



Delegated Report

Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20211470

Location: Meopham County Primary School Wrotham Road Meopham Gravesend

Description: Demolition of existing 4 porta cabin classrooms and erection of a new single storey building to be used for a pre-school nursery unit, general classrooms, hall, SEN department and associated facilities.

Applicant: Mrs Shirley Tomkins

Site Visit Date: 03 February 2022

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application for planning permission form;
Drawing no. 0618-001 Rev. A Red and blue line site boundary plan and existing block plan;
Drawing no. 0618-002 Existing ground floor layout;
Drawing no. 0618-003 Rev. A Existing elevations;
Drawing no. 0618-004 Rev. A Proposed ground floor layout;
Drawing no. 0618-005 Rev. A Proposed elevations;
Drawing no. 0618-006 Rev. A Proposed block plan;
Design and Access Statement dated 22 November 2021; and
Email from the agent dated 17 February 2022.

Procedural issues

It is noted that as the proposed development would adjoin the south western corner of the main school building, it would be more accurately described as an extension. The submitted details refer to the proposal as both an extension and a building and provide clear drawings illustrating its proposed location, layout and elevations. Therefore it is considered that, despite the above description being slightly misleading, the proposal can be determined without any prejudice to any interested parties.

It is also noted that the red/blue line boundary plan for the application site was amended following a request from the case officer. The original red line boundary (following image on the left) did not include the whole of the application site and the original blue line boundary (following image on the right) excluded some land that is within the ownership of the school;



Relevant Planning History

<u>Application No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Decision</u>
20140094	Stationing of two temporary classroom units.	Temporary permission	22.04.2014
20120639	Stationing of a five bay temporary classroom, for use as a pre-school nursery unit, retention of canopy and formation of new pedestrian entrance and footpath access to the nursery.	Permitted	25.10.2012
20110485	Erection of a five bay temporary classroom for drama activities.	Permitted	09.08.2011
20080200	Application under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 in respect of the erection of a canopy over the children's play area and walkway to classroom. KCC GRANTED PERMISSION 15.5.08 (CONDITIONS)	No objection	27.03.2008
20070706	Joint application under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 for extension to hardsurfaced area to provide enlarged parents/childrens waiting area plus widening of pedestrian gates to existing Wrotham Road entrance. KCC GRANTED PERMISSION 10.10.2007 (CONDITIONS)	No objection	28.08.2007
20050767	Joint application under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country General Regulations 1992 for the erection of a pre-school nursery unit. KCC GRANTED PERMISSION 15.11.2005 (CONDITIONS)	No objection	30.09.2005
20020443	Application under Regulation 3 of the Town & Country Planning General Regulations 1992 for the erection of an extension to entrance foyer and office. KCC GRANTED PERMISSION 11.7.202 (CONDITIONS)	No objection	12.06.2002

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development

- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS10 – Physical and Social Infrastructure
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS13 – Green Space, Sport and Recreation
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network
- C13 – Extensions to dwellings in the countryside
- TC7 – Other Archaeological Sites

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2021) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 12 – Achieving sustainable development and well-designed places
- 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 2 - Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020;
- Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (2015);
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

GBC Highways Officer

As this proposal is a like for like replacement in terms temporary buildings are being replaced with a permanent structure, but no changes are anticipated in the number of children or staff attending I have no objections.

Given there is a slight increase in car parking, the applicant should consider installing cables to support future Electric Vehicle charging points at these spaces, to do so now could be significantly less costly than providing the cables later.

GBC Leisure & Resilience Manager

The Leisure Team is comfortable with the proposals as set in the application documents. It is noted that the new permanent structure will take up a small section of existing playing field/open space within the school

grounds; although this will be mitigated by re-grassing of one of areas left by the one of the mobile units. It is also noted that the new building will be of a better quality and size to help to improve indoor PE/informal leisure use.

Sport England

The proposed development does not fall within either our statutory remit (Statutory Instrument 2015/595), or non-statutory remit (National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Par. 003 Ref. ID: 37-003-20140306), therefore Sport England has not provided a detailed response in this case, but would wish to give the following advice to aid the assessment of this application.

General guidance and advice can however be found on our website:

https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport#planning_applications

If the proposal involves the **loss of any sports facility** then full consideration should be given to whether the proposal meets Par. 99 of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), link below, is in accordance with local policies to protect social infrastructure and any approved Playing Pitch Strategy or Built Sports Facility Strategy that the local authority has in place.

If the proposal involves the provision of a **new sports facility**, then consideration should be given to the recommendations and priorities set out in any approved Playing Pitch Strategy or Built Sports Facility Strategy that the local authority may have in place. In addition, to ensure they are fit for purpose, such facilities should be designed in accordance with Sport England, or the relevant National Governing Body, design guidance notes:

<http://sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/>

If the proposal involves the provision of additional **housing** (then it will generate additional demand for sport. If existing sports facilities do not have the capacity to absorb the additional demand, then new and/or improved sports facilities should be secured and delivered in accordance with any approved local policy for social infrastructure, and priorities set out in any Playing Pitch Strategy or Built Sports Facility Strategy that the local authority has in place.

In line with the Government's NPPF (including Section 8) and PPG (Health and wellbeing section), consideration should also be given to how **any new development**, especially for new housing, will provide opportunities for people to lead healthy lifestyles and create healthy communities. Sport England's Active Design guidance can be used to help with this when developing or assessing a proposal. Active Design provides ten principles to help ensure the design and layout of development encourages and promotes participation in sport and physical activity.

NPPF Section 8: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/8-promoting-healthy-communities>

PPG Health and wellbeing section: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/health-and-wellbeing>

Sport England's Active Design Guidance: <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design>

KCC Ecological Advice Service

No ecological information has been submitted with this application. As a result of reviewing the data we have available to us (including aerial photos and biological records) and the information submitted with the planning application, we advise that the proposed development has limited potential to result in ecological impacts and as such we are satisfied that there is no requirement for an ecological survey to be carried out at this time.

We have taken this view because the buildings and trees to be removed do not appear to provide optimum habitat for roosting bats and the majority of the site is short regularly mown grassland reducing the

opportunities for protected/notable species to be present.

KCC Heritage

The site lies within an area of archaeological potential. I consider it unlikely, however, that these relatively limited proposals will have a significant archaeological impact and have no further comments to make in this case.

Meopham Parish Council

The Parish Council raises no objection to this application and supports the proposal which would benefit the site in principle as long as there is no planned increase of pupils to the site.

UK Power Networks

KCC Area Schools Organisation Officer

GBC Horticultural Services

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No response received.

Neighbouring properties

The application was publicised on two occasions (to reflect the amended red/blue line site boundary) by a site notice and to 16 neighbouring properties by letter. No representations have been received. The overall consultation period expired on 25 March 2022.

Officer's Analysis

The application site is located within the boundary of Meopham Primary School and comprises of four mobile classrooms located to the western side and rear (south) of the main school building. The wider school site has been home to various mobile classrooms since the 1970s. The current mobiles were most recently granted planning permission under references 20110485 (drama classroom) 20120619 (pre-school nursery) and 20140094 (two classrooms).

The proposed development would result in the removal of the four mobile classrooms and the erection of a new single storey building to accommodate a pre-school nursery unit, general classrooms, a hall, a Special Educational Needs department and other associated facilities (all of which are currently carried out in the existing mobile buildings). The proposed development would also provide a reconfigured car parking arrangement with seven new car parking spaces located in the area currently occupied by the pre-school mobile building. The applicant has set out that there would be no increase in either student or staff numbers at the school as a result of the proposal.

It should be noted that the main school building at the application site is not located within the Green Belt because the Green Belt boundary runs immediately to the south of it.

The majority of the application site lies within the Green Belt. Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location for development. In the rural area it states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and defined on the Policies Map. Development outside those settlements (which is predominantly the case here), will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Local Plan Core Strategy.

The principle issues in the determination of this application are;

- Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?
- Effect on the openness of the Green Belt
- Effect on the character and appearance of the area - including landscape character
- Other matters

Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?

Paragraph 137 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF 2021) sets out that the essential

characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence and paragraph 138 lists the five purposes that the Green Belt serves. At the application site, the Green Belt assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Paragraph 147 of the NPPF 2021 states that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 149 of the NPPF 2021 states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt, but lists certain exceptions. These exceptions are set out in sub-paragraphs 149(a) to 149(g). Sub-paragraph 149(c) identifies the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Sub-paragraph 149(d) identifies the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces.

The proposed uses would be the same as those existing within the mobile classrooms. As such, the proposed development would be in the same use as the buildings being replaced.

The existing mobile classrooms at the application site have a cumulative floor area of some 509 square metres and are between 3.3 and 3.5 metres in height. In addition, each mobile has a sizable access ramp and stepped access. The pre-school mobile has an attached covered play area and adjacent to the easternmost mobile, there is a wooden shed with a floor area of 15 square metres and a height of some two metres. Cumulatively, these features significantly increase the amount of existing built development at the application site (albeit at a lower height than the surrounding mobile classrooms).

The proposed development would have a floor area of some 568 square metres and a height of between 3.7 to 4.7 metres. As such, it would result in 59 square metres of additional floor area above the existing mobile classrooms and an increase of between 0.4 to 1.2 metres in height above the existing mobiles. The proposal would result in an increase in floor area of some 35% above the existing main school building, which has already been extended above its original footprint but is not located within the Green Belt.

The proposal would consolidate the dispersed building footprints of the existing mobile classrooms into one single location, reducing the spread of built development across the application site. Furthermore it would remove the access ramps, stepped accesses and wooden shed, which surround the existing mobiles.

It is noted that the highest part of the proposed building would accommodate a replacement hall, which would be used for games and performance activities, which due to the low height of the existing hall (within a mobile classroom) are currently limited. Therefore the increase in height above existing, of that part of the building, has been justified operationally. The increase in height for the rest of the proposed building above existing would be minimal and would match with the height of the main school building.

Overall it is considered that the proposed development would not be materially larger than the buildings being replaced and the new building would be in the same use as the existing mobile buildings. Therefore the proposal would be appropriate development in the Green Belt and in line with Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and sub-paragraph 149(d) of the NPPF 2021.

Effect on the openness of the Green Belt

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF 2021 states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It also states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence.

The proposed development, by its nature as an additional form of built development at the application site, would erode the openness of the Green Belt. However for the reasons set out above, the proposal would not add significant size or bulk above the existing buildings at the application site. Due to the screening provided by mature vegetation on the site boundaries and its location at the side/rear of the main school building, it would not be widely visible from public vantage points. Overall it is considered that the proposed development would not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt.

Effect on the character and appearance of the area

The application site is located in the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area. As such, Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 is relevant. This policy states that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment will be taken into account in determining applications.

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 requires new development to be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It should conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment and integrate well with the surrounding local area. In particular the design of new development should be derived from a robust analysis of local context and character and make a positive contribution to the street scene and the character of the area.

The proposed development would be located within the confines of an existing school site and would result in the removal of four unsightly mobile classrooms, various external ramps, stepped accesses and a wooden shed. The proposed building would have external facing materials to match those on the existing building and the design would be appropriate in its context. The land exposed by the removal of the existing mobile buildings, which would not be covered by the new building, would be made good with turf.

The proposal would also result in the removal of a number of trees from the application site. However the applicant proposes to replant these trees within the area land exposed by the removal of the mobile classrooms. The proposed tree planting and turf works should be covered by a landscaping condition on any planning permission granted.

Overall the proposed development would not undermine the educational character of the site; it would be appropriate in terms of design and materials; and would have a beneficial impact on the visual amenities of the surrounding landscape. As such, the proposal would be in line with Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).

Other matters

Impact on Educational Facilities

The proposed development would improve the educational facilities at the application site by removing temporary buildings that are no longer fit for purpose. This would be beneficial to the operation of the school. Therefore in principle, the proposal would be acceptable and in line with Policy CS10 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and paragraph 95 of the NPPF 2021.

Impact on Playing Fields

Part of the proposed development would be built on land that is currently used as a playing field. Sport England have not raised an objection and the GBC Leisure & Resilience Manager has noted that the lost area of playing field would be mitigated by the re-grassing of one of areas left by the removed mobile units and that that the new building would be of a better quality and size, improving indoor PE/informal leisure use at the application site.

Therefore the proposal would not detract from the playing field or sports provision at the application site and would be in line with Policy CS13 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and paragraph 99 of the NPPF 2021.

Neighbouring Amenity

The closest residential properties to the application site are no. 1 Longfield Road (located to the north west) and nos. 2 and 4 Longfield Road and no. 9 School Close (located to the north, across the roadway).

Due to the design of the proposal, the distance between the properties and the screening provided by boundary treatments/vegetation, it is considered that there would be no adverse overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impacts to the occupiers of any surrounding residential property.

Furthermore, as the proposed development would not introduce any new uses or additional vehicle movements to the application site, there would be no adverse noise or disturbance impacts associated with it.

Therefore the proposed development would not be detrimental to residential amenity and would be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014.

Parking and Highways

The proposed development would provide a reconfigured car parking arrangement with seven new car parking spaces. There would be no alterations to the existing vehicle or pedestrian access arrangements. The GBC Highways Officer has not raised an objection and requests that the applicant consider installing cables to support future electric vehicle charging points at the proposed parking spaces.

The proposed development would improve the car parking provision at the application site and the applicant can be advised of the need to consider installing electric vehicle charging points by way of an informative attached to any planning permission granted. Therefore the proposal would not be detrimental to highway safety and would be in line with Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).

Ecology and biodiversity

Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) requires no net loss of biodiversity in Gravesham and seeks opportunities to enhance, restore, re-create and maintain habitats particularly in Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and within new developments.

The proposed development would be within the confines of an existing school site, on land which is either hard surfaced or laid to grass and a number of trees would be removed. The KCC Ecological Advice Service has stated that the proposed development has limited potential to result in ecological impacts and it is noted that the applicant proposes to replant trees within the area land exposed by the removal of the mobile classrooms. As such, it is considered that there would be no adverse impacts to biodiversity and the proposal would be in line with Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

The application site is located in an area of multi-period archaeological potential. However KCC Heritage raise no objection to the proposed development. As such, the proposal would have no adverse impacts archaeology and would be in line with Policy CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and Saved Policy TC7 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994.

The application site is located within Groundwater Source Protection Zone 3 and it is proposed to dispose of surface and foul water to the main sewer. As the proposed development would be within the confines of an existing school and only a relatively small amount of groundworks would occur, then it is considered that there would be no adverse impacts to groundwater.

It is noted that Meopham Parish Council do not raise an objection to the proposed development.

Suggested Conditions

Time limit

Development in accordance with approved plans

Code of construction practice to be submitted and approved prior to commencement

Materials to match existing

Provide and retain car parking

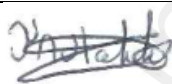
Landscaping details prior to above ground works

Residual land reinstated as playing field within three months of first use

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposal would comply with local and national planning policies and subject to the conditions set out above, the proposal would be acceptable.

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Kelly Joyce	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:	K Joyce	Signed:	
Dated:	29th March 2022	Dated:	30 March 2022