for accidents and construction traffic would exacerbate this;
- Increase in school traffic as a result of this development would make the existing congestion on the surrounding roads worse;

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- Surrounding roads should be traffic calmed to help the rat run situation;
- Impact of noise from delivery vehicles, light pollution and dust pollution on nearby residents;
- Construction period would have a negative impact on nearby residents;
- A new grammar school should be created instead of extending the existing one on a site that is too small;
- The location of the building would fill in a gap of open space and result in the school noise being amplified for nearby residents;
- The proposed building should be rotated 90 degrees clockwise, or 180 degrees to reduce the impact on residents in The Avenue;
- Suggest construction vehicles should enter The Avenue at the gate at the bottom of the playing field near Old Road West;
- The school site is too small to accommodate the additional children;
- A new vehicular access for the school should be created onto Lennox Road East so that vehicles can enter the site from Pelham Road and exit onto Lennox Road East;
- Lennox Road East should become a no-through road which would improve the safety of children moving between this site and the satellite school site;
- Other surrounding roads should be made one-way to help improve the traffic situation for the school and local residents;
- School Travel Plan initiatives would not have a significant impact on the traffic and parking situation around the school and are not stringent enough;
- Already an emergency access gate at the bottom of the playing field – don't think another one is required;
- Insufficient cycle spaces provided;
- Pelham Road is a much wider road and access to the site should be improved and taken from here rather than The Avenue;
- Impact on air quality due to congestion and queueing traffic which would be made worse with the construction vehicles.

**Discussion**

21. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 16 above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The proposal therefore needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
22. This application is being reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee due to the objections raised by Gravesend Borough Council and Sport England, and the neighbour representations received as set out in paragraphs 18 and 21 above. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case are the principle of development and the need for education facilities; the siting and design of the proposed building including conservation impacts; the loss of playing field land; highway and transportation impacts associated with the proposal; loss of the highway tree; and ecological matters. Other issues to also address are drainage, archaeology and contamination.

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**Principle of Development and Education Need**

23. Planning policy guidance in the form of both the NPPF and the Policy Statement for School Development are strongly worded to ensure that proposals for the development of state funded schools should, wherever possible, be supported. The guidance is set out in paragraph 15 above and in summary states that there should be a presumption in favour of the development of state funded schools; that planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement; and that any refusal would have to be clearly justified. The school site lies within the defined built up area of Gravesend and as such the principle of development is accepted. There are no other policy designations relevant to the site which would offer a reason not to apply the 'presumption in favour of development' as directed by the NPPF.
24. In accordance with the KCC Commissioning Plan, Mayfield Grammar School has been identified as needing to admit additional pupils due to increasing demand for places from local parents, and in consultation with the Area Education Officer the school consulted on the Admission Policy for September 2021, which has now been published with an admission number of 210 children per year (7FE). However, demand for places at the school has been such that the school has been admitting additional pupils since September 2015 – such that the current year 11 has 170 pupils, against the published admission number at the time which was 145. Each subsequent year group admitted since 2015 has also been in excess of the published admission number. Currently year 10 has 164 pupils, year 9 – 189 pupils, year 8 – 192 pupils and year 7 – 192 pupils. Although the school admission number has been officially adjusted to 180 for September 2020 (in consultation with the Local Authority) the school are already planning to admit up to 210 pupils this September due to local demand.
25. It is clear that there is a need for school places at this school, but also that the school has already been accommodating pupil numbers in between a 6FE and 7FE admission for the last three years. Whilst the 4 temporary classrooms have provided additional space to accommodate the increased pupil numbers to date, as the school moves forward to a full 7FE capacity, the additional teaching block would be required. It is therefore considered that the development would meet the guidance contained within the NPPF and the Policy Statement Planning for Schools Development in terms of new education provision.

**Siting and Design of New Building and Conservation Area Impacts**

26. The existing single storey annexe located behind the houses in Pelham Road is in a poor state of disrepair, which is why it has been identified as suitable for replacement under the national Priority Schools Building Programme. There is therefore no objection to the removal of this building (the demolition of which has already been considered and accepted through the permission given by Gravesham Borough Council in 2015) and it is acknowledged that its removal would improve the appearance of the school site for adjoining properties, and the appearance of the wider area. At pre-application stage consideration was given to constructing the replacement building on the site of this existing one, however, that location would be close to the rear elevations of the Pelham Road houses and at two storeys in height it was considered that the relationship would be inappropriate. In addition by rebuilding on this site, there would be a temporary lack

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of accommodation for the school to use during the construction process. Alternative locations were therefore considered which would allow the school to use the existing annex whilst a new building was constructed, and these included siting it on the tennis courts as well as the current proposed siting. Locating the building on the tennis courts would have had a combined negative impact of the loss of the sports facilities these games courts provide, as well as a poor relationship between the building and the houses sited immediately behind it on Lennox Road East.

27. The proposed new building is therefore shown to be sited just to the south of the existing tennis courts on a smaller area of playing field which is currently laid out and used for a rounders pitch during the summer months. The footprint of the building would be kept in line with the original building so that the main swathe of playing field to the south of the school site could be retained. The building would be set in off the eastern boundary wall by 3.5m at the closest point, therefore a wide access path around the edge of the building would be retained, and this gap would allow some natural light into the windows for the classrooms along this part of the building. In terms of its relationship with the existing school buildings on the site, there would be ample space around the new build so that it would not appear cramped within the site and by rationalising all the built form at the northern end of the site, the school playing field would be consolidated in one area. The two-storey design would be in keeping with the other two storey buildings on site and the overall height of the new building would be comparable to the existing structures. Furthermore, once constructed there would be no need to retain the mobile classrooms currently situated on the tennis courts, which would improve the overall appearance of the site, and it is therefore suggested that a condition requiring their removal by the School within 3 months of occupation of the new building would be appropriate.
28. By siting the new building in this location, the built form of the whole school site would be brought closer to the residential properties on The Avenue, and a number of these occupants have raised an objection to the planning application due to the siting and proximity of the new building to their properties. Although the built form of the school would be extended towards the boundary, the houses in The Avenue are located on the opposite side of the road from the school and are in excess of 21m away from the proposed new building. This measurement is a widely accepted industry guideline as an acceptable separation distance between neighbouring properties, included in design guides across the Country. This distance is judged to be a target separation distance between the facing windows of 'habitable rooms' in adjacent properties, beyond which privacy by virtue of overlooking is deemed to be of insignificant nuisance. Given this distance, as well as the intervening boundary treatment of the brick wall, and the road itself with footpaths either side, it is considered that the new building would be at a sufficient distance away from the neighbouring houses, so as not to cause an overlooking issue or be overbearing in terms of scale and height. There is no proposal for the windows of the classrooms or library to be obscure glazed but given the above it is considered that this would not be necessary. Furthermore, it should be noted that the children are not going to be in these rooms with the intention of standing at the windows and looking out across the road; they would be in there during lesson times whilst being taught or supervised in the library.
29. Additional comments were received about the loss of outlook across the school site from these properties (and the potential consequential loss of property value) which would

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result from siting the building in this location. Whilst this is noted, it should be pointed out that loss of, or change of, view is not a material planning consideration, although the siting of the development must be considered in terms of amenity and privacy issues. Although the outlook would be different for a number of houses opposite, it is considered that by locating the building here it would be consolidating the buildings in one part of the site, and given the design of the building (see below) the overall effect would not be detrimental to amenity or privacy, just different to the present.

30. The design of the new building has taken its cue from the brick and tile original school building and utilises a more traditional design than other school extensions and expansions recently delivered across the County. A traditional pitched roof design has been included rather than a modern flat roof, and there would be a regular pattern of fenestration on the facades. It is considered that this would sit sympathetically alongside the original school, and amongst the surrounding residential streets. The school adjoins the Pelham Road/The Avenue Conservation Area, with the Darnley Road Conservation Area just to the north-east. The applicants submitted a Heritage Assessment in support of the planning application which considered the impact of the proposals on both designated and non-designated heritage assets.
31. The County Council's Conservation Officer was consulted on the application, and as set out in paragraph 17, has raised no objection to the application. In his consideration of the scheme he stated that whilst the original school buildings and perimeter wall are not 'designated' they are considered to be non-designated heritage assets. The removal of the single storey teaching block, would, in his opinion, improve the appearance of the western part of the site and the opening in the boundary wall would not be harmful, at its reduced post construction width, provided the design details of the wall are observed and reinstated. He concurs that the proposed new teaching block is appropriate to the existing school buildings in terms of its size and scale and the chosen location on site. He also concurs that the impact on adjoining residential properties would be minor as the new block would be located a significant distance away from these properties. Finally, he acknowledges that the proposed development would not affect the three designated heritage assets located in proximity to the site, these being the Gravesend Cemetery, the cemetery gates and lodges or the mortuary chapel. In addition, it is considered that the traditional design of the new building would be wholly appropriate in terms of the relationship of the school site with the adjoining Conservation Area and the design of buildings within this, especially as the building would be partially seen in views into and from the Conservation Area.
32. In summary it is considered that the siting and design of the proposed building would be acceptable, without having an adverse impact on the residential amenity of surrounding neighbouring properties, or the nearby conservation areas or designated heritage assets, and would therefore accord with Policies CS19 and CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Policy TC3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review.

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**Loss of Playing Field**

33. The proposed building would, as described above, be sited on an existing area of playing field, and would therefore result in its permanent loss from the school site. As with all development that would affect existing playing field provision, Sport England were consulted on the application and have raised an objection. They state that the proposal fails to meet any of the five exceptions to Sport England's playing field policy, as there would be a net loss of existing school playing field which would reduce the sporting capacity of the field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality (fails to meet exception E3). Furthermore, the area to be lost is not proposed to be replaced with a new area of playing field of equivalent or better quality and quantity (fails to meet exception E4), and that none of the other exceptions are met.
34. In seeking to address these concerns the applicant submitted a Sport Pitches Assessment (Agronomist Report), which looked at the existing quality and condition of the sports pitches and the potential effects that may be encountered as a result of part of the field being used for the new building, the consequential uplift of usage of the remaining field area due to the reduction in overall sports area, plus an increase in the number of pupils. It also set out maintenance regimes that could be implemented to ensure that the remaining sports pitches would not deteriorate with increased use. The document was submitted for further consideration by Sport England. They note that the agronomist report recognises that the area to be lost cannot be fully compensated in terms of area, and that the playing pitches would remain cramped, therefore they stated that it would be inappropriate for them to accept such a lesser provision and they therefore maintain their objection.
35. In addition to the Sport England objection, Gravesham Borough Council have also objected to the scheme on the grounds of the loss of part of the playing field. The Leisure Services Department state that the area to be lost is not proposed to be replaced with a new area of playing field of equivalent or better quality and quantity, and there are no associated plans in tandem with the application which improves or enhances existing sports facilities on this site or at the neighbouring Isaac Newton site. They state that improvements to the leisure facilities on the site as a whole would be required in order for them to support the planning application, and in its current form the application would not meet Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy.
36. The submitted layout plans show that it would be possible to set out the required sports provision on the area of playing field that would be retained, albeit this may be more cramped than would be considered ideal by Sport England. In addition once the proposed new parking area is complete, the temporary use of the tennis courts for parking would no longer be required, and the new building would remove the need for the temporary classrooms to be sited on the courts as well, thereby freeing these hard courts up for some additional sports provision. Sport England have stated that whilst they acknowledge this benefit, it cannot be taken into account by them in assessing the impact on the *playing field* provision. Finally, the plans include the provision of an activity studio which would be sited close to the existing changing room provision and give easy access to both the hard courts and playing fields.

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37. The proposed building cannot be accommodated on site without the loss of some of the existing playing field provision and it is acknowledged that the proposal would not comply with the exception policies of Sport England's guidance or paragraph 97 of the NPPF. There is strong policy support at all levels for school development, and this site has some of the worst accommodation in the country, hence the funding being given for redevelopment through the Priority Schools Building Programme. In my opinion, although there is an objection by Sport England, I consider that the education need and the provision of additional teaching space to suitably accommodate the increase in pupils at the school (rather than temporary classrooms), and the provision of facilities which are suitable for use rather than in an inadequate state of repair, would outweigh the loss of this part of the playing field, especially when taking a longer term view and considering the proposals in a holistic and broader context. However, if Members are minded to permit the proposals, the application would need to be referred to the Secretary of State for his consideration in light of the objection from Sport England relating to the playing field implication.

**Highway and Transportation Impacts**

38. The application has been accompanied by a Transport Assessment, a draft Construction Management Plan, draft School Travel Plan and a supplemental Transport Technical Note regarding parking surveys which have been considered by the County's Highways and Transportation advisors. The vehicular access for the school would remain from Pelham Road, and this would lead to an extended car park of 20 spaces which would be located on the site of the existing annex which is proposed to be demolished. There are currently 62 parking spaces available on the main school site, and a further 70 available on the Issac Newton site, which are used for staff and visitors only. Due to the current construction of the new science block, staff parking has been temporarily permitted on the tennis courts. The on-site parking survey undertaken in January demonstrated that a maximum of 56 vehicles were parked in the car park and as additional 25 vehicles parked on the tennis courts, a total of 81 cars. When the tennis courts are no longer available there would be a shortfall of 20 spaces, which the proposed car park would accommodate. The proposed car park is therefore considered to be acceptable and a condition is suggested that ensures that the temporary parking arrangement on the tennis courts is retained until such time as the new car park is ready to be used. It would not in my view be reasonable to secure this prior to occupation of the new building as the school will need to move into the new building before the old annex can be demolished and the new car park created.
39. In line with the Highway Department's emerging policy for electric vehicle charging spaces, 10% of the additional spaces should be provided as EV charging spaces and a further 10% provided with passive provision now (ducting and cabling) to allow for future provision if required. The applicant has confirmed that these spaces (2 actual spaces and 2 passive provision) would be provided. The two EV charging spaces are shown to be allocated close to the existing school building rather than in the new car park, so that they can be better monitored. A condition to secure them is proposed.
40. There are currently 8 cycle parking spaces available on site for staff and pupils, however the information submitted states that only 1 staff member utilises these spaces. The highway officer has considered the modal travel survey results and considers that the

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number of those cycling to school is not expected to significantly increase as a result of the additional pupil numbers, and therefore does not require any additional cycling parking to be provided as part of the scheme. However, it is suggested that the situation be monitored (as it would be through the School Travel Plan) and should additional spaces be required these be provided at the relevant time. An informative to this effect is therefore proposed.

41. The Highways officer has assessed the information submitted in relation to travel modes for existing staff and pupils, and then the likely increase in trips in both the AM and PM peaks taking into account the additional pupils who would be on site, and incorporating factors such as siblings travelling together, absences, after school clubs and staff working times etc. This is likely to result in an increase in 89 two-way movements in the AM peak and 71 additional two-way movements in the PM peak. The highway officer states that these are considered not to be significant when taking into account the existing movements of 688 and 532 respectively. He also suggests that the implementation of an updated and effective School Travel Plan would help bring these trip numbers down. A condition to ensure a revised Travel Plan is submitted is proposed, which would be monitored by the KCC School Travel Plan Team via the Jambusters website.
42. Access into the site for construction purposes is proposed to be taken from a new opening in the boundary wall on The Avenue. A new 8.3m wide access would be created just to the south of the existing double wooden gates and a Construction Management Plan (CMP) was submitted detailing routing for traffic into and out of the site. This document has been updated following consultee responses from the Highways Officer who required tracking diagrams to be provided to demonstrate that construction vehicles could enter and exit from this point and that The Avenue was of sufficient width to accommodate the largest expected delivery/construction vehicles taking into account parking on both sides of the road along its full length. Tracking diagrams have demonstrated that large vehicles would be able to traverse along The Avenue and turn into the site, even with vehicles parked on the opposite side of the road. A condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with a CMP agreed by the Highways Authority is proposed.
43. Although there have been a number of objections received from residents about the proposed use of The Avenue to access the site, the Highways Officer has considered all of the updated information received and confirms that an acceptable access would be possible. There would inevitably be a period of some disruption for the residents along this road during the construction period, but the CMP includes amongst other matters that no traffic movements, including deliveries, should occur during school start and finish times; the location of parking and turning areas for construction and delivery vehicles and for site personnel and visitors; the provision of wheel washing facilities; and that the access would be managed at all times by a Banksman to ensure highway safety and flow of traffic is maintained. Given that there are neighbouring residential properties to the site, if planning permission is granted it is considered appropriate to restrict the hours of construction to protect residential amenity (Monday to Friday between 0800 and 1800; Saturday 0900 to 1300; and no operations on Sundays or public holidays), and this has also been set out in the CMP.



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44. Upon completion of the development it is proposed to retain the construction access for use as an emergency access for the school. The width of the access would be reduced to 4.8m wide and it is proposed to insert double wooden gates to match those recently installed for the sub-station and pedestrian access. The applicants have advised that the extended science block would impinge on emergency access provision to the eastern part of the site, therefore an alternative access needs to be provided. The existing gate in the southern end of the boundary wall along The Avenue is not wide enough for a fire tender and does not lead onto a reinforced surface, therefore is not suitable for emergency use. Given the above and the need to provide an emergency access, it is accepted that this opening would be acceptable to be retained, at the reduced width, providing a condition is imposed ensuring this gate would only be used for emergency purposes and not open for any other school traffic.
45. The applicant's additional Technical Note provided the results of an on-street parking survey carried out in January 2020. The surrounding roads (within walkable distance to the school) were surveyed at 5 minute intervals from 07:00 to 09:00 and 14:30 to 16:30 counting the number of parked cars and spaces within the non-restricted areas. The highway officer considers the methodology to be robust and to follow acceptable guidelines. The survey demonstrated that, on the day surveyed, there were a minimum of 106 available parking spaces in the AM period and a minimum of 97 available spaces in the PM period. These are greater than the predicted additional parking demand (52 and 44 additional pupils traveling by car respectively) generated by the increase in pupil numbers, even before making adjustments due to the implementation of the School Travel Plan targets. Given this, there is no justification to object to the scheme on the grounds of off-site parking demand during drop off and pick up times, despite the objections received.
46. It is acknowledged that congestion on streets surrounding schools located in the middle of urban areas is commonplace, but this is not in itself a reason to resist any future development at such schools. In particular, the congestion tends to be short lived, and only on days when the school is open, and is often more of an irritation than a serious road safety issue. It also needs to be borne in mind that the public highway is there to be used by the public, whether they are residents, employees or school parents, and it cannot be reserved for the sole use of any one sector of the public.
47. A number of the responses received to the public consultation for the application suggested alterations that could take place for the surrounding roads to improve the situation, including traffic calming, making some roads one way or no through routes etc. Given the highway officer's views set out above, however, it is considered that the impact of the new school development (and associated 1FE expansion) would not have such a significant effect on the highway network as to justify such highway alterations on the back of this development.
48. It is therefore considered that subject to the imposition of conditions as set out above, the proposed development would be in accordance with Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review.

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**Loss of Highway Tree**

49. As set out above the only way to access the site for construction purposes would be to enter along The Avenue at the point shown on the submitted plans. In order for this to be achieved one of the existing lime trees planted in the pavement along the road would need to be removed. The Arboriculture Manager for Highways and Transportation was therefore consulted on the planning application, and as set out in paragraph 17, has objected to the planning application on the basis of the loss of the tree. He states that the tree is in a good condition with a life expectancy of 40-80 years, and that (as with all highway trees) a significant amount of time and resources goes into the establishment of the trees, including watering. The removal of the tree would therefore be undertaken against their consent and if planning permission were to be granted they would expect the full CAVAT (Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Tree) value of the tree to be paid, as well as the cost of felling the tree and the stump removal. In this instance the CAVAT value is £2444.85.
50. Under the proposed plans, once construction is completed the width of the access on The Avenue would be reduced to 4.8m wide and retained for emergency vehicles only, as set out above. This would allow for the replacement planting of a tree on the site of its removal, and the applicant's have submitted tracking diagrams to show that it would be possible to access the site by a fire engine (the largest emergency vehicle that would be required) with the replacement tree in place. Whilst it would be preferable to have found an alternative access point that didn't require the removal of the tree, it has been demonstrated by the applicants that no alternative is available. It would not be possible to access the site from the north or west as there would be no route through the site that large construction vehicles could navigate given the location of the existing school buildings. In addition, access through the school site would raise health and safety issues for the pupils using these buildings. The proposed siting of the building would preclude any access from The Avenue south of its proposed location as it would access directly onto and impinge upon the school's functioning playing field, plus access to the construction compound on the tennis courts would not be possible.
51. It is therefore accepted that should planning permission be granted the only feasible access onto the site would have to be in the location shown. However, it is clear that the loss of the lime tree, even for a temporary basis during the construction period would have a negative impact on the wider street scene, and the replacement tree would inevitably be a less mature specimen which would have a reduced amenity value in the street scene. In order to offset this impact, the applicant has been asked to fund the additional planting of three more trees for this road, in a gap identified on the eastern side of the road and shown in red on the map below (the map shows the location of existing highway trees as green dots).

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52. The applicant has confirmed that they would be prepared to fund this, and therefore a condition is suggested which requires the planting of four trees in The Avenue (one replacement and three additional) to a specification to be agreed in writing with KCC, and to be planted in the first planting season following occupation of the new building. A further condition requiring their ongoing maintenance and care for a period to be agreed with KCC is also suggested. The applicants have confirmed that they would also meet the costs of the CAVAT value of the existing tree, its felling and stump removal and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be required to achieve this. The MOU will be completed by the applicant prior to the granting of any planning permission and require a signed commitment between the applicant and the Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste. The recommendation in paragraph 71 reflects this.

### **Ecological matters**

53. In support of the planning application, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was submitted which considered the existing biodiversity on the school site. It highlighted that there were some features on site that could be suitable for use by roosting bats within the building proposed to be demolished and that bats may also utilise the site for foraging and commuting. In addition, it stated that there were mammal holes under the annex building that may be a badger sett. Accordingly, additional survey work was recommended in relation to these two aspects, as well as a survey of the sports shed, music room, the eastern façade of the main school and boundary wall to assess whether bat emergence surveys are required for these parts of the school site as well. The document was considered by the County Council's Biodiversity Officer, who recommended that such surveys be carried out prior to determination of the application.
54. A badger survey has now been undertaken with monitoring of the mammal holes being undertaken by camera trap footage as well as visits to the site throughout March and April. In summary the report states that there was no evidence of badger presence on site, and none of the mammal entrances were in current use by badgers. The mammal burrows under the annex block (to be demolished) are utilised by red fox and a domestic cat on an occasional basis. Given this, a licence to interfere with badger setts will not

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need to be obtained from Natural England prior to the commencement of demolition works of the extension block. The applicants have advised that precautionary methods of work would be adopted during the demolition and the animal dens carefully dismantled in a manner that would allow animals to safely escape. The County Council's Biodiversity Officer, in assessing the report, has recommended that the Construction Management Plan should incorporate measures to ensure that demolition is undertaken using a methodology that would minimise the risk to any animal under the building.

55. An interim bat survey has now been submitted following visits to the site on 24<sup>th</sup> March, 5<sup>th</sup> May and 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020. The report details that no roosting bats were recorded on site but that occasional passes by two species of bats were recorded over the school site, as well as some foraging and feeding. The remaining bat survey is due to be undertaken in the first half of June, weather permitting. The County's Biodiversity Officer has considered the interim report and advises that although they would have preferred the completed survey to be submitted as part of the application, she is satisfied that the interim results and confirmation that 6 bat roosting features would be incorporated into the building is sufficient to allow the application to be determined. It is likely, she states, that any maternity roost would have been recorded during the initial surveys, therefore in the event that bats are recorded roosting with the building during the final survey, it is highly likely that the proposed mitigation would be sufficient to retain bat interest on site. A condition is therefore recommended that prior to demolition works commencing on site a bat mitigation strategy should be submitted for approval to include bat emergence surveys, overview of mitigation required, methodology to implement mitigation, timing of proposed works and a map showing the location of mitigation.
56. The Preliminary Ecological Report also made recommendations to enhance the site for biodiversity, which was supplemented by the submission of a 'Habitat Creation and Management Plan' which indicates the provision of native species planting along the western and southern boundaries, native scrub planting along new hedgerows, 4 bird boxes, at least 1 log pile, at least 1 invertebrate logger, and a species mix grassland and flower seed mix to be sown in open areas. In addition, 6 bat bricks are shown to be incorporated into the southern external wall of the new building – depending on the results of the bat survey these bat bricks may be considered as mitigation rather than enhancement. It is advised that this submitted plan be implemented as part of the planning permission and secured via condition. A further condition is suggested to control any new lighting on site to ensure it would have no adverse impact on bats utilising the site for foraging and commuting in the future. It is therefore considered that subject to the conditions suggested, the development would not adversely affect, and would seek enhancements to, biodiversity on site in accordance with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and the guidance of the NPPF.

**Other Matters****Drainage**

57. A Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment was submitted with the planning application, setting out how the scheme would deliver a sustainable urban drainage scheme,

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including the appropriate level of attenuation, accounting for extreme storm events and the effects of climate change. The document was assessed by the County Council's Flood and Water Management Team who requested additional information for clarification, including plans indicating the existing sewers in the vicinity of the car park, the proposed drainage pipework and analysis of pipework flows; a full and detailed design of the surface water network and revised calculations based on data obtained from the UK Centre of ecology and Hydrology. The report was updated and reassessed by the County's Drainage officers, who have advised that they are content that the information provided is acceptable, and they raise no objection to the application.

58. The information submitted is provided in sufficient detail such that a pre-commencement condition for a sustainable surface water drainage scheme is not required, instead a condition is suggested which requires compliance with the scheme submitted. Two additional conditions are also proposed relating to the submission of a verification report pertaining to the surface water drainage scheme being submitted before the building is first occupied, and that where infiltration is used to manage surface water, it is only in those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated to the County Planning Authority that there would be no risk to controlled waters or ground stability. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would accord with Policy CS18 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy.

**Archaeology**

59. The school lies in an area of archaeological potential, on the opposite side of the road to the site of St Mary's Church and graveyard. The church building was demolished but it is considered that it may have been the focus of a small medieval community. Medieval building remains are recorded to the south and similar remains may survive within the grammar school site. The application was accompanied by an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for evaluation trial trenching. The application has been assessed by the County Council's Archaeologist who advises that the WSI has set out an appropriate method for evaluating the sites below ground archaeological potential, whilst the DBA provides useful background information to inform the WSI with regards to historic character of the site. He therefore raised no objection to the application subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the implementation of archaeological field works in accordance with a timetable to be agreed with the County Planning Authority.
60. The proposed condition was one that needed to be submitted prior to development commencing. The applicants chose to update the WSI now with the details required by the proposed condition, and it has therefore been agreed by the County Archaeologist that the revised WSI covers all the potential stages and therefore a condition requiring the works to be carried out in accordance with this revised WSI is proposed instead. In summary it is considered that the scheme addresses any potential archaeology on site and would accord with Policy TC7 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review.

**Contamination**

61. The application was supported by the submission of a Phase 1 Contamination Assessment, which found that plausible pollutant linkages have not been found for the site. The document has been assessed by The Environment Agency who state that the

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report is considered to be in line with relevant guidance and provides confidence that the development poses a low risk to controlled waters. They therefore raise no objection subject to the imposition of conditions. These require a watching brief to be carried out by a suitable consultant during demolition and foundation works; that if during development contamination not previously identified is found then development will cease until a remediation strategy for dealing with this has been agreed with the County Planning Authority; that there should be no infiltration of surface water into the ground unless agreed with the County Planning Authority; and that piling of penetrative foundation methods shall only be used with the permission of the County Planning Authority. It is therefore considered that in relation to contamination the proposed development would be acceptable and is in accordance with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy.

**Sustainability**

62. Planning policy at all levels recognises the need to address climate change and to reduce the amount of energy consumed by development. The NPPF places a presumption in favour of development that is sustainable and Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy planning policy CS18 states that the Council will seek to reduce the overall carbon footprint of the Borough, whilst Policy CS19 requires new development to build in resilience to the effects of climate change. The proposed scheme has been designed to offer a sustainable solution, which is practical and meets the needs of the school. The Department for Education do not request formal BREEAM certification, and therefore the proposed scheme has not followed this process. However, the development does have to adhere to the Department for Education's 'Government Output Specification 2019', which sets out detailed specifications of new buildings. When energy requirements for schools are assessed against an environmental assessment like BREEAM it inevitably achieves a minimum BREEAM rating of 'very good'.
63. A Sustainability Assessment was submitted in support of the application which sets out that the energy approach for the new school is predominantly a passive one using a fabric first approach, with the objective being to minimise energy demand through design features including building orientation, optimised glazing areas, high levels of insulation, low air permeability, solar control glass and the use of natural ventilation wherever viable. The majority of water usage within the development would be attributed to handwashing and WC flushing. Dual flush cisterns and low-flow sanitaryware would be utilised to minimise consumption in accordance the BREAM requirements for water usage. In addition, rainwater would be collected via integrated water butts to provide a level of attenuation and an additional source for external irrigation. This fabric first approach, along with the energy efficient building services would allow the building to achieve regulatory compliance (Building Control) without the requirement for additional renewable energy technology.
64. Given that the new building would incorporate energy saving features that would be equivalent to achieving a 'very good' BREEAM rating it is considered that additional Low and Zero Carbon technologies are not necessary and cannot be justified in this instance. However, it should be reiterated that the building is designed to limit energy consumption in the first place, and this is achieved through the construction methods and features listed above. In addition, it is considered that the installation of PV panels

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on the southern roof slope of the new building would detract from the appearance of the building, as viewed in relation to the original school building it would sit alongside, as well as within the context of the adjoining Conservation Area. The school are able to provide two electric vehicle charging points on site and infrastructure for a further two spaces in the future and this combined with the energy saving building design demonstrate that the applicants have had consideration to energy consumption and have adopted a proportionate and positive approach. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would meet the aims of Policies CS18 and CS19 of the Local Plan Core Strategy and the guidance of the NPPF.

**Dust Control**

65. One of the neighbour comments raised was in relation to dust control measures for the site. The control of dust during demolition and construction would be dealt with under normal construction practices (and is addressed in the submitted Construction Method Statement) and it is considered unnecessary to impose any additional controls on the development as part of the planning permission.

**Landscape**

66. The application was supported by the submission of Tree Protection Plans which identified the existing trees on site and those that would need to be removed to enable the development. Two trees that are located between the existing school and the proposed new build would be retained and would require tree protection fencing to be erected around them during the construction period – a condition is proposed for this. The proposal would require the removal of a scattering of trees along the boundary of the proposed car park and the gardens of the houses in Pelham Road, as well as two small trees along the southern boundary and two trees adjacent to the tennis courts. All of the trees to be removed are classified as the lower quality Category C trees, and it is considered that their removal would not affect the overall appearance of the school site, or detrimentally affect the occupants of the residential properties, particularly those in Pelham Road.
67. Once complete there would be a limited amount of landscaping to undertake, which would simply involve grassing the proposed lawn area to the north of the new building as well as the edge of the car park alongside the playing field. It is considered that the development would accord with the guidance of Policy CS19 of the Local Plan Core Strategy.

**Conclusion**

68. In my view the key determining factors for this proposal are the principle of the development and the educational need, the loss of playing field land, together with the appropriateness of the design and siting of the new building, and the impact of the development on the local highway network, residential amenity and heritage considerations. There is strong Government support in the NPPF for the development or expansion of schools to ensure that there is sufficient provision to meet growing demand, increased choice and raised educational standards, subject to being satisfied on local amenity and all other material considerations. In my view the proposed

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development would not give rise to any severe, significant or demonstrable harm in terms of impact in the street scene or on the adjoining Conservation Areas and Heritage Assets that would be overriding as far as planning, environmental and amenity aspects are concerned, as demonstrated in the discussion above.

69. The loss of playing field land would be outweighed, in my view, by the improved education facilities on site, and it has been demonstrated that sufficient separation distance would be retained to avoid any loss of amenity for nearby residents. The temporary loss of the highway tree would be addressed through the longer term enhancement of planting a replacement and three additional trees within The Avenue, and the highway impacts of the development are not considered to be severe. The proposed conditions would ensure that any impacts in relation to drainage, archaeology, ecology and contamination can be suitably mitigated against.
70. In my view the development is sustainable, in accordance with the aims of the NPPF and the Development Plan policies, and there are no material planning considerations that indicate that the conclusion should be made otherwise. In addition, support for the provision of school places is heavily embedded within the NPPF, the Planning for Schools Development Policy Statement, and local planning policy, and this development would satisfy a required need for secondary school places. I therefore recommend that the application be referred to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for his consideration, and subject to his decision that various conditions be placed on any planning permission, including those outlined below.

**Recommendation**

71. I RECOMMEND that the application BE REFERRED to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and SUBJECT TO his decision, and the receipt of a signed Memorandum of Understanding between KCC Children, Young People and Education and KCC Highways, Transportation and Waste to ensure that the costs of the felling and stump removal of the highway tree required to be removed for construction purposes, as well as the full CAVAT value of the tree to be removed shall be paid by the applicant, PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
- The standard 3-year time limit;
  - The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
  - The submission and approval of details of all construction materials to be used externally;
  - The existing temporary classrooms on the tennis courts shall be removed from site and the land returned to its former use within 3 months of the occupation of the new classrooms building;
  - The existing temporary parking arrangements shall be retained until the approved car park is available to use;
  - The provision and permanent retention of the vehicle parking spaces as shown on the submitted plans within 3 months of the demolition of the existing annex building and their retention thereafter;
  - The approved parking spaces shall be used for staff and visitor parking only and shall be retained for such use;



**Demolition of existing teaching block and erection of two storey teaching block & activity studio, & car park extension at Mayfield Grammar School, Pelham Road, Gravesend, Kent DA11 0JE - GR/20/156 (KCC/GR/0019/2020)**

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- Two electric vehicle parking spaces shall be provided on site within 3 months of the occupation of the new building and passive provision for two further spaces shall be provided within the approved car park and shall thereafter be retained and kept available for electric car use only;
- The submission of a detailed review of the School Travel Plan incorporating measures to encourage sustainable transport;
- The implementation of the submitted Construction Method Statement for the duration of the construction activities on site (to include details of demolition measures to ensure mammals and their young are not killed during demolition);
- That works shall only be carried out on site between the hours of 0800 to 1800 Monday to Friday; 0900 to 1300 on Saturdays; and no operations on Sundays or public holidays;
- Post construction, the access gates from The Avenue shall only be used for emergency access purposes only and shall not be used for pupil or staff access at school drop off or pick up times;
- In the first planting season following occupation of the new building, four trees shall be planted in The Avenue (one replacement and three additional) in accordance with a specification to be agreed in writing with the County Council's Highway's Arboriculture Department. Any of these trees that die or are removed within 5 years of planting are replaced;
- The submission of a Bat Mitigation Strategy prior to the commencement of demolition works;
- Details of any lighting scheme to be submitted including hours of use, level of illumination and ongoing control over any new lighting on site in order to protect foraging and commuting bats;
- Prior to the completion of the development that it be demonstrated that the ecological enhancements detailed in the 'Habitat Creation and Management Plan' have been incorporated into the site, and that the features are then managed in accordance with the plan;
- Compliance with the submitted sustainable surface water drainage scheme;
- Submission of a verification report covering this scheme to be approved in consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority;
- No infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground, other than with the written approval of the County Planning Authority and shall only be used in those areas where there would be no unacceptable risk to controlled waters or ground stability;
- The programme of archaeological works be carried out in accordance with the submitted and approved Written Scheme of Investigation;
- A watching brief shall be carried out by a suitably qualified consultant during demolition and foundation works to protect underlying groundwater resources;
- If during development contamination not previously identified is found to be present, then no further development shall take place until a remediation strategy has been agreed with the County Planning Authority;
- Piling or any other penetrative foundation designs shall not be permitted unless with the written approval of the County Planning Authority;
- Prior to the commencement of development, the protection and retention of all trees on site within the vicinity of the development hereby approved, not shown to be removed as part of the planning application.

## Item D1

### **Demolition of existing teaching block and erection of two storey teaching block & activity studio, & car park extension at Mayfield Grammar School, Pelham Road, Gravesend, Kent DA11 0JE - GR/20/156 (KCC/GR/0019/2020)**

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

- That the applicant ensures that all necessary highway approvals and consents are obtained;
- To ensure that works to trees are carried out outside of the breeding bird season (mid-March to end of August inclusive) and if this is not possible that an ecologist examines the site prior to works commencing;
- The development should take account of the Bat Conservation Trust's 'Bats and Lighting in the UK' guidance;
- That only clean uncontaminated water should drain to the surface water drainage system. Appropriate pollution control methods should be used for drainage from access roads and car parking areas to prevent hydrocarbons from entering the surface water system;
- The registering with Kent County Council of the School Travel Plan through the "Jambusters" website following the link <http://www.jambusterstpms.co.uk>;
- The demand for cycle parking provision shall be monitored and any requirement for additional spaces should be met.

Case Officer: Mrs Helen Edwards
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Tel. no: 03000 413366
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Background Documents: see section heading
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