

SECTION D
DEVELOPMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

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

Item D1

Erection of a canopy over bike-racks and parents' entrance alley and canopy over reception class play area, St. Peter's Methodist Primary School, Canterbury – CA/09/1361

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 17 February 2010

CA/09/1361 - Application by St. Peter's Methodist Primary School for the erection of a canopy over bike-racks and parents entrance alley and erection of a canopy over reception class play area at St. Peter's Methodist Primary School, St. Peters Grove, Canterbury

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted subject to condition

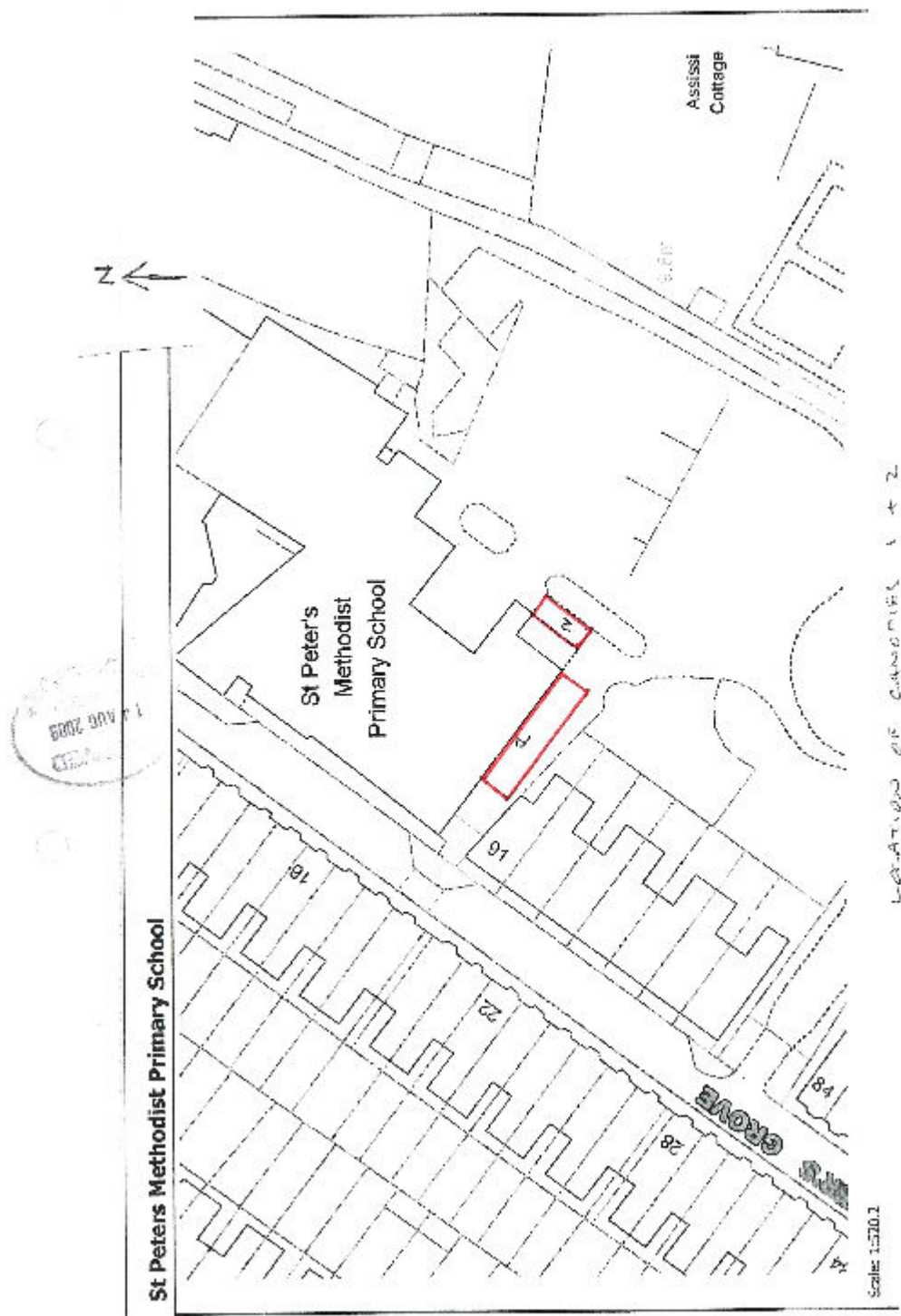
Local Member(s): Mr M.Vye

Classification: Unrestricted

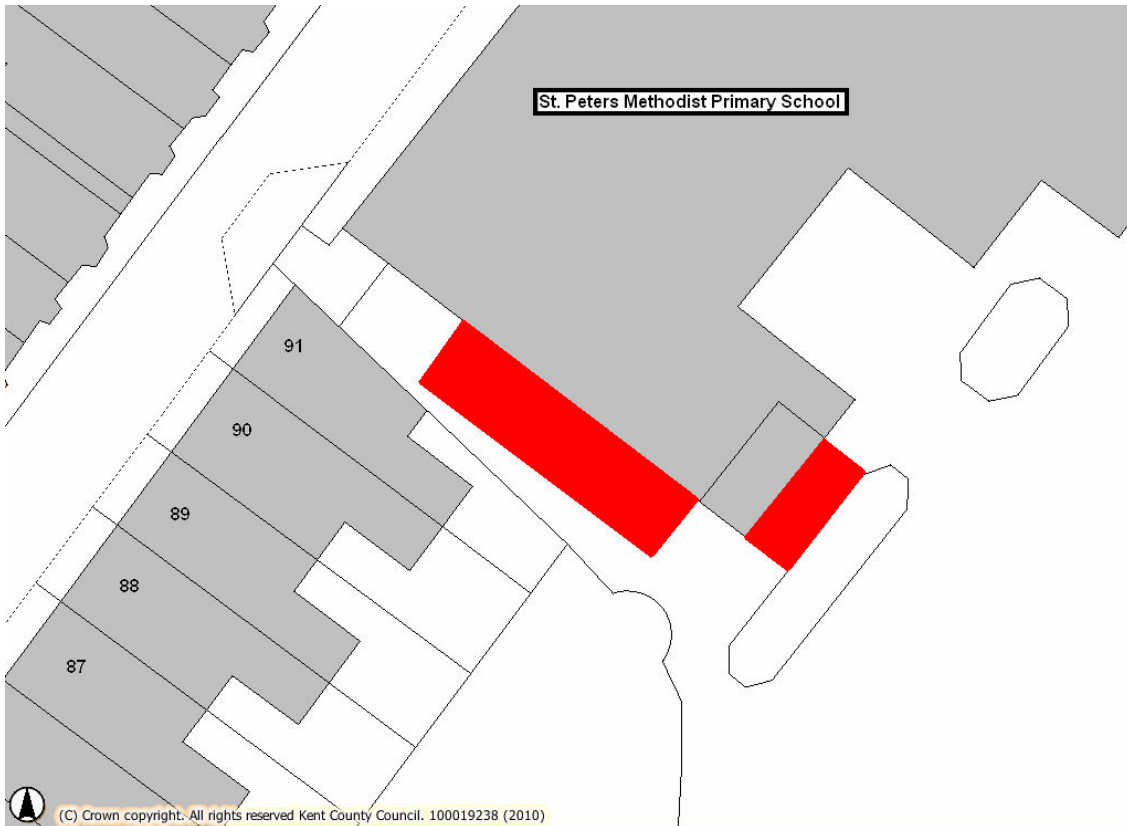
Site

1. St. Peter's School is located along St. Peter's Grove and to the rear of St. Peter's Methodist Church. The main school buildings abut the street frontage along St. Peter's Grove and are a mixture of Victorian red brick and slate buildings, and a recently constructed school extension also in red brick and slate. The road is a one-way street with very few parking/waiting spaces and these are rigorously patrolled due to the parking constraints on residents. It is enclosed predominantly by Victorian two-storey terraced housing.
2. The school grounds are predominantly open space/recreation area which occupies the land behind the school and behind Nos. 86 to 91. This land is bordered by Greyfriars Garden to the South and Greyfriars, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, to the East. The site lies entirely within the Canterbury City Conservation Area
3. Access to the school site is from St. Peter's Grove. There is a pedestrian access gate to the south west, which leads via a path between the school and No. 91 to the playground at the rear. There is a controlled vehicle access gate further down St. Peters Grove, between Nos. 84 and 86, which leads to the car park at the south western extreme of the school grounds. St. Peter's Grove is a single lane one-way street which serves the residential properties only. There is limited parking which is permit controlled and patrolled regularly by enforcement officers. There is very little space for parents with cars to wait when picking up children, and in doing so they would block the road to some extent.

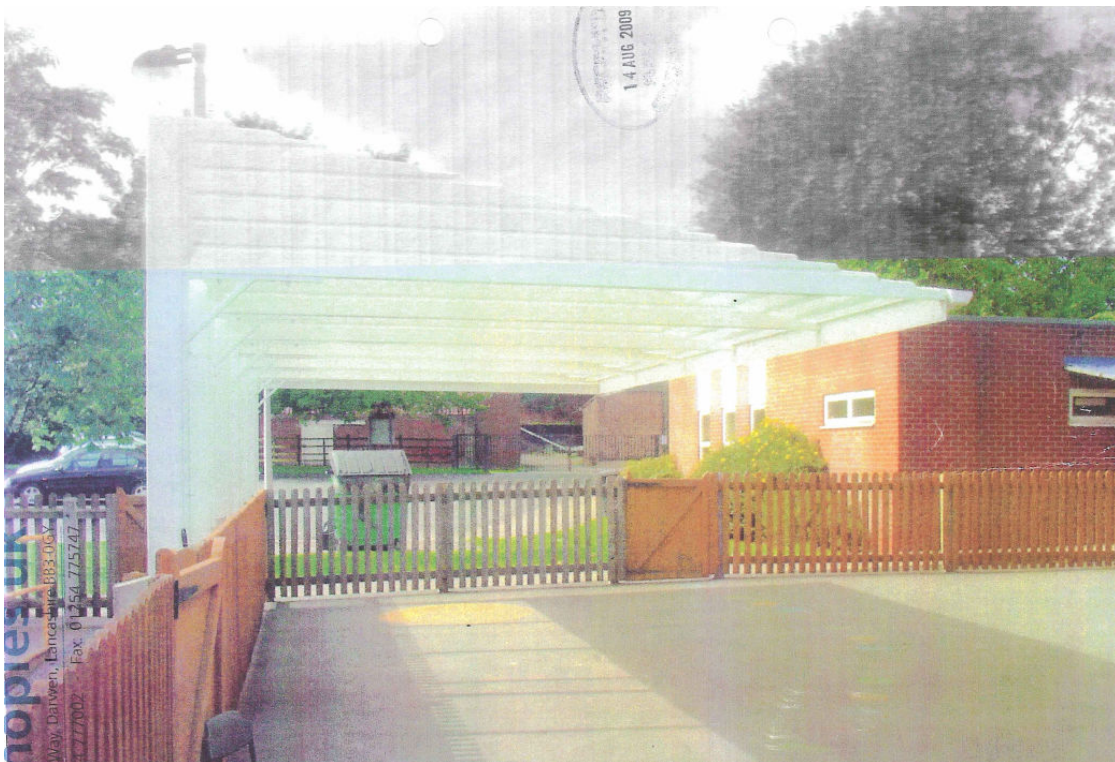
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Example Canopy 1



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Example Canopy 2



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4. Recent relevant planning history includes the development of a two-storey extension given permission in 1999. The canopies are proposed to be fixed to the walls of this extension. The planning application in 1999 was the subject of much debate and negotiation in order to make the extension appropriate in the setting of the Conservation Area and the nearby Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Proposal

5. This application is for the erection of two white plastic canopies. One is proposed to be fixed to the south west side of the school, over the pathway and bike racks accessed via the pedestrian gateway, and to the Year 4, 5 and 6 entrance. This canopy would be 14m x 3.6m. The applicant has stated that this canopy is required in order to cover the bike racks and to provide shelter for parents, waiting by the doors, collecting their children. In response to objections and negotiations, the applicant has indicated that there may be scope to change the colour of the canopy to brown.
6. The second canopy (2.4m x 5.9m) is proposed to cover a small outdoor area to the south east elevation of the school, which is currently used for the reception class children. The applicant has stated that this canopy is required as the existing covered area is not sufficiently large enough to accommodate the class during outdoor activities. Both canopies would be constructed of white plastic.
7. The applicant has stated the application has been put forward in order for the School to facilitate its Travel Plan. The Travel Plan made the School eligible to obtain an allocation of grant money made available for canopies. Currently 75% of the children who attend St. Peter's either walk or cycle to school, and the School wish to make the side walkway area covered, in order to encourage more to do the same, and to protect the bicycle racks from the weather.

Planning Policy

8. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to consideration of the application:
 - (i) The adopted **South East Plan**
 - Policy CC1** Seeks to achieve and maintain sustainable development within the region.
 - Policy CC4** Expects that all development will adopt and incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques.
 - Policy CC6** Seeks sustainable and distinctive communities that respect the character of settlements and landscapes, and achieve a high quality built environment.
 - Policy S6** States that local planning authorities, taking into account demographic projections, should work with partners to ensure adequate provision of pre-school, school, and community learning facilities.

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Policy BE1 Management for an Urban Renaissance, Local Authorities will promote and support design solutions relevant to context and which build upon local character and distinctiveness and sense of place.

(ii) The adopted **Canterbury City Local Plan 2006 Policies**

Policy BE1 The City Council will expect proposals to be of high quality design which respond to the objectives of sustainable development

Policy BE7 Development within, affecting the setting, or views into and out of a conservation area, should preserve or enhance all features that contribute positively to the area's character or appearance.

Policy C1 In considering new development, the Council will take account the principles of the adopted 2004 Canterbury District Transport Action Plan, which includes guidance for new development to provide alternative modes of transport by extending provision for pedestrians and cyclists.

Consultations

9. **Canterbury City Council:** Raises no objection.

Divisional Transport Manager: Raises no objection on highway grounds.

KCC Conservation Officer: the proposals use space at the sides of the site so does not consider they will impact on the Conservation Area.

Local Member

10. The local County Member for Canterbury City South East Mr M.Vye, was notified of the application on the 3 September 2009.

Publicity

11. The application was advertised by the posting of a site notice and the notification of 8 neighbours.

12. The application was advertised in the KM Canterbury Extra on 11 September 2009.

Representations

13. There was one letter of objection from a nearby resident:

- The canopy would increase the amount of time that the parents and children linger in the walkway adjacent to No.91 thereby increasing noise impacts on this property.
- A large plastic canopy is not appropriate design for the Conservation Area.
- The rear canopy would increase noise by creating outdoor usable space.
- The canopy is too big and too close to No.91.

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- The canopy would convert an access route into usable space.
- The bike racks are not used enough to warrant a canopy.
- The proximity would lead to a fire risk and the existing gap between the buildings should be maintained.

Discussion

14. In considering this proposal regard must be had to Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (4) above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
15. This application has been brought for determination by the Planning Applications Committee following the objection of a neighbouring resident in St. Peter's Grove. This property is immediately adjacent to the school and the area where the larger canopy is to be situated. The smaller canopy is further around to the rear of the school, and, I will discuss each canopy separately.

Reception Class Canopy (No.2 on Site Plan – page D1.2)

16. This canopy has been proposed by the applicant to provide additional covered space for outdoor activities with the reception class. It would appear in the objection letter from the local resident that they believed the intention was to create an outdoor reception class. This situation has been clarified by the applicant to confirm that the canopy is in fact for the reception class children, and would not create an additional classroom. The applicant has stated that Government guidelines in the national curriculum encourage the increase in outdoor teaching, and promote the development of facilities to meet this requirement.

Noise

17. The area that the canopy would cover is currently used solely by the reception class at present, and would be an extension to the existing covering over this area. The applicant has stated that the existing covering is not large enough at present. Therefore, I would suggest that the use of this area would not be substantially different to the current usage and that noise levels would not be unreasonably increased.
18. The area is immediately adjacent to the school playground, which extends behind all the neighbouring properties. The activities associated with the playground area are noisy by nature, although limited to set times. Although the canopy would allow the reception class children to be outdoors outside these set times, that would be during supervised classroom activities which are generally quieter in nature.
19. Presently, this area forms part of the school grounds and has no limitations on its use. The children and teachers are free to use it during the normal school day. The inclusion of a canopy has no bearing on that, and the structure in itself would not increase noise levels. Therefore, I am satisfied that the noise impact on residential amenity brought by this canopy would be negligible above the levels associated for properties adjacent to a school playground, and is acceptable in planning policy terms.

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Visual Impact

20. The canopy is proposed to be on the rear elevation of the school to St. Peter's Grove. It would be slightly visible from the rear upstairs windows of the nearest property and from the neighbouring properties. It would be an extension to the current covered area, therefore would not significantly change the character of this part of the school site. An important factor would be how the proposed canopy fits to the existing covering: the applicant should ensure that, if the new canopy is permitted, it fits well in order to maintain a tidy and organised continuation of the existing covering.
21. The canopy would not be visible from the street scene, and is in the enclosed area of the school playground. Therefore, I consider that the canopy would not have an adverse visual impact on the Conservation Area and I therefore conclude that this canopy accords with current planning policy.

Side Entrance Canopy (No.1 on Site Plan – page D1.2)

22. This canopy has been proposed by the applicant in order to assist in the delivery of the School Travel Plan. The site proposed is currently a wide walkway, accessed via a pedestrian gateway off St. Peter's Grove, which runs along the south west elevation of the school to the playground. This elevation has the entrance for the Year 4, 5 and 6 classes, therefore is used by parents to meet children at the end of the day. The walkway also contains a number of bicycle racks. Therefore the proposed canopy would cover the bicycle racks and the parent waiting area, as well as the doorway.
23. I have received local objection to the canopy on noise, need, visual impact and conservation grounds.

Need

24. The School has indicated that the canopy would help in the delivery of the School Travel Plan, and assist in increasing the 75% that currently either walk or cycle to the school, and therefore aid in reducing congestion on St. Peter's Grove at peak times. Reducing the number of pupils and staff that drive to school would make some steps towards contributing to national aims to reduce the reliance on the private car, and climate change targets.
25. I note the view of the local objector that the bike racks were not used enough to warrant a canopy. Evidence from the School Travel Plan indicates that the cycle racks are well used during the term time.
26. The canopy would, in my view, serve to enhance the community facility and make a commitment to sustainable transport. By creating a covered area for parents to wait in when picking up their children, this reduces the risk of increased traffic along St. Peter's Grove during inclement weather.

Noise

27. The area to be covered is currently used by parents as a waiting area, so there would be peaks in the noise levels at the end of the school day. The school playground runs along behind Nos. 86-91 and the noise levels from here would be at their highest during

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break periods and after-school activities. As the walkway is connected to the playground, in appearance it forms part of the area where children are free to play, as can be seen in the photographs.

28. Similar to the area proposed for the reception canopy, the walkway forms part of the school grounds and there are no restrictions on its use. Therefore the canopy itself would not serve to increase noise levels by allowing a use, and activity in the area that does not already exist at present. The canopy would perhaps encourage more use at break times during bad weather, but on balance, the number of occasions when this would be likely to occur would be minimal. A suggestion may be that if the canopy is granted permission, then the School restrict their pupils from using the walkway area during break periods. However, due to the proximity of the playground and the situation of the houses along St. Peter's Grove, it is a fact that these properties would be exposed to noise during these periods. In my view, the addition of the canopy would not therefore have a significant impact on this.

Visual Impact on Neighbouring Properties

29. The canopy would measure 14m x 3.6m (47 sq.m) and is proposed to be constructed of white plastic. The size and colour would create a considerable bulk when viewed from the upstairs windows of the nearest property, as this vantage point looks down onto the walkway area. The current view is of the south west elevation, bike racks and walk way area. The plans submitted with the application show that the canopy would come within 1m of the wall of No.91. The school building is approximately 4.6m from the boundary wall of the nearest property; the canopy is 3.6m wide and would close this gap.
30. The canopy would also be visible from the houses directly opposite the walkway. However, their views would be limited due to the fencing and gateway there at present. The canopy is set back from the front elevation of the school by approximately 7m so would not be obvious to those travelling down St. Peter's Grove. The general pattern of the street scene is of two-storey terraced houses, with few gaps in the street frontage; therefore the infill of this gap would not be in conflict with the general pattern of the street.
31. A solution to minimise the visual impact on neighbouring properties would be to reduce the length of the canopy. The proposed length is 14m, however I have calculated that there is scope to reduce the length to 9.25m. This length would be appropriate as it would cover the bike racks and entrance doorway, thereby fulfilling the reasons given for installing a canopy, whilst removing a considerable bulk from the rear view of the neighbouring properties. The applicant has submitted information stating that the lowest edge of the canopy would be set at between 3m to 3.5m in height – due to the 'wedge' shape of the canopy, the highest point of the canopy would be approximately 70cm higher than the leading edge. I would suggest that this height be reduced if approved, to a maximum of 2.8m. This height would allow the canopy to be fitted above the levels of the doors and windows, whilst keeping it as low as possible in order to reduce the impact on residents.

Visual Impact on Conservation Area

32. The canopy would be set back from the street frontage, so would not be readily visible from St. Peter's Grove. The rear of the school site is enclosed with no views into the grounds, therefore I am satisfied that the canopy would not have a significant adverse impact on the Conservation Area. The County Council's Conservation Officer was

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consulted and stated that as the proposals use spaces at the side of the site, then he does not consider that they will impact on the Conservation Area. Canterbury City Council also raised no objections to the proposal.

- 33. The canopy would be constructed of white plastic, which is not normally a material recommended for use in sensitive areas. However, this material is commonly used in canopies at schools around Kent. Its lightweight and strong properties minimise the need for excessive ground disturbance and is an acceptable solution in this instance. I recommend that if the canopy is permitted, then the colour also be altered to brown, since this is a more appropriate colour in a Conservation Area, and would match the finishing of the windows on the school building.

Conclusion

- 34. In my opinion the rear canopy (No.2) would be acceptable. Due to its location, size and design it would have minimal visual impact on the Conservation Area and would not unacceptably impact on the neighbouring properties. The noise levels generated from the installation of this canopy would not be significantly above the existing levels.

- 35. With regard to the canopy along the side of the school (No.1), it is large for the available space, however on balance I consider that the contribution the canopy would serve to aid the School’s commitment to sustainable transport and encourage more school users to either walk or cycle outweighs the visual impact affects. Noise levels associated with the canopy have the potential to be increased, but only during drop-off and pick-up times, when the noise levels are expected to peak. The canopy would help to ease congestion on St. Peter’s Grove during inclement weather by providing a covered area for parents to wait, and protection of pupils’ bicycles. I recommend that the canopy along the side walkway of the school (No.1) should be permitted on condition that the colour of the material used is changed to brown, and that the length of the canopy be reduced to a maximum of 9.25m. The reduction in length is to reflect its purpose of covering the cycle racks and entrance, whilst reducing the visual impact and bulk of the canopy on the neighbouring property.

Recommendation

- 36. SUBJECT TO the receipt of an amended details for Canopy 2 restricting its height to no more than 2.8 metres and its length to no more than 9.25 metres, I RECOMMEND that permission BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions, including the standard time requirement for implementation, Canopy 2 being finished in a brown colour and the development being carried out in strict accordance with the plans (as amended).

Case officer – Jeff Dummett	01622 221975
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Background documents - See section heading
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