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<b>Platt</b>	<b>562041 157373</b>	<b>5 July 2007</b>	<b>TM/07/02394/FL</b>
Borough Green And Long Mill			
Proposal:	New Memorial Hall and associated external works		
Location:	Land Opposite The Ferns North Of Maidstone Road Platt Sevenoaks Kent		
Applicant:	The Trustees Of Platt Memorial Hall		

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## **1. Description:**

- 1.1 The proposed new hall building would have a square footprint measuring 25m x 25m and a maximum height of 7.5 m. It would take a more modern appearance than the existing hall and would incorporate a curved roof. The building would not stand square to the road, but at an angle to it (i.e. one of its corners would face towards Maidstone Road. The building would incorporate a sedum roof, and the walls would be finished externally with natural Chestnut cladding at first floor level and red stock brickwork at ground floor level.
- 1.2 At ground floor level, the building would accommodate the main hall & stage, a second small hall, Parish Council office, another small meeting room, store and W.Cs. At first floor level, two further small meeting rooms would be provided together with a larger tank/plant room.
- 1.3 In addition to the submitted plans, a planning statement has been provided which sets out the need for a new hall in Platt, the options considered by the applicant before submitting the application as well as the justification for the current proposal. A travel survey and a Noise Control Survey have also been submitted with this proposal. These documents are available for inspection prior to the meeting
- 1.4 In addition to the accommodation within the building it is also proposed to create what has been termed "Memorial Square" in front of the main entrance to the hall (which is located on its south west elevation facing obliquely towards Maidstone Road). Steps and ramps would lead down from Maidstone Road directly into the memorial square.
- 1.5 It is also proposed to locate a war memorial on the front (south west) elevation of the building.
- 1.6 Car parking would be provided to the west of the building (39 bays in total) which would be accessed via the access route serving the recently permitted primary school that would be located immediately to the rear (north) of the proposed Memorial Hall.

- 1.7 The submitted drawings show that much screen planting would take place around the proposed building, along the Maidstone Road frontage and within/around the proposed car park.
- 1.8 This application is reported to Committee as it relates to development that is a Departure from the Development Plan, and because of the widespread public interest it has aroused.

**2. The Site:**

- 2.1 The site is located immediately opposite the residential development at The Ferns and is immediately east of the Micawbers OTG site.
- 2.2 The site is located outside the settlement confines of Platt, within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The land level of the site is lower than that of Maidstone Road and the land gently slopes down in a south to north direction away from Maidstone Road and from west to east across the site. A mature hedge currently forms the field boundary of the site with the Maidstone Road.

**3. Planning History:**

- 3.1 TM/03/03647/OA      Refused 15.07.2004      Appeal dismissed 28.06.2006

Outline application: new replacement primary school with attached playing field, new replacement Memorial Hall, 20 affordable houses, 16 private houses and public open space.

- 3.2 TM/05/01328/CR3      Granted (By KCC) 23.08.2005  
(KCC ref: TM/05/TEMP/0025)

Replacement six class primary school together with nursery class, playing field, servicing, parking and new vehicular access.

**4. Consultees:**

- 4.1 PC: There is little question that the current hall is no longer fit for purpose, a hotchpotch of ageing extensions to an original 1920's construction which is difficult and costly to maintain. The increasing demands on the hall, means that a vital village amenity is increasingly incapable of facilitating popular activities.

Equally, the current hall's limited parking facilities in an area where parking is at a premium and is a growing local issue dictate that the arguments on which the case for a new hall is made are accepted.

There is, however, undoubted public concern about the need to build the new hall on Green Belt land. The proposed site has attracted controversy in the past and an application for new school, hall and associated housing was turned down by the Secretary of State.

However the Secretary of State's judgement did appear to allow that the school and hall as separate amenities did answer the requirements of very special circumstances and the planning permission for a school adjacent to the proposed village hall site now exists.

Because of this the Parish Council does not object in principle to a village hall on this Green Belt site.

The Parish Council does, however, have considerable concerns about the design put forward which were reflected in public debate where it was described as "bunker like" or "an aircraft hanger".

This translates to Platt PC as four primary concerns;

1. That the ultra modern "eco-design" of the building does not reflect local architecture or character.
2. That the materials used in the building's construction do not match those present in characteristic local design.
3. That the design itself may not stand the test of time. Brave architecture today may prove someone else's carbuncle tomorrow.
4. That in order to meet Green Belt development requirements, the new building must be deemed to enhance the locale. While the case for it doing so as an amenity is made, the argument for it doing so architecturally is not.

4.2 KCC (Highways): It is noted that the access road is not included within this application site edged in red.

The proposal is to be served by a total of 39 parking spaces, including three disabled bays that I would find satisfactory. Bays are to be a minimum of 2.5m (width) x 5.0m (length). Disabled bay to be 3.6m (width) x 5.5m (length). I would recommend that the applicant provide secure covered cycle/motorcycle storage.

The site is to be served by a new access directly off of the Maidstone Road. Something that I believe to be a draughting error is the fact that the new access road scales approximately 7.5m wide at the tangent point closest to the Maidstone Road down to approximately 5.8m at the tangent point at the other end, drawing number D – 14 Rev P4. I would see this road as being 5.5m wide. I find the radii and forward

vision acceptable. Part of the forward vision falls within land under the control of the applicant. Nothing within the forward vision envelope is to be higher than 1.05m above the adjacent carriageway.

I do not consider that traffic generation is an issue.

All works affecting the public highway will be carried out to the Highway Managers satisfaction, be subject to a legal agreement and the safety audit process. The applicant will need to liaise with the Highway Manager to discuss these proposals.

Surface water from private areas is not to discharge onto the public highway.

#### 4.3 DHH: (Environmental Protection)

I am satisfied that the implementation and subsequent maintenance of the noise control measures set out in the submitted acoustic appraisal will safeguard aural amenity. I would not wish to object to this application providing a condition can be used to ensure the measures are undertaken.

#### 4.4 Natural England

Widespread Retails:

The survey information submitted by the applicant indicates that common Lizards, Slow Worms and Grass Snakes are using the application site. Whilst several of the survey visits were undertaken outside of the recommended temperature conditions, Natural England is satisfied that reasonable survey effort has been conducted. However other survey effort may be required to obtain a relative population estimate and guide the details of the mitigation strategy. The proposals set out in the application appear sufficient to mitigate any potential impacts on local reptile populations and Natural England is satisfied that these proposals will not be detrimental to the population of reptiles subject to a suitable worded condition.

Badgers:

The survey information provided by the applicant indicates that two subsidiary badger setts are present within the application site. However, the proposals set out in the application appear sufficient to mitigate any potential impacts on local badger populations. Therefore Natural England is satisfied that these proposals will not be detrimental to the population of Badgers.

Biodiversity enhancements:

This application has many opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife such as the incorporation of roosting opportunities for bats or the installation of bird nest boxes or the use of native species in a landscaping strategy. As such we would recommend that should the Council be minded to grant permission, measures to enhance the biodiversity of this site are secured from the applicant. This accords with PPS 9.

Ongoing habitat management:

Where habitats are created as mitigation or enhancement for a development, these habitats should be subject to long term management and monitoring to ensure that the populations of species affected are conserved, and wherever possible, enhanced. Therefore Natural England recommends that a management plan and monitoring programme should be produced for all habitats and species affected by this application and recommends that should the Council be minded to grant permission, such a strategy is secured from the applicant through a condition.

4.5 Private reps (including responses to site and press notices): 13/0X/18S/5R. The reasons for objection are:

- The development formed part of a scheme that was refused permission by the Secretary of State as that scheme was considered to be contrary to the development plan and national guidance. She also considered that the case of very special circumstances put forward did not outweigh the harm to the Green Belt caused by this inappropriate development
- The design of the building is not acceptable, which is so out of keeping with St Marys Platt. It looks like a factory building. The village hall should reflect the village and the rural situation.
- The proposed two storey building would block views of the Downs to the north
- The building is on a grandiose scale, too large for the community it would serve

The letters submitted in support of the proposal make the following comments

- The existing hall is becoming unsuitable for various events due to a lack of parking and sub standard facilities.
- The proposed building would provide a valuable asset for the local community for many years to come.

- Whilst the existing hall is old and dilapidated it is still used by many local clubs/groups. Its replacement is essential if we are to maintain this important focus of village life.
- Whilst the design is modern, it is sympathetic to the environment and will have a minimal impact on the views across to the North Downs.
- The roof design is lower than a conventional roof pitch would be, thereby allowing views to the Downs
- The green roof reduces water run off and is sustainable which will also blend into the views of the Downs
- The design will reduce the amount of sound emanating from the hall.
- The building will be environmentally friendly. The timber cladding will require little maintenance and will weather pleasantly over the years.

## **5. Determining Issues:**

- 5.1 The main determining issue are the principle of this Green Belt development and its impact upon the character of the countryside in the immediate and wider locality.
- 5.2 PPG 2 states that there is a presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt, which should not be allowed except in very special circumstances. It is for the applicant to demonstrate why permission should be granted for inappropriate development. The erection of a community hall does not fall within any of the categories of development listed within PPG 2 as being acceptable in principle within the Green Belt. It therefore falls to be determined as to whether very special circumstances exist that outweigh the principal policy objection to this development.
- 5.3 The applicant's agent has submitted a detailed explanation as to why the existing Memorial Hall is unsuitable in its present condition to meet the current or future needs of the village. The building is in constant need of repair maintenance, the toilet facilities are inadequate and there simply is not considered to be sufficient room within the building for all of the groups that currently use this essential community facility. The site is quite tight with little external space for car parking.
- 5.4 The applicant appears to have consulted widely in the local community in an attempt to assess what size of building is most desired by the groups and individuals who use the existing Memorial Hall or would use it if the facilities were improved. The applicant states that a building of approx 200 sqm more floor space than the existing hall would be necessary to accommodate all of the activities that the hall would be used for.

- 5.5 The applicant has considered several options as to how to improve upon the existing Memorial Hall, including the refurbishment of the existing facility (which would not increase the size of the existing facilities), extending upon the site (replacing an existing 1960's extension) and the current proposal. It is quite apparent that no alternative sites have come forward that are located within the settlement confines of Platt that would be large enough to accommodate a new building and external areas for use as a Memorial Hall.
- 5.6 Both the inspector and the Secretary of State in determining the previous application for a community hall, school, and housing on this site considered the issues surrounding the need for a new community hall within Platt. Whilst the appeal ultimately failed and permission was refused, they both considered that there were merits to allowing a replacement community hall to be built on this Green Belt site. At paragraph 37 of the Inspector's report, in referring to the merits of the separate elements of that development, it is stated:
- " Very special circumstances exist to justify the school and the hall. But they do not exist to justify the whole of the development including the affordable housing."*
- 5.7 The Secretary of State concurred with this view at paragraph 23 of her decision notice.
- 5.8 It is therefore apparent that the existing Memorial Hall is inadequate in terms of its physical condition, layout and size to meet current and future demands from various groups. The external area associated with the hall is also considered to be inadequate. None of the third party representations received through the consultation process concerning this application contradicts this point of view. It also appears that there are no other sites in the settlement confines of Platt that could reasonably be used to accommodate a new community hall of a size that is deemed to be required to meet current and future needs. In light of this and the fact that the Secretary of State has clearly stated that very special circumstances exist to justify erecting a new Memorial Hall and school on this site, I consider that very special circumstances do exist to provide a new memorial hall on this site.
- 5.9 Furthermore, it also has to be noted that KCC has also recently approved (in outline form) a new primary school immediately to the rear (north) of the current application site. There are of course benefits to locating two community facilities close to one another, such as the use of a shared access and facilities. Once the underlying need for the facilities has been acknowledged, siting two large community facilities next to one another would also be of benefit the Green Belt and countryside. Siting a new Memorial Hall on another Green Belt site elsewhere within Platt Parish is likely to cause greater erosion of the openness of the Green Belt than locating the two facilities in one site.

- 5.10 With regard to other matters, there is locally both opposition to and support for the form, design and appearance of the proposed Memorial Hall. Those opposing the design including the PC consider it to be out of keeping with the existing architectural styles and traditional building materials found within the village.
- 5.11 However, just because an architectural form or style is different to others in the vicinity, this does not necessarily mean that it would be harmful or detract from the visual amenities of the locality. The scale and size of the building is dictated by its functional requirements. The building has to be of a certain size to perform as a replacement Memorial Hall. The form of the building, including the curved roof, is different to other buildings within the locality that by and large possess traditional pitched roofs. However, it must be acknowledged that the buildings within the locality do vary in terms of height, scale, form appearance and use of external materials. There is therefore scope for a variety in design and I believe it would be quite fitting for a 21<sup>st</sup> century Memorial Hall to take on a design that reflects current building techniques and a desire to be energy saving rather than a pastiche representation of a more traditional form of building. I therefore consider that the form of the building as proposed would not detract from the visual amenities of the locality. It should also be noted that using a more traditional roof form for a building of this size could well create a taller building which would appear more prominent in the street scene and is more likely to obscure views of the Downs than the proposed building. In addition, policy QL1 of the KMSP adopts a positive stance to the use of innovative design.
- 5.12 With regard to materials these would consist of red stock brickwork and Chestnut cladding for the walls and Sedum would cover the roof. Whilst natural Chestnut cladding is not widely used in the locality, timber cladding is; although it is normally stained black/dark brown or painted white. Chestnut is grown locally and is hard wearing. When left in a natural state it weathers down to an attractive silver/grey colour, which would work well with red stock brickwork in my opinion. A Sedum roof is like a living carpet of low growing succulent plants which are suitable for the inhospitable conditions found on buildings' roofs. I consider that the use of this type of roof cover and natural wood would help to soften the impact of the building. I consider that the form, scale and appearance of the building suits its function and would be a focal point for the village. I consider that this scheme, on this site, would be acceptable in terms of its visual impact.
- 5.13 Concerning highway safety issues, the site would be accessed via the access that would serve the school site that was approved in outline form in 2005. KCC Highways is satisfied that the proposed access and parking arrangement associated with this proposal are acceptable.
- 5.14 The DHH is satisfied that the proposal in terms of noise generation from activities within the Hall would not be detrimental to the amenities of the nearest residential properties providing that the recommendations within the applicant's Noise Control Report are undertaken as part of the scheme. This could be achieved by the use of conditions.

- 5.15 I note the comments of Natural England regarding protection of Badgers and Lizards and biodiversity in general. These matters could also be dealt with appropriately worded conditions.
- 5.16 The scheme contains indicative landscaping details. These show that there is scope to plant many mature trees within the site and plant shrubs along the Maidstone Road frontage of the site in front of the proposed acoustic fence. Whilst full details of landscaping would be required, I am satisfied that scope exists within this proposed development to undertake a good quality landscaping scheme.
- 5.17 In light of the above I recommend that planning permission be granted.

**6. Recommendation:**

- 6.1 **Grant Planning Permission** in accordance with the following submitted details: Certificate B dated 04.07.2007, Letter dated 05.07.2007, Survey dated 05.07.2007, Letter dated 04.07.2007, Location Plan 27/SK01 dated 04.07.2007, Site Plan D-10 P3 dated 04.07.2007, Floor Plan D-11 P2 dated 04.07.2007, Floor Plan D-12 P1 dated 04.07.2007, Elevations D-13 P2 dated 04.07.2007, Plan D-14 P4 dated 04.07.2007, Report NOISE CONTROL dated 04.07.2007, Supporting Statement dated 04.07.2007, subject to:

**Conditions / Reasons**

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

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. No development shall take place until details and samples of materials to be used externally have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, and the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not harm the character and appearance of the existing building or the visual amenity of the locality.

3. The use shall not be commenced, nor the premises occupied, until the area shown on the submitted layout as vehicle parking space has been provided, surfaced and drained. 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 1995 (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.

4. No building shall be occupied until the area shown on the submitted plan as turning area has been provided, surfaced and drained. 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 1995 (or any order amending, revoking and 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 turning area.

Reason: Development without provision of adequate turning facilities is likely to give rise to hazardous conditions in the public highway.

5. No building shall be occupied until that part of the service road which provides access to it has been constructed in accordance with the approved plans.

Reason: To ensure the safe and free flow of traffic.

6. No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of landscaping and boundary treatment. All planting, seeding and turfing comprised in the approved scheme of landscaping shall be implemented during the first planting season following occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the earlier. Any trees or shrubs removed, dying, being seriously damaged or diseased within 10 years of planting shall be replaced in the next planting season with trees or shrubs of similar size and species, unless the Authority gives written consent to any variation. Any boundary fences or walls or similar structures as may be approved shall be erected before first occupation of the building to which they relate.

Reason: Pursuant to Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality.

7. Noise generated within the Memorial Hall shall not be audible at the boundary of the nearest residential property to the hall.

Reason: In the interests of the residential amenity of nearby dwellings

8. No live or amplified music shall be played outside the building.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of nearby properties

9. The use shall not commence until full details of all plant, machinery and equipment associated with ventilation and air conditioning, including arrangements for the continuing maintenance of this equipment and any noise attenuation measures required in connection with the equipment, have been submitted to and approved in

writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details of such equipment shall be sufficient to demonstrate that noise from these sources shall not exceed NR35 at the site boundary. The scheme of approved plant and machinery shall be fully installed before use of the building commences and shall thereafter be maintained in strict accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not harm the amenity of adjacent residential properties.

10. Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order amending, revoking and re-enacting that Order), no windows or similar openings shall be constructed in the walls of the building other than as hereby approved, without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to regulate and control any such further development in the interests of visual and residential amenity.

11. Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order amending, revoking and re-enacting that Order), no windows or similar openings shall be constructed in the roof of the building without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to regulate and control any such further development in the interests of visual and residential amenity.

12. Prior to the commencement of the development, a detailed reptile mitigation strategy shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All work shall then process in accordance with the agreed mitigation strategy, unless otherwise approved in writing beforehand with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to ensure that the reptiles found on site are adequately protected.

13. Prior to the commencement of the development, a detailed Badger mitigation strategy shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All work shall then process in accordance with the agreed mitigation strategy, unless otherwise approved in writing beforehand with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to ensure that Badgers found on site are adequately protected.

14. No development shall commence until a management plan and a programme for the ongoing monitoring of all of the wildlife habitats within this site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: in the interests of the biodiversity of the site.

Contact: Matthew Broome