

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 new two storey teaching block, reorientation of existing playing pitch, expansion of wellbeing garden, hard and soft landscaping, construction of new service road and ancillary works to facilitate a 1 Form Entry (1FE) expansion at Northfleet Technology College, Colyer Road, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 8BG - GR/25/328 (KCC/GR/0034/2025)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 9th July 2025.

Application by Kier Construction (On behalf of Kent County Council) for the erection of a new two storey teaching block, reorientation of existing playing pitch, expansion of wellbeing garden, hard and soft landscaping, construction of new service road and ancillary works to facilitate a 1FE expansion at Northfleet Technology College, Colyer Road, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 8BG - GR/25/328 (KCC/GR/0034/2025)

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Matthew Fraser Moat & Sharon Roots

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The application site lies within the defined urban area of Gravesend, midway between the A2 to the south and the River Thames to the north. Northfleet Technology College is a non-selective secondary school, educating boys from age 11 through to 18 (years 7-13 - years 12 & 13 being sixth form). The school is bordered by residential development on all boundaries, Colyer Road to the south-east, Vale Road to the north-east, Waterdales to the north-west and Mitchell Avenue to the south-west. The wider area is also predominantly residential, but in the vicinity are also the Cygnet Leisure Centre to the south-east, Northfleet Urban Country Park to the north, Wombwell Park to the south-west, and Northfleet School for Girls to the south. The school site is roughly rectangular in shape with the school building and parking area located at the north-eastern end and the grassed playing fields and dedicated habitat area at the south-western end.
2. Vehicular access to the school site is from Colyer Road on the south-eastern boundary. It is a gated access which leads to a car park providing 151 spaces, including 9 spaces for disabled users. 45m to the north of this access is a secondary gated vehicular access which is used for deliveries and servicing. There are two wide pedestrian accesses into the site, both from Colyer Road, but separate from the vehicular one. 100 sheltered cycle parking spaces are also available on site. There is a third access at the southern end of the Colyer Road frontage (also gated) which is a grassed track leading to the sports field and used for emergency access only.

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3. The school itself is a flat-roof two-storey modern building in an arch form with two arms enclosing a centralised courtyard. It is constructed from a mixture of blue stock brick and cladding panels. Circulation for the building is via a continuous covered walkway running round the external edge of the school, with external staircases providing access to the first floor. The playing fields are marked out for a variety of sports, and a 6 court multi-use games area (MUGA) is located to the south of the school behind properties in Colyer Road. Sited to the south of this are two single storey modular classrooms which were installed on site in 2024 for a temporary period of 3 years (see planning history in paragraph 5) and a sports pavilion.
4. The school frontage along Colyer Road is quite open, with low railings and hedges forming the boundary treatment. A brick wall runs down the edge of the maintenance and delivery access road at the northern end of the site, and the remainder of the boundaries are a mixture of trees, hedgerow and fencing. The site is not within any designated landscape or heritage areas.

Planning History

5. Since 2008 the following applications have been submitted and determined by KCC:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| <u>GR/08/138</u> | Complete replacement of the existing secondary school on the site with a new two storey school building together with revised access arrangements, new car park, hard play areas, landscape works and the demolition of the existing school buildings (with the exception of the sports pavilion) on completion of the development.
Approved 31 July 2008 |
| <u>GR/12/803</u> | 8 metre high fibreglass flagpole (white) installed within the school grounds
Approved 26 October 2012 |
| <u>GR/24/177</u> | Temporary permission for the erection of two one-storey modular prefabricated buildings for school use (Class F1), pathway and associated works.
Approved 17 April 2024 for temporary period of 3 years |

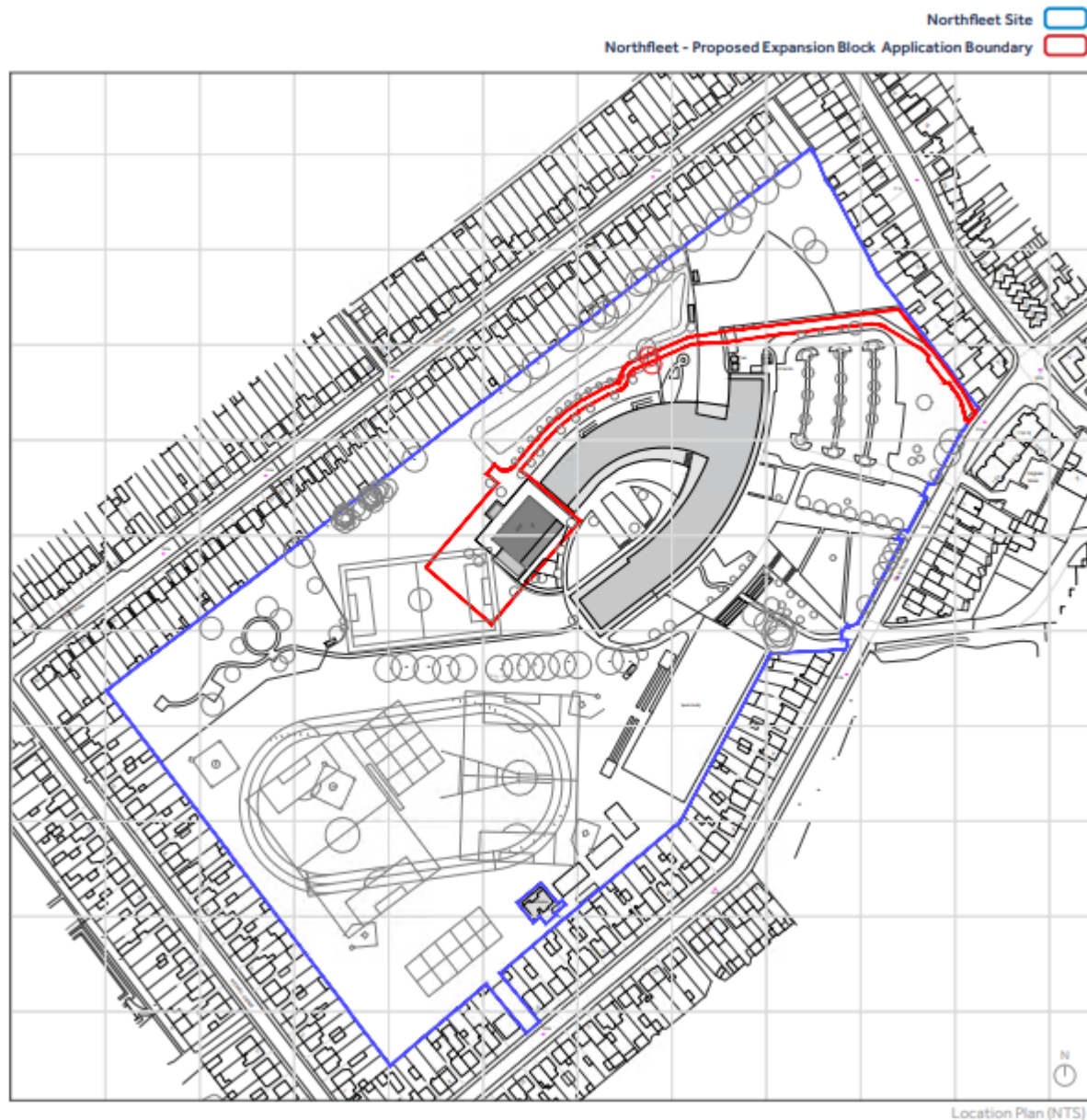
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This is a detailed street map of Northfleet, Kent, showing the location of Northfleet Technology College. The map includes labels for Waterdales, Mitchell Avenue, Colyer Road, Vale Road, and Northfleet Technology College. It also shows surrounding features like Northfleet Cemetery, Recreation Ground, and Northfleet School for Girls. A north arrow and a 1km scale bar are in the top left corner.

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Site Location Plan



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Background

6. Northfleet Technology College was re-established in 2010 when the new school was constructed as part of the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme. The school provides open teaching spaces and combined classrooms as 'zonal teaching' rather than a traditional school layout and the model has been so successful that the school requested the same layout be applied to the proposed new building. Due to residential development in the area, Northfleet Technology College is under pressure to increase the number of pupils on role.
7. The Published Admission Number (PAN), which is the number of pupils a School admits each academic year, has been steadily increasing at Northfleet Technology College since the 2015/2016 academic year. The Kent Commissioning Plan¹ 2024/28, which provides projections of future school places, indicates that there will be a shortfall of year 7 places in the Gravesham and Longfield Non-Selective planning group. In 2024 temporary consent was given for two modular classrooms to accommodate the expanding pupil numbers on site and the current application seeks to provide a permanent solution to address this identified need. The modular buildings are required to be removed from the site on or before 30th April 2027.

Proposal

8. This application seeks permission for the 1 Form of Entry (1FE) (one class per year group) expansion of Northfleet Technology College through the construction of a new stand-alone two storey teaching block located at the end of the northern 'arm' of the existing building. The development would allow for the accommodation of an additional 210 pupils across years 7-13 and an increase of 15 new members of staff. The new block would have a rectangular footprint and would follow the design of the existing school building, in that there would be an oversailing roof above a covered walkway, external staircases and lift shaft on the southern side. There would be a hard landscaped area separating the end of the existing school and the new block, but the proposed new building would appear as an extension to the original school, as the northern and southern elevations would follow the same building line.
9. The materials proposed for the new building would match the existing school with blue stock bricks, cladding panels in hazy blue for the lift shaft, grey spandrel panels on the main elevations (which are non-structural panels located between the floor slab and the window head in a building façade, which conceal the floor structure and provide a continuous surface for the facade) and louvres in a contrasting grey colour. Powder coated aluminium rainwater goods and external windows and doors would be in anthracite grey. The external staircases would be precast concrete with metal balustrades, again to match the existing. A metal canopy would also be positioned wrapping round the southern corner of the new building above an external seating area associated with the proposed dining hall at ground floor.

¹ The Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision is a strategic document that outlines how Kent County Council will ensure there are enough high-quality school places for all learners in Kent, considering where those places are needed and the needs of different learners.

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10. At ground floor level the new building would accommodate a new dining hall and servery, an engineering workshop for electronics and a heavy engineering workshop, plus a Design and Technology (DT) prep room, staff workroom and leadership office, an intervention room, mechanical and electrical plant rooms and a bank of toilets with one accessible WC. At first floor there would be a catering training kitchen (above the dining hall) with a catering prep and store room and a fire escape staircase the northern side. There would also be two general classrooms and a large zonal teaching area, staff workroom, intervention room, store room, further toilets, and an access staircase to the roof. On the roof, areas have been indicated for the installation of photo-voltaic panels. A metal balustrade would be installed round the edge of the roof.
11. The existing sports pitch would be reorientated so that both it and the proposed building could be accommodated on site without affecting sports pitch provision. Hard landscaping around the new building would be provided with areas of both coloured asphalt and flag paving, and soft landscaping would include the planting of trees, wildflower turf areas, grass embankment, hedge and shrub planting. The existing wellbeing garden, which lies to the north of the main school would be enhanced with a new seating feature and pergola, shrub planting and trees, a gravel garden and boulders and new fencing. Biodiversity Net Gain for the site would be achieved through the above planting features and a gain of 10.82% in area habitat units, and a 1551.24% increase in linear units would be delivered.
12. There would be no alteration to the primary vehicular access to the site, however the existing delivery and servicing road (at the north-eastern corner) would be extended to run along the northern edge of the existing school to reach the new building. This would result in the removal of 4 trees, but additional trees are proposed to be planted along the length of the new section of road. No additional vehicle or cycle parking is proposed on site (as it was determined that sufficient spaces already existed) and as a result no electric vehicle charging infrastructure is proposed.

Planning Policy

13. The following Guidance/Statements and Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of the application:

- (i) **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024** and the **National Planning Policy Guidance** sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England, at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications but does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However, the weight given to development plan policies will depend on their consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the development plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

In determining applications, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decisions in a positive and creative way, and decision takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

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

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

In addition, Paragraph 100 states that: *It is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should: a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and b) work with early years, school and post-16 promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.*

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

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

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

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- A refusal of any application for a state-funded school, or the imposition of conditions, will have to be clearly justified by the local planning authority. Given the strong policy support for improving state education, the Secretary of State will be minded to consider such a refusal or imposition of conditions to be unreasonable conduct, unless it is supported by clear and cogent evidence.

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

The Development Plan Policies summarised below are the most relevant to the consideration of this application:

- Policy CS01 Sustainable Development.** This states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan for Gravesham should be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise and that the Council will work proactively to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.
- Policy CS10 Physical and Social Infrastructure.** This policy states that support should be given to proposals that protect, retain or enhance existing physical and social infrastructure, or lead to the provision of additional infrastructure that improves community well-being.
- Policy CS11 Transport.** This policy states that new developments should mitigate their impact on the highway and public transport networks as required. Transport assessment and Travel Plans should be provided and implemented to ensure the delivery of travel choice and sustainable opportunities for travel, and sufficient parking for new development should be provided in accordance with adopted parking standards.
- Policy CS12 Green Infrastructure.** This policy states that there should be no net loss of biodiversity in the Borough, and opportunities to enhance, restore, re-create and maintain habitats will be sought.
- Policy CS13 Green Space, Sport & Recreation.** This policy states that the Council will seek to make adequate provision for and to protect and enhance the quantity, quality and accessibility of green space, playing pitches and other sports facilities, in accordance with an adequate and relevant evidence base.
- Policy CS18 Climate Change.** This policy states development will be directed sequentially to those areas at least risk of flooding. Proposals in areas at risk of flooding must be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (in accordance with national policy and Environment Agency standing guidance) and a Flood Risk Management Plan to demonstrate that they are adequately defended. The Council will seek to minimise the impact from new development on waste water systems. In particular the Council will require that surface water run-off from all new development has, as a minimum, no greater adverse impact than the existing use;

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require the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems on all development where technically and financially feasible. The Council will seek to manage the supply of water in the Borough. All non-residential development of 1000m² and above should meet the BREEAM² standards of water efficiency and include provision for the collection of rainwater. The Council will seek to reduce the overall carbon footprint of the Borough.

Policy CS19 Development and Design Principles. This policy states that new development should be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It should conserve or enhance the character of the local area and integrate well; incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques; safeguard residential amenity, avoid adverse impacts from pollution (noise, air, light, or ground contamination); provide appropriate hard and soft landscaping; enhance biodiversity; and build in resilience to the effects of climate change.

Policy CS20 Heritage and the Historic Environment. This policy states that the Council should accord a high priority towards the preservation, protection and enhancement of its heritage and historic environment – relevant in relation to the heritage asset of archaeology.

(iv) The **Gravesham Local Plan First Review (Adopted 1994)**

The following ‘saved’ policies from the Gravesham Local Plan First Review are also deemed relevant to the consideration of this application:

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

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

Policy TC7 Other Archaeological Sites. The policy states that in order to determine a planning application, the Council may require the developer to provide additional information in the form of an assessment of the archaeological or historic importance of the site and the likely impact of development.

² BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) is a sustainability assessment method for the built environment. It incorporates water efficiency and management as part of its overall assessment of a building’s sustainability, focusing on areas like water consumption, rainwater harvesting and water management.

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Consultations

14. The following consultee responses were received as a result of the consultations carried out.

Gravesham Borough Council raise no objection provided there are no objections from Sport England or the County Council Ecologist.

KCC Highways and Transportation Officer raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the submitted Construction Environmental Management Plan and for the submission of an updated School Travel Plan prior to occupation of the new classroom building.

KCC Biodiversity Officer raises no objection subject to the deemed condition requiring the submission and approval of the Biodiversity Gain Plan prior to the commencement of development; a condition to secure the submission of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan and an informative regarding undertaking works outside of the core bird nesting season (typically March to August, with the most active period being from March to July).

Sport England raise no objection as the proposed development is considered to accord with exception E3 of the Sport England Playing Fields Policy.

Environment Agency raise no objection subject to the imposition of a condition to secure a strategy for dealing with contamination not previously identified on site and informatives to ensure that only clean uncontaminated water should drain into the surface water drainage system; and those for the removal of waste from the site.

KCC County Archaeological Officer raises no objection subject to a condition securing the undertaking and submission of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prior to the commencement of the development, to detail further archaeological field evaluation works and any safeguarding measures.

KCC Flood Risk and Water Management Officer raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions to secure the submission of a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme prior to commencement of the development, and that the new building shall not be occupied until a verification report has been submitted.

KCC School Travel Planner raises no objection but suggests that the School Travel Plan should be submitted on the County Council's 'Jambusters Travel Plans for Schools' system to allow the College to benefit from various grant initiatives which encourage active and sustainable travel.

Local Member

15. The former local County Members for Northfleet & Gravesend West, Dr Lauren Sullivan and Conrad Bradely were notified of the application on 31 March 2025. Following the County Council elections in May 2025, the newly elected Members, Matthew Fraser Moat and Sharon Roots, were notified of the application on the 6 June 2025. No views have been received.

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Publicity

16. The application was publicised by the posting of six site notices at relevant locations along Colyer Road, Mitchell Avenue and Waterdales, along with an advertisement in a local newspaper.

Representations

17. In response to the publicity, one letter has been received from a local resident objecting to the application. The key points raised can be summarised as follows:
- Development will bring further traffic to the area which is already busy at peak times;
 - Local roads come to a standstill on a regular basis;
 - Damage to parked cars is caused as a result of the congestion;
 - Increase in student numbers (without supervision once they have left the school grounds) will also increase anti-social behaviour in the area.

Discussion

18. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 13 above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore the proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case can be summarised by the following headings – the principle of development and education need; siting, design, massing and appearance; impact on playing fields; impact on residential amenity; transportation impacts; construction; landscaping and trees; ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain; flood risk and drainage; sustainability; contamination; and archaeology.

Principle of Development and Education Need

19. The existing school site lies within the built-up area of Gravesend where there is a presumption in favour of development. The applicant states that the Kent Commissioning Plan 2024/28 indicates that there will be a shortfall of year 7 places in the Gravesham and Longfield Non-Selective planning group. Furthermore, the 2023-2027 Commissioning Plan anticipates an ongoing increasing demand for secondary school places in the Gravesham area, as a result of increased dwelling constructions along with migration from the greater London area. The proposed development would allow for a 1 Form of Entry (FE) expansion of the school to help address this need. An additional 210 pupils would be accommodated on site across years 7-13, and the number of staff would increase by 15 to a total of 135.
20. Paragraph 100 of the NPPF (December 2024) states that it is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post 16 places are available to meet the needs of

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existing and new communities. It goes on to state that local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement. The Policy Statement Planning for Schools Development acknowledges that there should be a presumption in favour of the development of state funded schools as it is the Government's view that the creation and development of state-funded schools is strongly in the national interest, and that planning decision-makers can and should support that objective, in a manner consistent with their statutory obligations. In addition, Policy CS10 of the Local Plan Core Strategy states that support should be given to proposals that protect, retain or enhance existing physical and social infrastructure or lead to the provision of additional infrastructure that improves community well-being.

21. Subject to consideration of the matters outlined below, the principle of development is accepted in order to provide for the additional school places required and I would give substantial weight to the need for the development, and subsequent Policy Support.

Siting, Design, Massing & Appearance

22. The proposed building, although stand-alone, would very much be seen as an extension to the existing school building, in that it would follow the same building line as the northern arm of the school. The roof height would be the same and the general design replicated, including the use of the overarching canopy above external walkways and external staircases for access to the first floor. The proposed materials would also match the existing building, so that the site would be viewed cohesively upon completion.
23. The scale and mass of the new building would replicate that of the existing school, specifically the northern arm to which it is adjacent, and would respond positively to the wider school setting. There is ample space on the school site to accommodate the new building, such that it would not appear overdeveloped, and the overall setting of the new building would be enhanced with the landscape scheme, which is considered in more detail below.
24. A condition is recommended to ensure that the development is built using the materials as set out in both the Design and Access Statement and on the elevation drawings. Subject to the imposition of this condition, it is considered that the proposed new teaching block would be visually attractive, locally distinctive and fit for purpose, in accordance Policy CS19 of the Local Plan Core Strategy. I would therefore give great weight to this consideration.

Impact on Playing Fields

25. The proposed teaching block would be located on an existing area of playing field and would therefore result in its permanent loss from the school site. As such the development needs to be assessed against Sport England's Playing Field Policy. This policy states that Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or prejudice the use of:
- all or any part of a playing field; or
 - land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped; or
 - land allocated for use as a playing field

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unless in the judgement of Sport England, the development as a whole meets with one or more of five specific exceptions. These exceptions are:

- E1. A robust and up-to-date assessment has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of Sport England, that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, which will remain the case should the development be permitted, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.
 - E2. The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.
 - E3. The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:
 - reduce the size of any playing pitch;
 - result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
 - reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
 - result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; or
 - prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.
 - E4. The area of playing field to be lost as a result of the proposed development will be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new area of playing field:
 - of equivalent or better quality, and
 - of equivalent or greater quantity, and
 - in a suitable location, and
 - subject to equivalent or better accessibility and management arrangements.
 - E5. The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.
26. The closest playing pitch on site would be reorientated to accommodate the proposed building, and the site layout plan demonstrates that this pitch, including the required run off area, could be accommodated without being impacted by the footprint of the new building and surrounding hardstanding areas. Sport England were consulted on the application and have advised that they consider the proposed development to meet their planning policy exception E3, in that the development affects only land incapable of forming a playing pitch and does not affect the size or usability of remaining playing pitches. The scheme is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of the loss of playing field land, and in accordance with both the Sport England Playing Field Policy and Policy CS13 of the Local Plan Core Strategy. I would therefore give moderate weight to this consideration.

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Impact on Residential Amenity

27. As set out above, the proposed building would, in effect, extend the built form of the northern arm of the original school. It would follow the same building line, and the northern elevation would replicate that of the existing school. This elevation would face towards the rear gardens and rear elevations of properties in the residential road of Waterdales and given its two-storey structure would be visible to the occupants of these properties. However, there would be a substantial separation of over 75 metres between the rear of the houses and the new school building, such that there would be no direct overlooking from classroom windows, and no loss of light or overshadowing caused by the building. The view of the proposed building as seen by the occupants of these properties would be no different than that of the existing school from other properties in the road, and it would be seen within the context of the existing school building and the wider school site, such that any loss of outlook is considered not to be of significant harm. Furthermore, the proposed landscape scheme would include elements which would soften the external appearance of the proposed building.
28. The extended road that would run along the northern edge of the existing school to also serve the new building would be screened with new tree planting. Given its use would be for maintenance and deliveries vehicles only, it is considered that this would not materially affect the amenity of the occupants of the houses to the north-west in Waterdales. The scheme is therefore considered to accord with the objectives of Policy CS19 of the Local Plan Core Strategy, and I would give this matter moderate weight.

Transportation Impacts

29. The application is supported by the submission of a Transport Statement (TS) and details of the existing access and parking arrangements are given at the beginning of this report in paragraphs 2 and 8. The development would allow for the accommodation of an additional 210 pupils across years 7-13 and an increase of 15 new members of staff. Advice on the access and highway issues were sought from the County Council's Highways and Transportation Officer.
30. The Highway and Transportation Officer noted that the applicant submitted a comprehensive Transport Statement that demonstrates that the existing car park (of 151 spaces) within the school grounds has sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional 15 staff expected to be employed as a result of this expansion. The proposed development would not require any changes to the existing vehicular or pedestrian accesses, which would be retained, and no additional car or cycle parking is proposed. There is also sufficient cycle space provision on site to accommodate existing and proposed pupil and staff numbers. No electric vehicle charging points are required as there is no increase in parking. The only proposed change to existing arrangements would be the extension to the service access road within the School site.
31. Parking stress surveys in the adjacent roads have demonstrated that there are sufficient on-street parking places to accommodate the additional dropping off / picking up and vehicle movements likely to be generated by the proposed expansion, which are projected to be two additional movements per minute during the AM and PM peak. It is also noted that the use of a robust School Travel Plan is of particular importance in reducing the number of private car trips to the site, both by pupils and staff. Such a plan

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has been submitted to support the application and will need to be reviewed regularly to ensure monitoring is undertaken. As requested by Highways and Transportation, I consider that a condition should be applied to any consent granted requiring an updated Travel Plan to be submitted and approved by the School Travel Plan Team prior to occupation of the proposed building. In addition, there is adequate existing parking on site and sufficient cycle provision to accommodate the increase in pupils and staff. On balance I am satisfied that these measures offer adequate provision to accommodate the increase.

32. A local resident has raised objection to the application on highway related grounds and commented on the development bringing further traffic to the area, local roads coming to a standstill on a regular basis, damage to parked cars caused as a result of the congestion, and an increase in student numbers increasing anti-social behaviour in the area. Taking account of the views of the Highways and Transportation Officer who has considered the submitted documentation and content of the current School Travel Plan, I note the concerns of the local resident and am satisfied that subject to the updating of the Travel Plan, the additional staff and pupil numbers envisaged would not result in an overriding detrimental impact on highways grounds. Parking and congestion issues at the school start and finish times in local roads is not uncommon and it is considered that in this instance these are of short duration and need to be balanced against the need for additional school places in this part of Gravesend. The submission of an updated School Travel Plan, as required by condition, would support the review and ongoing assessment of local circumstances and travel patterns. The concerns of the local resident with respect to antisocial behaviour is noted, however as it relates to school pupil behaviour this is considered to be a school management issue. It is noted that such behaviour is unacceptable. The School has policies in place to manage behaviour and these exist to support appropriate conduct of pupils when at school and in the vicinity of the school.
33. Given all of the above, it is considered that the development would not give rise to any unacceptable impact on the operation of the local highway network and would be acceptable in relation to Highway and Transportation considerations, in accordance with Policy CS11 of the Local Plan, subject to the imposition of conditions to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the submitted Construction Environment Management Plan and that an updated School Travel Plan is submitted and approved prior to occupation. I would give this matter moderate weight.

Construction

34. The application is supported by the submission of a Construction Environment Management Plan, which sets out details of the construction access, site compound, hours of working, mitigation of noise, vibration, dust and emissions, liaison with local residents, and adherence to the 'Considerate Constructors Scheme', amongst other matters. The Highways and Transportation Officer is satisfied with the details and content of this document, and as such has confirmed that the development can be carried out in accordance with this document. I therefore recommend that a condition is imposed to require the construction of the development to be undertaken in accordance with the submitted Construction Environment Management Plan. Subject to this condition, I am satisfied that the construction works would not have an unacceptable impact on local residential amenity or the local highway network.

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Landscaping and Trees

35. The existing site benefits from mature trees, grassed areas and established planting. There are large areas of playing fields, and hedgerows/trees along some of the boundaries. The existing building sits to the eastern end of the site with large open areas of playing field to the west.
36. In order to ensure the development is accommodated on site without compromising the existing landscape setting, a hard and soft landscape scheme is proposed and the application is supported by a landscape plan, tree and shrub planting plan, an Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Tree Survey Plan, Tree Protection Plan, and Detailed and Site Wide Landscape Masterplans. The application includes the planting of trees, wildflower turf areas (with bee friendly native species), grass embankment, and hedge and shrub planting. The existing wellbeing garden, that lies to the north of the proposed building, is to be extended and enhanced, with a new seating feature and pergola, shrub planting and trees, a gravel garden and boulders and new fencing. Soft landscaping is proposed around the new building and alongside the extended access road that aims to integrate this with appropriate planting.
37. The application identifies the removal of two field maples located close to the north east of the existing building, along with two apple trees, none of which can be seen from outside the site. Three small hedges are also proposed to be removed. None of these trees are required to be removed as a result of the proposed built extension. It is noted that the extension of the existing delivery and servicing road (at the north-eastern corner) would result in the removal of the trees, but additional trees are proposed to be planted along the length of the new section of road and no objections have been received with respect to the landscaping proposals.
38. It is regrettable that trees need to be removed, however it is noted that these are not significant or prominent trees within the site or wider setting. Mature and established trees on site would be retained, and it is considered that the overall appearance of the site from Colyer Road and the site boundaries would not be affected by the proposed tree removal as those trees are not visible from any boundary. In order to compensate for the tree loss, a comprehensive landscaping scheme has been submitted that includes tree replacement, hedgerows and lawns, the emphasis being on enhancing existing landscaping and new landscaping to mitigate any impact of the new development with the built form of the School. This includes new trees to the north of the existing building, and to the south and west of the proposed building, along with areas of hedgerow to the south and shrub planting. The proposals also include improvements by way of an extension to the existing wellness garden to help mitigate the impact of the new access road extension. New access gates are proposed in the existing internal fence lines to control vehicle access from the existing service road into the new access road. These are proposed to match existing.
39. The landscape scheme submitted is considered to be acceptable and comprehensive and would both enhance the appearance of the site and benefit biodiversity. It is proposed that a condition be included in any permission to ensure a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan be submitted to include habitat creation and enhancement (including full details of tree, shrub and hedgerow planting), full planting schedule (including primarily native species), and long-term maintenance, amongst other matters.

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Thereafter the scheme would be implemented in accordance with the submitted plans and documents, and be undertaken within the first planting season following completion of the development. Subject to the imposition of this condition, the scheme is considered to be acceptable with regard to landscape and trees and would accord with Policies CS12 and CS19.

40. I am satisfied that the proposed landscaping scheme is acceptable and would meet the objectives set out in Policy CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan (2014). I would give this matter limited weight.

Ecology & BNG

41. On the 12th February 2024 the Government introduced legislation under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) requiring developers to deliver a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) over the existing habitat and biodiversity value on the site. Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan (2014) states that there should be no net loss of biodiversity in the Borough, and opportunities to enhance, restore, re-create and maintain habitats will be sought. This policy was adopted prior to the introduction of the new legislation, however the need to ensure opportunities to enhance habitats should be considered.
42. In support of the application a Biodiversity Net Gain feasibility assessment was submitted alongside the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation along with a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Arboricultural report and Arboricultural impact assessment.
43. Documents were then amended and resubmitted following the initial consultation response of the County Council's Biodiversity Officer. Following receipt of the revised documents, he noted the application site is of very limited ecological interest, comprising an area of predominantly modified grassland, scattered trees and garden adjacent to the main existing school building. The site does not fall within any statutory designated sites and no priority habitats are located on the site itself. The reports concluded that the majority of the increase in habitat units are attributed to the provision of additional tree planting and off-site mixed scrub creation.
44. The proposed development provides a unit uplift for both area and linear habitat units, of a 10.82% increase in area units, and 1551.24% increase in linear units. In addition to this, recommendations are proposed for the provision of enhancement features for roosting bats include two integrated bat boxes.
45. The County Council's Biodiversity Officer has confirmed that sufficient information has been submitted to assess the impact of the development on ecology and is satisfied (following the revised BNG assessment) that the scheme as proposed would meet the requirements of the legislation. He notes that onsite hedgerow gains of 1,551.24% are anticipated and deemed feasible (and noted that a 30m loss of non-native hedgerow is to be compensated for with the planting of 91m of native hedgerow/native hedgerow with trees), alongside a required 30 - year monitoring schedule. The partial removal of 30m of hedgerows and some trees on site all have the potential to support nesting birds and hence an appropriate informative should be included in any permission to ensure that any works which may result in impacts to nesting birds should be conducted outside

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of the core nesting season. Some onsite (within the red line of the development) biodiversity gains are proposed (including planting of 24 small trees and enhancement of a 110m² of grassland) but an onsite biodiversity net loss of -11.01% is anticipated. As such, offsite gains are necessary; a 350m² of 'poor' condition modified grassland is to be planted with mixed scrub so that the scheme delivers an overall BNG of 10.82%. In this instance, offsite gains are such that they are outside of the red line application site, however would be provided on land owned/controlled by the applicant (within the school site) and hence are not required to be secured by a legal agreement.

46. Taking account of the Biodiversity Officer's comments, a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan, required by condition is recommended to ensure all biodiversity gains are established and are retained. This condition would need to include details of habitat creation and enhancement measures, including full details of tree, scrub and hedgerow planting and modified grassland enhancement; a full planting schedule utilising primarily native species; revised elevations drawings detailing the model and location of two integral bat boxes; rolling, long-term maintenance measures covering up to a 30-year period; and details of responsible persons.
47. Development shall be subject to the deemed condition requiring the submission and approval of the Biodiversity Gain Plan prior to the commencement of development. a condition to secure the submission of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan and an informative regarding undertaking works outside of the core bird nesting season. Subject to these conditions, I consider that the development accords with Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan (2014) in that there would be no net loss of biodiversity and that opportunities to enhance biodiversity would be secured. I would give this moderate weight.

Flood Risk and Drainage

48. The application site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is therefore classified at a low risk of flooding. However, the application has been accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Strategy. The FRA confirmed that the risk of flooding at the site from any watercourse, drains, other waterbodies or surface water flooding was considered to be low, therefore the development of the site is considered acceptable in terms of flood risk.
49. The Drainage Strategy Report addresses surface water and foul water drainage for the proposed development. Foul water would be collected from the building via pipes and discharge to the existing foul water sewer. Surface water drainage would be dealt with using a combination of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), including the provision of a new soakaway.
50. The Environment Agency and the County Council's Flood Risk and Water Management Team were consulted on this application. The Environment Agency are satisfied that there would be no adverse impact in terms drainage as a result of the planning application and suggest that an informative be attached to any permission to remind the applicant of their obligations with respect to the appropriate considerations to surface water drainage. The County Council's Flood Risk and Water Management team have considered the application and supporting information and are content with the principle of the proposed drainage strategy and have therefore raised no objection to the

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application, subject to a more detailed scheme being submitted (prior to commencement of development) pursuant to a condition imposed on any permission given. In addition to this condition, they also require a further condition requiring that there shall be no occupation of the new building until a verification report for the surface water drainage scheme has been submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority. Subject to the imposition of these conditions, I am satisfied that the development would be acceptable in terms of drainage and flood risk considerations and would accord with the objectives of Policy CS18 of the Local Plan Core Strategy. I would give this matter limited weight.

Sustainability

51. The application was supported by the submission of a 'Energy Statement Report', prepared in line with the planning and building control requirements at both national and local level. The report states that the design would utilise the 'Be Lean, Be Clean, Be Green' hierarchy through a fabric first approach to ensure the school's external building fabric is as thermally efficient as possible to minimise heat loss and energy consumption. Passive design measures such as energy efficient LED lighting, the use of water saving fittings, natural ventilation, and increased insulating properties would be incorporated into the new building. Renewable and low/zero carbon technologies were also considered for the site, and the development proposes the use of an Air Source Heat Pump for heating and cooling, extracting thermal energy from the ambient external air. Air source heat pumps have zero nitrogen oxide emissions and are considered a clean technology. Although they require electricity to operate, they have a high coefficient of performance which is why they are classed as a renewable source of energy. In addition, the new building benefits from a large amount of flat roof space and this has been considered suitable for the positioning of an array of photovoltaic panels which would offset carbon emissions. details of which have been provided in the application documents.
52. Whilst the method of construction proposed ("Be Lean, Be Clean, Be Green") does not directly correlate to BREEAM, the energy requirements of BREEAM are incorporated through the sustainable design of the building fabric and the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems. The proposed development achieves or in some cases surpasses the BREEAM technical standard of 'very good' in terms of energy efficiency. Furthermore, the development would comply with Part L of the Building Regulations, which was updated in 2022 to require sustainable building standards comparable with the BREEAM requirements. The development is considered to incorporate sustainable methods of construction and renewable energy technology, as well as demonstrating excellent standards of water efficiency, that would create a sustainable development and would accord with the aims and objectives of Policies CS18 and CS19 of the Local Plan Core Strategy despite not achieving the formal BREEAM accreditation. I therefore am satisfied with the sustainability credentials of the proposed development and give this matter moderate weight.

Contamination

53. The application was supported by the submission of a Phase 1 Preliminary Contamination Assessment, a Phase 2 Ground Investigation report, and a Foundation Works Risk Assessment to establish potential contamination risks and hazards on site

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prior to development. The reports concluded that given past uses of the site, overall there is a low risk of significant contamination being present at the site, or in the vicinity. The conclusions also note that given the findings, and previous investigations, there was not considered to be any need for further assessment of contamination risks.

54. The Environment Agency (EA) were consulted on the planning application and confirmed that they have no objection to the planning application subject to the imposition of an appropriate planning condition requiring the submission of a remediation strategy should any contamination be found following the commencement of the development, and informatives regarding waste disposal.
55. Based on the findings of the submitted reports, and taking into account the views of the EA, it is considered that the development of the site would be acceptable with regard to land contamination matters, subject to the condition recommendation by the EA. The provisions of Policy CS19 of the Local Plan to ensure no adverse impact on the environment as a result of the proposal is noted and any impact in terms of contamination would be minimal. I therefore have included the recommended condition and informatives in my recommendation, and give this matter limited weight.

Archaeology

56. The site lies within an area of multi-period archaeological potential and has particular interest for Palaeolithic archaeology. The application is supported with an archaeological desk-based assessment to consider the impact of the proposal on any features of interest.
57. Given the potential, the County Council's Archaeology Officer was consulted on the application and has considered the information submitted. The officer noted the potential for archaeological features to be present on the site. The officer also noted that there appears to have been some landscaping for the creation of the playing fields and this may have had some impact on any below-ground archaeological remains and geoarchaeological deposits. As such the officer recommends a condition be imposed on any consent given to secure archaeological field evaluation works, in accordance with an agreed written specification. Subject to this condition, the scheme would be considered acceptable in relation to its potential impact on archaeology and would accord with Policy TC7 of the Local Plan and I would give this matter limited weight.

Conclusion

58. This planning application proposes a 1 Form of Entry expansion of Northfleet Technology College through the construction of a new two storey teaching block, with materials to match existing, to be located at the end of the northern 'arm' of the existing building. This would allow for an additional 210 pupils across years 7-13 and an increase of 15 new members of staff. The application includes hard and soft landscaping and the reorientation of an existing sports pitch. No changes are proposed to the existing vehicular and pedestrian entrances; however, an existing delivery and service road would be extended within the site to reach the new building.
59. The development would be able to achieve biodiversity net gain in excess of 10%. The County Council's Biodiversity Officer has confirmed that sufficient information has been

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submitted to assess the impact of the development on ecology and is satisfied that the scheme as proposed would meet the requirements of the legislation, subject to the deemed condition requiring the submission and approval of the Biodiversity Gain Plan, a condition to secure the submission of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan and an informative regarding undertaking works outside of the core bird nesting season. The development is therefore considered to accord with Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan (2014).

60. The teaching block would be located on an existing area of playing field and would therefore result in its permanent loss from the school site. The closest playing pitch on site would be reorientated to accommodate the proposed building and this pitch. Sport England were consulted on the application and have advised that they consider the proposed development to meet their planning policy exception E3 and have raised no objection and hence the scheme is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of the loss of playing field land, and in accordance with Policy CS13 of the Gravesham Local Plan (2014).
61. One letter of objection has been received to the application that raises concerns with respect to traffic and amenity. The Highways and Transportation Officer has raised no objection to this application and is satisfied that the increase in vehicle movements as a result of the increase in staff and pupil numbers could safely be accommodated on the local highway network. A condition to ensure the updating of the School Travel Plan would further mitigate the impact of the small increase, and I am satisfied that the site and existing arrangements can adequately support the increase in numbers.
62. There is policy support in both the adopted Gravesham Borough Local Plan (2014) and the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) for the improvement of community facilities. Support for the provision of school places is also heavily embedded within the NPPF and the Planning for Schools Development Policy Statement and this development would satisfy a required need for secondary school places in the Gravesham area. In my view it would deliver necessary community infrastructure to meet growth in the locality and address community need.
63. I note the objection to this application, however I consider that the existing parking arrangements are sufficient, and the education need and the provision of additional teaching space to suitably accommodate the increase in pupils at the school would outweigh these concerns. With regard to all other matters discussed in the report above, it is my view that the development would be acceptable, would not give rise to any severe, significant or demonstrable harm that would be overriding as far as highways, environmental, amenity and ecological aspects are concerned.
64. The proposed development would accord with the relevant policies of the Gravesham Borough Local Plan (2014), the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) and the revised NPPF (2024) and is considered acceptable in regard to these other matters.

Recommendation

65. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:

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1. A 3-year time limit for commencement of the development;
 2. The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details and plans;
 3. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the details of all construction materials set out in the submitted documents and application drawings;
 4. That all construction works be undertaken in accordance with the submitted Construction Environmental Management Plan;
 5. The submission and approval of an updated School Travel Plan prior to occupation of the new classroom building, and ongoing review;
 6. That any contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then a remediation strategy to be submitted and thereafter implemented as approved;
 7. The submission of a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme prior to commencement of the development;
 8. The submission of a verification report pertaining to the surface water drainage scheme prior to occupation of the building;
 9. The submission of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) prior to occupation of the new building, to include habitat creation and enhancement measures, details of tree, scrub and hedgerow planting and modified grassland enhancement, tree protection measures, full planting schedule utilising primarily native species, elevation drawings detailing the model and location of two integral bat boxes, rolling, long-term maintenance measures covering up to a 30-year period; and details of responsible persons; and
 10. The submission of a written scheme of investigation for archaeological field evaluation works prior to the commencement of development;
 11. The development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted landscape scheme and associated plans within the first planting season following completion of the development.
66. The development shall also be subject to the submission of a Biodiversity Gain Plan, prior to the commencement of development, in accordance with paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
67. The following informatives are also proposed:
- a. only clean uncontaminated water should drain into the surface water drainage system; and those for the removal of waste from the site;
 - b. the School Travel Plan should be submitted on the County Council's 'Jambusters Travel Plans for Schools' system to allow the College to benefit from various grant initiatives which encourage active and sustainable travel;

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- c. ensure that any works which may result in impacts to nesting birds should be conducted outside of the core nesting season;
- d. the standard Biodiversity Net Gain informative.

Case Officer: Mrs Caroline Maclean	Tel. no: 03000 416348
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Background Documents: see section heading
