

4.1 - SE/14/02059/FUL Date expired 25 September 2014

PROPOSAL: Demolition of Existing Changing Hut, Equipment Stores and Viewing Gallery. Extension of existing Sports Hall and Changing Rooms, including new viewing gallery and IT Room. Removal of 4 no. existing trees. Planting of replacement trees.

LOCATION: New Beacon School, Brittain's Lane, Sevenoaks TN13 2PB

WARD(S): Sevenoaks Kippington

ITEM FOR DECISION

Councillor Mrs Hunter has referred the application to Development Control Committee with reference to the objections raised by the Town Council

RECOMMENDATION: That planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:-

1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

In pursuance of section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans (06)001A, (06)002A, (07)001A, (07)002B, (07)003A, (07)004A, (07)005A, (07)006B, (08)001A, (08)002A, (08)003A, (09)001A, (09)003B

For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3) No development shall be carried out on the land until details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. The development shall be carried out using the approved materials.

To ensure that the appearance of the development enhances the character and appearance of the locality as supported by Policy EN1 of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan.

4) The development shall achieve a BREEAM very good standard. Evidence shall be provided to the Local Authority -
i) Prior to the commencement of development, of how it is intended the development will achieve a BREEAM very good standard or alternative as agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority; and
ii) Prior to the occupation of the development, that the development has achieved a BREEAM post construction certificate minimum level very good or alternative as agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

In the interests of environmental sustainability and reducing the risk of climate change as supported in Planning Policy Statement 1, policies CC2 & CC4 of the South East Regional Plan & Policy NR1 of the Kent & Medway Structure Plan.

5) No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for: the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors loading and unloading of plant and materials storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate wheel washing facilities measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works

To ensure the impact of the construction of the development is acceptable within the locality.

6) Works on the main building shall not commence unless the local planning authority has been provided with either:

a) A licence issued by [the relevant licensing body] pursuant to Regulation 53 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 authorizing the specified activity/development to go ahead; or

b) A statement in writing from the relevant licensing body to the effect that it does not consider that the specified activity/development will require a licence.

In the interests of the biodiversity of the site in accordance with SP11 of the Core Strategy.

7) Prior to the use of the development hereby permitted, a scheme for the enhancement of local biodiversity including bird nesting features shall be submitted and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall not be used until the approved details are implemented, and they shall be retained thereafter

In the interests of biodiversity in accordance with SP11 of the Core Strategy.

8) No development shall be carried out on the land until full details of soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. Those details shall include:-planting plans (identifying existing planting, plants and trees to be retained and new planting / trees);-a schedule of new plants and trees (noting species, size of stock at time of planting and proposed number/densities); and-a programme of implementation.

To protect the visual appearance of the area as supported by EN1 of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan.

9) If within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development, any of the trees or plants that form part of the approved details of soft landscaping die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased then they shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

To protect the visual appearance of the area as supported by EN1 of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan.

10) Prior to the occupation of the building hereby approved, a Community Use Agreement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Community Use Agreement shall include details of how the school will make the facility available for non-school users and community sports groups. The approved

Scheme shall be implemented upon commencement of use of the development and operated thereafter.

To ensure that the benefits of the proposal outweigh any negative impact upon the openness of the Green Belt in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

11) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the ecological mitigation measures outlined in section 5 of the Ecological Scoping report dated 14.2.2014

In the interests of the biodiversity value of the site and SP11 of the Core Strategy

12) No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for: the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors loading and unloading of plant and materials storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development wheel washing facilities measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction

In the interests of the amenity of dwellings within the locality

Informatives

1) Kent Ecology has advised that there is vegetation and buildings on site which is suitable for breeding birds. They advise that this should only be removed outside of the breeding bird season (1st March and 31st August inclusive), unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check of vegetation/buildings for active birds' nests immediately before the work is carried out to ensure that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site.

Note to Applicant

In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the NPPF Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals. SDC works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner, by;

- Offering a duty officer service to provide initial planning advice,
- Providing a pre-application advice service,
- When appropriate, updating applicants/agents of any small scale issues that may arise in the processing of their application,
- Where possible and appropriate suggesting solutions to secure a successful outcome,
- Allowing applicants to keep up to date with their application and viewing all consultees comments on line (www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/environment/planning/planning_services_online/654.asp),
- By providing a regular forum for planning agents,
- Working in line with the NPPF to encourage developments that improve the improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area,

- Providing easy on line access to planning policies and guidance, and
- Encouraging them to seek professional advice whenever appropriate.

In this instance the applicant/agent:

- 1) The application was dealt with/approved without delay.

Description of Proposal

- 1 Demolition of existing changing hut, equipment stores and viewing gallery. Extension of existing sports hall and changing rooms, including new viewing gallery and IT Room. Removal of 4 no. existing trees. Planting of replacement trees. The works involve:
 - The construction of an extension to the existing Sports Hall to the north of the existing building.
 - The construction of additional changing accommodation to the west of the extended sports hall.
 - The construction of a first floor IT room to the south side of the building.
 - The demolition of the existing changing hut to the west of the existing Sports Hall.
 - The demolition of the 3 no. existing equipment stores to the north of the existing Sports Hall.
 - The application includes the removal of 4 no. trees to the north of the Sports Hall to allow for the construction of the Sports Hall Extension.

Description of Site

- 2 The application site lies to the west of Brittain's Lane and to the north of Dibden Lane, just to the northwest of the Cross Keys road junction. To the north lies Great Britain's Wood featuring an extensive area of beech woodland extending well north towards Brittain's Farm. To the west lies further woodland, open arable land and then the A21 Sevenoaks By-Pass beyond which lies Mill Bank Wood, another extensive band of trees. To the south beyond Dibden Lane lies arable land. Beyond the northeast boundary of the site lie two residential properties at 4 Brittain's Lane and Bryanston both with frontages to Brittain's Lane. To the southeast of these properties lie nos. 2 & 2a New Beacon Bungalows which, although beyond the curtilage of the application site, are within the School's ownership and are currently occupied by staff engaged at the School. No. 2B New Beacon Bungalows lies within the school curtilage between nos. 2 & 2a, and the swimming pool hall to the west. To the east of Brittain's Lane there is a recreation ground and semi detached residential properties at Julian's Way.
- 3 Three larger properties lie beyond the south east extremity of the site. The most northerly of these is Beaconside which is a detached property currently employed as the Head Teacher's residence, this house lying between the upper playing fields and Brittain's Lane. The two semi detached properties to the south of Beaconside are Beacon Cottage and Berneval both being in private ownership

with frontages on to the Cross Keys junction and rear gardens backing onto the upper playing fields

- 4 The school premises are located centrally within the site and towards the eastern boundary with Brittain's Lane. To the south and north there are playing fields associated with the school. The main school buildings are clustered around a single area within the site with pathways, landscaped areas and ponds interspersed between them.
- 5 The school has 392 day boys, with boarding provision for 14 boarders.

Constraints

- 6 Green belt
- 7 AONB

Policies

Sevenoaks District Local Plan

- 8 Policies- EN1

Core Strategy

- 9 Policies - SP1, SP11, L08

Allocations and Development Management Plan

- 10 Policies - EN1, EN2, EN5, GB9

Other

- 11 NPPF

Relevant Planning History

- 12 80/00093/HIST - erection of shelter at firing range. Granted

81/01747/HIST - demolition of existing timber classroom buildings and erection of replacement single storey school building and resiting of three mobile classrooms. Granted

83/00199/HIST - erection of single storey extension to school to provide additional classroom. Granted

85/00375/HIST - erection of a sports hall and changing rooms. Granted

88/02686/HIST - Single storey extension to junior school to provide new classroom. Granted

89/00412/HIST - New indoor swimming pool. Granted

89/02255/HIST - Three storey building to provide new Arts & Music Centre.as amended by letter and drawing plan received 19.2.90. Granted

90/01454/HIST – Two-storey building to provide new Arts & Music Centre. Granted

93/01622/HIST - Provision of external fire escape staircase & alteration of windows to fire doors. Granted

94/01103/HIST - Single storey classroom extension, new vehicular exit and additional car parking. Granted

94/01104/HIST - Demolition of 3 existing bungalows and erection of 1 detached and 4 semi-detached bungalows. As amended by letter and plans dated 28.11.94. Granted

95/02315/HIST - New Science Centre. Granted

95/02316/HIST - New Design/Technology Workshop and Computer Suite. Granted

96/01847/HIST - Lean to extension to sports hall to provide P T A Store. Granted

96/01848/HIST - Rebuilding existing rifle range hut. Granted

01/02739/FUL - Demolish single storey stores building and replace with two storey extension for kitchen and ancillary rooms over. Granted

04/01730/FUL - Car park extension. Granted

05/03232/FUL - Refurbishment, Extension and alterations of the existing junior school and construction of new classroom wing. Granted

06/00326/FUL - Replacement plant room and temporary contractors access from Brittain's Lane. Granted

06/02014/CONVAR - Retention of workshop building as variation of condition 9 of planning permission SE/05/03232/FUL for extension and alteration to school buildings. Granted

08/01150/FUL - Erection of free-standing storm shelter across the front of the schools existing sports hall. Granted

09/00731/FUL - Erection of free-standing storm shelter across the front of the schools music and arts centre. Erection of emergency exit from the first floor of the music and arts centre to existing external staircase. Granted

09/02378/FUL - Retrospective application for erection of 50 metres of galvanised fencing along part of lower boundary at a height of 2.4 metres. Refuse

10/00092/FUL - Resubmission of 05/03232/FUL - Refurbishment, Extension and alterations of the existing junior school. Granted

10/03524/CONVAR - Application to vary condition no. 10 of SE/10/00092/FUL to allow details to be submitted prior to installation of the all weather surface. Granted

12/01873/FUL - Formation of new 70 x 58m All Weather Pitch including perimeter fencing and floodlighting; relocation of groundsman's compound; creation of 6 no additional parking bays. Construction of new Grounds Maintenance Store. Granted

13/00481/FUL - Proposed new vehicle crossover to Brittain's Lane. Granted at appeal

13/00940/MMA - Minor material amendment to application reference 12/01873/FUL for the 'Formation of new 70 x 58m All Weather Pitch including perimeter fencing and floodlighting; relocation of groundsman's compound; creation of 6 no additional parking bays. Construction of new Grounds Maintenance Store in order to make amendments to pitch dimension, amendments to groundsman's store, amendment to paving/car parking material. Granted

13/01457/CONVAR - Removal of condition 6 (All earth, soil or other material resulting from the excavation of the surface shall be fully removed from the site prior to the first use of the approved all weather playing surface) of SE/12/01873/FUL to Formation of new 70 x 58m All Weather Pitch including perimeter fencing and floodlighting; relocation of groundsman's compound; creation of 6 no additional parking bays. Construction of new Grounds Maintenance Store. Granted

Consultations

Sevenoaks Town Council

13 Sevenoaks Town Council has advised:

'Sevenoaks Town Council recommended refusal due to the site's Green Belt location:

1. *No need has been established for providing these facilities for a school of only 400 pupils and 38 sports groups in the Green Belt*
2. *The 'very special circumstances' have been extended to cover the 38 sports clubs rather than the needs of the school*
3. *Excessive bulk and scale of the development within the Green Belt*
4. *There are no plans included within the application dated later than Feb 2014*

14 Sevenoaks Town Council requested this application be determined by the Development Control Committee rather than under delegated authority.

15 *Sevenoaks Town Council has been informed by sporting organisations that it appears the proposed facilities do not meet the minimum required standards of sporting organisation governing bodies, if this statement is accurate it would severely limit the community benefit of this development'*

SDC Arboricultural Officer

16 SDC Arboricultural Officer has advised:

It is with reluctance that I offer no objection to this proposal, which will entail the losses of a number of mature trees. Although these trees are mature, they have little amenity due to their location.

Should consent be granted for this application, I suggest that a robust landscaping scheme be conditioned in order to ensure that suitable new trees are planted.'

KCC Ecology

17 KCC Ecology has advised:

18 *'Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006), "Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity". In order to comply with this 'Biodiversity Duty', planning decisions must ensure that they adequately consider the potential ecological impacts of a proposed development.*

The National Planning Policy Framework states that "the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by...minimising impacts on biodiversity and delivering net gains in biodiversity where possible."

Paragraph 99 of Government Circular (ODPM 06/2005) Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations & Their Impact Within the Planning System states that "It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision."

Natural England has published Standing Advice on protected species and Ancient Woodland. When determining an application for development that is covered by the Standing Advice, Local Planning Authorities must take into account the Standing Advice. The Standing Advice is a material consideration in the determination of applications in the same way as a letter received from Natural England following consultation.

We have reviewed the ecological information which has been submitted with the planning applicant and we are satisfied that sufficient information has been provided to determine the planning application.

Bat Survey

19 *The submitted bat emergence surveys identified that a maternity roost of common pipistrelles were roosting within the western aspect of the building proposed for demolition and low numbers of bats were foraging/commuting within the site.*

The submitted the report has provided a detailed mitigation strategy and we are satisfied that the submitted information is sufficient to ensure the favourable conservation status of the bat species will be maintained.

A European Protected Species (EPS) licence from Natural England will be required before works can be implemented. As such if planning permission is granted we suggest the following is included as a condition (the wording has been adapted from the British Standard BS42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of Practice for planning and development):

No works on the main barn shall not in any circumstances commence unless the local planning authority has been provided with either:

a) A licence issued by [the relevant licensing body] pursuant to Regulation 53 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 authorizing the specified activity/development to go ahead; or

b) A statement in writing from the relevant licensing body to the effect that it does not consider that the specified activity/development will require a licence.

Lighting can be detrimental to roosting, foraging and commuting bats. We advise that the Bat Conservation Trust's Bats and Lighting in the UK guidance is adhered to in the lighting design (see end of this note for a summary of key requirements).

Breeding Birds

- 20 *There is vegetation and buildings on site which is suitable for breeding birds. We advise that it is removed outside of the breeding bird season (1st March and 31st August inclusive), unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check of vegetation/buildings for active birds' nests immediately before the work is carried out to ensure that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site.*

Enhancements

- 21 *One of the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework is that "opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged".*

The applicant is proposing to carry out replacement tree planting within the site. We recommend that a number of the trees are native.

In addition we suggest that bird nesting features should also be installed on mature trees that will be retained long-term.

Please provide confirmation that these enhancements will be incorporated in to the site.

If you have any queries regarding our comments, please contact me.'

Natural England

- 22 *Natural England have commented:*

'Statutory nature conservation sites – no objection

This application is in close proximity to the Knole Park Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Natural England is satisfied that the proposed development being carried out in strict accordance with the details of the application, as submitted, will not damage or destroy the interest features for which the site has been notified. We therefore advise your authority that this SSSI does not represent a constraint in determining this application. Should the details of this application change, Natural England draws your attention to Section 28(l) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), requiring your authority to re-consult Natural England.

Protected landscapes

- 22 *Having reviewed the application Natural England does not wish to comment on this development proposal*

The development however, relates to the Kent Downs AONB. We therefore advise you to seek the advice of the AONB Unit. Their knowledge of the location and wider landscape setting of the development should help to confirm whether or not it would impact significantly on the purposes of the designation. They will also be able to advise whether the development accords with the aims and policies set out in the AONB management plan.

Protected species

- 23 *We have not assessed this application and associated documents for impacts on protected species.*

Natural England has published Standing Advice on protected species. The Standing Advice includes a habitat decision tree which provides advice to planners on deciding if there is a 'reasonable likelihood' of protected species being present. It also provides detailed advice on the protected species most often affected by development, including flow charts for individual species to enable an assessment to be made of a protected species survey and mitigation strategy.

You should apply our Standing Advice to this application as it is a material consideration in the determination of applications in the same way as any individual response received from Natural England following consultation

The Standing Advice should not be treated as giving any indication or providing any assurance in respect of European Protected Species (EPS) that the proposed development is unlikely to affect the EPS present on the site; nor should it be interpreted as meaning that Natural England has reached any views as to whether a licence is needed (which is the developer's responsibility) or may be granted.

If you have any specific questions on aspects that are not covered by our Standing Advice for European Protected Species or have difficulty in applying it to this application please contact us with details at consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Local sites

- 24 *If the proposal site is on or adjacent to a local site, e.g. Local Wildlife Site, Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Site (RIGS) or Local Nature Reserve (LNR) the authority should ensure it has sufficient information to fully*

understand the impact of the proposal on the local site before it determines the application.

Biodiversity enhancements

- 25 *This application may provide opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife, such as the incorporation of roosting opportunities for bats or the installation of bird nest boxes. The authority should consider securing measures to enhance the biodiversity of the site from the applicant, if it is minded to grant permission for this application. This is in accordance with Paragraph 118 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Additionally, we would draw your attention to Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) which states that ‘Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’. Section 40(3) of the same Act also states that ‘conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat’.*

Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- 26 *Natural England has recently published a set of mapped Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). This helpful GIS tool can be used by LPAs and developers to consider whether a proposed development is likely to affect a SSSI and determine whether they will need to consult Natural England to seek advice on the nature of any potential SSSI impacts and how they might be avoided or mitigated. Further information and guidance on how to access and use the IRZs is available on the Natural England website’*

Representations

- 27 4 letters of objection have been received. They raise the following points:
- The site has a long planning history and reflects the level of development within the green belt and the AONB.
 - It is difficult to believe that there is a need for the proposed development.
 - The school is not a good neighbour and causes traffic and parking problems.
 - A high level of disruption would be caused by construction works and traffic
 - The drawings show no perspective from the public footpath.
 - There will be an adverse visual impact from the footpath.
 - The removal of trees is considered unacceptable
 - The bat survey results are questionable
 - The very special circumstances are not considered to be very special as they do not clearly outweigh the damage to the green belt.
 - The development is of a large scale
 - It appears that the school may have outgrown its site

Chief Planning Officer's Appraisal

- 28 Planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing Changing Hut, Equipment Stores, Sports Hall viewing gallery and an extension to the existing Sports Hall, associated extended and updated changing facilities and equipment stores, viewing gallery and IT Suite.
- 29 Paragraph 72 of the NPPF states that *'the Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education '*
- 30 Before applications are submitted they should:
- *give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools; and*
 - *work with schools promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues'*
- 31 With regards to the relevant policies of the Development Plan, the main considerations in this case are:
- a) The acceptability of the proposal in terms of the Green Belt Designation.
 - b) The acceptability of the proposal in terms of its impact upon the character and appearance of the landscape
 - c) The impact of the development upon neighbouring residents.
 - d) The impact of the development in terms of ecological conservation.
 - e) Any other issues.

Green Belt

- 32 Chapter 9 of the NPPF relates to the Metropolitan Green Belt. Paragraph 79 indicates that *'fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence'*.
- 33 Whether the proposal constitutes inappropriate development -
- 34 Paragraph 89 indicates that the construction of new buildings should be considered inappropriate unless they are for a limited number of exceptions. The proposal does not fall under any of the exceptions.
- 35 The proposal would be located within the existing built form of the site, in place of, and extending existing buildings. The proposal has been designed so that the highest point of the wave form roof would only protrude 0.5m above the highest point of the existing building.
- 36 The proposed building would not protrude any further south into the site. The building would extend the built footprint of the current facilities an additional 15.1m to the north of the site and an additional 6.9 m to the west. As such, although the building would represent a minimal increase in height compared

with the existing, and would replace an existing number of buildings which are shown to be demolished it would extend the extent of built form on the plot.

- 37 This increase in built form would take place on an existing developed site and therefore, whilst the impact of the proposal is material, it is somewhat reduced as a result of the removal of the existing ad-hoc buildings and the position of the building within the building envelope of the site. The actual overall impact in terms of Green Belt openness and the Green Belt objectives is considered to be relatively minimal.
- 38 The proposed replacement building does not meet the tests of an appropriate building within the green belt. It would have some limited detrimental impact upon Green Belt openness and would therefore be considered inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

Very Special Circumstances –

- 39 Paragraph 87 of the NPPF indicates that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 88 indicates that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed.
- 40 The applicant has put forward the case that the proposed development would
- *‘Provide a Sports Hall facility capable of accommodating the current pressures/demands which have increased dramatically since the existing building was constructed in the 1980’s’. The school pupil roll has increased from approximately 220 children to the current roll of 400, which it has maintained for the last 10 years. ‘The Sports Hall needs to cater for a wider range of activities concurrently to meet the curriculum hourly requirements for physical exercise and participative sports, and to manage inclement weather conditions better.’*
 - *‘The `three court’ facility proposed would enable the School to meet current sport and recreation standards in accordance with the recommendations of Kent County Council Sports Development Unit, Sports Council and Sport Scotland recommendations’. To meet the curriculum requirement for PE and participative sport the School states that it needs to increase the number of groups that can undertake sport classes concurrently. The application states that ‘present experience is that younger age groups have to undertake sports lessons during the morning which is their prime learning time. Afternoon activity would be more appropriate’*
 - *The application contends that the development would cater for a wider range of children’s age groups for which demand has been increasing in recent years. ‘Following demand for the needs of younger children the facilities must now cater for age groups ranging from Reception through to Year 8. The Sports facilities therefore must cover, Secondary age groups as well as Reception, Pre-Prep and Junior’*
 - *Enlarging the Hall would also ‘allow multipurpose use including drama, music, multi media, applied arts and dance to meet the increasingly*

broader curriculum requirements'. KCC recommends multi purpose facilities in accordance with guidance set out in the joint DfEE, Sports Council and Arts Council publication `Designing Space for Sports and Arts`.

- The *proposal would* build on the existing Community Use of the schools facilities. The School has stated that it is experiencing significant demand from the local community to use its facilities. *'Interest has been generated following the installation of an All Weather Sports Pitch in Autumn 2013. Relationships have now been established with local football, rugby and hockey clubs. Four local swimming clubs use the School's Swimming Pool. To meet the level of enquiry, a Facilities Manager has been appointed, with the brief to extend the number of local organizations accommodated and the range of activities offered. The extended Sports Hall will be the hub of these activities, and will offer adult as well as children standard sports facilities, more flexible changing arrangements, access and facilities for disabled athletes and learners, and a dedicated visitor's entrance in close proximity to parking. The proposed facilities will offer changing facilities for outside users of the all weather pitch. This accommodation has been designed to give direct access to the outdoor pitches and will offer secure dedicated changing accommodation which can be easily managed outside normal school hours.'*
- The current *changing* facilities are described as inadequate with the School's smaller pupils having to use class rooms open to public view. School pupils currently have to use overspill facilities in the unheated timber changing hut to the west of the existing Sports Hall during peak periods. *'The proposed upgraded changing facilities would provide secure changing privacy and security for all necessary age groups, and would enable the School to provide more cubicle showers in accordance with statutory requirements and KCC Sport Development Unit design guidance'*
- The applicant claims that *'the proposed upgraded changing facilities will provide a proportion of cubicled changing accommodation to allow use by external hirers, and to satisfy Sports Council recommendations for encouraging inclusivity and the widest possible involvement in participative sport'*. The changing rooms would also provide segregated changing areas for outdoor team game sports, and male and female community use.

41 The applicant has stated that *'meeting curriculum requirements requires intensive use of the school's existing sports facilities and presently all outdoor facilities are weather dependent. Pressure on school facilities has increased as the school has had to comply with raised targets for physical education activities.'*

42 New Beacon School caters for extended age ranges from reception to year 8 Secondary Education Level. In view of this factor, the application contends that Kent County Council Sports Development unit's publication `Four Court Sports Hall Design Brief' offers appropriate guidance on the matter.

43 I give these matters considerable weight as a case for very special circumstances. Currently the school benefits only from a relatively small indoor sports hall, and dated unsuitable changing facilities. The applicant has provided extensive information regarding the existing provision and expected provision under the current guidance. There is clearly a large gap. The proposal would upgrade the

indoor sports facilities including the changing rooms to levels which would bring the facility in line with recommended standards and guidelines, including for disabled access. I also give significant weight to the guidance in paragraph 72 of the NPPF that *'the Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.'* and that *'local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education'*.

- 44 I would only give very limited weight to the fact that the facility could be a valuable asset to community sports groups, although this would be advantageous to the community if the provision were found to be acceptable in all other respects. A condition can be used to secure a community use agreement.
- 45 These considerations outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness. This report will now consider whether the proposal would cause any other harm.

The impact upon the landscape

- 46 A corner of the site and the area that the extension is proposed upon is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Policy LO8 of the Core Strategy requires that the distinctive character of the AONB will be conserved and enhanced. The area falls within the 'Sevenoaks Wooded Cherts' character area for the purposes of the Countryside Character Assessment SPD.
- 47 Policy EN5 of the emerging ADMP states that *'the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their settings will be given the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Proposals within the AONB will be permitted where the form, scale, materials and design would conserve and enhance the character of the landscape and have regard to the relevant Management Plan and associated guidance.'*
- 48 *Proposals that affect the landscape throughout the District will be permitted where they would*
- a) conserve the character of the landscape, including areas of tranquillity, and*
 - b) where feasible help secure enhancements in accordance with landscape actions in accordance with the Sevenoaks Countryside Assessment SPD.'*
- 49 The surrounding landscape is generally characterised by a landscape enclosed by areas of dense trees with occasional openings of pasture land. The landform is moderately undulating.
- 50 Overall the site maintains a feeling of openness, with buildings arranged 'campus' fashion around green spaces and mature trees. The site is generally well screened by mature trees and planting to the boundaries. The buildings are remote from the north and west boundaries due to the juxtaposition of the playing fields. The north and west boundaries are screened by Great Brittain's Wood. The South boundary is also well screened by mature trees along the Dibden Lane frontage. The East Boundary is largely screened by the residential plots giving onto Brittain's Lane and by boundary planting. Three bungalows on this frontage, including the School Keeper's accommodation, are owned by the School, and Beaconside to the Southeast also falls within the School curtilage.

- 51 A number of concerns have been raised about the impact of the proposal on the public footpath that runs across the northern end of the site. The footpath is located approx. 50m away from the northern elevation of the proposed building. In comparison to the existing building, the northern elevation would extend 0.5m higher and 6.9m further to the west. In the context of the site, given the existing built form on the site, and the large distance and mature screening across and around the site, it is considered that the visual impact of the extended building would be minimal within the wider environment and from the footpath.
- 52 The new extension would remain well screened behind the existing Sports Hall building to the south and by the band of trees to the north, east and south. The application requires the removal of four trees and it is proposed that these will be replaced elsewhere. This can be required through imposition of a landscaping condition. Due to the minimal visibility of these trees in the wider landscape, and the comments by SDC Arboricultural Officer, this is considered acceptable.
- 53 Although the proposal will introduce greater built form onto the site on this corner of the AONB designation, the extension is located on land which is already previously developed. The current developments consist of the existing sports hall along with ad hoc buildings – 3 existing equipment sheds and a changing hut. These are impacting on the west and north elevations and would be replaced with the rationalised form of proposed development. Upon reflection, it is considered that the proposal would enhance the appearance of the AONB by presenting a clear delineation between the built form of the school site and the openness of the adjacent AONB through the removal of small ad hoc buildings that have no design cohesion with the sports hall building. The proposed extension would result in one single building which would contain all the necessary provision rationalised within one appropriately designed block. This would result in an enhancement of the AONB compared with the current layout, and would be in accordance with EN5 of the ADMP.
- 54 With the above in mind, it is considered that given the design and siting of the proposal, that it replaces existing built form, and the mature screening of the site, the landscape impact of the proposal would not be harmful and would therefore be acceptable.

The impact of the development upon neighbouring residents

- 55 EN1 of local plan states that proposed development should not have an adverse impact on the privacy and amenities of a locality by reason of form, scale, height, outlook, noise or light intrusion or activity levels including vehicular or pedestrian movements.
- 56 EN2 of ADMP states that proposals will be permitted where they would provide adequate residential amenities for existing and future occupiers of the development and would safeguard the amenities of existing and future occupants of nearby properties by ensuring that the development does not result in excessive noise, vibration, odour, air pollution, activity or vehicle movements, overlooking or visual intrusion and where the built form would not result in an unacceptable loss of privacy or light enjoyed by the occupiers of nearby properties.
- 57 The nearest residential dwellings (not occupied in connection with the school use) are located in excess of 120m to the east of the proposal.

- 58 There is a reasonable distance between the proposal and the nearest dwellings and there are a number of trees in between that would limit any impact from the building.
- 59 The noise generated by the evening use of this facility is unlikely to have a significant impact at these distances.
- 60 The proposal would have a negligible impact on neighbouring amenity

The impact of the development in terms of ecological conservation

- 61 Kent Ecology have advised that they are satisfied with the mitigation measures proposed for bats and have suggested a condition in relation to this, which can be put on the planning consent. They have also made recommendations with regard to tree planting, and the removal of vegetation and buildings in relation to nesting birds. These can also be controlled via conditions.

Any other issues

- 62 Concerns have been raised about the impact of the construction works on the locality. A construction method statement will be required prior to the commencement of any development to ensure that the construction process is managed and appropriate to the locality.
- 63 The Design and Access Statement shows that this application consists of 'phase 2' of the development of the school. Later proposed elements do not form part of this application in anyway and are not relevant to the consideration of this application.
- 64 The main school access, exit and circulation would be unaltered as a result of this development. The proposed parking spaces appear to be of an adequate size and are accessible.
- 65 Policy SP2 of the Core Strategy requires that all new commercial and institutional development will be required to achieve BREEAM very good standards. This will be required by condition
- 66 Concerns have been raised about increased traffic caused by the development. However the proposal is not include for the expansion of the school. It is intended to accommodate the existing pupil requirement for sports provision.

Conclusion

- 67 The proposal would not cause harm to landscape character, neighbouring amenity, highways or the ecological value of the locality. As such, the very special circumstances outweigh the limited harm to the Green belt and the development complies with paragraph 88 of the NPPF.
- 68 For the reasons stated above, the proposal is in accordance with the Development Plan and approval of the application is recommended subject to the appropriate conditions.

Background Papers

Site and Block plans

Contact Officer(s):

Joanna Russell Extension: 7367

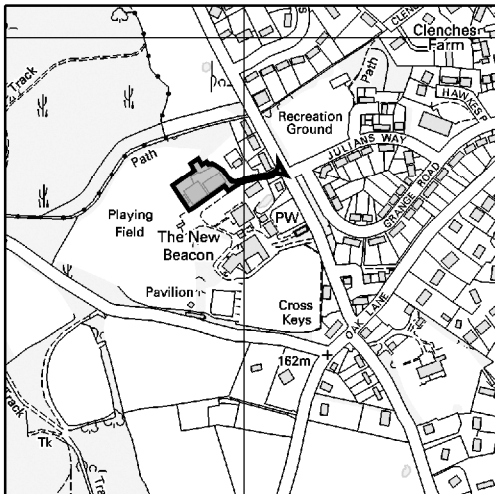
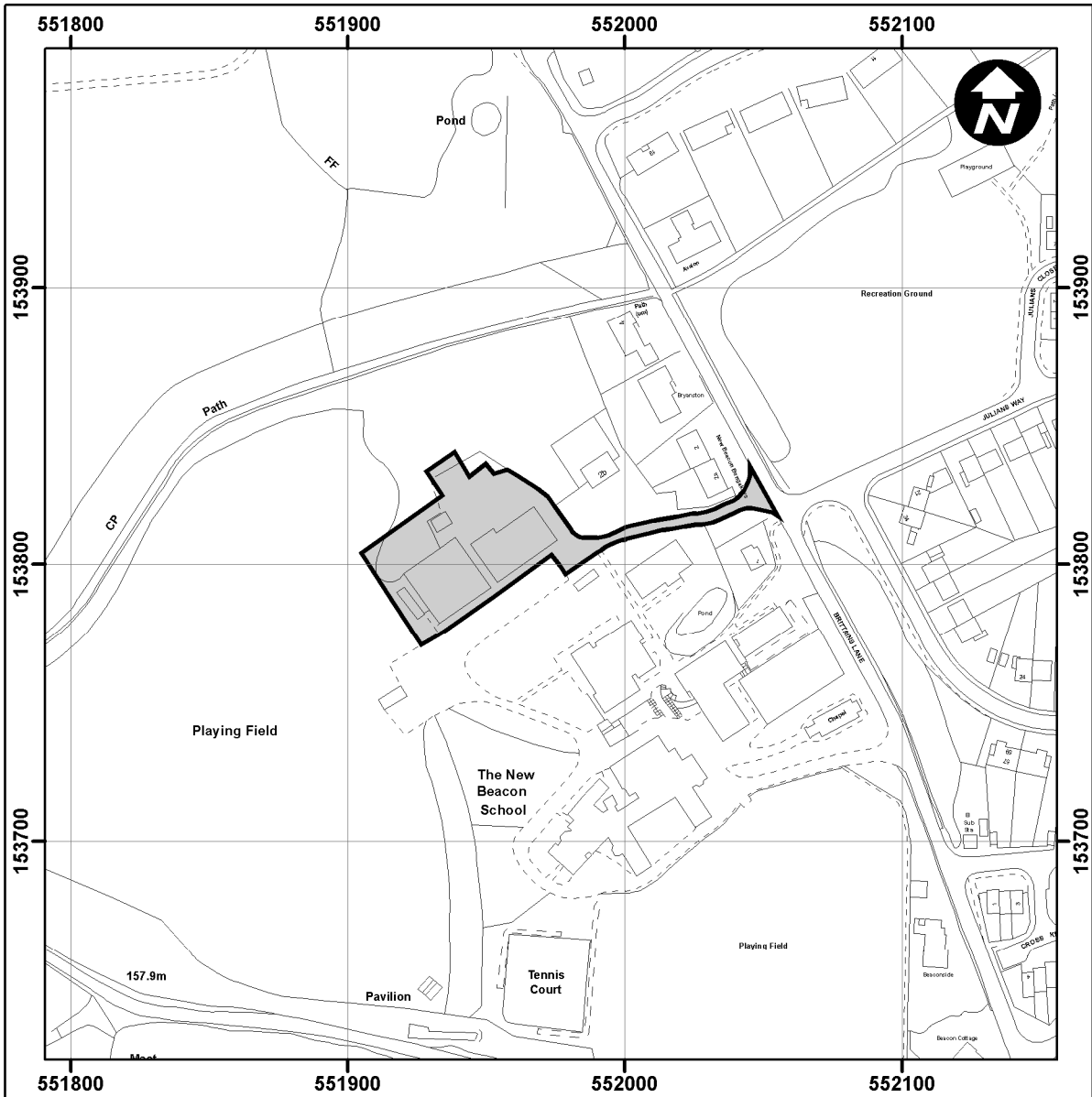
Richard Morris
Chief Planning Officer

Link to application details

<http://pa.sevenoaks.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=N7RKZVBKGB800>

Link to associated documents

<http://pa.sevenoaks.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=N7RKZVBKGB800>



Site Plan

Scale 1:2,500

Date 05/02/2015



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Sevenoaks District Council, 100019428, 2013.

Block Plan

