

**Demolition of existing school buildings and the construction of a new two storey school building at Thamesview School, Gravesend – GR/08/154**

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 29 July 2008.

Application submitted by Kent County Council Children, Families, Health and Education and the Land Securities Trillium for the demolition of existing school buildings and the construction of a new two storey school building, the laying out of playing fields, multi use games area, hard play area and courts, car parking and landscaping at Thamesview School, Thong Lane, Gravesend - GR/08/154.

Recommendation: 1) subject to Sport England being satisfied over the provision of an additional sports pitch, planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions, or:  
2) in the event that a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached with Sport England the application be REFERRED to the Secretary of State, and that subject to her decision, planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions,

**Local Members:** Mrs J. Cribbon and Mrs M. Newell

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Site**

1. Thamesview School is located on the eastern edge of Gravesend, overlooking the Thames estuary and the Metropolitan Green Belt. Thamesview is a mixed sex secondary school which currently has 820 11-16yr old pupils, although the school does not currently have any sixth form students. The school site occupies a rectangular plot of land which runs west off of Thong Lane, with the school buildings located to the east of the site, towards Thong Lane, and playing fields extending to the rear. Beyond the playing fields, to the west of the site, lies Raynehurst Primary School, although this school is not connected to Thamesview and does not form a part of this planning application. The school site is bounded to the north and south by residential properties, and to the northeast by 'The Viewpoint' Community Centre. Thamesview School also has an area of playing field to the east of Thong Lane, and this part of the school site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, and is bordered by open countryside and a small number of residential properties which face Thong Lane. The whole of the school site is within the Green Grid, as designated in the Gravesham Borough Local Plan Second Review (deposit version 2000). In total, the school site occupies 8.1 hectares. A site plan is attached.

**Background**

2. The Building Schools for the Future programme is a Government initiative to transform all the Country's Secondary School's to enable them to meet the new challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> Century education. In particular, new methods of teaching and new styles of learning have implications for the type and arrangement of spaces for schools. A move away from traditional teaching methods means less reliance on the earlier school designs of classrooms and corridors. Opportunity therefore exists for more innovative designs of school buildings with a wider variety of internal and external spaces, and greater scope for fuller use of the premises by the local community.

## Item D2

Proposed demolition of existing school buildings and construction of a new school building at Thamesview School, Gravesend – GR/08/154

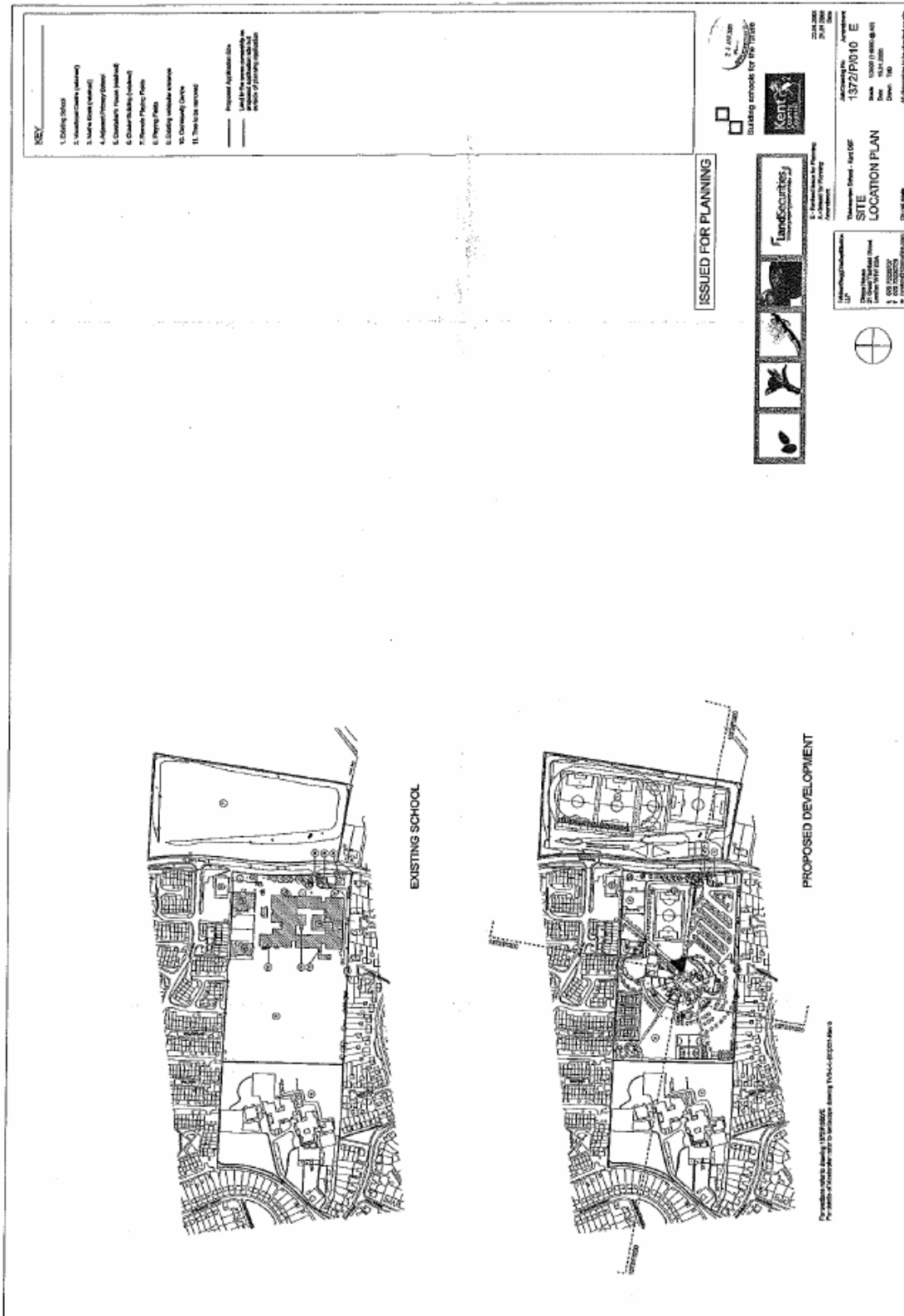
### SITE LOCATION PLAN



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**Item D2**

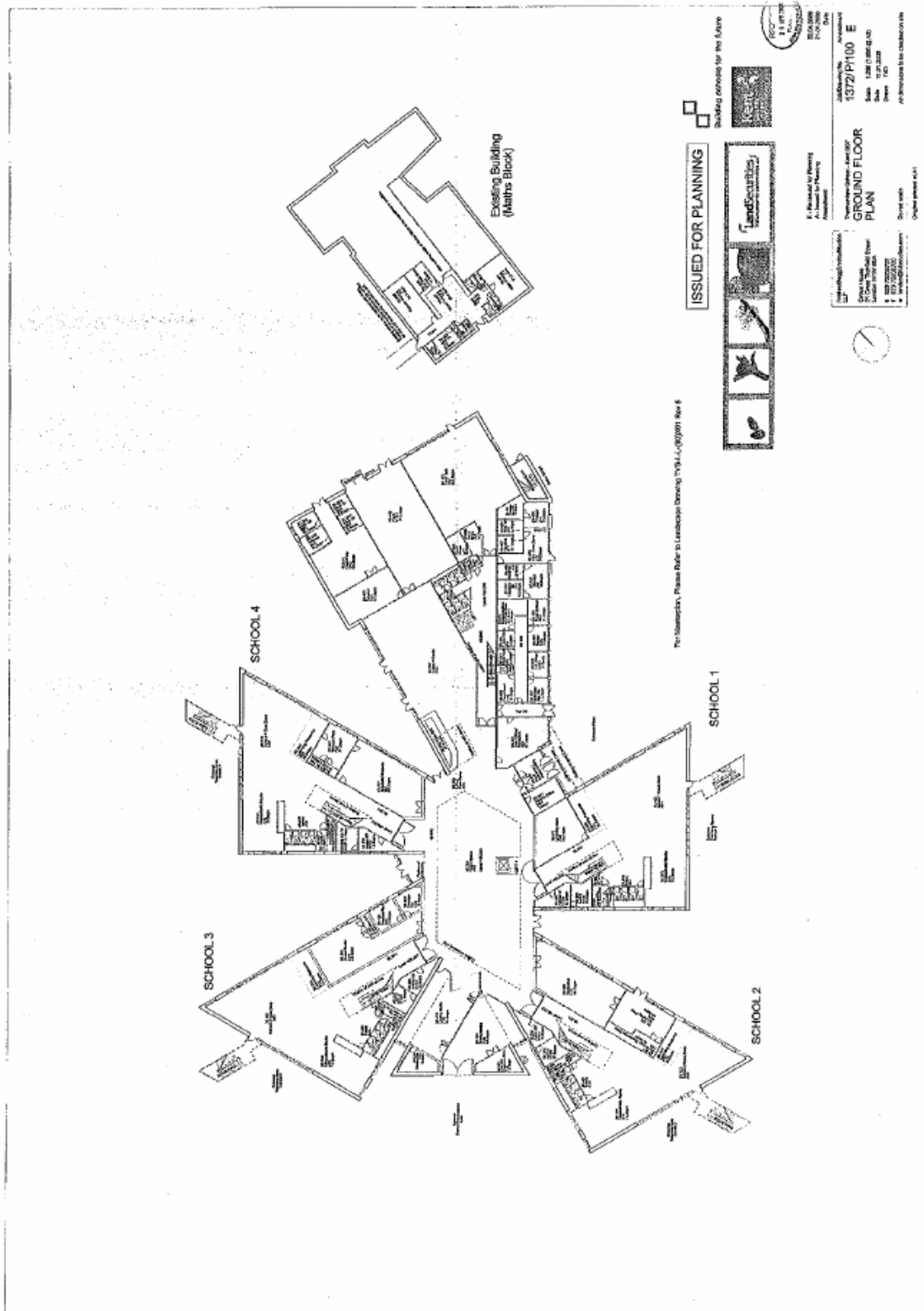
**Proposed demolition of existing school buildings and construction of a new school building at Thamesview School, Gravesend – GR/08/154**





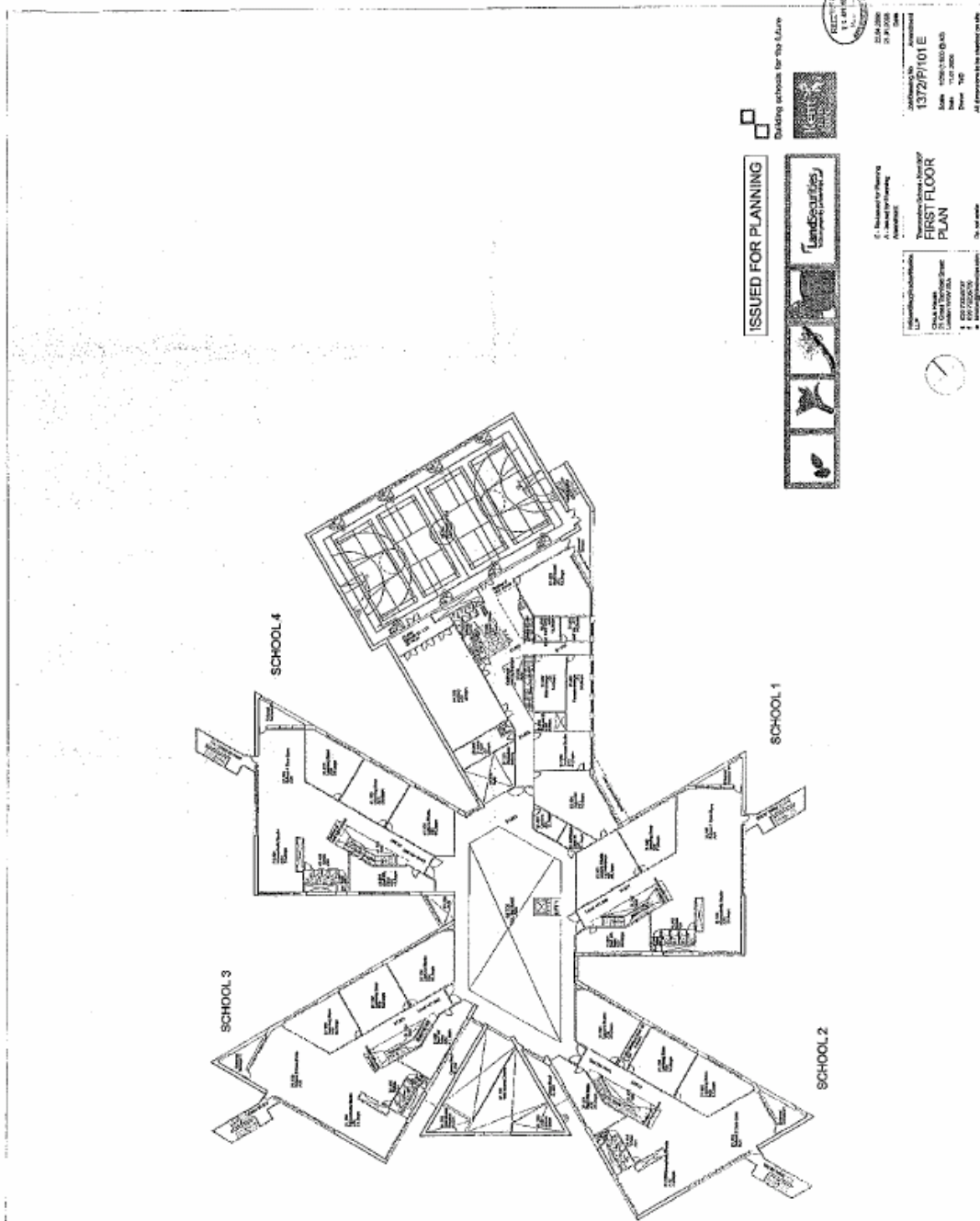
**Item D2**

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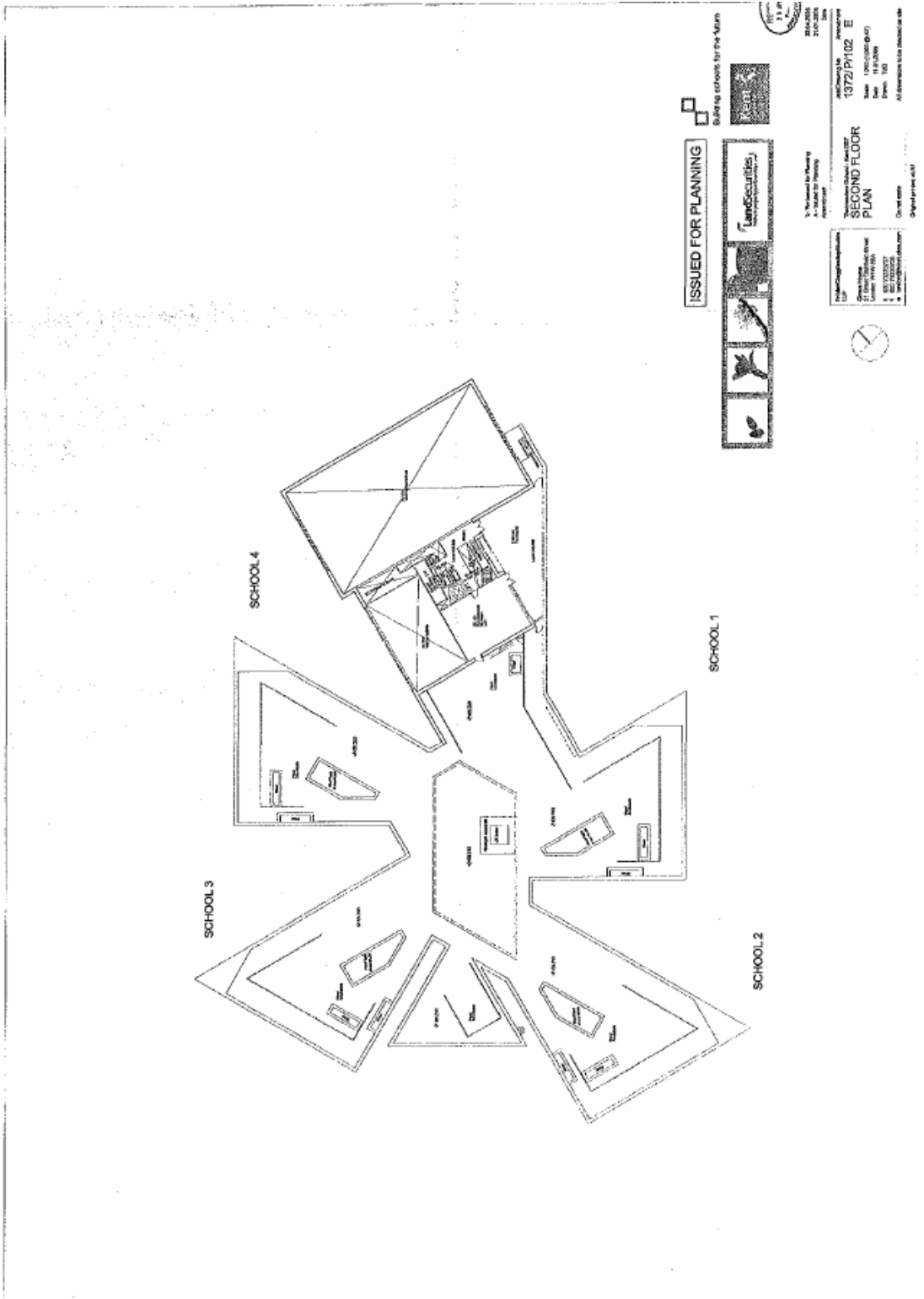
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ISSUED FOR PLANNING

Submitting schools for the future

LandSecurities

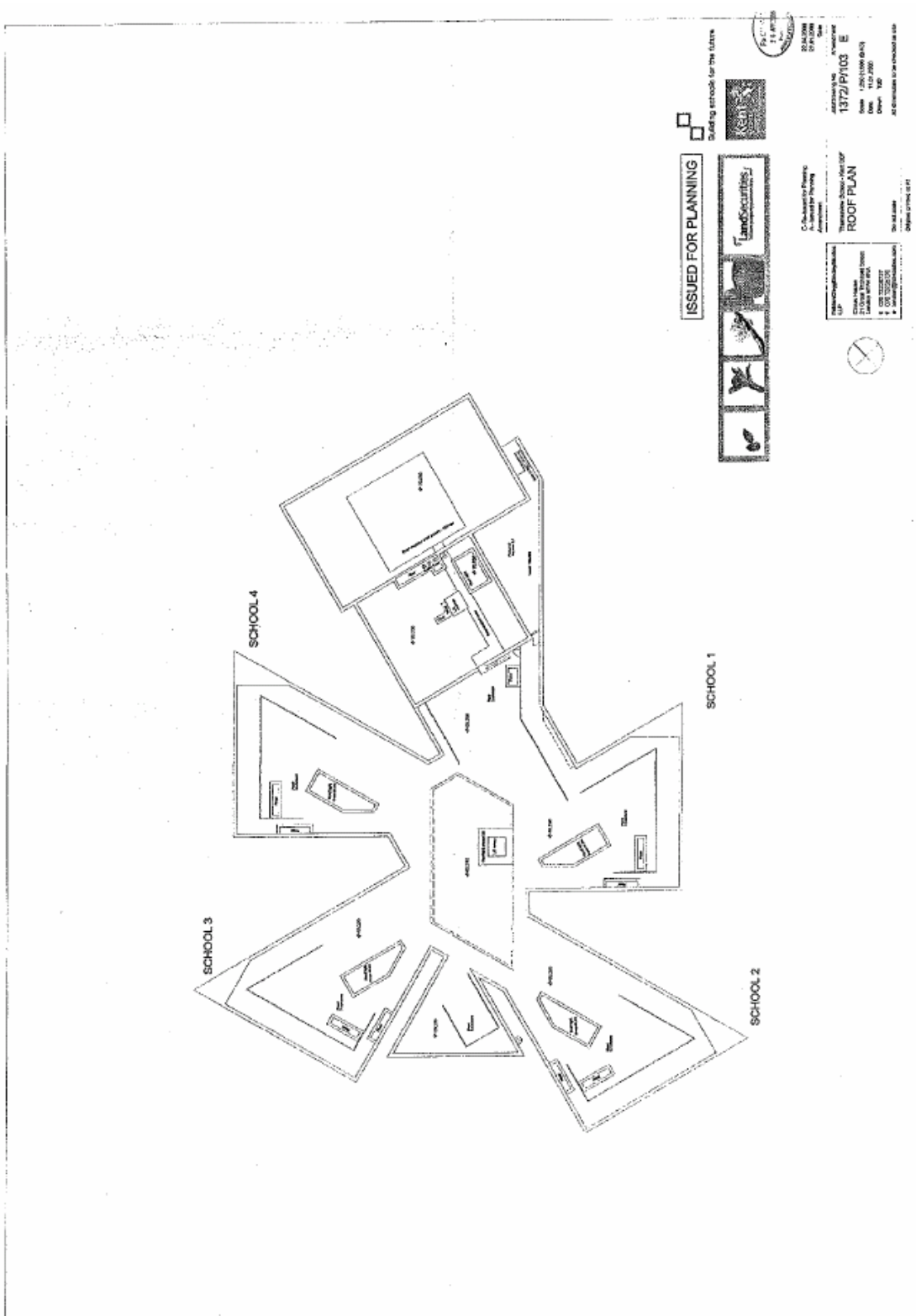
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# Item D2

## Proposed demolition of existing school buildings and construction of a new school building at Thamesview School, Gravesend – GR/08/154



**ISSUED FOR PLANNING**  
 Building schedule for the future

**Land Securities**

**ROOF PLAN**  
 Thamesview School - View 20P  
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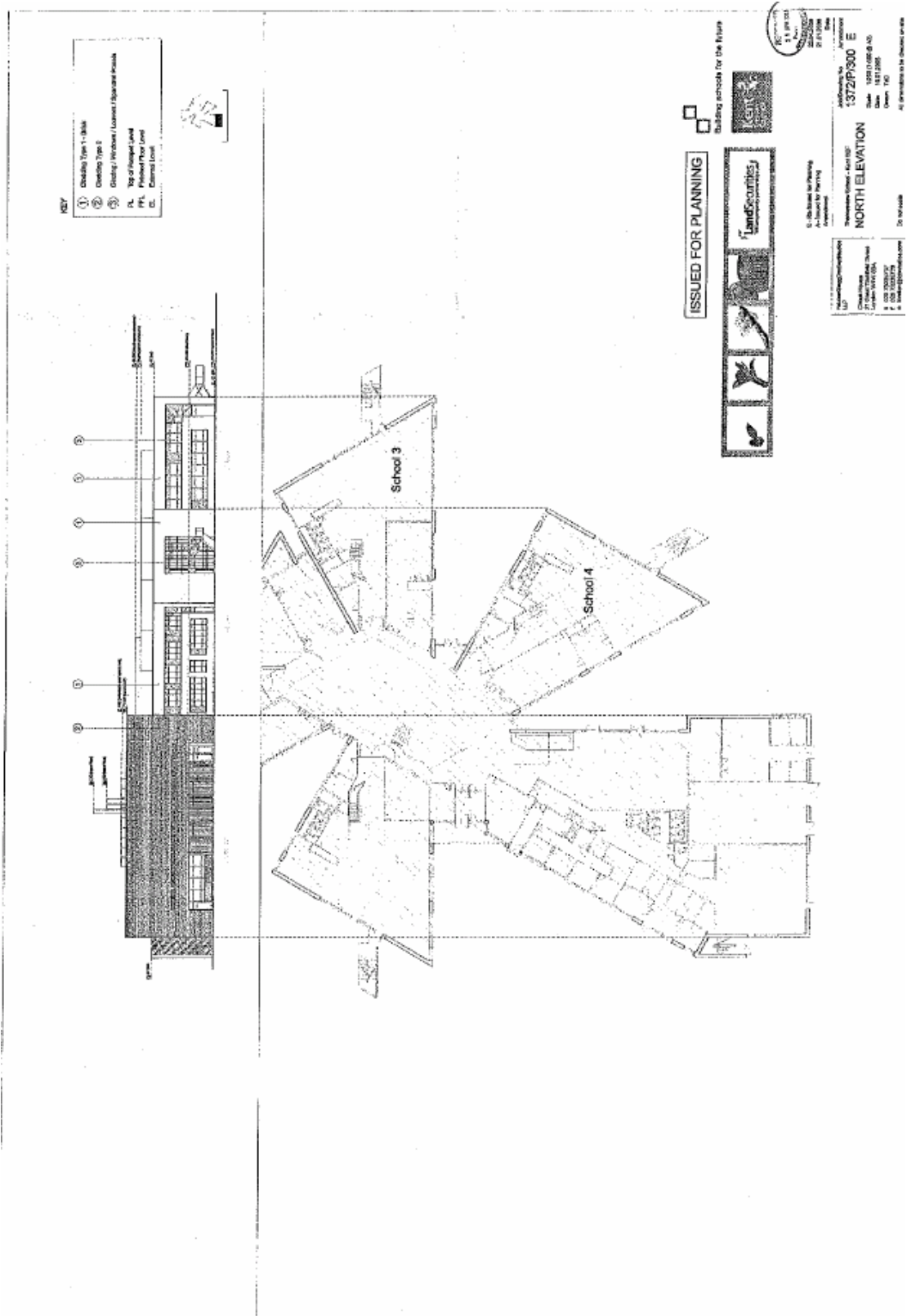
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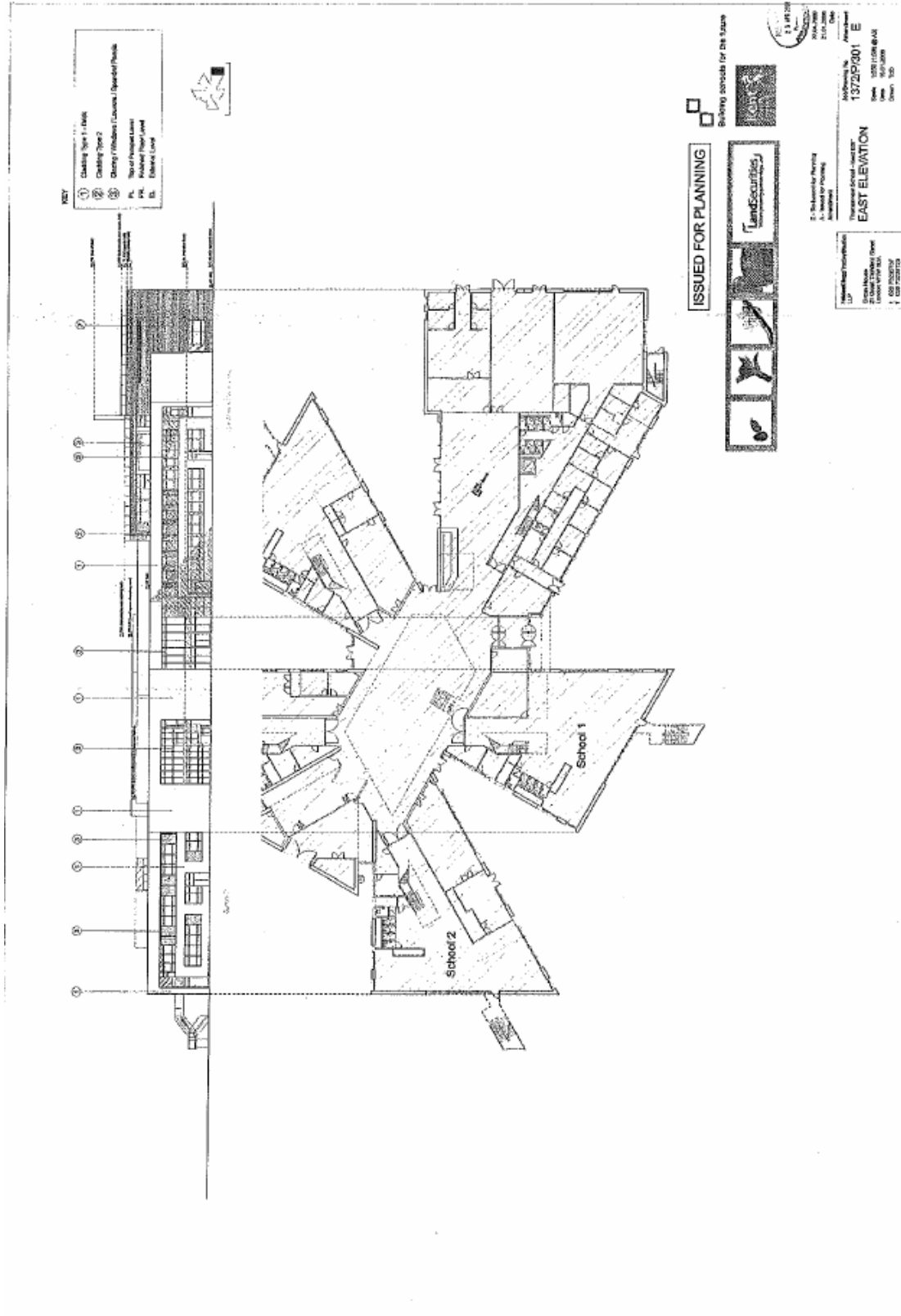
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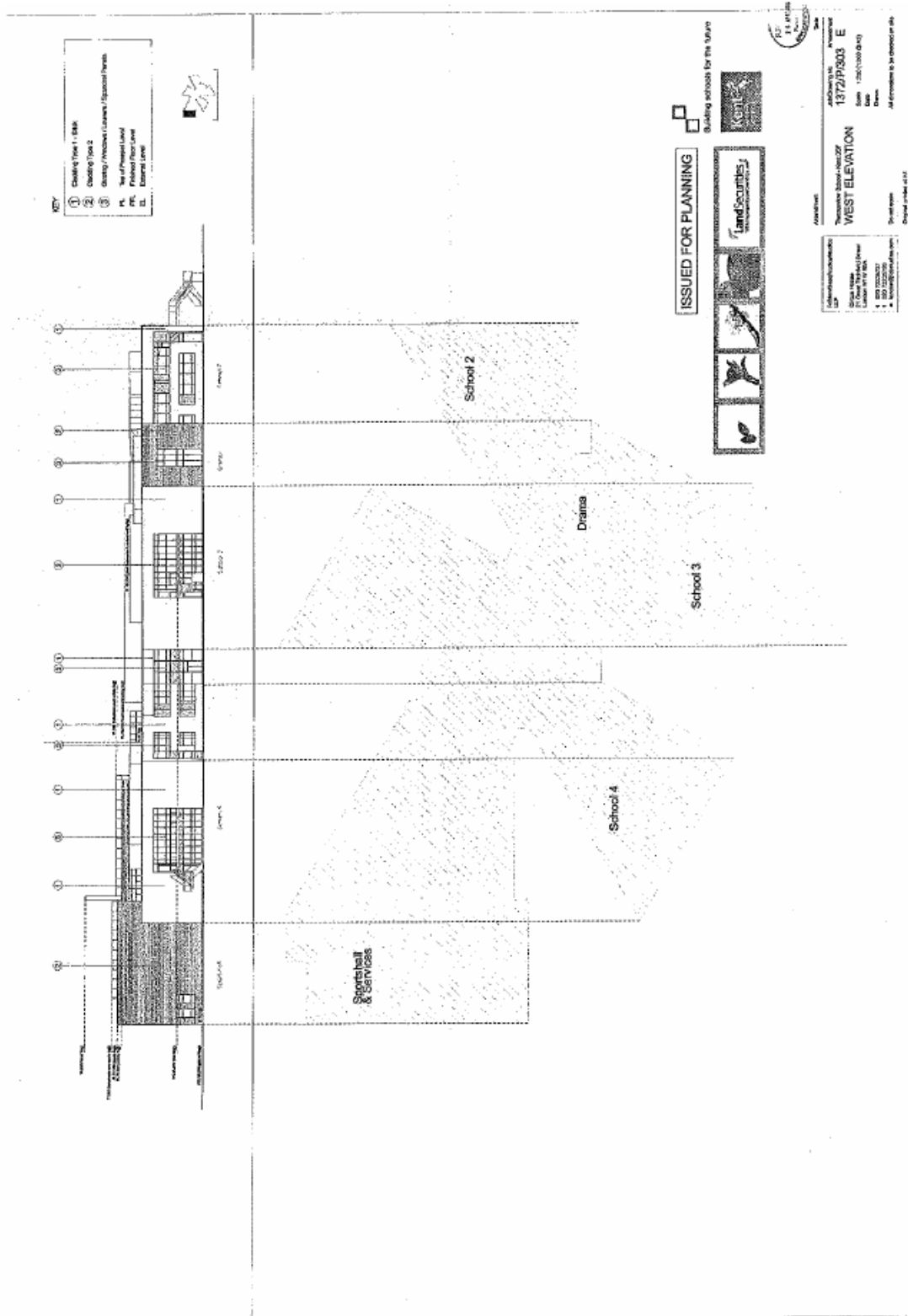


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3. Members visited this site on the 15 April 2008. Members of the public attending this meeting and expressed their concerns over the size, height and proximity of the building to the boundary, in addition to amenity concerns such as noise, light and air pollution, and disturbance during the construction process. The minutes of the Site Visit are appended to this report. Following the Members site visit, the applicant has amended the proposal, moving the building approximately 15 metres further north, away from the southern boundary of the site. In addition, the location of the construction access and site compound has been amended twice following the Members Site Visit, and further consultation with local residents. It is the amended proposal that will be discussed throughout this report.

**Proposal**

4. This application has been submitted jointly by Land Securities Trillium and Kent County Council Children, Families and Education, under the Building Schools for the Future programme, and proposes the demolition of existing school buildings and the construction of a new two storey school building, the laying out of playing fields, multi use games area, hard play area and courts, car parking and landscaping at Thamesview School, Thong Lane, Gravesend. The brief for the new school is to provide places for 830 students, 80 of which would be sixth formers, as projected for 2014. The School has a significant number of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), including a number of visually impaired students.
5. The application proposes that the majority of the existing buildings be demolished, with a new school building constructed upon the existing playing field. The existing buildings are considered by the applicant to be outdated, uninspiring and unsuited to modern teaching and different learning styles, hence the proposal to provide new build facilities for almost all of the school accommodation. The only school buildings which would be retained are the maths block and the vocational centre. The playing field to the east of Thong Lane would be retained, as would vehicular access to the site from Thong Lane and the school caretaker's house. The proposal limits the height of the new buildings to two floors, with one area only having a third storey, although the applicant advises that this storey is located in an area which would not lead to overlooking of neighbouring properties.
6. The School envisages becoming a local community centre of excellence for Business and Enterprise activities, the goal being to provide students with a learning experience that would equip them with the skills, attributes and competencies needed to achieve success. The applicant advises that the design of the school responds to the School's vision for a stimulating environment. The learning spaces would be divided into four distinct two storey 'schools within a school', with separate specialist spaces, all located around a central 'heart'. Each of the four distinct two storey schools would be given a group of internal and external spaces, which have a unique relationship to the 'heart', their location on the hill, the sun and the site. Each would be built with its own identity, but united by their connection to the central 'heart' space onto which their front doors face, the specialist learning rooms open and within which the school circulates, dines, assembles and works.
7. The school entrance would lead directly into the edge of the heart space at ground floor level. The specialist sports, art, food technology and business spaces would be located in the northern wing, approached alongside the dining area off the heart, allowing them to be used outside of the core school hours for functions and community use. The existing Vocational Centre, and external changing rooms (to be located within the

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existing maths building) are also planned to be used outside core school hours, all of which could be accessed without going through the secure boundary line of the school.

8. The school would have a single main entrance serving students, staff and visitors, which would be clearly visible from Thong Lane and the car parking area. The area between the school building and Thong Lane would be made secure by the site's perimeter fence and gates when the school/site are not in use. However, it is proposed that there would be five entrances into this area of the site. These would include a new primary pedestrian entrance located to the north of the existing vehicle entrance, the existing vehicle entrance (which would be re-graded to allow longer vehicles access to the site), a pedestrian gate to the south of the vehicle entrance, a pedestrian gate next to the Vocational Centre, and an existing pedestrian route through the north fence. The main entrance into the school building is one of only two defined routes into the permanently secure school area, the other being the northern service yard providing access to the kitchens and food technology areas, and for the delivery of biomass and plant maintenance.
9. Each school zone would have different internal and external environments, and each would incorporate an outdoor space at the second floor. Each school would be approximately 9 metres in height, with plant rooms and clerestory windows increasing the height to 11-12 metres in part. However, the finished floor level of the school would be half a metre lower than originally proposed, setting the building down into the site. The applicant also proposes the contouring of the land between the school and the southern boundary, and the introduction of landscaping and tree planting, aiding in screening the building and filtering views of the site. The 'wing' housing the school hall would be the highest element of the new build, measuring approximately 13metres in height.
10. School '2' would extend closest to the boundary with neighbouring properties, and would be approximately 33 metres from the southern boundary of the site, increasing to 37 metres in a westerly direction due to the orientation of the school southern wing relative to the boundary. The school building would be approximately 38 metres from the side elevation of the closest residential property, and over 75 metres away from the rear elevations of properties in Cambria Crescent. The proposed building would be approximately 47 metres from the northern boundary of the site at its closest point. The applicant proposes that the building would be finished in two different facing bricks, and glazing.
11. By locating the school upon the existing playing field, the new school could be completed whilst the existing buildings remain fully operational. The applicant states that an alternative complicated decant would require expensive temporary accommodation during construction, and be disruptive to the existing school operations (this will be discussed in more detail later in this report). It is therefore proposed that the new school buildings be constructed behind the existing ones, setting them back from Thong Lane. Upon completion of the new build, the existing school would be demolished and the land remodelled to provide informal and formal external play areas/sports facilities, and car parking.
12. Outdoor spaces and garden areas would be developed around the specialist subject areas of each of the four schools such as technology, science and art. External dining facilities, outdoor teaching areas and an outdoor performance space are also proposed. The applicant advises that careful consideration has been given to the location of hard and soft play areas due to the potential disruption caused by staggered break times impacting upon learning and teaching. A designated ball game area is proposed to the

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western boundary of the site, in addition to a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) which would be located on the north west boundary of the site. The playing fields would be relocated to east of the site, to the front of the proposed school, and the remote playing fields on the eastern side of Thong Lane would be retained, and fenced. None of the sports pitches would be floodlit.

13. The existing palisade boundary fence would be retained, and a new internal fence line would be established around the building to secure the play areas from the community and civic spaces. The MUGA would be enclosed with a new 3 metre high weldmesh fence. In addition, a new weldmesh security fence would be erected around the perimeter of the sports pitches on the opposite side of Thong Lane. The applicant advises that the fence would be erected inside the line of the existing perimeter vegetation in order to minimise its visual impact on the Green Belt to the east.
14. Opportunities for habitat creation would be developed throughout the planting and landscape design to maximise the biodiversity value of the site and enhance the educational value of the school grounds. Existing valuable wildlife habitats would be retained and integrated into the landscaping proposals for the site, which would be drawn up in close consultation with ecologists to ensure that the planting design would meet the strategic objectives of the Biodiversity Plan in terms of species selection, habitat creation, management and maintenance. An Ecological Scoping Survey was submitted with this application which concludes that the possible presence of several protected species (birds, bats and reptiles) should be taken into account before development work commences, and makes recommendations that should form conditions of consent.
15. An existing mobile telephone mast would be relocated on the site by Orange PCS Ltd to enable the existing chimney to be demolished. The position of the telephone mast would be determined by Orange PCS Ltd in consultation with Gravesham Borough Council.
16. The school has been designed to achieve an 'excellent' BREEAM rating. The current design features proposed include biomass boilers, heat recovery ventilation plant, solar connectors for hot water heating, low water use sanitary fittings, rainwater harvesting, the maximisation of natural day light and ventilation, and day-lighting lighting controls. In addition, the design would enable photoelectric cells to be added in the future when technological developments made this form of green energy more affordable.
17. CCTV cameras would monitor the external and internal spaces. The design includes red-wall monitoring that would enable a security contractor to identify unauthorised access to the perimeter of the building, enabling a response team to be dispatched prior to having to wait for an internal alarm to be triggered. Reception staff would be able to monitor pedestrian and vehicle movements, again ensuring that there is no unauthorised access. The design of the building would enable it to be zoned for out of hours community use. A separate out of school hours entrance to the indoor sports facilities is proposed in order to maximise its use whilst not compromising the security of the remainder of the building.
18. The existing vehicular access to the site from Thong Lane would be retained, albeit modified to allow longer vehicles, such as buses, to enter the site. Upon entrance to the site, all vehicles for the school would turn to the left, and all vehicles for the Vocational Centre, service access, and old maths building turn right. Dedicated vehicle and pedestrian/cycle routes with separate access points to the site would be provided, with the intention to minimise the potential for vehicle and pedestrian conflict by reducing the need for crossing points. Parking for the maths block and Vocational Centre would be in



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the main car park, not outside the buildings themselves. The only parking spaces located by the buildings would be for designated accessible parking. The main car park would provide 150 spaces, and would be available for out-of-hours use for community functions. Covered cycle storage is also proposed.

19. Throughout the construction works it is proposed that a temporary construction access be located to the north of the site, accessed via Cervia Way and the Community Centre's car park. The construction access road would run between the school buildings and the maths block to the construction compound, located to the rear of the existing school and adjacent to the northern boundary of the site, upon the proposed siting of the MUGA.

*Reduced copies of the submitted drawings showing the site layout, elevations, and access are attached.*

**Planning Policy**

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

(i) **The Kent & Medway Structure Plan: Adopted 2006:**

**Policy SP1** - Seeks to conserve and enhance Kent's environment and ensure a sustainable pattern of development.

**Policy SS2-** Within the Green Belt there is a general presumption against inappropriate development

**Policy QL1** – Seeks to conserve and enhance the environment through the quality of development and design.

**Policy QL12-** Provision will be made for the development of local services, including schools, in existing residential areas. Flexibility in the use of buildings for mixed community uses, and the concentration of sports facilities at schools, will be encouraged.

**Policy EN8** - Wildlife habitats and species will be protected, conserved and enhanced. Development likely to have an adverse effect, directly, indirectly or cumulatively, on important habitats or species, will not be permitted unless the adverse impact on an important nature conservation resource can be adequately mitigated and/or compensated.

**Policy EN9** - Tree cover and the hedgerow network should be maintained. Additionally, they should be enhanced where this would improve the landscape, biodiversity, or link existing woodland habitats.

**Policy NR5** – The quality of Kent's environment will be conserved and enhanced. This will include the visual, ecological, geological, historic and water environments, air quality, noise and levels of tranquillity and light intrusion.

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**Policy TP19** - Development proposals must comply with the respective vehicle parking policies and standards adopted by Kent County Council and Medway Council.

(ii) **Gravesham Local Plan First Review (adopted 1994):**

**Policy TC0** - The Borough Council will give priority to conserving and enhancing the built environment.

**Policy TC1** - The Borough Council will not normally permit proposals for new development which cause harm to interests of acknowledged importance. Applications will be considered in accordance with a number of design principles including the appropriateness of scale and massing, use of good quality materials, the design respecting the character and appearance of existing buildings, and safeguarding the amenity of neighbouring properties.

**Policy GB2** - There will be a strong presumption against permitting new development in areas subject to Green Belt policies.

**Policy LT3** - Planning permission will not normally be granted for proposals which involve the loss of playing fields.

**Policy T1** - The Local Planning Authority will consider the impact on the transport system and on the environment of traffic generated by new development and would wish to ensure that all proposed developments are adequately served by the highway network.

**Policy P3** - The Borough Council will expect development to make provision for vehicle parking, in accordance with Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards.

(iii) **Gravesham Local Plan Second Review (deposit version 2000):**

**Policy T1** - In considering development proposals, the Local Planning Authority will consider the impact of the generated travel demand on the transport system as a whole, and on the environment.

**Policy T16** - Provision will be made for vehicle parking in accordance with the Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards.

**Policy NE6** - Development on sites containing or directly adjacent to trees or hedgerows of amenity, wildlife or landscape value will only be allowed if these landscape features are protected and retained in the long term. All new proposals for new development must incorporate new landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.

**Policy NE7** - The Borough Council will encourage the implementation of wildlife enhancement initiatives and the planting of new landscaping in suitable locations to improve the ecological resource and the appearance of the environment.

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**Policy NE19** -Proposals for noise generating development will require a full assessment of the impact.

**Policy NE20** -Development involving the provision of external lighting will require the submission of details to demonstrate that the proposed lighting scheme is the minimum necessary for security, safety and working purposes, taking into account the design of the scheme.

**Policy BE1** - The Borough Council will give priority to conserving and enhancing the built environment in both the urban and rural areas.

**Policy BE12** -A high standard of layout, design and materials will be expected for all new development. The Borough Council will not normally permit proposals for new developments which cause harm to the interests of acknowledged importance. Applications will be considered against a number of criteria.

**Policy RA2** - Within the Green Belt, inappropriate development will not be permitted.

**Policy LT2** - The Borough Council will protect and enhance the existing elements of the Green Grid network to help achieved the objectives of the Green Grid.

**Policy LT3** - Any development within the Green Grid network justified in terms of other policies, must incorporate Green Grid links, areas, corridors and linear features within the proposal, in accordance with the objectives of the Green Grid.

**Policy SC3** - Any proposals affecting existing or new schools will be evaluated in the context of their importance as a community resource, their role in the education process and their contribution of the open space provision for the Green Grid.

**Consultations**

21. **Gravesham Borough Council:** initially objected to the revised proposal. In summary, the Borough Council raised concern regarding:

- The siting of the new school building and the decision to build on the existing playing fields, and the resulting loss of a strong site frontage;
- The proposals detrimental impact on local residential amenity;
- Potential noise impacts from the MUGA, and headlight glare from the car park;
- The car park layout and proposed construction access;

Following the submission of additional information in response to these points of objection, Gravesham Borough Council has withdrawn its objection, and comments as follows:

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“With regard to the access, siting and phasing of the development the Borough Council withdraws its objection.”

With regard to the risk of nuisance to adjoining residents, particularly adjacent to the MUGA and the service area, the Borough Council remains concerned at the risk of nuisance. However, the Senior Environmental Health Officer concedes that conditions as follows should allow protection and mitigation to be achieved:

Construction activity:

Requiring method statement to identify how control of noise and dust is to be achieved and to require details of wheel washing equipment.

Plant noise

The condition requiring noise control so that plant does not exceed +3dB appears to have been accepted

Noise from school

Noted that all musical rooms can be sealed and mechanical ventilated- need to take care where the outlets of these ducts are or that they are appropriately baffled.

Noise from MUGA (and service area)

Recommend the installation of prior approved noise barrier at northern edge. Restriction on the hours of use, and on installation of floodlighting.

Car park

Recommend the installation of prior approved noise barrier at southern edge

The remaining issue of concern relates to the restriction of community use of pitches.”

Gravesham Borough Council’s Sport and Recreation Manager summarises the concerns of the Borough Council as follows:

“The current theoretical supply of pitches across the Borough meets demand (as of 2006). However, in **reality** this isn’t straight forward especially as the make up of provision includes other non-statutory providers of formal provision such as private landowners and community sites which over time have reduced, especially in the last few years. The assessments also highlight that some local clubs currently access facilities outside of the Borough, who now wish to migrate back into the area due to losing provision in neighbouring authorities. In fact a number of local clubs (predominantly juniors) have been contacting the Council anxiously looking for pitches in the last few weeks, including those associated with the BSF sites. This is also compounded further by the fact that pitches cannot be altered from adult to youth to cater for different age groups throughout the week or season. Therefore, currently accessible pitches within Gravesham are in fact in short supply in order to cover the range of ages and sizes needed for association football. On the information provided so far and the need for further clarification from the existing users actual needs, this Department objects to the further loss of formal playing pitches within the Borough.”

In addition, The Borough Council’s Estates and Valuation Manager confirms that he is unhappy that the development plans show an access through Council Land at Cervia Way. Until an agreement is in place, the Borough Council will not accept the access as proposed, via the Community Centre car park.

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**The Divisional Transport Manager:** strongly recommends that a condition be secured requiring the applicant to submit details of works to be carried out in the public highway, to be approved by Kent Highway Services, prior to any works commencing on site. These works would need to be secured through a Section 278 Agreement with the Highway Authority, and should include details of access arrangements, carriageway treatment and pedestrian crossing point and associated footway link. Whilst it would have been preferable for access/crossing point details to have been produced and Safety Audited to Stage 1 prior to any permission being granted, in the absence of available time, a combined Stage 1 and 2 Safety Audit would need to be submitted pursuant to condition. However, this would not require a separate planning condition as a full safety audit would be required as part of the Section 278 Agreement procedure.

In addition, there are no objections in principle to the location of the temporary construction access via the community centre car park, as proposed. However, due to the fact that the temporary construction route would be accessed via the existing vehicular access serving the community centre, it is strongly recommended that a condition be secured requiring the applicant to agree details with Kent Highway Services of how construction vehicle movements would be safely separated from the existing Community Centre car park movements, and associated pedestrian movements, prior to any works commencing on site.

It is also recommended that the School Travel Plan be updated.

**The County Council's Landscape Consultant:** comments as follows:

"In general, we consider that the proposals would be beneficial in terms of updating the existing school buildings, providing a landscape structure for the site and mitigating necessary existing vegetation removal.

Whilst we are satisfied that the existing vegetation around the sports field on the eastern side of Thong Lane would not be adversely affected by the proposed fencing, and we appreciate the safety requirement of having the fence, we consider that it would be slightly detrimental to the visual aesthetics of the field. We suggest that the fence is powder coated in a subtle shade of green so that it is less visually intrusive."

The following matters should be covered by planning conditions:

- Details of the species, plant sizes and planting densities for all proposed trees, shrubs and hedges for approval, as well as a five year maintenance schedule and replacement planting regime to ensure the establishment of the vegetation.
- The applicant reviews and follows the guidelines set out in BS5837:2005 – Trees in Relation to Construction, to make sure all protective measures are taken to ensure the continued health of the trees to be retained.
- The planting proposals around the site boundary, especially the southern and northern boundaries should be carefully planned to ensure any gaps are in-filled to provide adequate screening of the school from the adjacent residential properties. Care should be taken along the northern boundary as larger tree planting can affect the quality of light reaching the adjacent properties.
- The Informal Hard Play area at the west of the site is shown as green. We request confirmation of the surface material to be used in this area.
- Further details about the proposed surfacing and use of the area around the Vocational Centre and Maths building at the north-east of the site. We

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recommend that the boundary receives some soft landscaping treatment to soften the views from the residential properties beyond.”

**The County Council’s Noise Consultant:** is satisfied that any concerns over potential noise pollution as a result of this application would be controlled by the imposition of the following condition:

*Prior to the commencement of the works a specification for an acoustic barrier, to be erected along the northern boundary adjacent to the MUGA and service area, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The specification shall include details of height, materials and acoustic properties and shall demonstrate that the proposal shall not result in a change to the current ambient noise environment. The acoustic fence shall then be constructed in accordance with the approved details prior to the first use of the MUGA and/or Service Area.*

**The Environment Agency:** raises no objection to the proposal subject to the imposition of conditions regarding groundwater and contaminated land, and informatives regarding fuel/chemical storage.

**The County Archaeologist:** no comments received to date.

**Sport England:** raises objection to the application and comment as follows:

“As you will be aware Sport England raised an objection to this application as the proposed development does not meet with any of the specific circumstances to our adopted playing fields policy. The development would result in the loss of playing field land equivalent to two grass playing pitches despite the Design and Access Statement indicating that the playing field land would be relocated once works are complete.

The additional information subsequently provided by the applicant, along with discussions held with the applicant, have focussed on Gravesham Borough Council’s 2002 Playing Pitch Assessment and Sport England’s playing fields policy.

Sport England notes the conclusions of the Playing Pitch Assessment but is concerned over the relevance of its use in assessing this current planning application. The study is six years old and does not therefore provide the robust up to date assessment required by Sport England when assessing such applications. Although not noted by the applicant, Sport England is aware that this assessment was updated in 2006. However, it appears that the 2006 work only updated the assessment’s methodology and did not update the 2002 data on which the assessment is based.

Given the above concern, it is understood that the applicant is now in discussions with Gravesham Borough Council’s Leisure Department regarding the playing pitch needs in the area. It is understood that these discussions are also looking into possible replacement provision that could assist in mitigating the loss of playing field land resulting from this application.

The additional information provided to date does not provide the adequate justification required for the loss of the playing field land or demonstrates that the application meets with any of the specific circumstances to our adopted playing fields policy.

Consequently, Sport England maintains the current objection to the application and looks forward to hearing the outcome of the discussions between the applicant and Gravesham Borough Council’s Leisure Department.”

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**Police Architectural Liaison Officer:** no comments received to date.

**The County Fire Officer:** confirms that the means of access is considered to be satisfactory.

**EDF Energy:** has no objection to the proposal, providing their rights regarding access and maintenance of cables within the area are maintained at all times.

**CABE:** has no comment to make on the proposed development.

**Local Member**

22. The local County Members, Mrs M. Newell & Mrs J. Cribbon were notified of the application on the 19 February 2008, and the amended proposal on the 15 May 2008.

**Publicity**

23. The application was publicised by advertisement in a local newspaper, the posting of five site notices and the individual notification of 90 nearby properties. In addition, all 90 nearby properties were notified of the amended proposal.

**Representations**

24. To date 16 letters of representation have been received from neighbouring properties with regards to the original proposal. A further 8 letters have been received following the submission of amendments, primarily objecting to the construction access via Cervia Way. A petition against the construction access via Cervia Way was received, signed by 45 signatories. The main comments/points of concern and objection can be summarised as follows:

Impact upon residential amenity:

- Residents currently face/back onto the school playing field. Putting a large building here would have unacceptable impacts;
- The new building would exacerbate current problems experienced by local residents such as vandalism, trespass, crime, litter and antisocial behaviour, due to its close proximity to neighbouring properties;
- There would be a marked increase in the levels of noise and light pollution;
- It is requested that a noise survey be undertaken;
- Outside teaching of music and drama so close to residential properties would have unacceptable impacts;
- Wider community use and use outside of school hours is a cause of concern;
- Privacy would be lost due to overlooking of gardens and property;
- It is understood that the 2<sup>nd</sup> level of the building will encompass outside terraced areas, which would clearly overlook properties;
- CCTV could affect the privacy of local residents;
- The building is too close to the boundary, and too high, having a detrimental impact upon a number of local residents;
- The building would be overbearing and should be moved much further away from the boundary;
- Natural light would be blocked by the school;
- The school would be set far back from Thong Lane, raising security concerns;

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- The proposed siting of the school would block exiting views to the Thames, and could devalue property prices;
- Local residents will be inconvenienced during construction works;
- The construction access would generate noise, dirt and pollution;
- Objection is raised to the proposed construction compound adjacent to the northern boundary. It is too close to residential properties and will cause noise, dust and air pollution;

#### Design:

- The proposed scheme is very short-sighted and the design of the school is questioned. It is considered that it could become a blot on the landscape rather than a futuristic build as the design may date quickly. A more contemporary design is suggested;
- The design is not in keeping with surrounding development;
- The design of the school would create secluded areas with poor lines of sight, leading to poor pupil supervision and antisocial behaviour;
- The design creates a very large building which is not necessary;

#### Loss of playing fields:

- The existing school playing field is shared with Raynehurst School. To lose this community resource would be a great loss;
- The development would result in a reduction of playing fields and sports pitches;
- The siting of the school on the existing playing fields is questioned and objected to;

#### Access and parking:

- An increased amount of car parking is proposed, which suggests an increase in pupil numbers;
- The proposal has potential highway implications, including traffic congestion, lack of safe pedestrian access, and increased crossing of Thong Lane to access the playing fields;
- Separate vehicle and pedestrian access points should be provided;
- The site compound and construction access road is proposed alongside the schools boundary with residential properties. This is not appropriate or acceptable, and should be moved;
- The amended positioning of the construction access is welcomed;
- Strong objection is raised to the amended construction access via Cervia Way. Local roads are narrow and local residents park on both sides. In addition, Cervia Way is a cul-de-sac;
- The site compound and construction access road is proposed alongside the schools boundary with residential properties. This is not appropriate or acceptable, and should be moved;
- The amended positioning of the construction access is welcomed;
- Strong objection is raised to the amended construction access via Cervia Way. Local roads are narrow and local residents park on both sides. In addition, Cervia Way is a cul-de-sac;

#### Alternative locations:

- It is suggested that the school be built on the playing fields to the east of Thong Lane, or upon the existing footprint of the school;
- Mobile accommodation should be proposed, to house students whilst the existing school is re-built on its original siting;



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- It was hoped following the Members' Site Meeting that the School would be rebuilt on the existing footprint. To move the building 15 metres to the north is not a sufficient change;
- The building could be built on the north east boundary where it would only back onto the Viewpoint, a social club;

Other:

- It is considered that the applicants are trying to disguise of distance by measuring from the elevation of properties as apposed to the original measurements from the boundary;
- What would happen to the telephone mast?
- The School has not consulted with neighbouring residents, and have assumed that the development is a forgone conclusion;
- It should be noted that residents are not against development of the school, but are strongly opposed to be relocation of the building;

In addition, a letter from the Manager of one of the Riverview United Football Teams was received, forwarded under the cover of a letter from the Member of Parliament for Gravesham. The letter states that the Riverview United teams train and play their matches at Thamesview School, and would lose approximately 8 of their pitches as a result of the development. The letter goes onto say that the School have said that they may be able to give Riverview United one, maybe two pitches, which is not practical to run about 10 teams.

**Discussion**

25. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan policies outlined in paragraph (20) above. Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. Issues of particular relevance include siting, design and massing, the provision of sports pitches, impact upon residential and local amenity, and highway implications. It should be noted that the playing field to the East of Thong Lane is within the Metropolitan Green Belt. However, the applicant is only proposing to fence the playing fields, which I do not consider would affect the openness of the Green Belt. I do not therefore consider the proposed development to be contrary to the general thrust of relevant Development Plan Policies.

**Siting, massing and design**

26. Policy QL1 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan and Policy TC1 of the Gravesham Borough Local Plan First Review require new developments to be of a high quality and well designed. The policies state that applications will be considered in accordance with a number of design principles including the appropriateness of scale and massing, use of good quality materials, the design respecting the character and appearance of existing buildings, and safeguarding the amenity of neighbouring properties. This application proposes the demolition of the existing school buildings, and the construction of a new school building with associated hard and soft landscaping, ancillary accommodation, sports facilities and car parking. The applicant advises that worn-out unsuitable accommodation would be replaced with high quality new accommodation, designed for new ways of learning. However, the principle of building a new school upon the playing field and not on the footprint of the existing school has met with objection. This will be discussed be discussed below.

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27. The proposed siting of the replacement Thamesview School has been amended throughout the consideration of this application in an effort to alleviate the concerns of neighbouring residents and the initial Borough Council objection. The building was moved approximately 15 metres further north, away from the southern boundary of the site. The implications of this will be discussed in more detail later in this report. First, the principle of locating the school upon the playing field, and not upon the footprint of the existing school needs to be considered. This underlying principle of the Thamesview BSF proposal previously met with objection from Gravesham Borough Council and continues to do so from local residents which border the site.
28. The applicant advises that the decision to propose a new build for this site was the subject of detailed studies by Kent County Council's advisors, who examined all options open to them, which included the refurbishment of the existing buildings and their redevelopment. In this case, the choice of building a new school represented the best physical, educational and financial solution. In response to the concerns of local residents and the Borough Council, the applicant has produced a report which aims to aid local understanding as to why a location to the west of the existing buildings was chosen over all other options. The report concludes that there are a number of reasons why the development of the new school on the site of the existing could not be favourably considered. These principally relate to the impact such a proposal would have on the delivery of education at the school during the course of construction, the cost of the proposal and the physical issues arising which cannot be easily resolved. The applicant advises that, in contrast, the proposed development, which builds to the rear of the existing school, overcomes those problems.
29. The option of rebuilding the school to the east of Thong Lane was considered and discounted by the applicant due to the fact that this part of the school site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. This designation seeks to protect land from built development and maintain openness. The applicant advises that it is for this reason that the option of siting temporary buildings on this land was also dismissed. Whilst it may be possible to site buildings so as to minimise impacts on the surrounding area that still would not justify temporary encroachment onto this land. In this case the temporary buildings would simply be placed on the playing fields and would also involve the provision of substantial hard paved areas, which would effectively destroy the playing fields for a considerable amount of time. In addition, the applicant confirms that the uncertainty of obtaining planning permission for buildings in the Green Belt would in itself compromise the deliverability of the project. In particular, any inappropriate development in the Green Belt can only be countenanced if there are no alternative locations available on non Green Belt land. In my view, this option would clearly fail to meet that basic test. How well the buildings could be screened in landscape terms is of no consequence to maintaining the physical presence of Green Belt land. In light of this information, I consider it likely that this option would have a detrimental impact on the openness of the Green Belt and could also meet with objection from Sport England. I therefore conclude that this option is not viable. This limitation, therefore, allows for the consideration of only two options for the redevelopment of Thamesview School.
30. The first of the two options would be to rebuild the school upon its existing footprint. In order to achieve this, there would be a requirement to house the existing school within mobile accommodation for some 800 pupils for the duration of the building works. This would have to include teaching spaces, a library, resource area, dining facilities and a large space for assembly, as well as specialist laboratory and technology facilities since this is a secondary school. The applicant advises that it would not be possible to provide sports facilities within temporary accommodation, although health suite facilities could be

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provided. It is estimated that a minimum of 5,200m<sup>2</sup> of temporary accommodation would be required, all of which would have to be surrounded by hard surfacing sufficient to satisfy health and safety requirements. The construction of such temporary accommodation would take 3 months. Following that, a 6 month period of demolition would be undertaken, including the removal of asbestos material from within the school building. The construction of the new school would then take place over a predicted 14 month period, which would be followed by the decanting of the school from the temporary accommodation, and its subsequent removal. Upon removal of the temporary accommodation, the playing fields would need to be reinstated and would not be available for use for approximately six months due to reseeding.

31. The long term advantages of this option are the containment of the new buildings largely on the footprint of the existing school, the retention of the playing fields to the east of Thong Lane, easy access for contractors to the building site from Thong Lane and, upon completion, this option maximises the areas available for playing fields and open space. However, the applicant advises that this option would represent a substantial increase in the cost of the project. Increased costs could potentially lead to the failure of the BSF proposals for Thamesview School, or could reduce the specification and quality of the finished product. An increase in cost would result in a substantial reduction in the amount of new building works, and would inevitably lead to the option of refurbishing some of the existing buildings, which have already been identified as unsuitable. The applicant advises that the savings required would reduce the new build element of the scheme by a minimum of 1250-1500 sq metres, with the school having to retain this amount of its existing premises to compensate. This would have longer term implications on the standard of accommodation and education that the pupils of Thamesview School would receive. Whilst cost is not strictly a planning consideration, it does need to be borne in mind that increasing the available funding is not an option for this particular development, which is already more costly than other BSF developments in Gravesend.
32. This option, to rebuild the school on the existing footprint, would also involve the total loss of educational facilities during the building contract, including indoor sports facilities. The applicant advises that sports provision could not be catered for within the temporary buildings. It has been suggested that alternative locations for indoor sports facilities may be available at the adjacent community centre, the nearby Cascades sports centre, or the adjacent Rayneshurst Junior School. The applicant states that the Rayneshurst Junior School sports facilities are appropriate for Primary School use, and are unsuitable to satisfy the requirements for sporting facilities within the secondary school programme. In addition, dual use of the facilities could not satisfactorily provide for both schools given that the junior school requires its own use of its facilities for many periods of the day. Cascades Leisure Centre lies to the south of the school, but any form of provision which requires travel to and from it gives rise to two particular issues. The first is that of security of the pupils which would be very difficult to ensure and would require significant additional supervision and the second is the time taken to transfer between the two facilities, which would make provision at Cascades impractical. I am satisfied that the applicant has given serious consideration to the provision of replacement sports facilities, and that there are no options available other than to retain the existing facilities until the new build is completed.
33. As detailed in paragraph 30, to build the replacement school upon the footprint of the existing would involve the delivery of education in temporary accommodation for a period of up to 2 years. The applicant advises that this would severely prejudice the schools ability to deliver improved attainment targets. Apart from the operational difficulties of delivering the curriculum over a prolonged period in temporary accommodation, the School would probably face a damaging decline in numbers given

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that some pupils would be otherwise condemned to inadequate accommodation for the rest of their time at the school. The option of closing the School for a couple of years would be equally as unpalatable, and would clearly jeopardise its long term future. In addition, Thamesview is a lead school for teaching disabled students and the current school has a Physically Disabled Unit. The hygiene and therapy suites would be difficult to accommodate in mobile buildings. In addition, it is estimated that building works would be extended by at least 9-12 months should the replacement school be built upon the existing footprint. This would exacerbate the impact of the construction works upon local residents, and increase the disruption and nuisance associated with construction and demolition.

34. The applicant also advises that there is a need to create additional parking areas on site, which are limited at present to the area between the road and the building, which is constrained in width. In addition, a further impact of this option would be the provision of two storey accommodation in close proximity to those dwellings backing onto the site in Ariel Close, where there are currently only single storey buildings. A common theme with all of the BSF projects is the need to create centralised facilities and provide a heart to each of the layouts, out of which other facilities radiate. To some degree this predetermines the overall shape and size of the building, and in order to achieve this within the confines of the existing school building area, the applicant advises that a two-storey building extending close to Ariel Close properties would be inevitable, as would substantial buildings fronting the site. If the new building was single storey the extensive footprint required to accommodate the school would cover the whole of the existing school footprint, as well as extending in a westerly direction onto the playing field. Moreover, the applicant states that this option would not allow for significant areas of car parking at the front of the site.
35. I consider that the applicant has thoroughly considered the option of building upon the existing footprint of the school, and has provided a robust and sound case for why it is not a viable option. In light of this, the applicant is continuing to propose to build the new school upon the playing field to the west of the site, to the rear of the existing school, albeit in a slightly revised position from that identified at the Member's site visit. I will now consider the merits of the proposed siting of the building, having regard to the amenity of neighbouring properties and the implications of building upon the playing field.
36. This application seeks planning permission to build a replacement Thamesview School upon the existing playing field. The principle of this has met with objection, but the applicant has submitted detailed justification for proposing this solution, and has provided sound reasoning as to why alternative options are not being pursued. This option would reduce the build time for the project to a minimum, 9-12 months faster than if the school were to be built on the existing footprint. In addition, a seamless delivery of education in permanent buildings could be provided. The applicant advises that this option represents the most cost effective solution for building at Thamesview, allowing for the greatest amount of money to be directed to the new facilities. In addition, the relocation of the buildings away from Thong Lane would allow for the satisfactory resolution of concerns regarding parking, circulation and access, the footprint of the building would be reduced and a more innovative solution to the front of the site could be proposed, defining the character and presence of the school. As with the first option, the playing fields to the east of Thong Lane would remain in use throughout the building project.
37. However, a disadvantage of the proposed siting is that the area available for playing fields would be reduced, and the new sports pitch to the east of the proposed school

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would not be available for twelve months following completion of the works, to allow the pitch to settle and grass to establish. It is for this reason that Sport England has objected to the proposal, a concern supported by Gravesham Borough Council. This matter will be discussed in detail later in this report.

38. A further disadvantage to the siting is that the scheme alters the outlook from neighbouring residential properties, particularly those to the south of the site who currently have views over the playing field to the River Thames. Although loss of view is not a material planning consideration, the impact on local and residential amenity as a result of the siting of the development must be considered. Local residents have expressed concern over the proposed siting of the school, and have raised strong objection on the grounds of overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of light, and general amenity issues such as noise and light pollution. In addition the massing and design of the proposed school has been questioned. These matters will be discussed below in more detail.
39. It must be noted that the applicant has amended this proposal following the receipt of objections from neighbouring residents, the earlier views of the Borough Council, and in response to the issues raised and discussed at the Members Site Visit. The applicant has moved the proposed building approximately 15 metres further away from the southern boundary of the site in an effort to alleviate the concerns of local residents. 'School 2' would extend closest to the boundary with neighbouring properties, and would be approximately 33 metres from the southern site boundary, increasing to 37 metres in a westerly direction due to the orientation of the school southern wing relative to the boundary. The school building would be approximately 38 metres from the side elevation of the closest residential property, and over 75 metres from the rear elevations of properties in Cambria Crescent. The proposed building would be approximately 47 metres from the southern boundary of the site at its closest point. Although it is recognised that the proposed school would result in a change of outlook, and loss of views of the River Thames for some properties to the south of the site, the distances between properties and the proposed building fall well within the guidance given within the Kent Design Guide (21 metres window to window and 11 metres window to wall).
40. The size and massing of the building is dictated by the amount of accommodation which has to be provided within the building, in conjunction with relevant guidance regarding classroom sizes etc. In an effort to reduce the mass of the building, which would be approximately 9 metres in height, with plant rooms and clerestory windows increasing the height to 11-12 metres in part, the applicant is proposing to lower the building into the ground. The applicant also proposes contouring of the land between the school and the southern boundary, and the introduction of landscaping and tree planting, in an effort to filter views of the site and help to screen the building. Although this will be discussed in more detail later in this report, this land contouring and landscaping would aid in breaking up the mass of the building. It should also be noted that at the same time as lowering the building, a revision to the construction has enabled the architect to reduce the depth of the ceiling voids, thereby reducing the overall height of the two-storey parts of the school by a further 120mm, and the higher elements by 180mm. Although these changes are minor in nature, the applicant has demonstrated that all reasonable measures have been taken in an effort to reduce the massing of the building.
41. The measures taken to reduce the mass of the building, in conjunction with the revised distances between the site boundary, residential properties and the proposed school building lead me to the conclusion that that applicant has taken all practicable steps to reduce the impact of the building. I do not consider that the development would overshadow neighbouring properties given the distance of the building from adjacent

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properties, nor do I consider that the development would be overbearing, especially upon completion of the landscaping works.

42. Neighbouring residents have expressed concern over the impact of the development with regards to loss of privacy and overlooking. These concerns largely arose from potential views from the first floor of the southerly wing of the new building, including those from the outdoor terrace area. The applicant advises that the revised proposal sets the first floor level 4 metres above ground floor level. This would equate to 62 AOD, and the finished ground levels to the south of this wing, as shown on the submitted landscape plan, would be approximately 61metres AOD, after the land is contoured. The existing boundary fencing and landscaping, which cuts off views into the residential gardens would continue to do so, and the applicant advises that this would apply even when viewed from the first floor level within the school. In addition, the applicant proposes the careful use of planting along the southern site boundary to assist in providing adequate screening to nearby residential properties. In addition, changes to the design of the end elevation have reduced the amount of windows in this part of the building, which would also assist in preventing any loss of privacy. The external terrace, situated at the southern end of 'school 2', would be enclosed on the southern elevation, open only on the east, affording views towards the car park and Thong Lane only. Again, this would mitigate against potential overlooking and loss of privacy concerns. In light of the changes made by the applicant, I consider that all reasonable measures have been taken to ensure that the proposed development does not have a significantly detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents with regards to loss of privacy or loss of light.
43. However, the proximity of the building, and its associated hard/soft informal play areas and games courts, to the boundary has also led neighbouring residents to raise concerns over noise and light pollution, and intrusion from CCTV cameras. With regards to lighting and potential intrusion from CCTV, the applicant has advised that external lighting is proposed and would be kept to a minimum of 10lux. The lighting levels would be sufficient to meet the needs of the CCTV coverage at night, and would also light external pathways and the car parking area when the school is in use in the evenings. The lights would be fitted with reflectors and louvers to minimise light pollution. CCTV coverage is proposed as part of the development and the external areas of the school, particularly in the vicinity of the buildings, would be monitored. However, the location of the cameras would be carefully selected to avoid overlooking of neighbouring gardens. Nevertheless, I consider that further details of external lighting to the whole of the site, including the building and car parking areas, and details of CCTV, should be submitted pursuant to condition should planning permission be granted. At that time, relevant parties would be consulted on the submitted details to ensure that they were acceptable in terms of being fit for purpose, whilst not having a detrimental impact on the amenity of local residents. In addition, although it is not currently proposed to floodlight the MUGA, I consider that in order to protect the amenity of the locality, a condition should be imposed to ensure that floodlighting could not be installed without the submission and approval of a separate planning application.
44. The design of the school building has also met with objection from neighbouring residents. The design of this, and the other schools in the BSF programme, is not a design that would have been submitted in the recent past for a new school. However, the design reflects the new methods of teaching and new styles of learning which have implications for the type and arrangement of spaces within schools. Local residents have objected to the design, claiming that is it unsympathetic to surrounding development, and out of character with the area. The applicant does confirm that the building, being a large educational establishment is, by its very nature, very different to the buildings

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found within the neighbourhood which, with the exception of the buildings at the school campus, are of a small scale domestic nature. The very scale and nature of the scheme demands a different design approach and one which has a generous plot size to visually separate it from its surroundings. Given the residential nature of the adjacent land uses, it is not appropriate to reproduce a domestic scale design on the application site. Moreover, it needs to be borne in mind that the surrounding neighbourhood is a product of its time (mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century) and the new school aims to be a product of its time (21<sup>st</sup> Century). However, the use of materials within the scheme does provide opportunity to create elements of harmony with its surroundings. Therefore, should Members be minded to permit, the submission of details of all materials to be used externally shall be required pursuant to planning condition. This would enable the County Planning Authority to ensure that the materials proposed are sympathetic to the locality, minimising the impact of the design of the development.

45. In summary, therefore, I consider that although regrettable that the school cannot be built upon the footprint of the existing school, the applicant has successfully demonstrated a case of need to build upon the playing field to the west of the site. The applicant has given reasoning and justification for the proposed siting and has made all reasonable efforts to amend and/or mitigate the design, siting and massing of the building. Subject to the imposition of conditions, including details of a scheme of lighting, details of CCTV, and details of all materials to be used externally, I am satisfied that the development would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents due to the siting, massing or design of the proposed building.

**Landscaping**

46. The applicant has provided an indicative landscaping proposal for the site, which includes details of planting and land contouring. The proposed landscaping scheme has not met with objection, and the County Council's Landscape Consultant has not raised objection or concern over the proposed scheme. However, whilst the Landscape Consultant is satisfied that the existing vegetation around the sports field to the east of Thong Lane would not be adversely affected by the fencing proposed to be installed, it is considered that the fencing would be slightly detrimental to the aesthetics of the field. It is suggested that the fence be powder coated 'a subtle shade of green' so that it is less visually intrusive. Therefore, should Members be minded to permit, I consider that details of all fencing and means of enclosure (for the whole site, not just the playing fields), including colour finish, should be submitted for approval pursuant to condition.
47. The County Landscape Advisor recommends a number of other matters be covered by planning condition, including details of tree protection and replacement planting, and details of surfacing to the hard plays areas and other areas of paving/hard landscaping. The submission of a detailed scheme of landscaping, to include details of tree protection measures, replacement landscaping and tree planting, details of surfacing and a programme of maintenance for 5 years, amongst other matters, should be submitted for approval pursuant to condition should permission be granted. This would be sent to consultation with the County Council's Landscape Advisor to ensure that the scheme included all of the recommendations made. Subject to this condition, I am satisfied that the proposed development would be acceptable in landscape terms.
48. However, as previously advised, the applicant is seeking permission to contour the land between the school building and the southern boundary, creating bund like features. Although these may aid in screening the development, and mitigating against the massing and height of the building, they could have a potential impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents. Although it is the applicant's intention to landscape these

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'bunds', and plant them with trees, there is also the potential that pupils could use them for informal outside play/recreation. The height of the 'bunds' could potentially allow pupils to overlook the gardens of neighbouring residents. This would not be acceptable in planning terms. Therefore, although the land contouring is acceptable in principle, I would wish to see and approve further details of the contouring levels, including site sections, in order to fully assess the potential impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents. Therefore, a condition of consent would be the submission and approval of details of the land contouring, including site sections, prior to the commencement of the development.

**Noise**

49. The proposed development could introduce potential sources of noise where there currently are none, as well as removing/reducing some sources of noise which are existing. Local residents have expressed concern over potential noise generation, as have Gravesham Borough Council and the County Council's Noise Advisor. Potential noise sources include the MUGA, service area, car park, playing field and games courts. Although the applicant has submitted further information regarding potential noise impacts and subsequent mitigation, and has proposed to erect an acoustic fence to the northern boundary adjacent to the MUGA, it is considered that additional information is still required.
50. Gravesham Borough Council has requested that various conditions of consent be imposed, should permission be granted. First, it is requested that a construction method statement be submitted to identify how noise and dust nuisance would be controlled, and to include details of wheel washing facilities. In addition, a condition requiring that noise from plant does not exceed +3dB is requested. Both of these matters can be made conditions of consent, ensuring that noise and dust from construction and plant would not impact upon the amenity of local residents.
51. The Borough Council also notes that all musical rooms can be sealed and mechanically ventilated, and it is suggested that the applicant needs to take care where the outlets of the ventilation ducts are located, or that they are appropriately baffled. I see no reason why this routine requirement cannot be dealt with and I consider that this be added to the consent as an informative, advising the applicant of the Borough Council's advice.
52. The Borough Council recommends the installation of the proposed acoustic fence, at northern edge, adjacent to the MUGA, prior to the first use of the facility. The erection of an acoustic fence along the southern boundary, adjacent to the car park, is also recommended by the Borough Council. With regard to the acoustic fence to the northern boundary, the County Council's Noise Consultant recommends that this be extended to mitigate any noise generated by the School's service area. Therefore, I consider the following condition, as recommended by the County Council's Noise Consultant, to be an acceptable approach in ensuring that appropriate mitigation is installed on site prior to first use of the MUGA and service area:

*Prior to the commencement of the works a specification for an acoustic barrier, to be erected along the northern boundary adjacent to the MUGA and service area, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The specification shall include details of height, materials and acoustic properties and shall demonstrate that the proposal shall not result in a change to the current ambient noise environment. The acoustic fence shall then be constructed in accordance with the approved details prior to the first use of the MUGA and/or Service Area.*



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53. With regards to an acoustic fence to the southern boundary, adjacent to the car park, this has not been identified as an area of concern by the County Council's Noise Advisor. Although screening would be required along this boundary to mitigate the impact of light pollution, potentially from car headlights, the need for an acoustic fence has not been identified. Therefore, rather than condition that an acoustic fence be provided, I consider it appropriate to condition that the applicant undertake further survey work to investigate the possible noise implications of the car park, and should it be deemed to be necessary, provide details of mitigation works. This should be submitted, approved and any required mitigation in place prior to the first use of the car park.

**Community use**

54. It is proposed that there would be community use of the school buildings and the associated sports facilities, a principle which is supported by Kent & Medway Structure Plan Policy QL12. However, at this stage there are few details against which to assess the potential impact. In light of this, and in order to protect the amenities of nearby residential properties, it would be appropriate for details of community use to be submitted for approval pursuant to planning condition. These details would need to include proposed hours of use for indoor and external facilities, the types of uses proposed and the frequency of use, as well as detailing how use of the facilities by the local community would be managed. The submitted details would be sent to consultation with relevant consultees to ensure that the proposed community use would not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of the locality. Once considered acceptable and approved, the community use of the facilities must strictly adhere to the hours of use and details given. Subject to the imposition of such a condition, I consider that community use of the development would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenities of the locality.

**Access/Highways**

55. It is proposed that the existing vehicular access from Thong Lane be retained, albeit modified to allow longer vehicles, such as buses, to enter the site. Upon entrance to the site, all vehicles for the school would turn to the left, and all vehicles for the Vocational Centre, service access, and old maths building turn right. Dedicated vehicle and pedestrian/cycle routes with separate access points to the site are proposed, with the intention to minimise the potential for vehicle and pedestrian conflict by reducing the need for crossing points. The main car park would provide 150 spaces, and would be available for out-of-hours use for community functions. Covered cycle storage is also proposed. This development would not result in an increase in staff or pupil numbers and would not, therefore, exacerbate any existing highway problems. In fact, the provision of a greater number of parking spaces, cycle parking, and improved access arrangements, could reduce any highway problems currently experienced as a result of the school.
56. The Divisional Transport Manager raises no objection to this application, but strongly recommends that a condition be secured requiring the applicant to submit details of works to be carried out in the public highway, to be approved by Kent Highway Services, prior to any works commencing on site. These works would need to be secured through a Section 278 Agreement with the Highway Authority, and should include details of access arrangements, carriageway treatment and pedestrian crossing point and associated footway link. Although it would have been preferable for access/crossing point details to have been produced and Safety Audited to Stage 1 prior to the determination of the application, in the absence of available time, a combined Stage 1 and 2 Safety Audit would need to be submitted pursuant to condition. However, this

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would not require a separate planning condition as a full safety audit would be required as part of the Section 278 Agreement procedure. In addition to the Divisional Transport Manager, the County Fire Officer has also confirmed that means of access are considered to be satisfactory. Therefore, subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the applicant to submit details of works to be carried out to the public highway, to include the details outlined above, I do not consider that the development would have an adverse impact upon the local highway network. It is also recommended that the School Travel Plan be updated, and this would also form a condition of consent.

57. Throughout the construction works it is proposed that a temporary construction access be located to the north of the site, accessed via Cervia Way and the Community Centre car park. The construction access road would run between the school buildings and the maths block to the construction compound, located to the rear of the existing school and adjacent to the northern boundary of the site, upon the proposed siting of the MUGA. Local objection was received regarding the two previously proposed construction accesses, but to date, the current proposed access has not met with objection from local residents. The Divisional Transport Manager raises no principle objections to the location of the temporary construction access via the Community Centre car park, as proposed. However, due to the fact that the temporary construction route would be accessed via the existing vehicular access serving the community centre, it is strongly recommended that a condition be secured requiring the applicant to agree details with Kent Highway Services of how construction vehicle movements would be safely separated from the existing Community Centre car park movements, and associated pedestrian movements, prior to any works commencing on site.
58. Gravesham Borough Council's Estates and Valuations Manager is concerned about the proposed access via the Community Centre car park. I am advised by the applicant that the school already use this access route, and have an agreement with the Community Centre that the car park be used as a pick up/drop of facility, with a pedestrian access from the car park into the school grounds. It is unclear whether Gravesham Borough Council has concerns over this permanent pedestrian access, or the proposed construction access. For information, the applicant has confirmed that the access would not become a permanent vehicular access. This is a land ownership issue and is not within the remit of the County Planning Authority to rectify. The applicant is in ongoing discussion with the Borough Council in an effort to resolve the matter. Should access rights not be granted, the applicant would be required to submit a formal amendment to the application.

**Sport England**

59. Sport England currently objects to this application on the grounds of loss of playing field. The applicant advises that Thamesview School currently has the capacity to provide 6 pitches, 2 on the main school site, and 4 on the land to the east of Thong Lane. I am advised that, in practice, the School do not use the land to the east of Thong Lane, and that it is used predominately by Riverview United at the weekend. The proposed scheme would make provision for 4 pitches on land to the east of Thong Lane, and 1 pitch to the front of the proposed school. There would therefore be a loss of 1 pitch as a result of this proposal.
60. Given the concerns of Sport England, the applicant is in discussion with Gravesham Borough Council's Leisure Department regarding the playing pitch requirements in the area. Sport England understand that these discussions are also looking into possible replacement provision that could assist in mitigating the loss of playing field land resulting from this application. The outcome of these discussions is unknown at the time

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of writing this report, and therefore Members of the Planning Applications Committee will be updated verbally of the position at the Committee Meeting.

61. I am hopeful that the issue will be resolved by the Committee Meeting, and an agreement reached on an additional pitch. In the event that it is not, and the objection remains, my recommendation proposes that the proposed development be referred to the Secretary of State for her consideration under the Town and Country Planning (Playing Fields) (England) Direction 1998, and that subject to her decision, planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

**Conclusion**

62. In summary, I consider that the proposal would provide a welcome increase in the provision of new education, community and sports facilities. Subject to the imposition of conditions, this proposal would not have a significantly detrimental effect on the amenity of local residents, the local highway network or the provision of sporting facilities. In my view it would not give rise to any significant material harm and is in accordance with the general thrust of relevant Development Plan Policies. There are no material planning considerations that indicate that the conclusion should be made otherwise. However, I recommend that various conditions and informatives be placed on any planning permission, including those outlined below.

**Recommendation**

63. I RECOMMEND that:

1) subject to Sport England being satisfied over the provision of an additional sports pitch, that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED subject to conditions;

2) in the event that a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached with Sport England over the provision of an additional sports pitch, that the application be REFERRED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE and that subject to her decision, PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED subject to conditions;

- the standard time limit;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- the submission of details of all materials to be used externally;
- details of all external lighting;
- details of CCTV;
- a scheme of landscaping, its implementation and maintenance;
- measures to protect trees to be retained;
- details of fencing, gates and means of enclosure, including colour finishes;
- details of the land contouring, including site sections;
- no floodlighting to the MUGA without the submission of a full planning application;
- noise from plant not to exceed +3dB;
- specification for an acoustic barrier to the northern boundary, adjacent to the MUGA and service area;
- further survey work to investigate possible noise implication from the car park, and any required mitigation;
- contaminated land;
- details of surface water drainage;

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- development to accord with the recommendations made in the submitted Ecological Scoping Survey;
- revision of the School Travel Plan;
- details of works to be carried out in the public highway;
- details of community use, including hours of use;
- hours of working during construction;
- details of how construction vehicle movements would be safely separated from the existing community centre car park movements, and associated pedestrian movements;
- details of a construction method statement;
- prevention of the deposition of mud on the local highway network;

Informative – regarding the outlets of ventilation ducts.

Case officer – Mary Green	01622 221066
Background documents - See section heading	

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**APPENDIX 1****APPLICATION GR/08/154: DEMOLITION OF EXISTING SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW TWO STOREY BUILDING, THE LAYING OUT OF PLAYING FIELDS, MULTI USE GAMES AREA, HARD PLAY AREA AND COURTS, CAR PARKING AND LANDSCAPING**

NOTES of a Planning Applications Committee Members' site meeting at the Thamesview School, Gravesend on Tuesday, 15 April 2008.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr R E King (Chairman), Mr J A Davies, Mrs E Green, Mr C Hibberd, Mr J F London, Mr W V Newman, Mr A R Poole and Mr F Wood-Brignall. Ms C J Cribbon was present as the local Member.

OFFICERS: Mrs S Thompson, Mr J Crossley and Miss M Green (Planning); and Mr A Tait (Legal and Democratic Services).

GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL: Cllr W Lambert and Ms K Joyce (Planning).

THE APPLICANTS: Land Securities Trillium (Mr M Butler), Ms R Andersson (KCC BSF Team) with Mr D Stewart (Lee Evans Planning), Mr I Taylor and Mr T den Dekker (Field and Clegg) and Mr I Blackman (KIER);

ALSO PRESENT were some 20 members of the public.

- (1) The Chairman opened the meeting. He explained that its purpose was for the Committee Members to familiarise themselves with the site and to listen to the views of interested parties.
- (2) Mr Crossley explained to the meeting that the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme was a nationwide initiative to reinvest in education at the secondary level. The Government had provided £45 billion to upgrade secondary schools, often by demolishing existing buildings and replacing them with 21<sup>st</sup> Century buildings. At Thamesview, most of the buildings were between 40 and 50 years old.
- (3) The BSF programme took account of new learning and teaching methods. There would be more individual tuition and IT as well as small and large group learning. This meant that schools would need to be built in a new style with a greater variety of spaces, incorporating a wider range of facilities for community use. The intention was that schools would become centres within their neighbourhoods for such activities as sports, leisure and catering.
- (4) Mr Crossley went on to say that there were 11 BSF applications in Kent, 4 of them in the Gravesend district. This particular application had brought up a number of planning issues. There was no objection in principle from the planning policy aspect to rebuilding schools on existing school sites, but a number of local amenity concerns were being raised and it was

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important for the Committee Members to be aware of these. Mr Crossley then invited Miss Green to explain the application in detail.

- (5) Miss Green said that the application had been submitted under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. It proposed the demolition of the existing school buildings and the construction of a new two storey school building, the laying out of playing fields, a multi use games area, hard play area and courts, car parking and landscaping.
- (6) The application proposed that the majority of the existing buildings would be demolished, with a new school building being constructed on the existing playing field. The only school buildings to be retained were the maths block and the vocational centre in the northern part of the existing school site. The playing field to the east of Thong Lane, which was within the Metropolitan Green Belt would be retained, as would vehicular access to the site from Thong Lane and the caretaker's house, located next to the school entrance.
- (7) Miss Green said that by locating the proposed school upon the existing playing field, the new school could be completed whilst the existing buildings remained fully operational. Upon completion of the new build, the existing school would be demolished and the land remodelled to provide informal and formal external play areas/sports facilities and car parking. The new school would occupy the centre of the school site, with car parking to the front of the site in the south and a small football pitch between the car parking and the retained vocational centre. The main car park would provide 150 spaces and would be available for out-of-hours use for community functions. Covered cycle storage was also proposed.
- (8) It was proposed to provide a multi use games area to the north eastern corner of the site, to the rear of the new school. This would be separated from the boundary with Raynehurst Primary School by an Ecological Garden. Informal hard play facilities and a kitchen garden were proposed to the south west area of the site. External dining facilities, outdoor teaching areas and an outdoor performance space were also proposed.
- (9) Miss Green went on to say that the proposed school had been designed around a central heart. Five "wings" would project from it to create an almost star-shaped building. Four of the wings would be specialist learning areas; each of them would have their own internal and external spaces, including an outdoor terrace on the second floor. These four wings would be two-storeys, and approximately 9m in height, although plant rooms on the roof and high level natural lighting would increase the height of the roof to 12m in places. The fifth "wing" would project to the north of the heart and would be the highest element of the new build, measuring approximately 13m in height. This wing would house the sports hall. School "2" would extend closest to the boundary with neighbouring properties. Miss Green pointed out the line of this proposed building which

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would be approximately 20m from the boundary and 22m from the side elevation of the closest residential property. The applicants proposed that the school would be finished in two different facing bricks and glazing.

- (10) The school would have a single main entrance serving students, staff and visitors, which would be clearly visible from Thong Lane and the car parking area.
- (11) Miss Green then said that the existing pallsade boundary fence would be retained, and a new internal fence line would be established around the building to secure the play areas from the community and civic spaces. The multi use games area in the north west corner of the site would be enclosed with a new 3m high weld mesh fence. In addition, a new weld mesh security fence would be erected around the perimeter of the sports pitches on the opposite side of Thong Lane. The design of the building would enable it to be zoned for out of hours community use.
- (12) Miss Green then turned to the construction phase. She said that it was proposed that a new construction access would be located to the south of the existing vehicular access, next to the southern school boundary. The access road would run along the southern boundary to the construction compound, located to the rear of the existing school and to the south of the proposed school, adjacent to the southern boundary of the site.
- (13) Miss Green summarised the views of statutory consultees. She said that Gravesham BC, the County Council's Landscape Consultant and its Noise Consultant all required additional information to be submitted before the application was determined. Sport England had raised objection to the proposal on the grounds that there was a lack of information regarding the justification for the proposed loss of playing field land.
- (14) Miss Green concluded her presentation by saying that an additional 16 letters of representation had been received from neighbouring properties to the south of the site. They raised objection to the siting, height and massing of the proposed building, design, proximity to the boundary and neighbouring properties, overshadowing, loss of light, noise and light pollution, and to the highway implications.
- (15) Ms Cribbon said that many of the local residents had contacted her with their concerns about the proposal. They were not against the BSF programme but rather against its local impact. They wanted the building to be moved further away from the site boundary to the south. She was now more concerned than before having heard Miss Green's description of the construction access. She also supported the objection from Sport England about the loss of playing field land. She asked the Committee to take into account that the whole point of the BSF programme was that the school should stay open for longer hours and at weekends in order to cater for other activities including community use.



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- (16) Mr Lambert (Gravesham BC) said that this proposal could not have been worse if it had been designed to upset the School's southern neighbours. He was particularly concerned about the location of the buildings and suggested that it should be built further down to the north. He also asked for the proposed car park to be moved away from the boundary in order to reduce noise and pollution impacts on the neighbours.
- (17) Following a question by Mr Poole, the distance from the proposed end of the school to the southern boundary fence was measured as 19.20m. Mr Crossley asked everyone to bear in mind that the shape of the proposed building meant that it would not present a flat façade all along the boundary at that distance.
- (18) Mr Wood-Brignall asked why the applicants did not simply build on the current site a little bit at a time. Mr Crossley said that there would be a requirement to keep the school fully operational, and it would not be practicable to close the school for a year or two and provide a large number of mobile classrooms.
- (19) Mr Stewart (Lee Evans Planning) said that the key problems associated with the project were how to build whilst maintaining good standard educational facilities. There were also important economic and Health and Safety considerations. There would be a substantial difference in the time it would take to complete the building if it was developed on the site of the existing built area.
- (20) Mr Stewart went on to say that the applicants had taken a careful note of the question of the proximity of the building and were looking to see if it could be moved further away. He asked everyone to bear in mind that the base of the building would be between 0.5 to 1m below the level of the field. He added that concerns had been raised over the proposed CCTV cameras. These would be part of the building and would be operated by the School both in and out of school hours.
- (21) Mr Davies said that he had a similar question to Mr Wood-Brignall. He too believed that it would be possible to build on the site of the existing building. He said that this had been achieved at Pembury Hospital. This suggested that any Health and Safety or educational problems could be addressed.
- (22) Mr Taylor (Field and Clegg) said that as the architect he had attended the recent public meeting. The question of building on the existing site had been raised at that meeting. There were no technical reasons (such as ground conditions) why this could not be achieved. The main difficulties were the health and safety of the pupils and the cost of doing so. The

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process of building on the existing site would be very intricate and complicated. It would also put back the completion date by three years.

- (23) Mr Taylor then said that following the public meeting, a way had been found to move the building façade further away from the boundary by between 10 and 15m. It would also be possible to remove the upper floor windows. The impact would be further reduced because the level of the proposed new building would be 1m below the field, which was in turn 1m below the levels of the neighbouring houses.
- (24) Residents made a number of points about the proposal which are summarised below:-
- (a) It would be better to build the new school on the existing site, even if it was more expensive and time-consuming to do so.
- (b) Thamesview School had only just come out of Special Measures. It was the teachers and pupils who made a school successful or otherwise. In any case, why had the contractors tied themselves to building the new school within two years?
- (c) If, as Mr Stewart was saying, the contractor's bid had been put in for all 11 BSF schools in Kent, why not save money on the less problematic school in Hall Road and divert funds to this one? This would enable a good school to be built in an acceptable manner.
- (d) A local resident said that when she had put in an application for a loft conversion to Gravesend BC, it had nearly been refused on the grounds that it would be visually unsuitable, yet now it was proposed to locate a very large unsuitable building at the bottom of her garden. Furthermore, the proposed development would deny her and her neighbours their right to light. She knew that the light impact would be great as even the cutting down of a tree by the boundary fence had had a significant impact. *Mr Taylor said that he would be prepared to visit her house in order for the architects to assess the situation.*
- (e) Why could the new building not be located in the field on the other side of Thong Lane? Alternatively, this would be a good venue for mobile classrooms whilst the new school was built on the existing site. *Mrs Thompson advised that this field was in the Metropolitan Green Belt, where there was a presumption against new development. Any application for development there would need to demonstrate very special circumstances.*
- (f) The field where the new school was proposed was currently beautiful and open. Even so, there was a large amount of unacceptable use. This included youngsters climbing over the supposedly unassailable palisade fencing into the neighbouring gardens and committing acts of

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vandalism such as breaking windows. Imagine what the consequences would be of having a built-up area so close to the boundary where there would be plenty of pockets for people to hide in.

(g) The education of the pupils would be disrupted no matter where the building was sited.

(h) The design of the proposed development was out-of-keeping with the design of the housing in the locality. This was a futuristic design and only the proposed building materials fitted in. *Mr Taylor said that the architects had considered the local environmental context and had also visited all the neighbouring streets. He believed that the design was appropriate.*

(i) The rooms in the proposed design were a very peculiar shape and would not readily lend themselves to the provision of good education.

(j) The concept of the design was to split the school into 4 sub-schools. This would encourage unhealthy rivalries.

(k) Thamesview School would have to put up with disruption for 2 years. The neighbouring residents would have to put up with the consequences for a lifetime.

(25) The Chairman clarified that the Planning Applications Committee had a role which was independent of the Education Authority. Any Member of the Committee who had had any role in bringing the application forward would be automatically disqualified from taking part in its determination. The Committee was charged with looking at the planning aspects of the application before it and could not look at other considerations such as cost.

(26) Members looked at the nearby properties from a distance a further 10 and 15 metres away from the site boundary.

(27) The Chairman thanked everyone for attending. The notes of the visit would be appended to the Head of Planning Applications Group's report to the determining Committee meeting.