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Proposal:	Construction of additional single storey staff facilities
Location:	No 1 Area Traffic Headquarters London Road Aylesford Kent
Applicant:	Kent Police

1. Description:

1.1 Full planning permission is sought to erect a single storey extension on the south eastern side of the building to provide staff facilities including mess and locker rooms, showers and toilets. The extension would measure 17.3m in length by 9.8m in width and would be linked via a passageway to the main open plan office area. The extension would measure 3.8m high and be finished with a flat roof.

2. The Site:

2.1 The Police Traffic Head Quarters occupy an irregularly shaped site within the Strategic Gap that separates the Medway Gap settlements from Maidstone. The site fronts the A20 with the main building occupying a roughly central location along the frontage.

2.2 The most relevant Local Plan policies include P2/18 concerning development in the Strategic Gap.

3. Planning History:

3.1 TM/76/11002 Approved 19.07.1976
Police area traffic headquarters.

3.2 TM/96/01522/FL Approved 03.02.1997
Extension, internal access road, car park, cameras, lights and security fencing.

3.3 TM/03/01538/FL Approved 05.09.2003
Construction of additional office and ancillary accommodation.

3.4 Over the years several applications have been made to site mobile buildings.

4. Consultees:

4.1 PC: Views awaited.

- 4.2 KCC (Highways): The details indicate that 12 additional full time members of staff are proposed. No additional parking is shown, however in this instance, based on the current working procedures for this site the existing arrangements are likely to be acceptable. On balance no objections are raised.
- 4.3 Southern Gas Networks Ltd-has submitted a plan identifying presence of gas mains in proximity to the site and the need to avoid mechanical excavations above or within 0.5m of certain pressure systems.

5. Determining Issues:

- 5.1 The main issue is whether the proposal represents an acceptable form of development within the Strategic Gap. The relevant Local Plan policy seeks to prevent the coalescence of existing and new settlements and the merging of areas of development. The aim is to prevent the significant extension of the built confines of existing settlements.
- 5.2 The proposed development would take place within the existing traffic head quarters land on a site that already has substantial built development, notwithstanding its location in the Strategic Gap. It would not involve expansion beyond the site boundary and given the size and location of the proposed extension relative to the existing building, it would not, in my view, be in conflict with the aims of the relevant policy.
- 5.3 The need for additional facilities has been questioned with the applicants agent, given that the new building agreed in 2003 incorporated areas for staff facilities. It is understood that this extra accommodation is needed to provide facilities for Highways Agency staff who work with the police and who are employed to clear a site after an incident has taken place.
- 5.4 The style of the extension is functional but it has a satisfactory and appropriate relationship with the main two storey building. Given the location of the proposed extension relative to the site boundaries, and in the light of the additional tree - planting approved in connection with the extension under TM/03/01538/FL, I do not consider that further landscaping is required as a result of the current proposal. This use does, in fact, add to the facilities to service the M20 which is very much to the benefit of the wider community.

6. Recommendation:

- 6.1 **Grant Planning Permission**, as outlined on drawings numbered 78201.100 rev C and 78201.101 received 16.06.2005, subject to the following conditions:
- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

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

- 2 All materials used externally shall match those of the existing building.

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

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