

MC/22/0974

Date Received: 19 April 2022

Location: The Hundred Of Hoo Primary School Main Road
Hoo St Werburgh Rochester

Proposal: Construction of a two storey extension with associated external works incorporating the expansion in the capacity of the staff car park and reconfigured early years play area and playground.

Applicant Medway Council

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Ward: Peninsula Ward

Case Officer: Amanda Barnes

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 6th October 2022.

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:

Received 19 April 2022:

1200 Rev P6 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
1201 Rev P6 - Proposed First Floor Plan

Received 29 April 2022:

1060 Rev P1 - Extended Works Plan
1070 Rev P1 - Extended Planting Plan
2100 Rev P1 - Proposed Sections Sheet 1
2101 Rev P1 - Proposed Sections Sheet 2
3100 Rev P02 - Proposed Elevation Sheet 1
3101 Rev P02 - Proposed Elevation Sheet 2
MHS170.16-G01 Rev G - Landscape with Plant Schedule
65203623-SWE-ZZ-XX-DR-C-0001 Rev P03 - Levels and Drainage Layout
SK012 Rev P4 - Staff Car Park Plan

Received 27 May 2022:

65203623-SWE-Z1-XX-D-C-0702 - Kerbing Layout

Received 10 June 2022:

MHS258.22-G01 Rev B - Landscape Proposals

Received 29 June 2022:

1051 P13 - Site Plan Proposed

1061 P04 - External Works Plan 2 of 2

Received 29 July 2022:

1827_HHA_00_00_DR_C_0108 Rev C7 - Road Construction Details

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

- 3 No development above ground floor slab level shall take place until samples of all materials to be used externally have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the development shall be carried out 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.

- 4 Within six months of works commencing, details of how the development will enhance biodiversity will be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. This will include measures in section 4.5 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PJC March 2022).

Plans and information providing details of existing and proposed finished ground levels, pedestrian access and circulation areas, external hard surfacing, 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.

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.

The Ecological measures shall be carried out for the duration of the development.

Reason: Pursuant to condition 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality and In the interests of wildlife habitat enhancement and mitigation in accordance with Policies BNE1, BNE6, BNE37 and BNE39 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 5 From the commencement of works (including site clearance), all precautionary mitigation measures will be carried out in accordance with the details contained in sections 4.4.11 through to 4.4.55 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PJC March 2022).

Reason: Pursuant to condition 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality and In the interests of wildlife habitat enhancement and mitigation in accordance with Policies BNE6, BNE37 and BNE39 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 6 Prior to occupation, a lighting design plan for biodiversity shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The plan will show the type and locations of external lighting, demonstrating that areas to be lit will not disturb bat activity. All external lighting will be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the plan and will be maintained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of wildlife habitat enhancement and mitigation in accordance with Policies BNE1, BNE6, BNE37 and BNE39 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 7 Prior to the first occupation of the development herein approved, details for tree planting shall be provided:

These details shall include the design and specification of tree planting to enable healthy establishment at maturity, details for the planting environment (including within hard or soft landscape and raised planters where relevant), 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: Pursuant to condition 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality, in accordance with Policies BNE1 and BNE6 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 8 In this Condition "retained tree" means an existing tree which is to be retained in accordance with the approved plans and particulars as shown in the submitted

Aboricultural Method Statement - Proposed Car Park Remodelling (27 June 2022) and plan PJC/6079/21/C and Aboricultural Method Statement - Hundred of Hoo Primary School (28 July 2022) and plan PJC/5998/22/C; and paragraphs a) and b) below shall have effect until the expiration of 5 years from the date of occupation of the building for its permitted use.

a) No retained tree shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be pruned other than in accordance with the approved plans and particulars, without the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. Any pruning approved shall be carried out in accordance with British Standard 3998 (Tree Work).

b) If any retained tree is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree shall be planted at the same place and that tree shall be of such size and species, and shall be planted at such time as may be specified in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

c) The erection of fencing for the protection of any retained tree shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved plans and particulars before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought on to the site for the purposes of the development, and shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed in any area fenced in accordance with this Condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made without the written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Pursuant to condition 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality, in accordance with Policy BNE1 and BNE6 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 9 Prior to the first occupation 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 for a minimum period of five years, with arrangements for implementation and future review. The document shall also include an appendix incorporating product specification sheets for all furniture and play equipment, covering installation and maintenance requirements. The development shall thereafter be managed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: Pursuant to condition 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality, in accordance with Policies BNE1 and BNE6 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 10 Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a construction code of practice covering noise, dust, air quality and lighting for the construction phase of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved construction code of practice.

Reason: Required prior to commencement, in the interests of the amenities of nearby properties in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 11 Prior to the first occupation of the new school building full details of the refuse storage arrangements for that building, including provision for the storage of recyclable materials, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Except with the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority, the building shall not be occupied until the approved refuse storage arrangements for that building are in place and all approved storage arrangements shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure a satisfactory provision for refuse and recycling in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 12 The construction site compound and temporary site access road shall be removed and the playing field returned to its former condition within three months of the completion and prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the playing field and ensure its restoration to a usable condition.

- 13 No development shall take place until a scheme based on sustainable drainage principles, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority.

The scheme shall include (where applicable):

- i. Details of the design of the scheme (in conjunction with the landscaping plan where applicable).
- ii. A timetable for its implementation (including phased implementation).
- iii. Operational maintenance and management plan including access requirements for each sustainable drainage component.
- iv. Proposed arrangements for future adoption by any public body, statutory undertaker or management company.

The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the agreed scheme.

Reason: To manage surface water during and post construction and for the lifetime of the development as outlined at Paragraph 168 of NPPF.

- 14 Prior to occupation (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 168 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.

- 15 No development shall commence until details of a Construction Surface Water Management Plan (CSWMP) detailing how surface water and storm water will be managed on the site during construction (including demolition and site clearance operations) is submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with the LLFA. The CSWMP shall be implemented and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved plan for the duration of construction.

The approved CSWMP and shall include method statements, scaled and dimensioned plans and drawings detailing surface water management proposals to include:

- i. Temporary drainage systems.
- ii. Measures for managing pollution / water quality and protecting controlled waters and watercourses.
- iii. Measures for managing any on or offsite flood risk

The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: To manage surface water during and post construction and for the lifetime of the development as outlined at Paragraph 168 of NPPF.

- 16 No development shall take place until an Air Quality Emissions Mitigation Assessment and Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Mitigation Assessment and Statement shall be prepared in accordance with the Medway Air Quality Planning Guidance, and shall specify the measures that will be implemented as part of the development to mitigate the development related road transport emissions. The total monetary value of the mitigation to be provided shall be demonstrated to be equivalent to, or greater than, the total damage cost value calculated as part of the Air Quality Mitigation Assessment. The Mitigation Statement shall include full details of all mitigation to provided. The development shall be implemented, and thereafter maintained, entirely in accordance with the measures set out in the approved Mitigation Statement.

Reason: Required prior to commencement, in the interests of the air quality in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 17 The proposed development shall not be occupied, until the area shown on the submitted layout as vehicle parking space has been provided, surfaced and drained in accordance with details submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter it shall be kept available for such use 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 the land so shown or in such a position as to preclude vehicular access to this reserved parking space.

Reason: Development without provision of adequate accommodation for the parking of vehicles is likely to lead to hazardous on-street parking and in accordance with Policy T13 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 18 No development shall take place above ground floor slab level until details of the provision of 5 electric vehicle charging points has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include the location, charging type (power output and charging speed), associated infrastructure and timetable for installation. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and shall thereafter be maintained.

Reason: In the interests of sustainability in accordance with paragraph 112E of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

- 19 Prior to first use of the development details of the following highway works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

- Parking Arrangements as outlined in drawing 1051 P12

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.

- 20 Prior to the first use of the extension herein approved, a School Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The School Travel Plan shall include provision of 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 bicycle use with details of future monitoring and update procedures. The School Travel Plan shall be implemented upon first use of the school and shall be kept in place, and updated, thereafter. The approved school travel plan shall be continually monitored with the results of the monitoring and any recommended actions submitted to and approved in writing to the Local Planning Authority on an annual basis starting from the date of the approval of the first School Travel Plan, with the approved recommendations implemented as agreed as part of the annual review, improvement and reduction of car dependency.

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

- 21 The development herein approved shall incorporate the measures to address energy efficiency and climate change as set out within the Design and Access Statement received 19 April 2022. The development shall not be occupied until a verification report prepared by a suitably qualified professional has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority confirming that all the approved measures have been implemented.

Reason: In the interests of sustainability and to positively address concerns regarding climate change in accordance with paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

- 22 Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a scheme to minimise the transmission of noise from the use of the premises, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Noise from the premises should be controlled, such that the noise rating level (L_{Ar,Tr}) emitted from the development 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. All works which, form part of the approved scheme shall be completed before any part of the development is occupied and shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not prejudice the amenities of neighbouring property in accordance with Policy BNE2 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 proposal relates to the construction of a two-storey extension to increase the size of the school from 1 Form Entry (1FE) to 2 FE together with associated external works incorporating the expansion in the capacity of the staff car park, drop off area and reconfiguration of the early years play area and playground.

The ground floor of the extension, mirrors that of the existing classroom wing, two new reception classrooms are arranged to each side of the shared WCs and cloakroom on the southern side with additional Keystage 1 classrooms arranged along the north side of the extension accessed directly from the playground. Classroom storage is located in separate, shared spaces.

The existing double reception classroom on the south side of the existing school is proposed to be divided into two spaces, a studio / supplementary learning space (served by the existing WCs) and a new staff room / PPA area replacing the existing space on the first floor.

The layout of the ground floor is repeated at the upper level. Mirroring the layout of the upper floor of the existing building, 4 no. Keystage 2 classrooms are arranged in typical clusters either side of shared WCs and a group room. A reading alcove is provided in the 'spare' space afforded by the corridor link between the old and new buildings. No modifications are proposed to the first-floor accommodation in the existing school.

An additional 23 car parking spaces are proposed many in a tandem arrangement behind the existing spaces.

The building would measure approx. 28m in length, 18.6m in width and 8.3m height.

In total it is anticipated between 40 and 42 staff in total would work at the 2FE school.

Relevant Planning History

MC/16/1845 Construction of a one form entry primary school and associated open space and infrastructure
Decision: CAP
Decided: 12 October 2016

Representations

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

3 letters have been received objecting to the proposal on the following grounds:

- The Transport Statement fails to address or propose solutions to known traffic management issues in the immediate vicinity of the development, during drop-off and pick-up times.
- The applicant appears to negate its responsibility for:
 - The safe transit of pedestrians once off of the school's land, in line with MLP:2003 Policy T1 (ii) and T2 (i)
 - Disruption and nuisance to local residents during drop-off and pick-up times. No consideration has been given for any remedial action to parking issues known to the Applicant, Medway Council Highways and Parish Council.
- The development proposals make no provision for noise, dust, fume or rodent mitigation during the construction phase, with particular reference to the position of the construction site compound to the rear of existing residencies.
- No assessment has been given to the impact the development would have on the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) to the west of the development at Four Elms Hill, nor proposes mitigation measures attributed with the air quality due to the increased vehicular movements in the immediate vicinity of the development, in line with MLP:2003 Policy BNE24
- The Drainage Strategy Report relies on a controlled surface water discharge to "The Brook" which is already over design capacity following construction of the primary school in 2017 and has resulted in an increased number of flood events to local properties in the vicinity of the development.
- The original application and consent for the Primary School development in 2016 (MC/16/1845) contained a number of conditions applied to the development, the majority of which related to the impact this development would have on the surrounding area. A specific condition was imposed on the developer (Condition 22) relating to the creation of a "Travel Plan" for the development and called for: "The approved measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and shall continue in operation for the life of the development, as monitored, reviewed and updated in accordance with the approved Plan". Since the school opened in 2017 this Travel Plan although in place, has not been effectively monitored, and has resulted in the residents in the immediate vicinity of the school suffering a nuisance and anti-social behaviour by the parents/carers of the students parking vehicles in a way that blocks the Main Road carriageway, damages Medway Council owned land outside the school grounds and surrounding area, or on private property.
- This situation has been raised on numerous occasions with the Applicant (who has shown no regard or willingness to resolve these issues), Medway Council Highways,

and the Parish Council. The latter parties have attempted to address some of these issues, with limited success at the taxpayer's expense, whilst the school view these issues as someone else's problem to resolve. Should this application be granted, this situation will only exacerbate an already untenable situation for the local residents in the area.

- Applicant has failed to address these known issues within the vicinity of the site associated with traffic creation and anti-social behaviour.
- Within the Transport Statement attributed to this application it is acknowledged that the travel plan currently in place has not been managed or enforced (Transport Plan item 7.34) and the proposal is to now enforce this plan through a "bastion" approach would only serve to worsen the current unsustainable approach of uncontrolled traffic management in the area. The implementation of restricting vehicular access to the Academies land would increase the accident risk profile of pedestrians, due to increased close proximity to vehicular movements outside of the proposed development area, on Medway Council owned land, and migrates the problems to Medway Council Highways, Parish Council and local residents to resolve.
- Local residents invite the Academy and Planning Officer to witness the problems they have created outside their school gates at 15:00 on any school day to better understand the impact they have on the local residents and local environment.
- The Travel plan states: ' Parking within the school is limited to parents of EYFS children which will be rigorously enforced by a permit scheme, parents of other children should park in surrounding areas. The school gates will not be opened until just before the end of the school day.' Parents who arrive early to ensure a parking space will queue along Main Road adding to the congestion which already exists with parking on both sides of the road within a small area outside the school at the end of the school day. As the area around the school has minimal on road parking, this currently results in parents parking on and damaging grass verges, waiting on a private road, blocking access to the houses and at times becoming abusive when confronted by residents.
- Considers that the assessment indicating that 87 of the 210 new pupils will travel by car is an underestimation as busy parents will jump in the car for convenience. These parents will have the only option to park as others do, endangering pedestrians, inconveniencing local people, and damaging Council land.
- The placement of the construction compound within close proximity of the neighbouring houses will cause, noise, dust and pollution which will have to be endured by the residents during the build time. There are several elderly residents who suffer dementia who will be adversely affected by the starting up and movement of heavy construction vehicles to what will seem to them as occurring at the end of their gardens. With such a large expanse of land available for this to be situated surely there is no need to position it where planned.

UK Power Network have advised where the electrical lines and/or electrical plant are.

National Grid have advised - An assessment has been carried out with respect to National Grid Electricity Transmission plc's apparatus and the proposed work location. Based on the location entered into the system for assessment the area has been found to not affect any National Grid Electricity Transmission plc's apparatus.

SGN have objected to the application on the basis that there are high pressure pipelines in the vicinity of the proposed work area. SGN formally object to this planning application until such time as a detail consultation has taken place.

Sport England have advised that they do not wish to raise an objection to this application as it is considered to meet exception 3 of their Playing Fields Policy. The absence of an objection is subject to a condition being attached to the decision notice should the local planning authority be minded approving the application that sets out that The construction site compound and temporary site access road shall be removed, and the playing field returned to its former condition within three months of the completion and first use of the development.

Southern Water have written to advise that they require a formal application for a connection to the public foul sewer to be made by the applicant or developer. Their initial investigations indicate that there are no public surface water sewers in the area to serve this development. Alternative means of draining surface water from this development are required. This should not involve disposal to a public foul sewer and should be in line with the Hierarchy of H3 of Building Regulations with preference for use of soakaways. It is possible that a sewer now deemed to be public could be crossing the development site. Therefore, should any sewer be found during construction works, an investigation of the sewer will be required to ascertain its ownership before any further works commence on site.

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 2021 and are considered to conform.

Background

The existing primary school site occupies the lower section of what was formerly part of the playing field of the secondary school, itself separated from the main school site by a privately owned track serving farmland to the north. The school building is centrally located on the site between the staff car park to the east, playground to the north and MUGA to the west. All other spaces serve as landscape or amenity uses. A high-pressure gas pipeline runs east-west through the middle of the site, to the south of which is located the balancing / wildlife pond installed as part of the SuDs measures. Along the north and east boundaries runs a bank with mature trees and shrubs forming a backdrop to the site as well as screening from the farm track and secondary school. The south boundary of the site is defined by a belt of hedges and trees and a drainage ditch, to the south of which are residential properties which front onto Main Road.

The current building and site of the 1FE facility were designed to support its future expansion, notably with a specific location for a two-storey extension planned to the west of and connecting with the existing building. Specific aspects of the building and site, notably the areas of shared accommodation (such as the main hall) and capacity of central services were designed to support a simple and economic future expansion of the school.

Principle of Development and Need

Paragraphs 10 and 11 of the NPPF endorses a presumption in favour of sustainable development that underpins both plan-making and decision-taking. The principle of an

extension to the existing school to create a 2FE provision finds strong support at a national level in the NPPF where planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive, and safe places. Paragraph 93b requires planning to “*take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.*”

More specific support for the principle of extensions to schools can be found in paragraph 95 of the NPPF where it attaches great importance to ensuring that sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. It encourages local planning authorities to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. Furthermore, it (paragraph 95a and b) attaches great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools and, work with delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

Policy CF2 of the local plan states that new community facilities will be permitted subject to the size and scale of the development being appropriate to the site; the development having no detrimental impact on the countryside, residential amenity, landscape or ecology; and accessibility to the local population by a variety of means of transport, including public transport, cycling and walking.

The site is set outside the urban boundary and therefore Policy BNE25 ‘Development in the Countryside’ of the local plan is considered relevant. Policy BNE25 states that development in the countryside will only be permitted if it satisfies one of a number of specified criteria including “*a public or institutional use for which the countryside location is justified, and which does not result in volumes of traffic that would damage rural amenity.*” In this particular case the development would be defined as “a public or institutional use.” The application is for an extension to the existing school to meet a need for school places within this locality and therefore is consistent with both Policies CF2 and BNE25 of the local plan in terms of the ‘needs’ test.

During the 2016 application for the main (1FE) school it was advised that Medway Council’s Cabinet on 13 May 2014 considered a report titled “Expansion of Primary School Places in Hoo St Werburgh” requesting authorisation from Cabinet for the establishment of an all-through academy in partnership with the Williamson Trust on the Hundreds of Hoo Academy site, in order to provide sufficient primary school places in Hoo St Werburgh from September 2015. Demand for primary school places in Hoo St Werburgh was identified as increasing with an expectation to continue to do so over the coming years due to projected increases in the population in Hoo and future development planned for the area, which will further increase demand for school places.

Using the method of calculation set out in BB103, the proposed 2FE school would have a minimum total site area of 1.59 hectares and a maximum total site area of 2.004 hectares. Therefore, the application site would be of a sufficient size to accommodate the proposed new form entry.

The Education division fully supports this expansion which is needed to meet current and future demand from local developments. The original school was built as a 1FE school but with 2FE core facilities so that it could easily be expanded in the future as demand dictated.

The proposal would meet the government guidance objectives for primary school education

whilst meeting the demand locally for schooling places described above. The loss of part of the playground would be compensated by an expansion of the 'informal and social' space and the early years play area, exceeding the minimum requirement by BB103.

In light of the above, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies CF2 and BNE25 of the local plan and paragraphs 10, 11, 93b, 95a and 95b of the NPPF subject to all other material considerations set out in the assessment below.

Street Scene, Design and Character of the Area

The NPPF attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Paragraphs 126 and 130 of the NPPF emphasises the importance of good design and Policy BNE1 of the local plan is a general, criteria-based design policy for all development. It seeks appropriate design in relation to the character, appearance and functioning of the built and natural environment.

The site planning for the original school was constrained by the existing bank and tree belt at the north boundary, and the alignment of the high-pressure gas main to the south. The location and the footprint of the extension itself is broadly fixed by the decisions made during the design of the existing school.

Due to concerns about the possible disruption to learning during the construction of the extension (by which time the existing school will be at full capacity), a decision was made to separate the main body of the new building from the west wall of the existing building but linked by a corridor extension.

The proposed extension adopts a longer, shallower building footprint in order to accommodate the early years play area outside the HSE consultation zone of the main gas-pipeline and in order to maximise the area of the reconfigured playground. While this reduces the space between the new building and the existing MUGA, sufficient clearance is maintained for access for emergency vehicles.

The required increase in the capacity of the staff car park is accommodated within the existing area between the school building and the banking / tree belt along the east site boundary. The applicants advise that this was considered the best option operationally for the school while avoiding the negative impact on established landscaping and biodiversity associated with a second separate car park in another location. The modified parking layout features a number of 'tandem' spaces, the management of which has been accepted by the school (see Highways Section below).

It is proposed that the materials on the existing building will be carried across to the extension, in addition to the design mirroring the existing, to ensure that the extended school appears as a coherent whole. The creation of the corridor link, being set back from the elevations of the existing and new block, suggests the need for a different expression as a separate linking element. By using the same sheet material as the stairs, but in a white colour, contrast is achieved as well as continuity through the size and orientation of the panelling. As all window, door frames and flashings in the stair elevations match the grey of the surrounding wall panels, so the metal elements of the corridor connection will be powder coated white to match the Quartz White cladding sheet.

It is considered that the development will have greater presence than the existing

playground and the increased hard surface that will be required to facilitate parking and access for staff and pupils, as such further ecological enhancements are sought in the area to the west of the balancing pond, these could be in the form of more tree planting, wildflower meadow or even the potential for a forest school, a condition requiring details to be submitted is recommended on any approval.

Overall, it is considered that the design and layout of the building together with the proposed palette of materials would result in a high-quality building that would complement the existing building and its immediate environment. Furthermore, the building has been sensitively sited in response to the constraints within the site and to minimise impacts within the wider locality, subject to conditions for ecological enhancements, landscaping and materials no objection is raised on design grounds. As such it is considered that this proposal would meet the requirements set out in the NPPF and Policies BNE1 and BNE6 of the local plan and paragraphs 126 and 130 of the NPPF.

Amenity Considerations

Paragraph 130(f) of the NPPF asserts that decisions should ensure that developments create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. Policy BNE2 of the local plan, sets out that all development should secure the amenities of its future occupants and protect those amenities enjoyed by neighbouring properties. The design of the development should have regard to privacy, daylight and sunlight, noise, vibration, light, heat, smell and airborne emissions and activity levels and traffic generation.

The proposed extension has been sensitively sited in order to minimise any impacts upon nearby residential properties. The nearest dwellings are located beyond the southern boundary of the subject site and the extension would be sited more than 50m from this boundary, it is therefore considered overall that in view of the separation distance, the proposed development would not result in a significant loss of privacy, sunlight, daylight or outlook to neighbouring properties. The multi-use games area is as existing as such it would not be located in proximity to neighbouring residential properties. The MUGA would continue to be solely for the use of the school and would not involve the provision of floodlights or similar lighting. This would further ensure that any impact upon nearby residents would be minimised.

Noise

In terms of operational noise, the applicant has advised that the plant provision in the existing school was designed to support the future extension, so with the exception of local extract fans on the extension roof serving the new WCs, there is no more significant mechanical plants to be added than that which already exists.

To protect residents during the construction, phase a condition requiring a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to be submitted prior to commencement is recommended on any approval.

The proposal would therefore not result in significant impact on amenity and would be in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the local plan and paragraphs 130(f), 174e and 186 of the NPPF.

Air quality

Due to the additional vehicle trips, an air quality mitigation commensurate with the impact of the development related to road transport emissions is required, as such a condition is recommended to that effect on any approval.

Highways

The development would use the existing vehicular access from Main Road. Whilst the Highway Authority share concerns set out in the letters of representations, that an increase in student numbers will adversely impact highway function, It is noted from the submission that by not providing this school in this location where demand for school places already exists, a school in another location may lead to students attending schools further away from the catchment area and thus longer journeys' which in turn would mean more traffic on the highway network.

The applicants have indicated expanding the parking/drop off area to 40 spaces to accommodate the additional growth in student numbers. It is considered that given the constraints of the site, the increase provision is acceptable. In terms of onsite parking for staff, the applicants have increased the provision to meet the likely demand (42 spaces), whilst some spaces are in the form of tandem parking (which is not considered ideal) given the use of the site and that the school will be able to monitor their use, in this insistence, it is not considered unacceptable.

It should be noted that the NPPF 2021 has put sustainable development as a central core and paragraph 112E outlines that development should provide electric charging facilities, therefore a suitably worded condition has been attached to fulfil this objective.

Subject to conditions to implement the approved parking prior to first occupation and the provision of electric charging points the application is acceptable in respect of the transport and parking Policies T1, T2 and T13 of the local plan and paragraphs 111 and 112E of the NPPF.

Trees

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF requires that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Furthermore, Policy BNE43 of the local plan requires that development "*should seek to retain trees, woodlands, hedgerows and other landscape features that provide a valuable contribution to local character.*"

The proposed works to alter the drop off parking area will not require any significant works or removal of the existing trees. The work required to create the new tandem parking spaces and cycle store will require minor works to prune the trees, however no trees are proposed to be removed to facilitate the new parking or cycle spaces. However, subject to a condition to install tree protective fencing to ensure that the trees are not affected during construction, the proposed works would be in accordance with Policy BNE43 of the local plan and paragraph 131 of the NPPF.

Ecology

Policies BNE37 and BNE39 seek to protect wildlife habitat unless there is an overriding need

for development that outweigh its loss, there is no reasonable alternative site location for such development; the proposal is designed to minimise loss and appropriate compensatory measures are provided to balance against the loss. Where necessary, conditions will be sought to safeguard and maintain habitat.

There is unlikely to be any significant ecological impact from the proposed development due to the well-maintained grounds and lack of habitat features. However, it is recommended that if planning permission is granted, a breeding bird informative (due to the possibility of birds nesting on the flat roof) and ecological enhancement conditions are attached to any approval.

As stated within the Ecology report, it is likely that bats commute and forage over and around the site. As lighting can be detrimental to commuting and foraging bats, it is recommended that the external lighting of the development should be designed in a way that negates the impact on bat activity. To mitigate against potential adverse effects on bats, and in accordance with paragraph 180 of the NPPF it is suggested that the Bat Conservation Trust's 'Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting' is consulted in the design of lighting around the development. A condition to that effect is therefore recommended on any approval.

To prevent harm to potentially present protected species during construction, e.g., reptiles and badgers, precautionary mitigation measures have been proposed in the Ecology Report. This includes measures such as removing vegetation at suitable times and covering excavations overnight. To secure the implementation of precautionary mitigation measures, it is recommended that a condition is attached to any approval.

Under section 40 of the NERC Act (2006), paragraph 174 of the NPPF and the Environment Act (2021), biodiversity must be maintained and enhanced through the planning system. Additionally, in alignment with paragraph 180 of the NPPF, the implementation of enhancements for biodiversity should be encouraged. To ensure that biodiversity loss offsetting and enhancement measures are enacted, a condition is recommended to be attached to any approval.

Subject to these conditions, the development would comply with the objectives of Policies BNE37 and BNE39 of the local plan and paragraphs 174 and 180 of the NPPF.

Flood risk

The site lies within Flood Zone 1 (Low Risk) according to the Environment Agency Mapping. It is noted areas within the site are subject to a high risk of surface water flooding, therefore it is vital that the design of the buildings account for this.

British Geological Mapping indicates the presence of London Clay Formation. The proposal seeks to use attenuation tanks and an existing basing considered acceptable for the site, (the current site drains via the basin which connects to the surface water sewers), and Permeable paving.

Any sustainable urban drainage (SuDs) scheme should be designed in accordance with SuDs Management Train principles including the prevention of runoff by reducing impermeable areas and utilising source, site, and regional controls where necessary.

It should be ensured that there is a maintenance schedule in place for the lifetime of the development to maintain any SuDs, which serve it. All SuDs should be located in publicly accessible areas, unless deemed inappropriate or not possible, to allow for suitable access for maintenance. We will need to see a plan of the frequency of maintenance for each SuDs feature on site based on guidance in the CIRIA SuDs Manual as well as details of who will carrying out the maintenance.

It is recommended that conditions are added to any approval to ensure that the SuDs scheme is acceptable. Subject to conditions the application is considered to be in accordance with Policy CF13 of the local plan and paragraph 167 of the NPPF.

Climate Change and Sustainability

It is proposed that there will be good levels of daylight achieved to all the teaching spaces, thereby reducing the need for artificial lighting. Solar control glass and blinds will be specified to reduce overheating in south facing spaces. Passive natural (stack) ventilation and thermal mass in the form of exposed concrete slab soffits reduce running costs, energy consumption and improve maintainability.

Renewable energy systems, notably the air source heat pump supported underfloor heating, will be extended, although an early Brukl assessment has indicated that no additional PVs are required to those on the existing roof.

It is proposed to source new materials by considering their origin with appropriate certification and will be reviewed against the Green Guide for Building Specification. The cladding materials removed from the west elevation of the existing school (at the corridor link) will be reused for the extension, if it is practical to do so.

Water use will be minimised by the specification of efficient taps, dual flush toilets, and low water use appliances. It is proposed that all construction on site will be managed in an environmentally responsible manner in terms of resource use, storage, waste management, and potential sources of nuisance or pollution.

Subject to a condition to ensure compliance with the above measures the development is considered to be in accordance with paragraph 154 of the NPPF.

Local Finance Considerations

None relevant to this application

Conclusions and Reasons for Approval

The proposed development has shown that there is a need for additional primary school places within this locality and that the principle of an extension to the existing school finds strong support at both local and national level. It has been demonstrated that the proposal would satisfy the requirements of both the local and national plan policies in terms of design, amenity, highway and including ecology.

Subject to recommended conditions, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies BNE1, BNE2, BNE25, BNE37, BNE39, BNE43, L3, CF2, CF13, T1, T2, T3, T4, and T13 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and paragraphs 10, 11, 93b, 95a, 95b, 111, 112E, 126,

130, 131 and 167, 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 views contrary to Officers 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/>