

MC/20/2839

Date Received: 9 November 2020
Location: Land Off City Way (Former Playing Field) Chatham
Medway ME1 2AE
Proposal: Construction of a 3-storey, 6FE secondary school with 900 pupils and a 285 pupil sixth form with associated accesses (including for construction traffic), parking and hard and soft landscaping and sports pitches including all-weather pitch.
Applicant: Wates Construction Ltd
Agent: Planning & Development Associates Ltd
Mr Alan Gunne-Jones 118 Pall Mall
London
SW1Y 5ED
Ward: Chatham Central Ward
Case Officer: Oliver Ansell
Contact Number: 01634 331700

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 3rd March 2021.

Recommendation - Approval with Conditions

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

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Drawing numbers: 2204-FAB-XX-00-DR-L-0001-P01, 2204-FAB-XX-00-DR-L-0003-P01, 2204-FAB-XX-00-DR-L-2000-P02, 2204-FAB-XX-00-DR-L-2001-P02, 2204-FAB-XX-00-DR-L-2002-P02, 2204-FAB-XX-00-DR-L-2003-P02, 2204-FAB-XX-00-DR-L-2004-P02, 2204-FAB-XX-00-DR-L-2020-P02, 2204-FAB-XX-00-DR-L-4001-P02, PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-01-DR-A-1002 P01, PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-LG-DR-A-1000 P01, PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-4003 P01, PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3100 P01, PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3101 P01, PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3102 P01, received 9 November 2020; PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-R1-DR-A-1003-P02, PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-4201-P03, PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-8150-P01, PSPB2044-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-4202-P01, PSPB2044-JWA-ZZ-

ZZ-DR-A-9075-P02, 2204-FAB-XX-00-DR-L-1000 P04, 2204-FAB-XX-00-DR-L-4000 P03, 2204-FAB-XX-00-DR-L-4002 P03, received 29 January 2021; PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3001-P03, PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3010-P01, PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-4001-P03, PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-4002-P03, PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-4003-P03, received 2 February 2021; PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-01-DR-A-1001-P03, received 3 February 2021; and PSBP2204-JWA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3002-P04, received 9 February 2021.

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

- 3 Prior to the commencement of the development a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Construction Environmental Management Plan shall include amongst other matters details of:
- i. hours of construction working; measures to control noise affecting nearby residents;
 - ii. wheel cleaning/chassis cleaning facilities;
 - iii. dust control measures;
 - iv. pollution incident control and;
 - v. site contact details in case of complaints.

The construction works shall thereafter be carried out at all times in accordance with the approved Construction Environmental Management Plan, unless any variations are otherwise first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of residential of the adjoining properties and in compliance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 4 No part of the development shall commence until full details of the following highway improvements have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

Access arrangements as outlined in drawing number SJF-CDL-XX-XX-DR-C-82001 P05, received 5 February 2021.

The approved details shall thereafter be implemented in full prior to first occupation of the development.

Reason: To ensure the development preserves conditions of highway safety, pedestrian safety and the free flow of traffic, in accordance with Policies T1, T2 and T3 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 5 No development (with the exception of the access shown on drawing number SJF-CDL-XX-XX-DR-C-82001 P05, received 5 February 2021 and vegetation

clearance) shall take place until details of earthworks have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include the proposed grading and mounding of land areas including the levels and contours to be formed, showing the relationship of proposed grading and mounding with existing vegetation and surrounding landform. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: Required prior to commencement of development to ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory and without prejudice to conditions of visual amenity in the locality, in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 6 Prior to commencement of works (including site clearance), a detailed methodology for the translocation of reptiles shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The approved methodology shall be implemented thereafter.

Reason: To protect and enhance the natural environment in accordance with section 15 of the NPPF.

- 7 Prior to commencement of development, the tree protection measures identified in the Arboricultural Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement, dated December 2020 shall be provided and maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from site. No materials or equipment shall be stored or placed nor fires lit, within any of the area protected in accordance with this condition. The siting of barriers/ground protection shall not be altered, nor ground level changed, nor excavations made within these areas without the written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To Safeguard existing trees to be retained and to ensure a satisfactory setting and external appearance to the development in compliance with Policy BNE43 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 8 Notwithstanding condition 7 full details of the proposed retaining walls on the east and north boundary of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The details shall include measures to ensure the protection of the trees shown to be retained in the Arboricultural Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement, dated December 2020.

Reason: To Safeguard existing trees to be retained and to ensure a satisfactory setting and external appearance to the development in compliance with Policy BNE 43 and NPPF.

- 9 Notwithstanding the approved drawings, no development above slab level shall take place until details and samples of all materials to be used externally have

been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory and without prejudice to conditions of visual amenity in the locality, in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 10 Prior to the first opening of the school herein approved, a Heritage Interpretation Strategy shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The Heritage Interpretation Strategy shall be prepared by a suitably qualified heritage outreach specialist and demonstrate how the heritage benefits of the proposed development can be better understood through for example, interpretation signage, heritage trails that link the Fort to the wider site and town and a school/community outreach programme. The Strategy shall include a programme and timescale for implementation.

Reason: In the interest of retention and protection of the schedule monument and in compliance with Policy BNE18 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 11 Prior to the installation of the plant equipment forming the development hereby permitted, an acoustic assessment shall be undertaken to determine the impact of noise arising from mechanical plant equipment. The cumulative noise rating level (L_{Ar,Tr}) of mechanical plant shall be at least 10dB below the background noise level (L_{A90,T}) at the nearest residential facade. All measurements shall be defined and derived in accordance with BS4142: 2014. The results of the assessment and details of any mitigation measures shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved measures shall be implemented before the development is brought into use and thereafter be maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 12 No development shall take place until an Air Quality Emissions Mitigation Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Statement shall be prepared in accordance with the Medway Air Quality Planning Guidance and shall include full details of the measures that will be implemented as part of the development to mitigate the development related road transport emissions. The development shall be implemented, and thereafter maintained, entirely in accordance with the measures set out in the approved Mitigation Statement.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity of the adjoining properties and in compliance with Policy BNE24 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 13 Prior to first use of the development hereby approved a School Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The travel plan shall include the arrangements for the appointment of a School Travel Plan Coordinator and working group, SMART targets and initiatives for promoting sustainable transport with particular emphasis on walking and arrangements, together with details of future monitoring and update procedures. The School Travel Plan shall be implemented upon first use of the secondary school and shall be kept in place, as updated, thereafter. The approved school travel plan shall be continually monitored with the results of the monitoring with recommended actions submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority on an annual basis, with the approved recommendations implemented as agreed as part of the annual review.

Reason: In the interests of promoting safe and sustainable development and to accord with Policy T14 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 14 The new secondary school shall not be brought into use until the parking, drop-off/collection, access and site management measures have been implemented in accordance with the details hereby approved. Thereafter the areas shall be used/managed in accordance with these approved details and no permanent development, whether or not permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order amending, revoking or re-enacting that Order) shall be carried out on that area of land or in such a position as to preclude its use as approved.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and amenity, to prevent an over-provision of staff car parking and in order to secure the dual use of the drop-off/collection area to help minimise the impact of the loss of the playing courts, with regard to Policies T1, T2, T13 and L3 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 15 The new secondary school shall not be brought into use until secure and covered cycle parking facilities have been provided on the site in accordance with details which have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved cycle parking facilities shall be available for use thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that adequate and suitable cycle parking provision is made on site and in accordance with Policy T4 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 16 Prior to the first use of the school, details of the following mitigation measures shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

12 Electric Vehicle charge points within the dedicated parking area with the future provision of a further 6 charging points.

Reason: In the interests of sustainability in accordance with paragraph 110E of the NPPF.

- 17 Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved (or within an agreed implementation schedule) a signed verification report carried out by a qualified drainage engineer (or equivalent) must be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority to confirm that the agreed surface water system has been constructed as per the agreed scheme and plans. The report shall include details and locations of critical drainage infrastructure (such as inlets, outlets and control structures) including as built drawings, and an operation and maintenance manual for the unadopted parts of the scheme as constructed.

Reason: This condition is sought in accordance with paragraph 165 of the NPPF to ensure that suitable surface water drainage scheme is designed and fully implemented so as to not increase flood risk onsite or elsewhere.

- 18 Prior to the first use of the development herein approved, full details of a hard and soft landscape scheme should be provided:
- i. Plans and information providing details of existing and proposed finished ground levels, means of enclosure, car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas, all paving and external hard surfacing, (including drainage), tree grilles, minor artefacts and structures (seating, refuse receptacles and raised planters). Soft landscape works, including details of planting plans, tree positions, planting build ups, written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with grass, tree and planting establishment, aftercare and maintenance); schedules of plants, noting species, plant sizes, root treatments and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate.
 - ii. Details for the design and specification of tree planting to enable healthy establishment at maturity. Information should provide details for the planting environment (including within hard landscape, raised planters and podium), calculated soil volume, tree support and tie specification, guards and grilles, aeration and irrigation systems, soil build-up information (avoiding the use of tree sand), tree cell systems (to street tree planting environments).

A timetable for implementation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and timetable and any trees or plants which within 5 years of planting are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory external appearance and provision for landscaping in accordance with Policies BNE1 and BNE6 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 19 Prior to the first use of the development herein approved, a Landscape Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Landscape Management Plan shall include long-term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all hard and soft landscape areas, including play space and communal courtyard for a minimum period of five years and arrangements for implementation. The document shall also include an appendix incorporating product specification sheets for all street furniture, covering installation and maintenance requirements. The development shall thereafter be managed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory external appearance and provision for landscaping in accordance with Policies BNE1 and BNE6 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 20 Prior to the first use of the development herein approved, a Boundary Treatment Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Boundary Treatment Plan shall indicate the positions, design, materials and type of boundary treatment to be erected. The boundary treatment shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory and without prejudice to conditions of visual amenity in the locality, in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 21 Prior to the installation of any external lighting associated with the development across the site, details of such lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include height, position, external appearance, any shielding, light intensity, colour, spillage (such as light contour or lux level plans showing the existing and proposed levels) and hours of use and a report to demonstrate its effect on the landscaping of the site and vice versa (including an overlay of the proposed lighting onto the site landscaping plans). Any external lighting shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to limit the impact of the lighting on the: the surrounding landscape and heritage features, nearby residents and with regard to Policies BNE1, BNE2 and BNE12 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 22 Prior to the first use of the school herein approved, a Community Use Agreement (CUA) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CUA shall describe all the facilities included in the agreement and shall include details of pricing policy, access by non-educational establishment users, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review. Following the

first use of the school, the school facilities shall thereafter be used in accordance with approved CUA.

Reason: To secure well managed safe community access to the sports facility/facilities, to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport and to accord with Policy L8 of Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 23 The facilities to be used for community purposes as outlined in the Community Use Agreement (CUA) to be approved under condition 22 shall not be used outside of the following hours:

17:00 to 22:00 Monday to Friday for internal spaces
08:00 to 22:00 on Saturday and Sunday for internal spaces
17:00 to 20:00 on Monday to Friday for the external pitches
09:00 to 20:00 on Saturday for the external pitches
10:00 to 14:00 on Sunday for the external pitches

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 24 With the exception of the details sought and approved under condition 6 above, the development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted Ecological Mitigation Strategy BWAT154/009/001/001 dated November 2020 and the mitigation measures shall be retained for as long as the development is in existence.

Reason: To protect and enhance the natural environment in accordance with section 15 of the NPPF.

- 25 If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site, no further development shall take place until a method statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Method Statement must detail how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved Method Statement.

Reason: To ensure that the development is undertaken in a manner which acknowledges interests of amenity and safety in accordance with Policy BNE23 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 26 No infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground is permitted other than with the written consent of the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not contribute to, or is not put at unacceptable risk from, or adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of water pollution caused by mobilised contaminants in line with paragraph 170 of the NPPF.

- 27 There shall be no more than 1185 pupils in total enrolled at the school at any given time.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control such development in the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policies T1, T4, T13 and T14 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 28 The development shall be carried out in accordance with the climate change and energy efficiency measures detailed in the Energy and Sustainability Statement dated September 2020, received 9 November 2020.

Prior to the first use of the development a verification report shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The verification report shall detail and confirm the measures that have been implemented.

Reason: In the interests of energy efficiency and climate change in accordance with paragraphs 8, 149, 150 and 151 of the NPPF.

- 29 Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order amending, revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification) the school herein approved shall be used for education and community purposes only and shall not be used for any other purposes, including any other use that would fall within Use Class F1 of the schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) (or in any provision equivalent to those classes in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that order with or without modification) and no change of use shall be carried out unless planning permission has been granted on an application relating thereto.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control such development in the interests of the amenities of the local residents and highway safety, and in accordance with Policies BNE2 and T1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

Proposal

This is a full planning application for the erection of a 3-storey, 6FE secondary school for 900 pupils, Years 7 to 11, and 250 pupils in sixth form, years 12 to 13, with associated access, parking, landscaping and sports pitches.

The school building would be largely 'C' shaped, positioned on the eastern side of the site and would be 3-storeys in height. The lower ground floor would contain teaching classrooms, dining hall, kitchen, ICT rooms and staff room including meeting rooms and a SEN and therapy room. There are also facilities provided on this floor. On the upper ground level is a chapel, four-court sports hall, changing rooms, music rooms, main hall, teaching classrooms, library and sixth form study area. In addition, there are also facilities on this floor including a PE store area. The main entrance is also on this level. On the first floor there are teaching classrooms including art, science, activity studio and a specialist lab.

Externally, a three court MUGA would be sited along the northern side of the building, a central courtyard to the eastern side and to the north-western side of the building an all-weather pitch, 100m grass running track, and 9-a side grass football pitch will be located.

To the south of the sports pitch, south west of the building, a car park with 127 spaces will be positioned with new access from City Way, and there would be a pedestrian access, running east-west from Boundary Road via the existing PROW that is currently situated near southern boundary of the site.

It is proposed that the sports facilities as well as the school's library will be made available for community use outside of school hours.

A landscape and design and access statement has also been submitted with the application.

Relevant Planning History

MC/20/2511 Screening opinion for proposed erection of a 3 storey 6FE secondary school with 900 pupils and 285 pupil sixth form with associated access (including for construction traffic), parking and hardstanding and soft landscaping at "disused" playing fields, land off City Way Rochester ME1 2AE
Decision: EIA not required
Date: 04 Nov 2020

Representations

The application has been advertised on site and in the press and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties. **KCC Biodiversity**,

KCC Archaeology, Southern Gas Networks, Southern Water, The Environment Agency, Sport England, Heritage England and Kent Police have also been consulted.

31 letters of objection have been received expressing the following:

- Impact on parking and traffic in the area
- Increase in anti-social behaviour
- Overdevelopment of the area
- Loss of green space
- Overlooking towards Elmhurst Gardens
- Noise pollution from development
- Noise and disturbance from construction
- Light pollution
- Impact on ecology and biodiversity
- Loss of trees
- Potential safety issues utilising the PROW as access
- Impact on heritage assets (Fort Pit and views from Fort Amherst)
- Impact on visual amenity

Two letters of support have been received from the Archdiocese of Southwark and Parent Governor of St John Fisher School.

A letter of support from the Assistant Director (interim) for Education and SEN of Medway Council Education Department, giving their full support for the proposed school.

Southern Gas commented highlighting the location of nearby gas lines and recommending safe digging practices in accordance with HSE publication HSG47 "Avoiding Danger from Underground Services"

UK Power Networks commented highlighting the location of electrical lines and/or electrical plant within the locality.

Southern Water comment that they would be able to provide foul sewage to the development but would require a formal application for a connection to the public sewer to be made by the developer or applicant.

Kent Police have no additional comments to make and have been in ongoing discussions with the applicant.

Sport England objects to the proposed development as they understand the development would lead to the loss of land being used as a playing field (for rugby) or has been used as a playing field in the last five years. SE outline their five Policy exceptions for development of playing fields however state that the development does not meeting these exceptions. SE state that where the Council is minded to approve, the application should be referred to the SoS (NPCU).

The application was also referred to the Football Foundation and RFU.

KCC Biodiversity commented on the proposal stating that KCC Ecology can confirm that we're satisfied with the proposal to translocate reptiles from the development site to Vinters Park Nature Reserve. However, prior to determination of the application, explicit landowner consent would be required (email or letter format from Vinters Park Nature Reserve). After this has been provided, securing the translocation of reptiles can be conditioned with any granted planning application.

Historic England consider that the proposal will result in harm to the significance of Fort Pitt as it would make it harder to appreciate the Fort. However, acknowledge that this harm would be less than substantial overall. Harm might be further minimised through minor adjustments to the landscaping proposals to provide better screening, and through appropriate exterior cladding finish and colour. Heritage enhancements might also be delivered through a heritage interpretation strategy.

Environment Agency raise no objections subject to conditions for contamination and surface water infiltration.

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan). The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 and are considered to conform.

Planning Appraisal

Background and need

The St John Fisher Comprehensive Catholic School is an existing school which caters for 1185 pupils, including 285 within sixth form and is supported by 107 staff members. The current school is split between two sites with the lower school (years 7&8) site located on Maidstone road and the upper school (years 9 – 13) located on Ordnance Street.

As outlined in the submitted School Education Mission Statement both the upper and lower school buildings are dilapidated and beyond their useful life. The upkeep of the buildings have required much financial investment through Locally Coordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP) funding. The statement highlights that over the previous five years the school has been awarded an average of £254,402 per annum (out of Medway's total £500,000) due to the dilapidated state of the buildings. Adding to this, the school does not own the Maidstone Road site and the lease is due to expire in 2023 after having been temporarily extended.

The development is for the amalgamation of the two existing sites to bring one school on to the proposed site. The provision of the new school on site would also bring benefits to

the general curriculum within the school with new offerings such as KS3 Food and Nutrition as well as enhance facilities such as sports and games pitches. The new School is being commissioned and procured through the Department for Education (DfE) Construction Framework.

There is a presumption in favour of the development of state-funded schools outlined by the 2011 Written Ministerial Statement which states:-

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 with immediate effect:

- *There should be a presumption in favour of the development of state-funded schools, as expressed in the National Planning Policy Framework.*
- *Local Authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling the development of state-funded schools in their planning decisions.*
- *Local authorities should make full use of their planning powers to support state-funded schools applications.*

As highlighted above the current school is considered to be financially unsustainable given the substantial cost needed to maintain it annually along with the lease of the site ending in the coming years. The need in instance is established as the need to develop a suitable site and building to allow the school to continue to function in the long term.

The need for the school is, therefore, clearly established.

Principle

The NPPF outlines that the purposes of the planning system are to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It emphasises that paragraphs of the NPPF should be taken as a whole in defining what amounts to sustainable development. Economic, Social and Environmental considerations form the three dimensions of sustainable development. With regard to the social role of the planning system, this is in support of strong, vibrant and healthy communities by creating a high-quality built environment that reflects the community needs and supports its health, social and cultural wellbeing. In order to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly.

Paragraph 94 of the NPPF states that regard to planning for school places: -

"It is important 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.

They should:

- a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter, schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and*
- b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted”*

The community facilities section of the Local Plan states that “No new secondary schools are proposed in the local plan”. It is relevant to note that the Council’s current Local Plan was for the period 2003 to 2011 when the existing secondary schools either had the capacity to accommodate the demand or sufficient room to expand to respond to any growth in pupils numbers up to 2011. Also of note is that the proposed development, whilst for a new school building, is not for an additional school but is for the relocation of and amalgamation of an existing one. The existing Local Plan, therefore, does not reflect post-2011 demographic changes in the Medway administrative area. As such the NPPF is considered to carry more weight with regard to the principle of the proposal.

The proposed school would be located within an Area of Protected Open Space as defined by the proposals map accompanying the Local Plan. Therefore, Policy L3 Local Plan applies. This policy seeks to resist the loss of existing open space unless one of the following exceptions are met:

- i. sports and recreation facilities can best be implemented, or retained and enhanced through redevelopment of a small part of the site; or
- ii. alternative open space provision can be made within the same catchment area and is acceptable in terms of amenity value; or
- iii. in the case of outdoor sports and children’s play space provision, there is an excess of such provision in the area (measured against the n.p.f.a. standard of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 population) and such open space neither contributes to, nor has the potential to contribute to, informal leisure, open space or local environmental amenity provision; or
- iv. in the case of educational establishments, the development is required for educational purposes and adequate areas for outdoor sports can be retained or provided elsewhere within the vicinity; or
- v. the site is allocated for other development in the local plan.

In this instance the development is required for educational purposes and would retain sufficient outdoor space for sport and recreation, including a three court MUGA, an all-weather pitch, 100m grass running track, and 9-a side grass football pitch, to meet the requirements of the school.

It is noted that Sport England have objected to the proposed development as It is understood that the proposal prejudices the use, or leads to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field or has been used as a playing field in the last five years.

In assessing whether the site has been used as a playing field within the last five years officers have reviewed historic data from sources such as Google Earth. The satellite photos show clearly that in 2011 and 2013 the site was laid out for sports with the pitches maintained, including the pitch markings. However, from 2014 onwards the satellite imagery shows that the pitch markings have not been maintained nor laid out, but the grass has been regularly mowed. This is supported by a letter from BLM Maintenance who were contracted to maintain the grounds since 2011. The letter states that towards the end of 2013 the school requested an estimate for how much it would cost to redress and make good the pitches, but it was decided that they did not use the pitches enough to justify the expenditure, so the grass was mowed periodically.

Further evidence has been submitted from Clive Mailing, Chair of Governors who confirmed that:

“Following a Health Safety Committee meeting on the 20th November 2013 it was highlighted the following issues with the Detached Playing Field:

- Security of the site constant unauthorised access onto the site by third parties who repeatedly breakdown the fencing and gates to gain access
- Safety of Staff and Pupils people walking their dogs and resultant mess left behind, drink and drug activity on the field with used drug equipment and broken bottles discarded.
- Costs involved trying to maintain the pitches, site security, and site clearance before any usage

A Risk Assessment was undertaken, and it was decided by the governors that the school was not able to maintain a safe environment for the staff pupils as highlighted above and the excessive costs being expended that the detached playing field would be taken out of use.

At that time in the school’s history, I was Vice Chair of Governors, Chair of the then Premises Committee** and a member of the internal School Health Safety committee.”

In considering the evidence submitted to support the proposal, officers conclude that it is reasonable to determine the site has not been in use as playing fields within the last 6 years. Notwithstanding this, should members be minded to grant permission for the proposal, officers recommend referral to the Secretary of State, via the National Planning Casework Unit as the scheme would be contrary to Sport England’s assessment.

Having regard to the above, it is considered there is no objection to the principle of the proposed development and the proposal would be in accordance with Policies S1, and L3 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 94, 170, 190, 194 and 196 of the NPPF.

Heritage

The application site is situated to the South of the New Road Rochester conservation area and also south of Fort Pitt, a nationally important scheduled monument. Therefore, the proposed development needs to be assessed with regard to its impact on the setting of the conservation area and scheduled monument.

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. (The Act) sets out that in the exercise of planning functions, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Section 66(1) of the Act says that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development, which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest, which it possesses.

Mirroring those provisions, to a large extent, paragraphs 193 and 194 of the NPPF maintains that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. It goes on to note that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset, or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

The remains of Fort Pitt are justifiably of national importance given the degree of survival, archaeological potential, form of the defences, historical interest, and as an important component of the wider Chatham defensive landscape which has international claims to significance. The Fort was designed to be surrounded, for tactical reasons, by open ground.

Any proposed development which may affect the significance of the monument must therefore be given very careful consideration; with efforts made to avoid and minimise harm, and opportunities sought to sustain and enhance significance, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The proposed school buildings and associated parking area will reduce the openness of the site which will harm the significance of Fort Pitt as it will be harder to appreciate the heritage asset. Notwithstanding this, the development has been designed to minimise where possible the harm against the heritage asset. In this instance the school has been repositioned to the eastern side of the site along with the access and parking positioned to the south. This enables the most impactful parts of the development to be positioned away from the Fort's southern boundary. Furthermore, the eastern portion of the site sits lower in the land than the west further reducing the buildings prominence.

In view of the above, it is considered that the proposed school development will result in less than substantial impact on the setting of the designated heritage asset. Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that “where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

As set out in the background section above, there is an urgent need for a new school. In further consideration of the benefits of the proposal, the applicant has stated that outside of school hours and academic periods, the school’s sports facilities will be made available to the local community. Additionally, and to be secured by condition, heritage interpretation boards are to be provided as part of the development to enable a better understanding of the Fort Pit.

It is therefore considered that subject to appropriate landscaping and details of materials and heritage interpretation, the cumulative community benefits of the development outweigh the limited impact identified to the setting of the heritage asset. The proposal would be in compliance with Policy BNE18 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 190, 193, 194 and 196 of the NPPF

Layout and Design

NPPF Chapter 12 states ‘Achieving well-designed places’ reinforces that design is a key aspect of sustainable development and indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Chapter 12 also confirms that high-quality design includes consideration of individual buildings, public and private spaces. Policies and decisions should ensure that development responds to the local character and history and reflects the identity of local surroundings and materials, to create distinctive places, with a consistent and high-quality standard of design. However, the level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances in each place and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified.

The application site was formerly used as playing fields, though as explained above they have not been in use for some time. The site is an area of green space set within a surrounding urban context. To the east, south and west residential development characterises the area and to the north there is residential development along with the Fort Pitt Grammar School. Further East the existing schools is situated from Ordnance Street.

The applicant has submitted a Townscape Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA) which concludes that development would not result in harm to the value of the townscape of Chatham and Rochester given the limited loss of townscape features and characteristics. The TVIA does identify that, as a result of the change in character of the site, there would be a minor adverse impact from the development. However, it should be noted that this impact would be viewed in the existing urban context in which the site is seen and as such is considered to be negligible.

Regarding the design of the building itself, this much been dictated by the needs of the school with respect to the curriculum. The building is shown to be rendered with brickwork at the ground floor and as a feature around the drama hall. The entrance would be constructed from Aluminium. Combined the materials and design give the school a modern appearance. Whilst render is shown the final colour has not yet been agreed, thus a condition requiring details of this is considered to be necessary.

Whilst the building may be visible from the surrounding area, it is acknowledged that in order to minimise the impact, trees and vegetation around the site boundaries are to be retained and reinforced. Additional planting is proposed throughout the site which would soften the development as it matures, details of which are to be secured by condition.

In assessing the above, officers consider that the proposed site would be capable of satisfactorily accommodating the development and would relate acceptably with the character and appearance of the surrounding development. As such it is considered that the development would in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Local Plan and with Chapter 12 of the NPPF.

Amenity

The nearest residential properties to the site are located on The Fort to the northwest, Boundary Road to the east and Elmhurst Gardens directly south and are located approximately 46m, 63m and 60m away respectively (wall to wall). With regards to privacy, outlook, sunlight and daylight, the proposal, by virtue of the siting, size and scale of the development and the distance and relationship to neighbouring properties, the development would not result in an unacceptable level of overlooking or loss of privacy, loss of light or overbearing to neighbouring occupiers. Concerns have been raised in regard to the potential loss of a view however this is not a matter for planning consideration.

Notwithstanding the above, there is the potential for neighbouring occupiers to be impacted on during the construction process. Due to this, and the potential impact from noise and dust during construction, a condition is recommended for a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP).

The proposed development as such would not cause harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. The proposal would be in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan and paragraph 127f of the NPPF.

Noise

With regard to noise, the application has been supported by a noise assessment report. There is the potential for there to be an impact upon residential amenity from the use of the sports pitches, particularly to the north and east. To minimise harm from noise caused by the use of the pitches to the occupiers of the existing properties along the eastern boundary of the application site, a condition is recommended restricting the hours of use

of the pitches. Conditions are also recommended to ensure adequate noise mitigation measures are incorporated into the fabric of the building along with details of plant equipment.

It is considered that subject to the suggested conditions, the proposal would not result in a detrimental impact on the amenities of the nearby residents and given the benefits that would result from this development the proposal would be in compliance with Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 127 and 180 of the NPPF

Air Quality

Air pollution has a wide-ranging impact on human health and new development can have an adverse impact on air quality through increased transport movements and congestion. The application includes an Air Quality Assessment including a damage costs assessment, carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Medway Air Quality Planning Guidance. An Air Quality Emissions Mitigation Statement can be secured by condition.

A qualitative assessment of construction air quality impacts has been undertaken in accordance with relevant guidance. Construction phase mitigation can be included in a site wide Construction Environmental Management Plan, this can be included as a condition on any permission.

Given that a scheme of mitigation can be included as a condition on the permission, the proposed development will not generate adverse air quality effects and would comply with Policy BNE24 of the Local Plan and paragraph 181 of the NPPF.

Highways and transportation

The site is bounded by City Way to the west and The Fort residential development to the north with residential areas with some existing businesses to the south and east. The applicant has reviewed pedestrian links in the near vicinity. In terms of cycle provision, Figure 3.4 within the TA outlines Medway's Cycle Route, it is noted that this site has limited cycle infrastructure in the local area. In relation to public transport, figure 3.5 provides an extract of Medway Bus and Rail Network, which demonstrates a number of services located close to the site. Rochester Train station is within 1.6km walk and provides services towards London and east towards Swale.

It is noted that there is a public right of way running to the south boundary of the site, the path is in poor condition and therefore it is recommended that, given the increase in footfall resulting from this proposal, the footpath would require improvements such as resurfacing to improve pedestrian safety, particularly during the winter months.

It is considered that a contribution of £15k (This covers for the existing footway to be resurfaced (overlaid), vegetation cut back (that protrudes through the fencing and at its

base) and covers fees for various teams. It also includes a contingency allowance) can be secured through the S278 agreement.

Consequently, whilst taking into account the above, the site is well served by pedestrian and public transport and the existing infrastructure (subject to improvements) is not considered to be prohibitive to sustainable journeys to the school from the surrounding residential areas.

Access

It is proposed that the development would be served by a single point of vehicular access, which would take the form of a simple priority junction with a ghost right hand turn lane (SJF-CDL-XX-XX-DR-C-82001 P03). During discussions with officers, the applicant assessed a number of options, with agreement between the Highway Officer on the new priority junction with right turn lane and a new standalone signalised crossing.

Forward visibility can be achieved to an appropriate standard and the capacity analysis for this junction's operation demonstrates that it would operate safely. The geometry of the access has been subject to vehicle swept path analysis and is acceptable. A TRO would be required to prevent vehicles parking within visibility splays and opposite the new priority junction.

Separate pedestrian/cycle access is proposed to the north and south of the new access into the school with a new crossing island within the access to link City Way. These measures have been subject to a Road Safety Audit and the results from this audit have not identified any issues that cannot be resolved as part of the detailed design process for these highway works and will form part of a section 278.

Subject to the provision of the new access, a new section of footway, pedestrian crossing which can be secured through a Section 278 of the Highway Act, the proposal would be acceptable.

Parking

The Council's parking guidelines require 1 space per each member of teaching staff, an additional 10% causal parking and one per seven students with drop off area. This would equate to a maximum standard of 296 parking spaces. The proposal has indicated provision of 127 general parking with the following breakdown:

- 69 spaces for staff;
- 40 drop off/pick up spaces;
- 8 spaces for visitors;
- 6 disabled spaces (in accordance with MC's standards);
- 4 bays for minibus, including 2 bays for visitors' minibus.

The applicants have provided A Car Park Management Plan (CPMP). This indicates how they proposal to manage the usage of the car park on site during the school peak periods. The document will also provide management measures for the academy car park on-site. The applicants intend to supervise vehicle movements within the site during the peak periods (morning and afternoon).

In terms of allocating the staff parking spaces, it would be determined using the following criteria:

- Carshares;
- Those with special caring requirements;
- Those that live at greatest distances with no option to use non-car modes.

Regarding electric charging points, the applicants have outlined 10% of the overall provision, which is considered acceptable. A condition would be attached to secure this provision.

It is noted that the school has outlined that no parking spaces will be provided for sixth form students and that those students will be asked to sign a commitment not to drive a school. Whilst this welcome, in reality is unenforceable, given that the site is located outside of any control parking zone, it is likely that those students would park in the neighbouring residential roads. It is noted that within the Transport Assessment, the applicants provided a Travel Survey (undertaken at the existing school October 2020) which indicated that only 2 sixth form students drive to school at present.

In terms of cycle parking, it was agreed during the scoping stage that 70 cycle stands would be available, it is considered sufficient to meet the predicted demand. Should the proportion of cyclists increase in future years, the provision of cycle spaces can accordingly be increased.

Concerns are noted from the letters of representation regarding the level of staff parking. The school has outlined that 107 staff are likely to be employed, this therefore would require at least 35% of staff to travel by sustainable modes of transport or car share. This is considered optimistic but achievable given the Travel Survey indicated that 28% of staff travel via non-car modes, 4% travel by car sharing, and 72% (or 77 staff) travel by car.

Parking availability along City Way would be reduced due to the proposed access arrangements. The applicants have provided a Car Parking Survey to determine the likely impact resulting from the loss of parking along City Way. This survey demonstrates sufficient parking availability during the morning along City Way and the nearby vicinity, however during the afternoon period, there is a deficiency in the availability of parking spaces along City Way, it is likely therefore that this would result in an additional congestion (albeit during a short period) on a primary route into and out Rochester/Chatham.

Traffic generation

Before assessing the impact of the additional traffic resulting from the development, an understanding of the trip generation is required. During the pre-application discussion, the applicants have been informed that a critical concern would be in regard to the highway impact. It was proposed that a significant proportion of trips would need to be made via alternatives to the car.

The predicted catchment area for the proposed school has been created by reviewing the catchment area for neighbouring schools and postcode data from primary. Figure 9.1 provides a summary of the home to school distance. The assessment analysed current travel habits at the school. The Travel Survey indicated that 53% (or 631) of students walk/cycle and 47% (or 554 students) travel by car or public transport. Whilst there might be some minor variation given the relocation of the school, it is not considered to significantly alter travel habits.

In terms of staff, the TA outlines that there would be 77 trips in the morning period (between 7am and 8am) with 76 trips during the afternoon period (57 between 16:00pm to 17:00pm and 19 trips between 17:00pm and 18:00pm). Overall, the applicants outline that during the morning peak period (8am to 9am), that 126 vehicle trips would be generated with 19 vehicle trips during the evening peak (17:00pm to 18:00pm). Whilst it is noted that the vehicle trips are not new trips on the highway network, but relocated from the existing school sites within Chatham, there is still a need to assess the potential impact of this relocation.

Highway Impact

The application is accompanied by a Transportation Assessment (the TA), which based upon traffic counts and trip rate predicts that the development is likely to generate in the region of 126 two-way (i.e. total) vehicle movements during the morning peak period and 19 vehicle movements during the evening between 1700 and 1800. The development could also generate up to 126 trips during the inter peak period.

The following scenarios were tested to ascertain the impact on the highway

- 2023 Do Nothing, whereby no school development happens. (DN)
- 2023 Do Something, whereby the school development does happen. (DS)

The 2023 Do Nothing flow has been obtained by adding the 2020 Base flow, growth to year 2023 by using factors included in Table 11.8, to the Committed Development flow. The 2023 Do Something flow has been obtained by adding the Development Flow to the 2023 Do Nothing flow.

The following junctions have been assessed:

- Junction 1 – A2 Star Hill/A2 New Road/City Way Roundabout
- Junction 2 – City Way/ The Cut Junction

- Junction 3 – City Way/ The Fort Junction
- Junction 4 – City Way/ Onslow Road Junction
- Junction 5 – City Way/ Old Patterns Lane

The assessment outlines that during the 2023 DN scenario, that significant pressures already exist along this stretch of carriageway. Each junction that has been assessed has a “Stream” that has a level of service (LOS) of F (Forced Breakdown), with some junctions exceeding the theoretical capacity in term of Ratio Flow Capacity (RFC).

When a junction operates beyond its theoretical capacity, at small increments of traffic correspond exponential increases of queues and delays. 4 out of 5 off-site junctions operate beyond their theoretical capacity in the DN scenario and therefore with the additional trips under the DS scenario, additional delay and queue lengths on the highway network is seen (with Junction 4 being the exception) Whilst it is acknowledged that the impact on each junction is relatively minor, when view collectively as a travel corridor, it is considered that the culminative impact would be detrimental to the functioning of the highway network.

As stated earlier, whilst it is observed that the vehicle trips are not new trips on the highway network, it is considered the cumulative impact would result in harm to the functioning of the highway network. This harm is balanced at the end of the report.

Sustainable transportation initiatives

After extensive discussions with the Highway Authority, the applicants with their consultants have provided mitigation strategies to help reduce the impact on the highway, some have already been stated above but the additional ones have been summarised below.

Admissions policy

The Admission Arrangement will ensure admission is largely based on distance-based criteria. Based on the predicted demand for the academy places and the academy admission criteria, it is expected that the catchment area for the academy will be local.

Breakfast club/ After school club activities

The school will provide facility for students to access the school, buy breakfast each morning and wait for classes. It is also recognised that a proportion of students may be dropped-off earlier by parents as part of their journey to work. As such, the school premises will be open from 07:00 and will have suitable facility for students to wait for classes to start, should they arrive earlier. It has been assumed that circa 10% of these trips may occur prior to the school peak hour.

The academy will operate school club activities. This measure will reduce the number of trips occurring during the school peak periods and will spread the demand for travel

across the longer periods. However, it is noted that 38% of students attending school clubs is considered again optimistic. The Travel Survey demonstrated a keen interest of pupils (62%) to attend such clubs and therefore whilst a high target, is potentially achievable.

Travel Plan

A travel plan has been produced for ST John Fishers that sets out a range of measures to help minimise the demand for car travel and promote safe travel behaviours. There are a number of soft measures to increase the use of public transport, these measures are considered consistent to help achieve a reduction in vehicle trips. A condition is recommended to secure the final version before occupation of the school.

It is noted that from the submission, that by not providing the academy in this area where demand for school places exists, may lead to students attending schools located further away and thus mean more traffic for on the highway network and the proposal is in essence for the relocation of an existing school. The proposal would be in compliance with Policies T1, T2, T4, T5, T13 and T14 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 108, 109, 110 and 111 of the NPPF.

Flood Risk

The site is not at risk of flooding in accordance with the latest Environment Agency mapping. The council do not have any records to suggest there has been flooding at the site.

Based on the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (ref 2204-AKSW-XX-XX-RP_C-0003, AKS Ward Construction Consultants, November 2020), and Drainage Strategy and Water Quality Management Report, (ref 2204-AKSW-XX-XX-RP-C-0002, AKS Ward Construction Consultants, November 2020) The scheme to manage surface water comprises the use of an infiltration tank, soakaways, and permeable paving/astroturf and permeable sub-base. A maintenance schedule has been submitted and confirmation that the drainage elements will be maintained by the school. Calculations have been submitted which demonstrate that the site will not flood during events up to an including the 1 in 100 year + 40% climate change events, and all soakage features achieve the required half drain of less than 24 hours.

The proposal is considered acceptable subject to a condition requiring a verification report that the suds have been constructed in accordance with the approved details. With the inclusion of the suggested condition, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with paragraph 165 of the NPPF.

Archaeology

Archaeological trenching has taken place on the site in accordance with a scheme of works agreed on by KCC Archaeology and the result submitted as part of this application. It is considered that no further work is required in this respect.

Contamination

Desktop Phase 1 Geo- Environmental reports have been submitted with the application. The investigations were in line with current guidance and, based on the results in the reports, no contamination issues were found. However, due to the presence of made ground and the sensitivity of the proposed development as a school, a watching brief condition is recommended to be attached to any permission. Subject to this the application complies with the contamination Policy BNE23of the Local Plan.

Ecology

The application is supported by a preliminary Ecological Habitat Appraisal which is considered sufficient to consider the application. Concerns were raised with the applicant as a result of the population of slow worms currently on site and whether the onsite mitigation would be suitable in the long term. Through discussions with KCC Biodiversity it was agreed that the translocation of the reptiles to another site would provide the best solution for this site. The reptiles are to be translocated to Vintners Valley Nature Reserve in Maidstone. Whilst not close to the site the nature reserve would provide suitable habitat for the slow worm population. A detailed methodology for reptile translocation is to be secured by condition. Subject to conditions, no objection is raised under Policy BNE37 of the Local Plan and paragraph 175 of the NPPF.

Trees

The existing site has TPO trees along the eastern boundary. The trees along the western boundary are considered important to the character of the street scene of City Way and also helpful to screen the school buildings and associated car park area from the road and properties to the west.

An Arboriculturally assessment was submitted in support of the application detailing the which trees are to be removed as part of the development and which are to be retained and protected. A total of 71 trees and 11 tree groups are to be removed to facilitate the development. The assessment details protection measures for the trees to remain and it is suggested a condition imposed to ensure this. Notwithstanding this, concerns were raised in regard to trees on the eastern and north east boundary as there are two retaining walls to be constructed here. A condition requiring the details of the retaining walls as well as the protective measures to ensure the long-term retention of the trees is suggested. 60 new trees are to be planted as part of the landscaping and thus there would be an overall loss of trees resulting from the development. This loss is considered in the planning balance at the end of the report.

Climate change and efficiency

The applicant has indicated that a fabric first strategy has been developed in line with all the relevant Part L Building Regulations and the UK Government's approved energy calculation methodology to reduce energy consumption in use. They also highlight that the proposed building layouts, orientation and form were developed through a series of design workshops with the aim of optimising the building footprint, providing adequate daylight and limiting excessive solar gains using external shading. Additionally, whilst there is no requirement for a BREEAM rating on this development an assessment has been carried out for indicative purposes and confirms that a BREEAM 'Very Good' rating can be achieved.

Secured bike storage is to be provided within the site, as such the development offers the opportunity for a sustainable transport solution. Gas efficient boilers and air source heat pumps along with electric car points are also provided as part of this application. A condition securing these measures and a verification report is suggested.

Planning balance

It is considered that a number of benefits would flow from implementation of the proposal. The primary benefit would be the contribution to addressing the educational need, both in terms of the wider area but also the localised need from the existing school. Additionally, there would be economic benefits from the investment in construction and generation of jobs during the construction period. Another social benefit to be provided is the school facilities will be made available to the wider community outside the school hours and term time.

The development has been designed to minimise the harm to the heritage assets, that being Fort Pit and the adjacent conservation area and conditions would be imposed to further mitigate this harm. Overall, the proposal would provide an attractive development that would integrate within the area as the landscaping establishes.

Notwithstanding the above, the proposal would result in generation of additional traffic to and from the school and the loss of on street parking. To reduce the volume of traffic and to assist with air quality, the applicant is providing cycle storage as well as a travel plan to encourage sustainable transport methods. Additionally, as outlined above there would be a loss of trees and biodiversity within the site which is not fully mitigated against through additional planting.

Having regard to the above it is considered that on balance, the public benefits of the development would considerably outweigh the harm on the highway, heritage significance and loss of trees.

Conclusions and Reasons for Approval

It is considered that the proposed development will result in the construction of a needed secondary school in the eastern part of the borough.

The school's associated sports facilities will be available to the wider community. The impact of the proposed development has been assessed in detail above including with regard to heritage matters, landscape impact, design and visual impact, amenity, noise, lighting, trees, ecology, sustainability, contamination, drainage, highways, travel and parking.

In summary, it is considered that the development proposed will achieve an acceptable balance between the need of the wider community for a secondary school in Rainham area, the applicant and the school's impact on its surroundings, including its important historic setting and highway safety. The development is considered acceptable with regard to Policies S1, S2, BNE1, BNE2, BNE5, BNE18, BNE23, BNE24, BNE25, BNE34, BNE37, BNE43, T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T13 and T14 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and paragraphs 94, 108, 109, 110, 111, 124, 127, 165, 170, 178, 180, 181, 190, 193, 194 and 196 of the NPPF.

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred for Committee determination due to the number of representations received expressing a view contrary to officer's recommendation.

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess1.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>