

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

Demolition of two existing mobile classrooms and erection of single storey detached classroom block including associated external works at Dover Grammar School for Girls, Frith Road, Dover, Kent, CT16 2PZ – DO/26/57 (KCC/DO/0190/2025)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 17 June 2026.

Application by Kent County Council Infrastructure Division for the demolition of two existing mobile classrooms and erection of single storey detached classroom block including associated external works at Dover Grammar School for Girls, Frith Road, Dover, Kent, CT16 2PZ - DO/26/57 (KCC/DO/0190/2025)

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Members: James Defriend and Albert Thorp

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

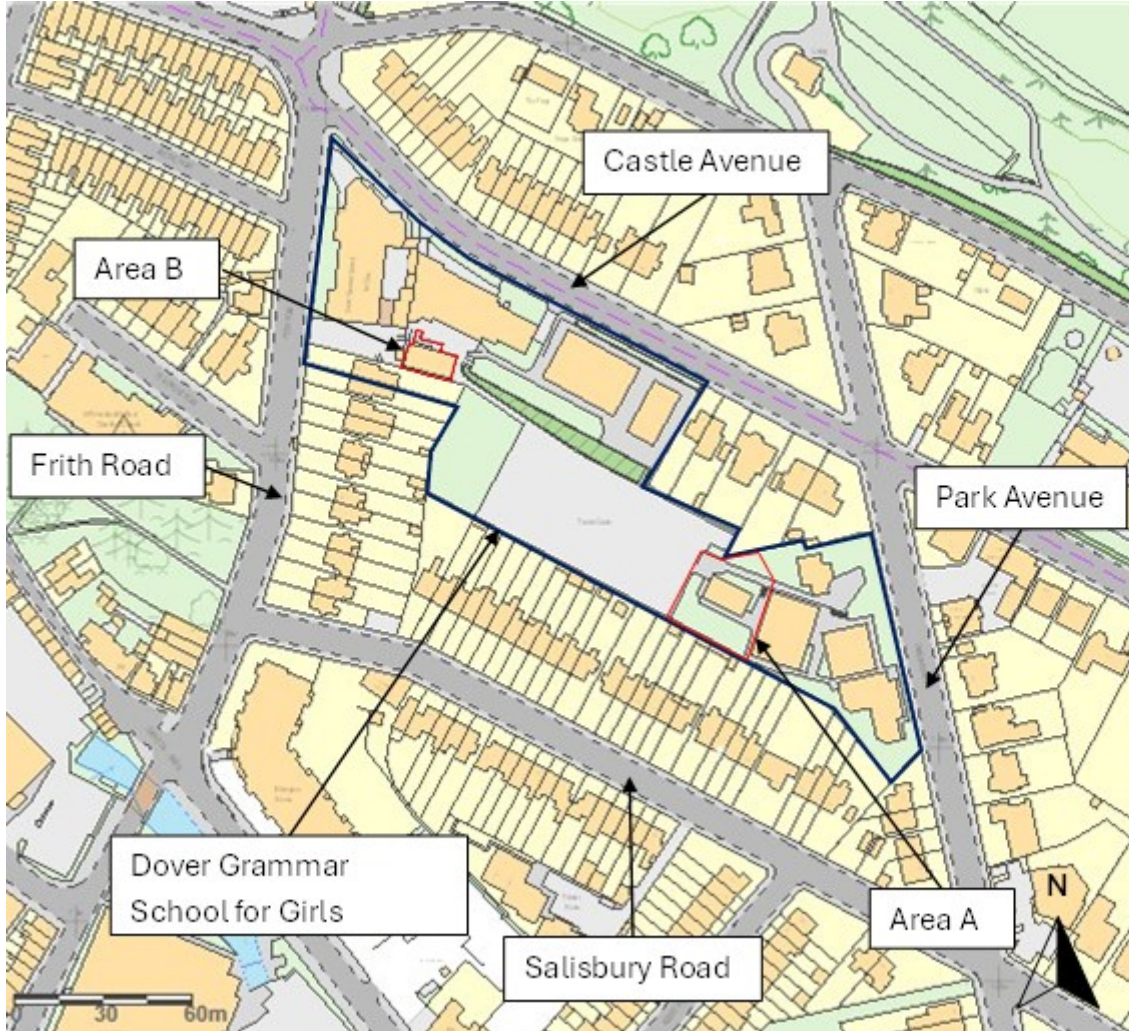
1. Dover Grammar School for Girls is located off Frith Road in Dover, with the principal access to the school being located off this road, which is located to the west of the school site. The school site is located within a residential area. The school is bound on its north side by Castle Avenue for approximately half its length before cutting behind residential buildings. The eastern end the school site borders Park Avenue. The school's southern boundary then runs to the rear of residential properties in Salisbury Road. The western school boundary is in part to the rear of residential properties in Frith Road before becoming the school's site frontage. The main school building is located on the corner of Castle Avenue and Frith Road and it is four storeys in height and dominates the corner in street scene views from these roads. The remaining buildings are a mix of one and two storeys grouped along the Castle Avenue and Park Avenue frontages. The central section of the site is open and this is where the principal hard surfaced ball courts are located. There are natural slopes and gradients across the school site meaning that existing buildings and facilities are split over a range of varying floor and ground levels.

Background

2. The applicant advises that the proposed development seeks to rationalise and improve the existing teaching accommodation by replacing two outdated temporary structures with a single purpose built permanent building. The proposal is located within the established grounds of an educational setting and would not result in any net increase in the number of classrooms or teaching spaces when compared to the existing provision nor any increase in staff or pupil numbers at the school.

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block at Dover Grammar School for Girls, Dover - DO/26/57
(KCC/DO/0190/2025)**

Site Location Plan



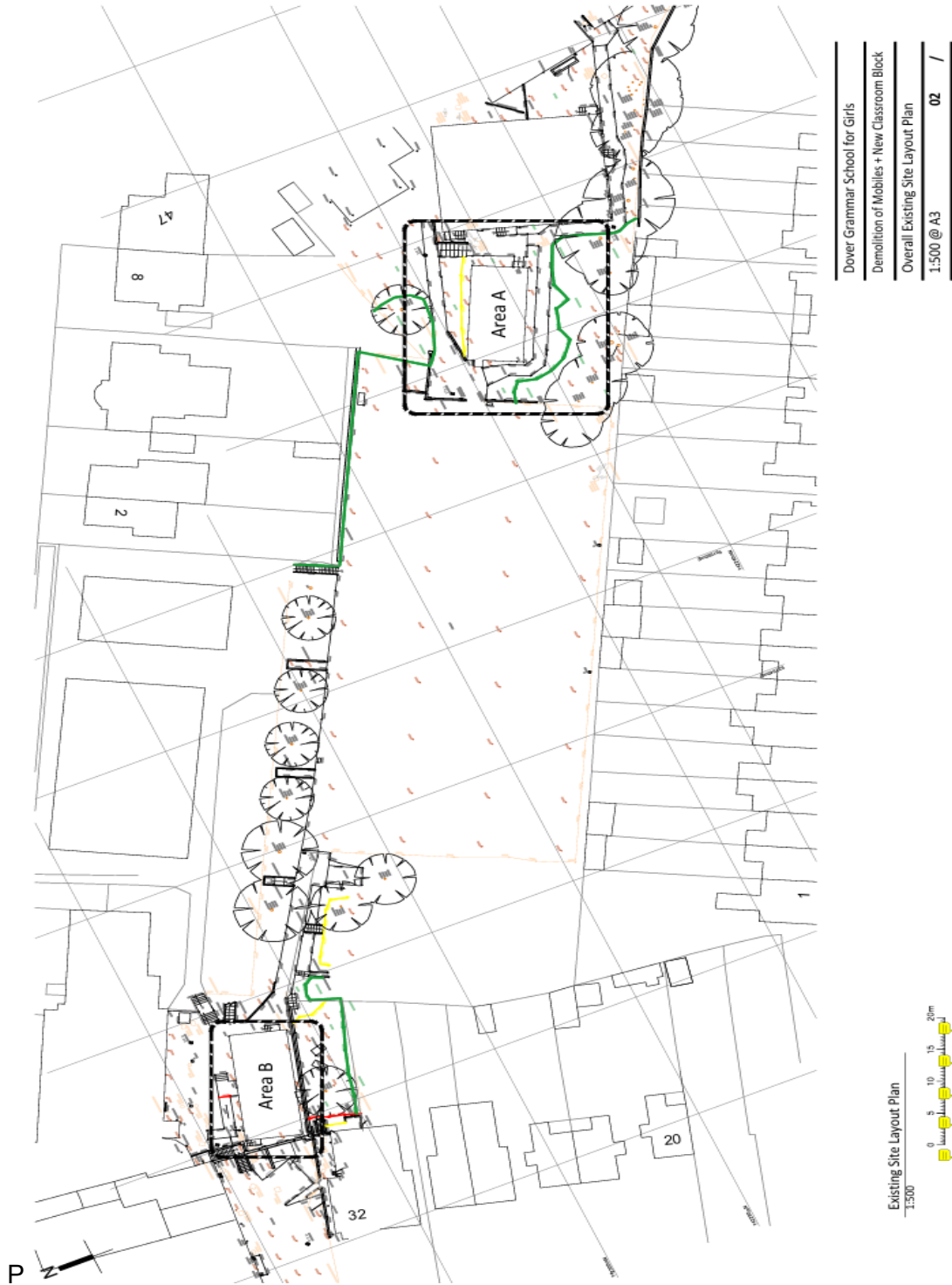
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Site Location Plan



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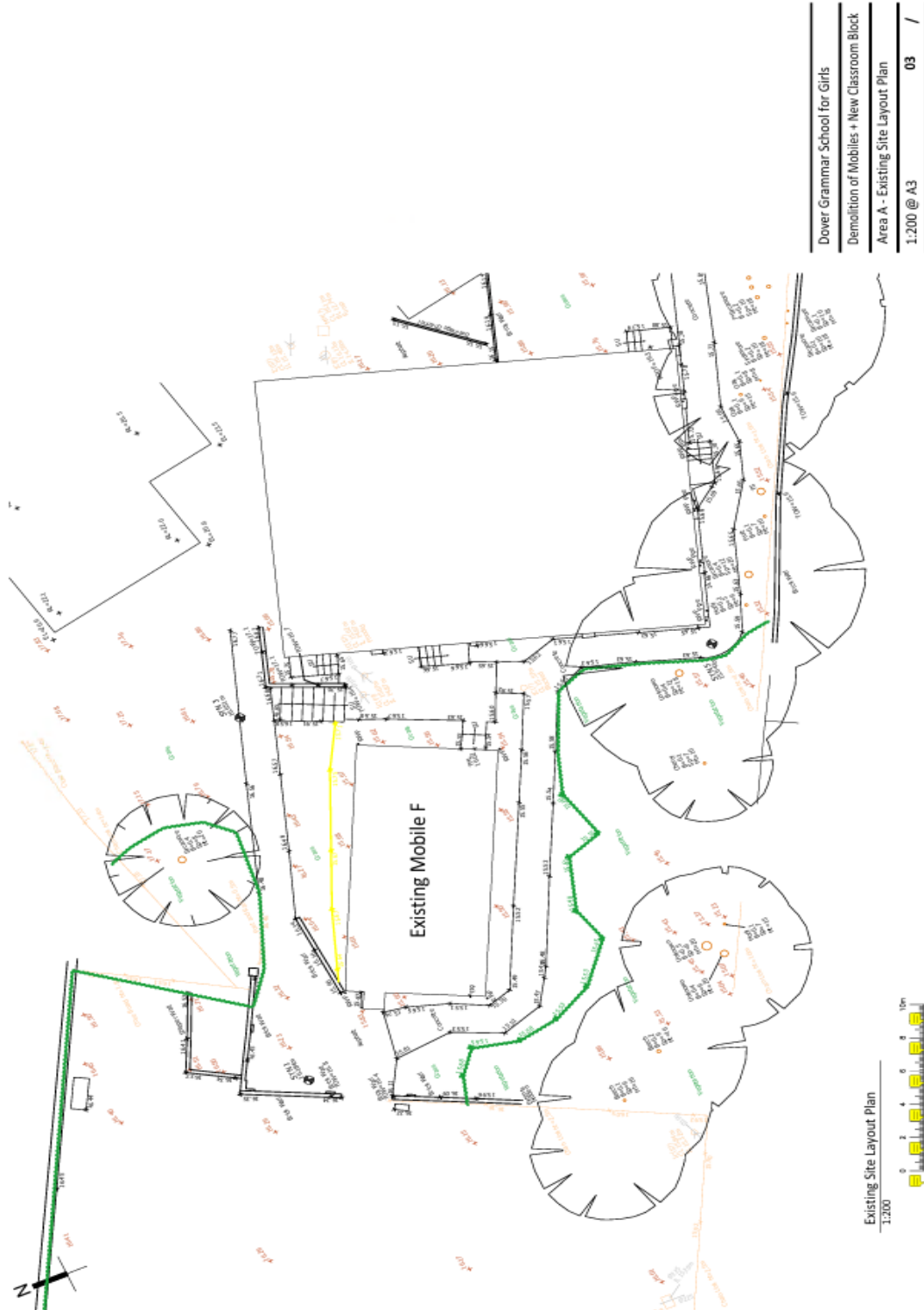
Location of Area A and Area B



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|---|----|
| Dover Grammar School for Girls | 02 |
| Demolition of Mobiles + New Classroom Block | / |
| Overall Existing Site Layout Plan | |
| 1:500 @ A3 | |

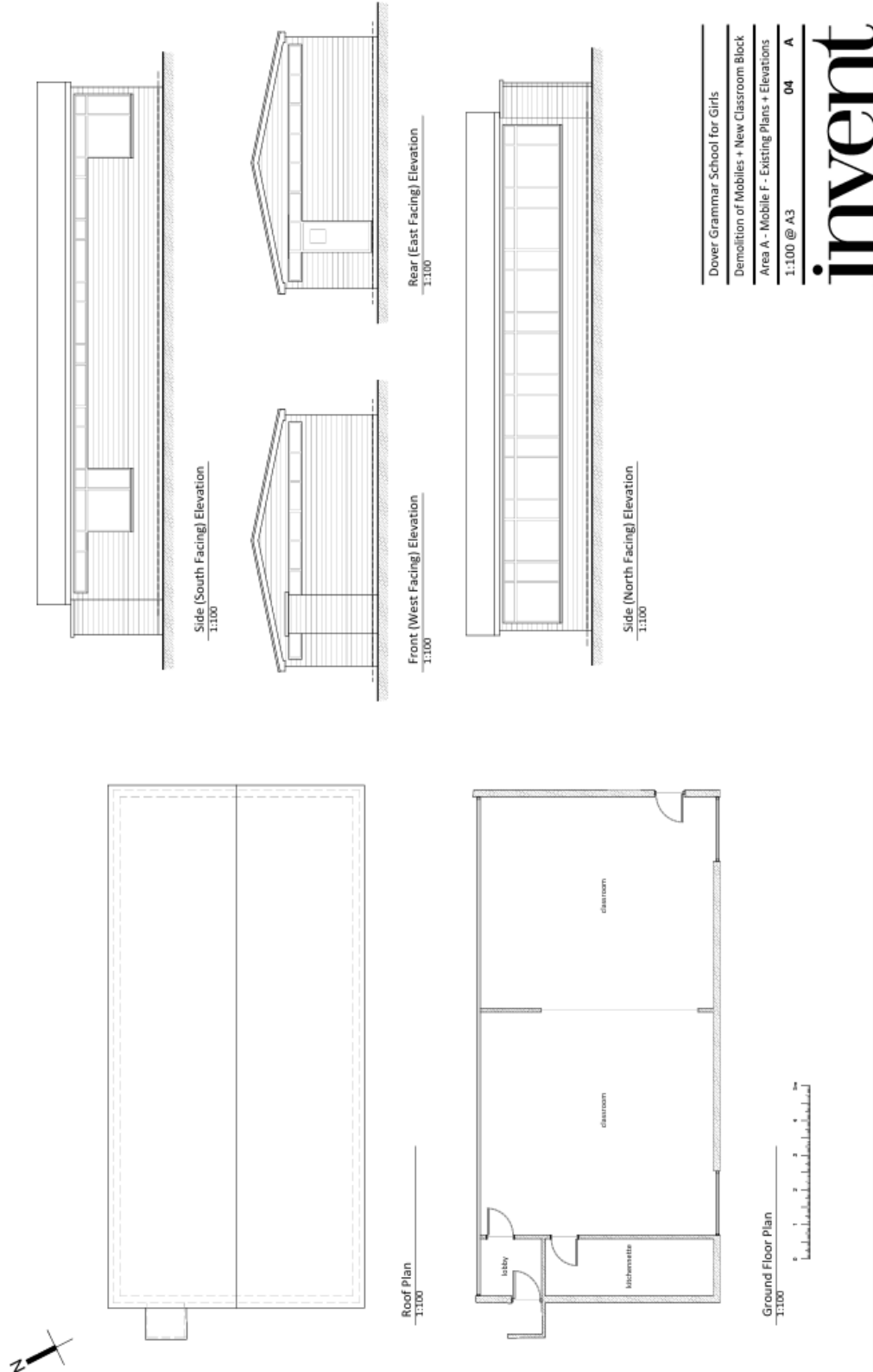
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Area A - Existing Location Plan (existing Mobile F)



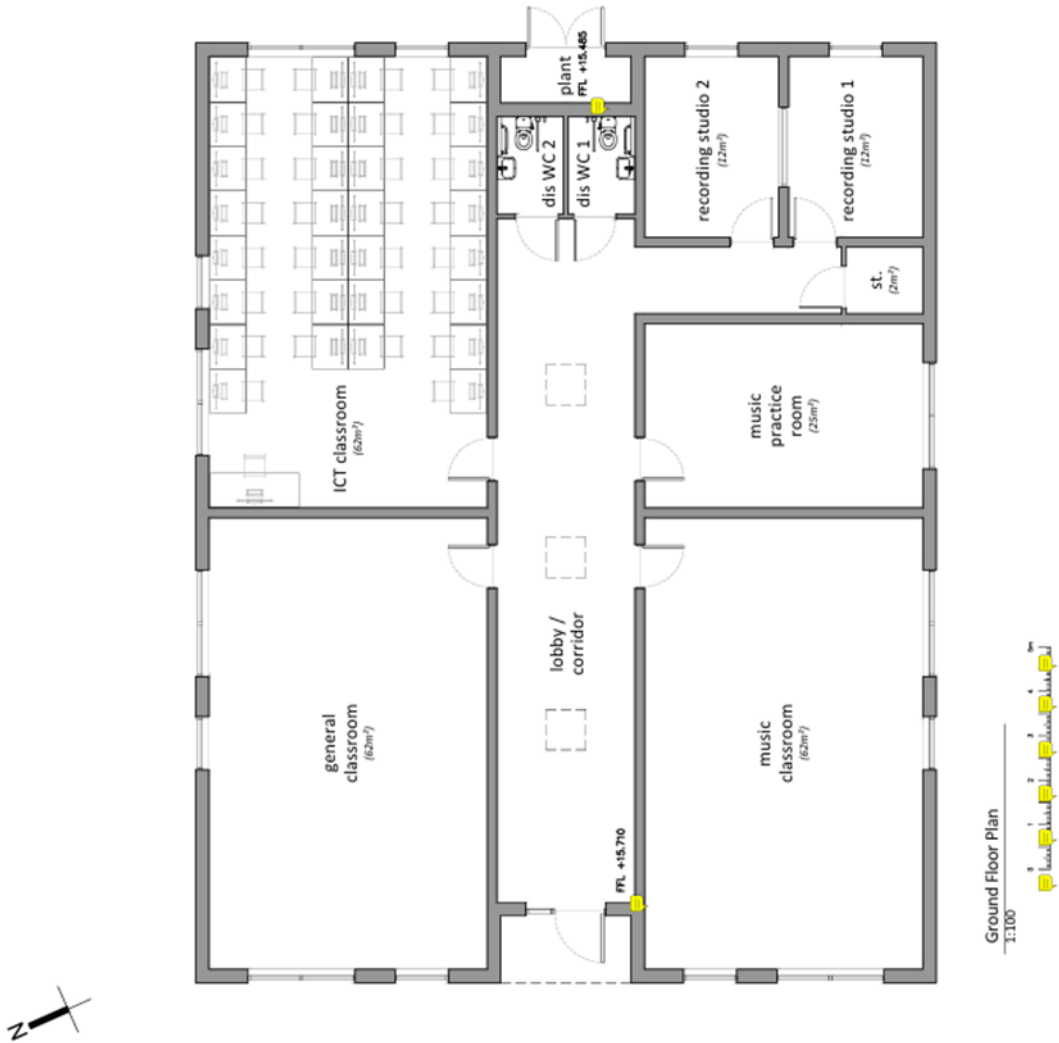
Demolition of two mobile classroom and erection of classroom block at Dover Grammar School for Girls, Dover - DO/26/57 (KCC/DO/0190/2025)

Area A – Existing Plans and Elevations (mobile F)



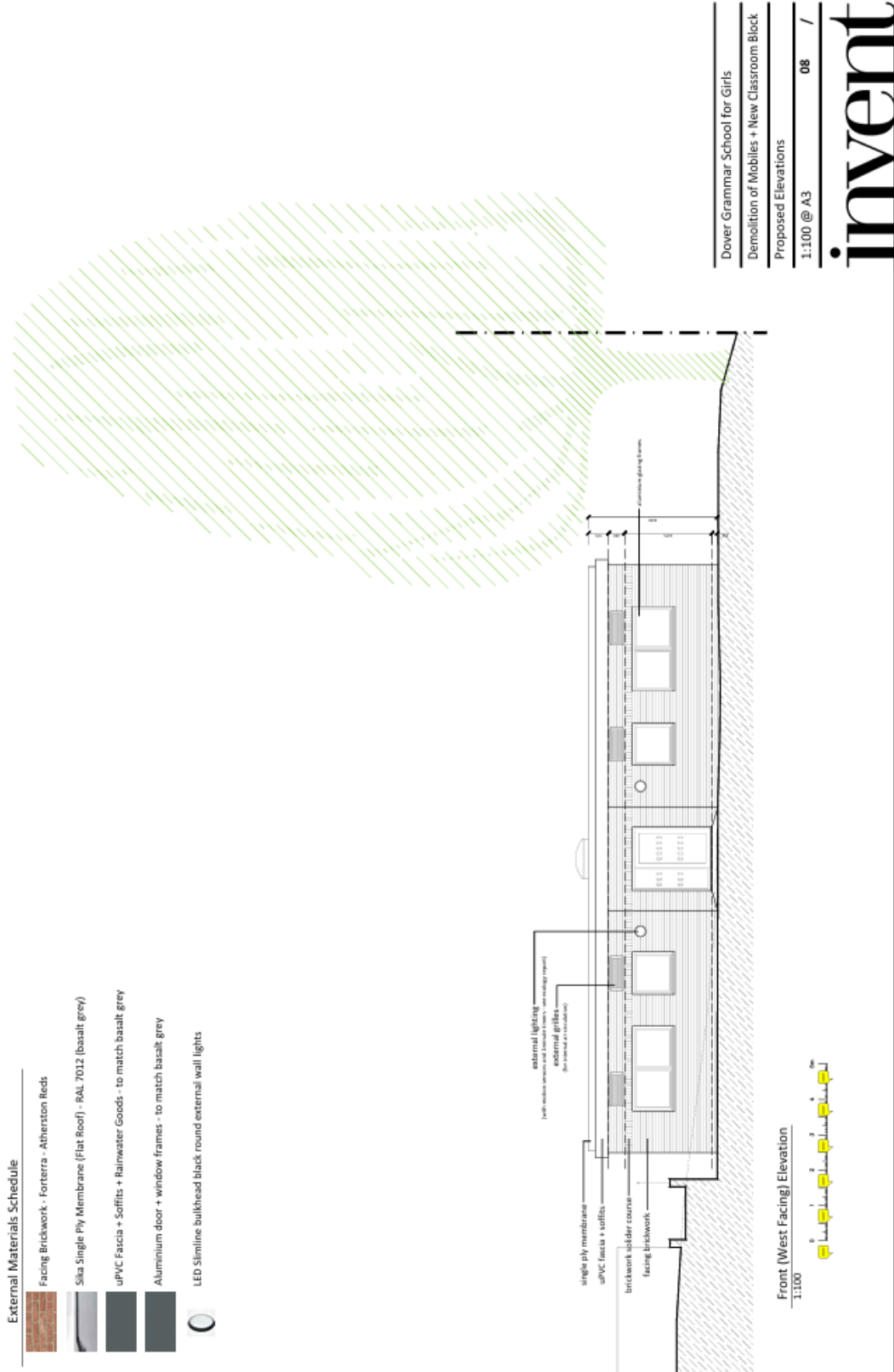
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Area A – New Classroom Block – Proposed Ground Floor



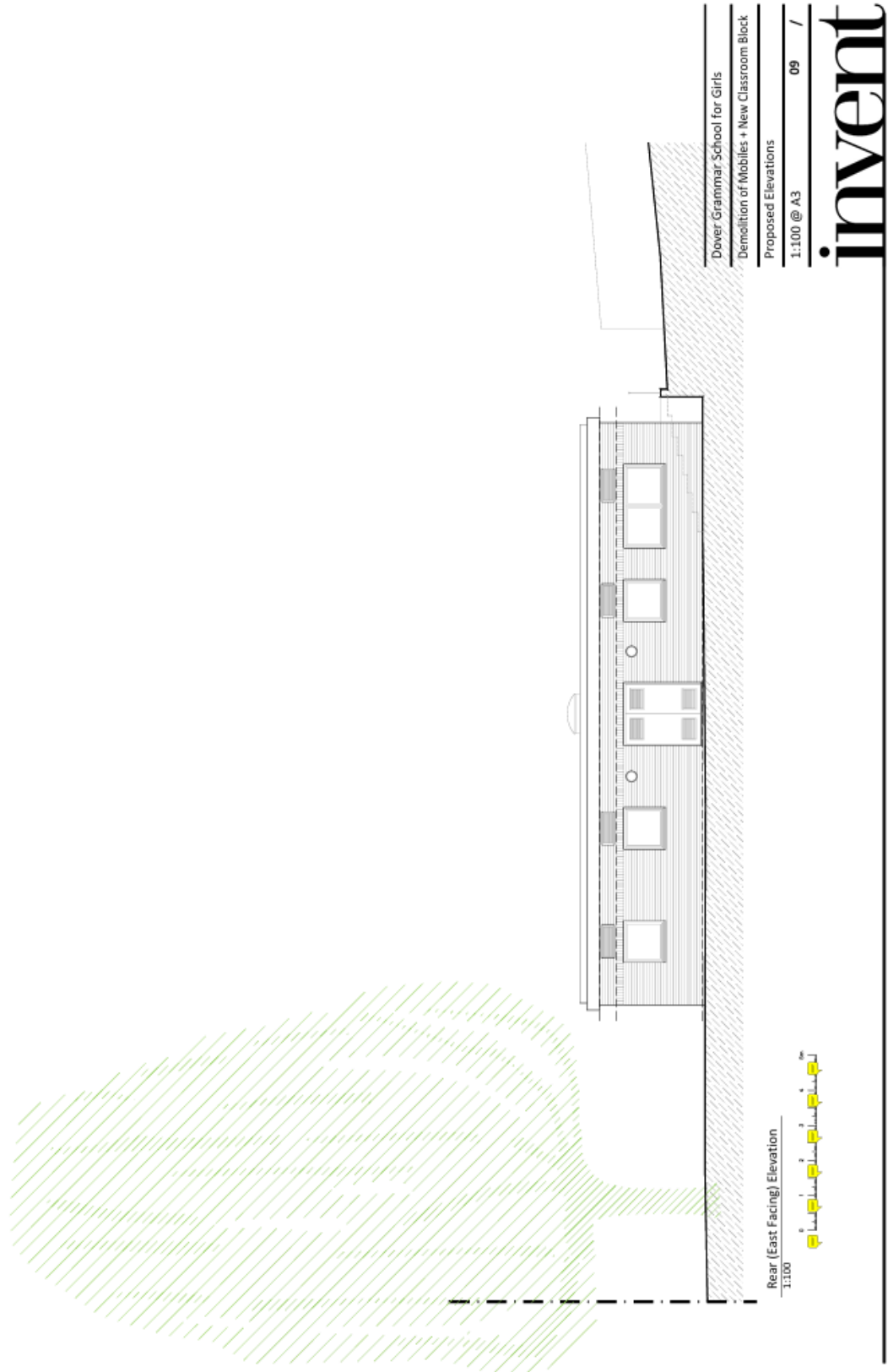
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Area A – New Classroom Block – Proposed Elevation (West)



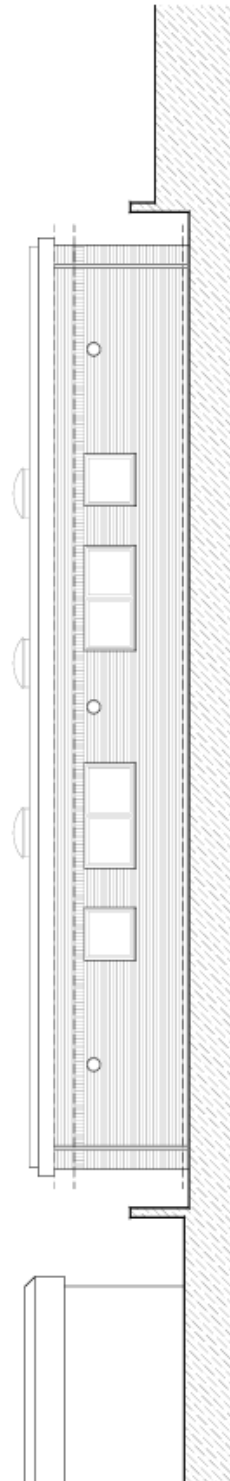
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Area A – New Classroom Block – Proposed Elevation (East)

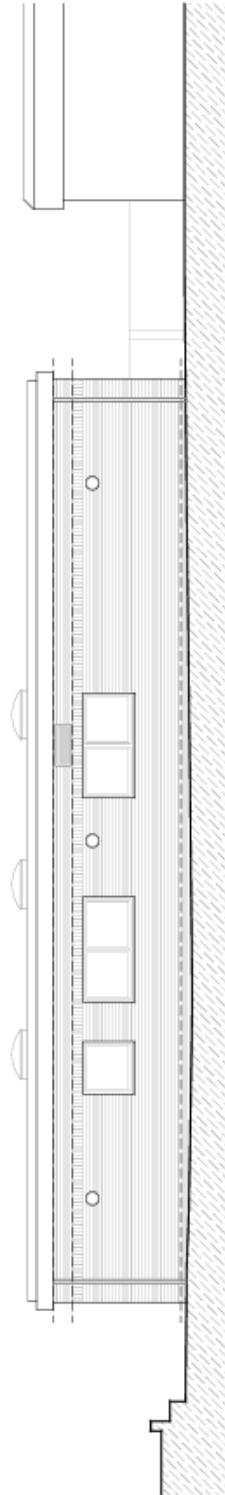


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Area A – New Classroom Block – Proposed Elevations (North and South)



Side (North Facing) Elevation
1:300



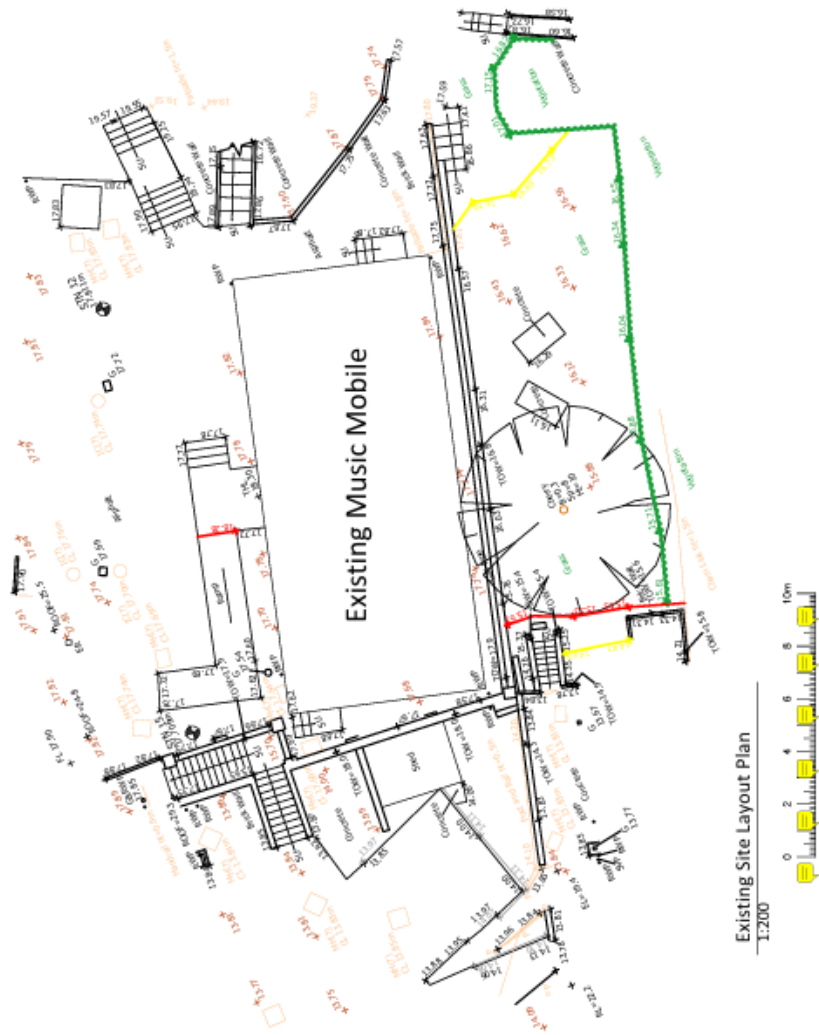
Side (South Facing) Elevation
1:300

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| Dover Grammar School for Girls |
| Demolition of Mobiles + New Classroom Block |
| Proposed Elevations |
| 1:100 @ A3 |
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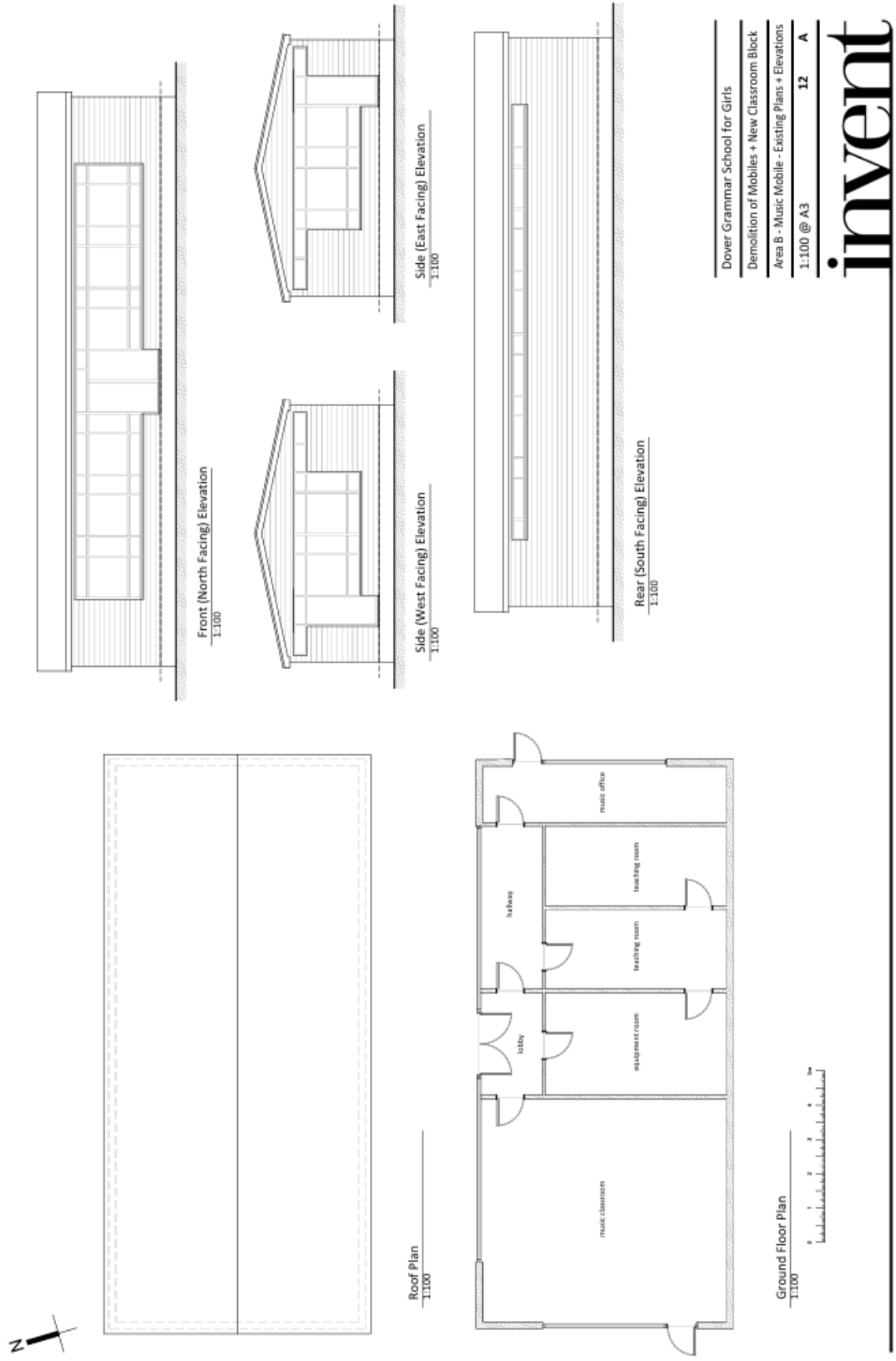
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Area B - Existing Location Plan (existing music mobile)



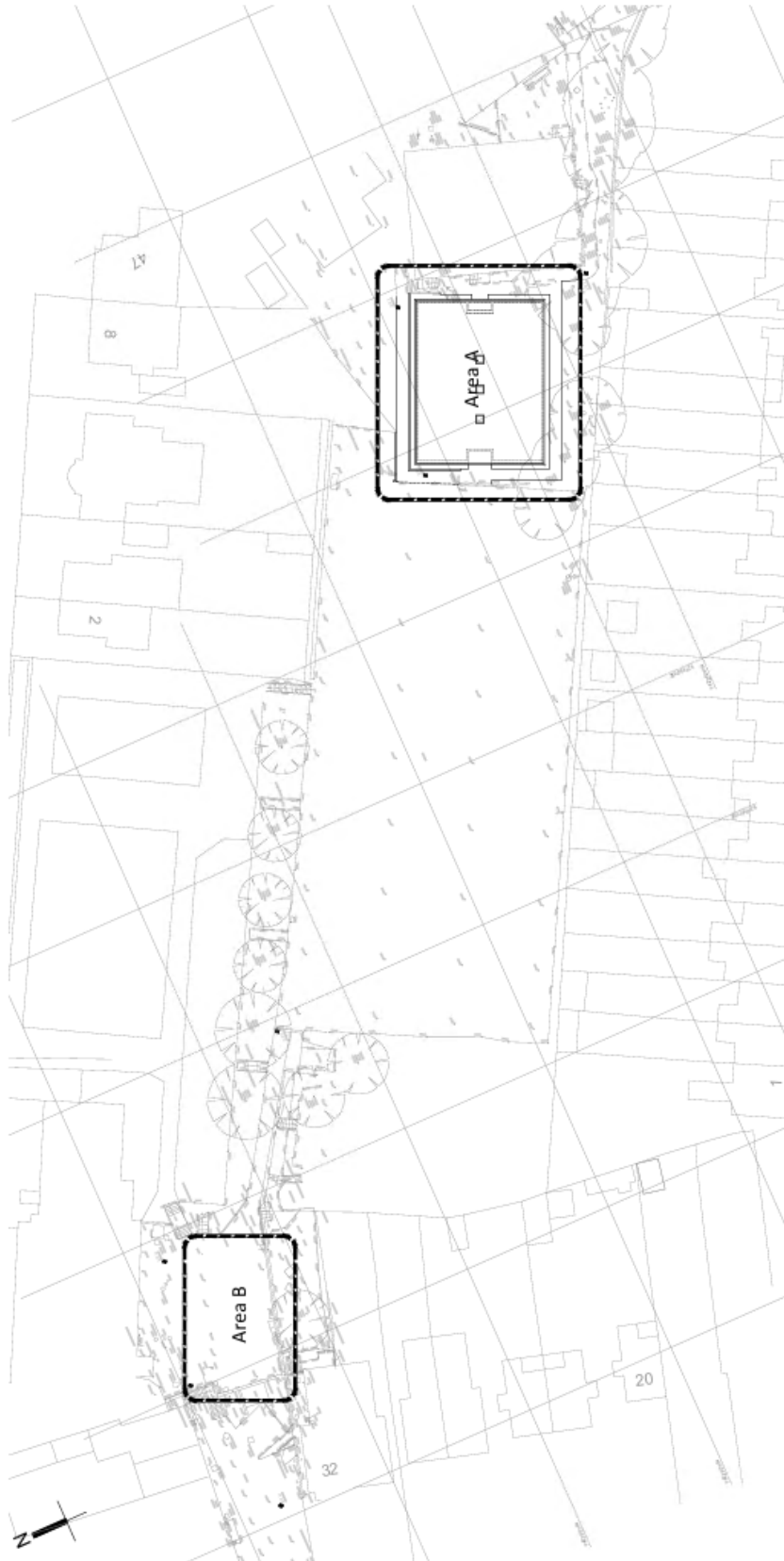
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Area B – Existing Plans and Elevations (music mobile)



Demolition of two mobile classroom and erection of classroom block at Dover Grammar School for Girls, Dover - DO/26/57 (KCC/DO/0190/2025)

Area A and Area B – Overall Proposed Site Layout



Dover Grammar School for Girls
Demolition of Mobiles + New Classroom Block
Overall Proposed Site Layout Plan
1:500 @ A3 14 /

Proposed Site Layout Plan
1:500
0 5 10 15 20m
[Scale bar with yellow markers]



Demolition of two mobile classroom and erection of classroom block at Dover Grammar School for Girls, Dover - DO/26/57 (KCC/DO/0190/2025)

3. The two existing mobile classrooms which are the subject of this planning application are located within the areas labelled as Area A and Area B.

- **Area A** – within this area is a mobile classroom known as Mobile F. It currently includes two classrooms, a kitchenette area and a small lobby. A photograph of this mobile is shown below.



Area A – Mobile F – existing mobile classroom

- **Area B** - within this area is a mobile classroom which is currently used as a music classroom. This mobile includes one music classroom, two small teaching rooms, an equipment room, a music office, small lobby and a hallway. A photograph of this mobile is shown below.



Area B – existing mobile classroom

4. As part of a county wide assessment of mobile buildings, Dover Grammar School for Girls was identified as having two units classed as end of life mobiles and high priority for replacement. Both existing mobile classrooms have reached the end of their

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serviceable life and require removal on health and safety grounds. This planning application proposes to replace both mobiles with a single permanent building, representing a more efficient, cost effective and sustainable solution.

Planning History

5. The most recent site planning history is listed below:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| DO/17/751 | The removal of a mobile classroom and its replacement with a new 2 storey teaching block on land adjacent to Park Avenue. The new block will provide 4 science laboratories/classrooms, an office, preparation room, toilets and ancillary accommodation. Granted with conditions. |
| DO/12/481 | The proposed development provides four history teaching areas and toilet provision within a stand-alone building on the school site. Granted with conditions. |
| DO/12/424 | Enclosure of a first floor staff room balcony area. Granted with conditions. |

Proposal

6. This planning application proposes the demolition of two existing mobile classrooms and the erection of a single storey detached classroom block including associated external works. The proposal comprises:
- The demolition of the two existing mobile classrooms located within Areas A and B.
 - The construction of a new larger single storey classroom block positioned within Area A and associated external works including new pathways and planting.
 - The removal of the existing mobile classroom located within Area B and the reinstatement of the surface treatments where necessary.
7. The planning application confirms that following the demolition of the existing mobile classroom within Area A measuring 99sqm (gross internal floorspace), it is proposed to replace it with a larger single storey detached classroom block measuring 318sqm (gross internal floorspace) and incorporating one general classroom, one ICT classroom, one music classroom, a music practice room, two music studios, two new toilets, a plant room and a lobby/corridor. The proposed works also include the realignment of an existing tarmac pathway to accommodate the expanded footprint of the replacement classroom block, whilst preserving the root protection zones of trees on the southern boundary. A mature sycamore tree to the north is proposed for removal, alongside an area of low-growing scrub and vegetation to the south.
8. The application documents confirm that the proposed classrooms and associated facilities in the replacement classroom block would directly replace those currently accommodated within the two mobile classrooms that are proposed to be demolished. There would be no net increase in the number of teaching rooms as a result of the proposed development.

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9. The siting of the new classroom block that is proposed to be located in Area A has been chosen to take advantage of the location of the existing mobile classroom and to minimise disruption to the wider school site, as well avoiding any encroachment into the open areas of the campus. The proposed siting would allow for clear and direct connections to the existing school buildings and to established pedestrian routes. The proposed demolition and complete removal of the music room mobile located in Area B, would result in a more cohesive and open external environment once the hardstanding is made good upon removal.
10. The application documents confirm that the proposed replacement classroom block would be single storey in height and thus reflecting the existing characteristics of the newer and permanent buildings within the school campus. The external appearance of the replacement classroom block would be defined by the use of red facing brickwork, grey aluminium framed windows, and a single-ply grey membrane roof covering, all of which reflect the material palette and architectural language of the more recent classroom buildings on this site. Furthermore, the applicant advises that the proposed materials have been selected to provide a robust, high quality and low maintenance finish which is considered to be appropriate for an educational environment. The proposed building would also be designed to meet current accessibility standards. Level access would be provided to the entrance, and internal layouts would ensure that classrooms and WCs are accessible to all users, including those with mobility impairments.
11. There are no proposed changes to the wider site boundary or to the existing vehicular or pedestrian access arrangements. The proposed scheme includes the provision of a new pedestrian pathway that would connect with the existing pathway to the north and south of the proposed classroom block, ensuring safe and convenient movement across the site.
12. Additionally the landscaping proposal would incorporate biodiversity and ecological enhancements. These measures are proposed to contribute positively to the environmental value of the site and would ensure that the development accords with best practice in sustainable site design.

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) 2025** 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:

- planning law requires that applications for planning permission are to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing (*paragraph 48*).
 - 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 (*paragraph 100*).
 - the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, and effective engagement is essential for achieving this (*paragraph 131*).
 - achieving the requirement for a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Planning decisions should ensure that developments would function well and add to the overall quality of an area; be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting; establish or maintain a strong sense of place, creating a welcoming and distinctive place to live, work and visit; include an appropriate mix of development and support local facilities and transport networks; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible (*paragraph 135*).
 - trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning decisions should ensure that...existing trees are retained wherever possible (*paragraph 136*).
- (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.

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- Local authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling the development of state-funded schools in their planning decisions.
- Local authorities should make full use of their planning powers to support state funded school applications. This should include engaging in pre-application 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.
- 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.

(iii) Dover District Local Plan to 2040 (adopted 16 October 2024)

- Policy SP2** **Planning for Healthy and Inclusive Communities:** Seeks to protect against the loss of existing community facilities, allowing for the enhancement of existing community facilities.
- Policy SP14** **Enhancing Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity:** Seeks that all development must avoid a net loss of biodiversity and will be required to achieve a net gain in biodiversity above the ecological baseline in line with Policy NE1.
- Policy PM1** **Achieving High Quality Design, Place Making and the provision of Design Codes:** States that all developments must achieve a high quality design, that promotes sustainability and fosters a positive sense of place.
- Policy NE1** **Biodiversity Net Gain:** States that development must provide a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG).

Consultations

14. The following consultee responses were received:

Dover District Council raises no objection.

Dover Town Council no comments have been received.

KCC Biodiversity Officer raises no objection subject to the imposition conditions covering the submission of lighting details, a landscape management plan, a site specific precautionary mitigation strategy for other species present within the site, and a bat survey prior to the demolition of the building in Area B. The submission of a detailed landscaping scheme is also required prior to the commencement of development. The

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development would be subject to the deemed Biodiversity Net Gain condition, requiring the submission of a Gain Plan prior to commencement of the development.

KCC Drainage Team raise no objection subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the submission of a Verification Report pertaining to surface water drainage system prior to the occupation of development.

KCC Highways and Transportation Officer raises no objection subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the submission of a Construction Management Plan prior to commencement of development.

Local Member

15. The local County Members for Dover Town, James Defriend and Albert Thorp, were notified of the application on 16 January 2026. No response has been received from Mr Thorp. Mr Defriend commented:

“I fully support this planning application.”

Publicity

16. The application was publicised by the posting of 6 site notices around the school site including Frith Road, Salisbury Road, Park Avenue and Castle Avenue on 22 January 2026.

Representations

17. In response to the publicity 8 letters of objection to the application have been received from the same local resident.

A summary of the main planning issues raised is set out below:

- Raise an urgent concern about the proposed removal of a mature sycamore tree located on the north side of the development site.
- Note that while a tree report has been provided, it appears that the assessment has not been undertaken by a suitably qualified arboricultural consultant and does not follow the standard BS5837 methodology typically expected for developments of this nature.
- Request that consideration be given to the making of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) in respect of the sycamore tree.
- Given the significance of the tree and the potential for irreversible loss, its amenity and landscape value should be given full and proper weight in the decision-making process.
- The proposed building is located within a relatively narrow part of the site, with established trees situated on both sides. This raises concerns that the development may result in unnecessary pressure on these trees, whether through removal or indirect impacts such as root disturbance.
- The existing tennis court area may offer a less constrained alternative location for the proposed building.

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- The displaced tennis courts could potentially be reconfigured within the more constrained area currently proposed for development.
- It is noted that there are currently residential properties for sale within close proximity to the school, including at least one, which is directly adjacent to the school boundary. This suggests that opportunities for strategic expansion beyond the existing site may exist and could warrant consideration as part of longer-term planning.

Discussion

18. In considering this proposal, regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph 13 above and other material considerations. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The proposal therefore needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations including those arising from consultation and publicity.
19. This application is being reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee due to objections received from one local resident following publicity of the application. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case are the principle of and need for the development, siting, scale and massing, impact on residential amenity, arboricultural and ecological matters, and highway considerations.

Principle of Development and Need

20. The principle of the proposed development is to replace two mobile classrooms that are deemed to have reached the end of their serviceable life and to provide one larger classroom block that would be DDA compliant and in line with DfE guidelines in the location of one of the demolished mobile classrooms (Area A). As part of a county wide assessment of mobile buildings, Dover Grammar School for Girls was identified as having two units classed as end of life mobiles with high priority for replacement, as they are required to be removed on health and safety grounds. This planning application proposes to replace these two mobiles with a single permanent building, representing a more efficient, cost effective and sustainable solution.
21. It should be noted that whilst the proposal is for a larger single replacement building, this would not result in any net increase in the number of classrooms or teaching spaces when compared to the existing provision nor any increase in staff or pupil numbers at the school. Whilst the proposed replacement building would be approximately 100sqm larger than the two existing mobiles to be removed, the additional space is proposed to include enhanced accommodation including two recording studios and toilet areas.
22. Planning policy guidance in the form of both the NPPF and the Policy Statement for School Development are strongly worded to ensure that proposals for the development of state funded schools should, wherever possible, be supported. The guidance is set out in paragraph 13 above and in summary states that there should be a presumption in favour of the development of state funded schools; that planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement; and that any refusal would have to be clearly justified. The school site lies within the defined

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built-up area of Dover and as such the principle of development is accepted, subject to it being in accordance with other relevant policies.

23. It is evident that from the above, there is clear policy support and backing for the delivery of suitable, DDA compliant and in line with DfE guidelines, replacement teaching accommodation at this school. I am therefore satisfied that there is a case of need for this development and support the principle of the replacement permanent classroom block.

Sitting, scale and massing

24. The proposed location of the development is currently occupied by an existing mobile classroom (Area A), a full feasibility study was carried out by the applicant to determine the best location for the proposed replacement classroom block on what is a constrained site. This study considered and looked at other locations within the school site but these were disregarded for various reason including school operational considerations, landlocking other school buildings, or resulting in a greater number of trees being impacted by the proposed works.
25. In addition, the school accommodates pupils and staff who are non-ambulant, and the existing buildings and surrounding routes are not fully accessible. The proposed building has been designed to improve accessibility across the site, including wider footpaths. Furthermore, the current location has been chosen to minimise the impact upon the immediate surroundings and adjacent trees/vegetation, whilst maintaining appropriate distances from the surrounding residential boundaries.
26. Objection has been received from a local resident regarding the proposed location of the replacement classroom block and in particular that it appears to be located within a relatively narrow part of the site, with established trees on both sides. Concern has been raised that the development may result in unnecessary pressure on these trees, whether through removal or indirect impacts, such as root disturbance. The objector also suggested that other parts of the site, such as the existing tennis court area, may offer a less constrained alternative location for the proposed building, where the impact on existing trees on the school ground could be significantly reduced or avoided.
27. As part of the alternative site options considered by the applicant, a range of potential locations were considered. The use of the tennis courts was discounted due to the absence of alternative outdoor recreational provision, such as an onsite playing field, and the importance of retaining this essential sports facility for the school. Furthermore, an alternative location to the rear of the site (adjacent to Park Avenue) was also considered. However, this area of the site contains a significant amount of established trees and vegetation, and its development would have resulted in the removal of a substantially greater number of trees.
28. As part of the planning application process, a local resident suggested that the School should consider buying one of the current residential properties which surround the site and within close proximity to the school. This was considered by the resident to be a least harmful solution in terms of impact on existing trees and as an alternative location for the replacement classroom block. It was also suggested that this could provide opportunities for a strategic expansion beyond the existing site and could warrant consideration as part of longer-term planning for the school.

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29. The KCC Area Education Officer considered this suggestion and advised that it is not a feasible solution. He advised that the planning application was not to accommodate an expansion of pupil numbers at this school. It is proposing a direct replacement building that is DDA compliant and in line with DfE guidelines for two existing mobile buildings that need to be urgently replaced. Purchasing a house outside of the school's land, which may not be of the size and specification required by the school, would not work operationally for the School, and may have accessibility issues. From the Education Authority's perspective, this alternative was not considered appropriate.
30. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed replacement classroom block would have a bigger footprint than the existing mobile classroom that is currently located in Area A, I consider the amalgamation of two end of life mobile classrooms into one single building, which would be DDA compliant and in line with DfE guidelines, to be a betterment over the current facilities and acceptable.
31. I also consider the proposed location to be appropriate as the principle of locating a classroom block in this area has previously been accepted, and has been located at this site for a number of years. The current mobile classroom is a single storey structure and the proposed replacement would also be a single story building, so I consider the scale and massing of the building to be appropriate in this location.
32. In order to accommodate the replacement classroom block on site, there is a need to reconfigure the existing footway that currently sits at a higher level than that of the proposed building, and to construct a retaining wall to support this footpath. However, in carrying out this work the root system of a sycamore tree, which is located to the north of the existing mobile classroom, would become exposed and make it unsafe. As a result, the tree is proposed to be removed.
33. It should be noted that I would not wish to see any tree removed unnecessarily to accommodate development. However, in considering this planning application, I have to balance the removal of this tree against other material planning considerations, including the educational need for the development, the implications of relocating the building, local residential amenity matters, the retention of other trees on site, and resulting wider landscape impacts. The amenity and landscape value of the sycamore tree that is proposed to be removed, and other trees on site, will be discussed in detail in the paragraphs 37 to 44 below. However, I consider the replacement permanent single classroom block to be acceptable in principle in terms of sitting, scale and massing, subject to the matters to be considered below.

Impact on Local and Residential Amenity

34. It is noted that a school building has been located in this area of the school site for a number of years and so the principle of a building in this location has previously been accepted. Whilst the footprint of the proposed building would increase, it would still be a single storey building with a flat roof as opposed to the existing single storey mobile building with a shallow pitched roof, and the overall height would remain the same. I consider that the location of the proposed replacement classroom block would have no greater impact upon the amenity of local residents than the existing building.
35. Whilst a sycamore tree is proposed to be removed to allow for a larger footprint of the replacement classroom block, the majority of the existing boundary vegetation is

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proposed to be maintained and enhanced. As will be discussed below, recent works to the sycamore tree have been undertaken, reducing its landscape value. However, existing boundary planting, which is to be supplemented, ensures that the site is well screened and the removal of this one tree would not, in my view, significantly alter the character of the local area. I also consider that there would be no material change to the outlook from residential properties to the south, nor any detrimental impact on the privacy of neighbouring residents as a result of the proposed development.

36. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF set out that new development needs to be of an appropriate design and that proposals should be of a character sympathetic to the local area, establishing a sense of place, taking into account building materials and building styles. The proposed replacement building has been designed to reflect the material palette and architectural language of the more recent classroom block on this site and are considered to be appropriate for an educational environment. Therefore, I am satisfied that the proposed development would have little or no impact on the existing residential character of the surrounding area, nor on the amenity of local residents bordering the site.

Arboricultural issues

37. Objection has been received from a local resident regarding the proposed removal of a mature sycamore tree to the north of the proposed development site. The objector considers that, whilst a tree report has been provided, the assessment had not been undertaken by a suitably qualified arboricultural consultant. It was stated that the tree survey did not follow the standard BS5837 methodology typically expected for developments of this nature.
38. With regard to the suitability of the submitted tree survey, I can confirm that the details are acceptable for a development of this scale and meet the County Planning Authorities local list validation requirements (Guidance and Validation Requirements for County Council Community Development (Regulation 3) Applications – March 2025). The submitted tree survey confirmed that to the north of the building, there is a sloping pathway leading to the other school buildings but on the corner nearest the site there is a single sycamore tree approximately 20m in height. This report identified that this tree has had significant pruning in the past, mainly to clear the aerial cabling that runs down the verge, and that there is a clear stem of approximately 8m with light epicormic growth (*epicormic growth is the sprouting of new shoots from dormant buds beneath a tree's bark, typically triggered by stress, damage, or environmental changes*) at the base, potentially showing the tree is under stress or responding to damage.
39. The author of the originally submitted tree survey works for an independent landscaping company with over 40 years' experience in this field. Given the small scale of the proposal and the limited number of trees affected, the submitted report was considered to be fit for purpose for a development of this size and of the nature proposed and proportionate in planning terms.
40. However the objector requested that the application should not be determined until a full BS5837 compliant arboricultural survey and impact assessment, prepared by a suitably qualified arboricultural professional, had been submitted and properly considered. In response and to assist in the planning process, the applicant arranged for a BS5837 compliant tree survey to be produced. This Arboricultural Report confirmed that this

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sycamore tree was in a poor overall physiological and structure condition, and that it had been recently heavily pollarded, and that it would never return to good health. The recommendation from the Arboricultural Report was that this sycamore tree needed to be removed, regardless of the proposed development. Both the original tree survey and the subsequent Arboricultural Report concluded that in order to carry out the proposed works, which included a larger building in this area and the need to reconfigure the existing footway, the root system of the sycamore tree would become exposed and make it unsafe. Both reports recommended that the sycamore tree would become unstable and would need to be removed.

41. It should be noted that the sycamore tree is not located within a Conservation Area, or subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) so can be removed/pruned/lopped by the landowner at any time. It is also noted that the tree has recently been heavily pollarded, which appears to have exacerbated its poor health, but the school are within their rights to undertake these works without the approval of the planning authority. It has not undertaken any works which would have needed approval. The tree now needs to be removed on health and safety grounds, regardless of the proposed development. However, the initial tree survey, which was undertaken before the recent lopping, also noted the poor health of the tree and recommended its removal. The landscape value of the tree has regrettably been diminished by recent works, and this cannot be reversed by retaining the tree as it will not return to its former condition. However, the applicant is proposing to plant 3 trees to the north of the proposed replacement classroom block to compensate for the loss of the sycamore tree.
42. The proposed removal of the sycamore tree has been considered in detail in the determination of the planning application and it has been balanced against other material planning considerations, including the implications of retaining this tree on the siting of the proposed building, and the health of other trees on site should the building be relocated. The feasibility study carried out by the applicant to determine the best location for the proposed replacement classroom block confirmed that by moving the building further south to potentially enable the sycamore tree to be retained, this would have adversely impacted on the health of trees to the southern boundary, necessitating the removal of additional trees, including some of arguably higher amenity value.
43. The location for the replacement permanent classroom block has been proposed as to minimise the impact upon the immediate surroundings and adjacent trees/vegetation, whilst maintaining appropriate distances from the surrounding residential boundaries. Alternative locations on the school site had been considered, however they had been discounted due to possibility of the removal of a greater number of trees, which are also in good health. The sycamore tree has been recommended for removal due to its close proximity to overhead cables and the existing mobile classroom, both of which represent material constraints on the site, its poor health, and resultant health and safety concerns.
44. Whilst the preference would be that no tree would need to be removed to facilitate development, there has to be a balance between the removal of this tree against other material planning considerations, including the educational need for the development, the implications of relocating the building, local residential amenity matters, the retention of other trees on site, and resulting wider landscape impacts. I consider that due to the on-going issues with the health and safety of the sycamore tree, that its proposed removal to facilitate the proposed development would be acceptable in this instance.

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Replacement tree planting to the north of the building is proposed, and the submission of a detailed landscaping scheme would be secured by planning condition should permission be granted.

Ecology & BNG

45. On the 12 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 NE1 of the Dover District Local Plan (2024) states that development must provide a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG).
46. In relation to ecology and biodiversity, a suitably qualified ecologist has assessed all habitats and species affected by the proposal. The impact of the proposed tree removal has been fully accounted for within the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment, which identifies the level of mitigation and replacement planting required should the development proceed. The scheme is designed to deliver a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain in accordance with Planning Policy, and the ecological value attributed to the sycamore tree is reflected within the adopted metric and associated enhancement proposals. While it is acknowledged that the removal of this tree would be regrettable, the proposed mitigation ensures that the overall biodiversity value of the site would be enhanced. The development would deliver in excess of 10% biodiversity net gain through the provision of new trees, hedgerows, shrubs and enhanced grassland, all of which would be managed, maintained and protected for a minimum period of 30 years through the BNG process. It is also worth noting that the majority of the new biodiversity enhancements would be located to the north of the proposed building, behind the position of the sycamore tree, and would establish over time. This planting would be required to be retained and managed for at least a 30 year period. Should permission be granted, the development would be subject to the deemed condition requiring the submission and approval of the Biodiversity Gain Plan prior to the commencement of development.
47. The submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal detailed that the site had potential to support roosting bats (within the mobile classroom located in Area B), breeding birds, hedgehogs and reptiles. It is good practice that the results of the recommended bat emergence survey and details of any mitigation are submitted prior to determination of a planning application. However, in this instance County Ecologist has accepted that it would be more appropriate to condition that the bat surveys be carried out during the survey season prior to the demolition of the mobile classroom located in Area B. The applicant has confirmed that this building would not be demolished for approximately 12 months. The building has been assessed as having a low potential for roosting bats and, therefore, it is likely that the building would be used by low numbers of commuting bats – if at all. I am therefore satisfied that the development would not have an adverse impact on bats, subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the submission of a Bat Survey, and any required mitigation, prior to the demolition of the building in Area B. For the avoidance of doubt, there is no requirement for further surveys to be undertaken with regard to the building in Area A.
48. Regarding the other species present within the site, the County Ecologist is satisfied with a precautionary mitigation approach to avoid a breach of wildlife legislation and has requested a condition securing the implementation of a site specific precautionary

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mitigation strategy to be submitted post decision. Development shall be subject to this condition being submitted within 3 months of the date of permission.

49. Taking account of the County Ecologist's comments, and as a result of the removal of the sycamore tree, a detailed Landscaping Scheme would be secured by condition, for submission prior to commencement of the development. Additionally, the submission a Landscape Management Plan is recommended, detailing how the proposed habitat to be created and enhanced would be managed. This plan would need to include a management timetable, capable of being a rolling 5 year management plan. The submission of a lighting plan is also recommended, with any proposed security lighting to be designed following best practice guidance within Bat Conservation Trust/Institute of Lighting Professional's *Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night*.
50. Subject to the imposition of the conditions recommended above by the County Ecologist, I consider that the development accords with Policy NE1 of the Dover District Local Plan (2024) in that there would be no net loss of biodiversity and that opportunities to enhance biodiversity would be secured.

Transportation and Highway Considerations

51. This planning application would not result in any increase in either staff or pupil numbers as the proposal is for the replacement of two end of life mobile buildings. Therefore, there would not be any increase in traffic going to and from the site nor would there be any increase in parking demand. Kent Highways were consulted on this planning application and raise no objection, subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the submission of a Construction Management Plan (CMP) prior to commencement of the development. The CMP would include details of the routing of construction and delivery vehicles to and from the site; parking and turning areas for construction and delivery vehicles and site personnel including vehicle tracking/swept paths; timing of deliveries; hours and days of working; provision of wheel washing; measures to prevent discharge of water onto the highway; temporary traffic management/signage and before/after highway condition surveys. Subject to the imposition of a condition securing the submission and approval of a CMP prior to commencement of the development, I am satisfied that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the local highway network.

Conclusion

52. This planning application proposes the demolition of two existing mobile classrooms and the erection of a single storey detached classroom block and associated external works. The proposed development is to replace two mobile classrooms that are deemed to be beyond safe and economic repair and to provide one larger classroom block that would be DDA compliant and in line with DfE guidelines.
53. In my view the key determining factors for this proposal are the principle and need of the development, siting, scale and massing, impact on residential amenity, arboricultural and ecological matters. There is strong Government support in the NPPF for the development of schools to ensure that there is sufficient provision to meet growing demand, increased choice and raised educational standards, subject to being satisfied on local amenity and all other material considerations. In my view the proposed development would not give rise to any severe, significant or demonstrable harm that

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would be overriding as far as planning, environmental and amenity aspects are concerned, as demonstrated in the discussion above.

54. Having had due regard to the planning documents submitted as part of this application, the consultation responses received and representations made, I am of the opinion that the proposed development, subject to the conditions listed below, would not give rise to any material harm, is acceptable and is otherwise in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies and the guidance contained within the NPPF. I therefore recommend that planning permission be granted, subject to the planning conditions and the deemed BNG condition set out below.

Recommendation

55. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions covering (amongst other matters) the following:
1. Development shall commence within 3 years of the date of the permission;
 2. Development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted details;
 3. The two mobiles classrooms shall be removed from the site prior to the occupation of the replacement building;
 4. Measures to protect trees to be retained;
 5. The submission of a detailed Landscape Scheme prior to commencement of the development;
 6. The submission of a detailed Landscape Management Plan within 3 months of the date of planning permission;
 7. The submission of a bat survey prior to the demolition of the mobile classroom located in Area B, to be carried out during the survey season and to include a Preliminary Roost Assessment, bat emergence survey, and overview of any mitigation required;
 8. The submission of a lighting plan, to be designed following best practice guidance within Bat Conservation Trust/Institute of Lighting Professional's 'Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night, and to include a site plan showing the location and types of lighting, downward facing lighting, and timings of the operational hours, within 3 months of the date of planning permission;
 9. The submission of a site specific precautionary mitigation strategy the other species present within the site, to be submitted within 3 months of the date of planning permission;
 10. The submission of a construction management plan prior to commencement of the development, to include routing of construction and delivery vehicles, parking and turning areas for construction and delivery vehicles, timing of deliveries, hours and days of working, provision of wheel washing facilities, measures to prevent the discharge of surface water onto the highway, temporary traffic management/signage and before and after construction highway condition surveys;
 11. The submission of a Verification Report pertaining to surface water drainage system prior to the occupation of the development.
56. 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).

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Background Documents: see section heading