
Tonbridge Vauxhall	559068 145228	14 February 2014	TM/14/00575/FL
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Proposal:	New build two storey Sixth Form Centre and associated landscaping on the existing disused outdoor swimming pool site. Demolition of existing changing room block and creation of additional car parking spaces.
Location:	Tonbridge Grammar School For Girls Deakin Leas Tonbridge Kent TN9 2JR
Applicant:	Tonbridge Grammar School

1. Description:

- 1.1 Permission is being sought to erect a new sixth form building on the site of the existing swimming pool and changing room building. The new building would measure 25.6m in length, 16m in width and would stand 8.8m high at ridge level.
- 1.2 The building would take a simple rectangular form with a shallow pitched roof. The walls of the long sides would be clad externally with zinc panels. The rear (east) elevation would be built externally from red brickwork framed by a zinc coloured surround. The front (west) elevation would be predominantly glazed, but would also contain blank panels. The building would contain aluminium windows and louvres as well as Brises Soleil along the south (flank) elevation.
- 1.3 The building would contain a social/study area, kitchen, changing rooms and W.C's at ground floor area and classrooms, an office and W.C's at first floor level.
- 1.4 The building would be located towards the eastern side of the site, 19m away from the boundary with the new dwellings within Taylor Close.
- 1.5 The proposed elevation drawings show that the rear elevation (brick) would contain vertical cables, up which, Clematis plants would grow.
- 1.6 Two unprotected Oak trees would be removed from site to accommodate the proposed building. It is proposed to plant three new Silver Birch trees to the rear of the building towards the eastern boundary of the school site. A hedge formed from Japanese Quince is also proposed to be grown along the east boundary of the site.
- 1.7 In addition to the existing 70 car parking spaces located at the south west corner of the site, adjacent to the main entrance, 14 further car parking spaces have now been marked out on an area of hardstanding located at the northern end of the site. This area is shown on the submitted site plans. It is also proposed to create 46 new car parking spaces in front of the Hands Building and netball court either side of the internal access road within this site using a grass reinforced plastic mesh. Furthermore, the school is now also proposing to open up the netball courts to provide additional car parking when required to cater for specific events.

1.8 The application has been amended significantly since it was originally submitted and the revisions are documented within section 5 of this report.

2. Reason for reporting to Committee:

2.1 At the request of both of the Ward Councillors and as a result of widespread local interest.

3. The Site:

3.1 The site is located within the urban confines, on the east side of Deakin Leas. The site of the proposed building is located towards the eastern side of the school site, towards the boundary with properties in Taylor Close. The primary means of access to the site is via Deakin Leas, although a secondary access also exists from the south end of Taylor Close.

4. Planning History:

4.1 There is an extensive history relating to the use and development of the school, going back to 1949 and beyond. The following is the most recent and relevant:

TM/94/01182/FL grant with conditions 20 May 1994

Single storey brick construction changing rooms and showers to serve existing school swimming pool

TM/94/01183/RM grant with conditions 19 July 1994

Details of materials pursuant to condition 02 of TM/94/0359FL (being Wealden stock brick and Redland plain brown roof tiles in connection with the Swimming pool changing facilities)

TM/94/01184/FL grant with conditions 16 March 1995

Relocation of existing temporary classroom buildings

TM/94/01185/FL grant with conditions 15 February 1995

Two storey brick construction science and technology block, access roadway and resurfacing and minor enlargement of parking area

TM/95/51703/RD Grant 9 February 1996

details of landscaping pursuant to condition 3 of consent ref: TM/94/51562/FL (two storey science and technology block)

TM/96/01853/FL Grant With Conditions 14 February 1997

alterations to eastern elevation of Mitchener Centre

TM/03/02958/CR3 Grant With Conditions 22 November 2004

Construction of three storey teaching/administration block and ancillary works

TM/07/03231/CR3 Approved 14 November 2007

Details of all materials to be used externally, details of all external lighting, methodology for working in close proximity to trees, details of obscure glass, construction details of the emergency access, details of the levels of the development and details of surface water drainage pursuant to conditions 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14 and 17 of planning permission TM/03/02958/CR3: Construction of three storey teaching/administration block and ancillary works

TM/07/03692/CR3 Approved 7 January 2008

Amendments to car parking, drop off, cycle parking and pedestrian circulation pursuant to condition 2 of planning permission TM/03/2958/CR3: Construction of three storey teaching/administration block and ancillary works

TM/07/04067/CR3 Approved 21 December 2007

Details of School Travel Plan submitted pursuant to condition 18 of planning permission TM/03/02958/CR3: Construction of three storey teaching/administration block and ancillary works (KCC ref. TM/03/2958/R18)

TM/07/04081/CR3 Approved 10 January 2008

Landscaping details submitted pursuant to condition 15 of planning consent TM/03/02958/CR3: Construction of three storey teaching/administration block and ancillary works

TM/07/04083/CR3 Approved 13 November 2007

Details of access submitted pursuant to condition 9 of planning permission TM/03/02958/CR3: Construction of three storey teaching/administration block and ancillary works

5. Consultees:

5.1 KCC (Highways): It is encouraging to read that the school has heeded local concerns and made a step change in addressing neighbourhood parking and traffic management issues associated with the school through this application. A central part of the amendments is to upgrade on-site parking numbers to be in line with the County's car parking standards for schools, redressing historic shortfalls. The school is also intending to address evening event scenarios with a scheme for temporary parking at these times.

5.1.1 The school also recognises the need for management, marshalling and ongoing monitoring to keep abreast and on top of these issues and on behalf of the Highway Authority I confirm that I have no objection to this application.

5.1.2 I note the high usage of school buses, public buses and trains submitted in Figure 12.1 of the new Transport Statement and accept the statement in this document that the increases in car journeys are not sufficiently significant to affect the capacity of the local road network, nor warrant under the guidance of the NPPF, objection or recommendation for refusal on highway grounds. The school's commitment to a School Travel Plan is welcomed and I would recommend (with or without this application being approved) that the applicant registers this plan with Kent County Council's School Travel Plan Advisor so that subsequent reviews and any potential future funding opportunities can be prompted. Should this application be approved it is recommended that a review of the School Travel Plan is undertaken within 6 months of occupation for approval by the Local Planning Authority.

5.2 Private Reps (including responses to site notices): 70/1X/85S/45R. The comments received objecting to the proposed development do so for the following reasons:

- The proposal will increase the number of pupils resulting in more traffic movements to and from the school.
- The area already suffers gridlock with difficulties for residents accessing their own properties. The proposed development will make things worse.
- Emergency services will not be able to travel up or down Deakin Leas.
- People already block residents' driveways.
- The proposal will cause additional disruption and disturbance to local residents.
- The additional sixth former parking will add to the parking burden on local streets.

- The building is unacceptably close to the new dwellings in Taylor Close.
- The commercial use of the new building will cause further parking problems in Deakin Leas.
- Heavy goods vehicles used to build the new building will damage the road.
- The existing car park is over capacity and not available on many occasions.
- The opening of the site for further community use may increase crime and allow access in to the neighbouring gardens.
- Loss of designated open space.
- Overshadowing to the neighbouring residential properties and the open space in Taylor Close.
- Loss of privacy from overlooking.
- The design of the building is not in keeping with surrounding buildings and the materials will resemble an industrial building.
- Noise disturbance generated by the use of the building itself.

5.3 The letters in support of the application appear to have been submitted mainly by parents of pupils attending the school and other interested parties. The main reason for support is that the school needs to enhance its facilities to maintain its excellent level of teaching.

6. Determining Issues:

6.1 Policy CP11 of the TMBCS states that development will be concentrated within urban areas including Tonbridge.

6.2 The playing fields of the school are defined as an open space to which policy OS1 of the MDEDPD applies. This policy states that developments that would result in the loss of, or reduce the recreational, nature conservation, biodiversity, carbon sink, landscape or amenity of existing open spaces will not be permitted unless a replacement site is provided. The site of the application is the school's former swimming pool, (now disused) and the site of the changing rooms serving the pool. The development would not displace the recreational open space currently used within the school's grounds, but would rather make use of an under-used section of the school site. I am satisfied therefore, that the proposal would not conflict with the requirements of policy OS1 and is acceptable in terms of its principle.

- 6.3 The main issues that concern local residents relate to additional disturbance/disruption arising from the use of the proposed building, and its physical impact upon neighbouring residential properties.
- 6.4 Policy CP1 of the TMBCS states that the need for development will be balanced against the need to protect the built environment. It also states that when determining applications residential amenity will be preserved.
- 6.5 Policy CP24 of the TMBCS requires all developments to be well designed and that they must through scale, siting, character and appearance be designed to respect the site and its surroundings.
- 6.6 The proposal would be a significant addition of built form within this site. It would measure over 25m in length, 16m in width and stand 8.8 m high. However, the building would be smaller than some of the existing buildings within this site (such as the Hands Building) and it would not be out of scale with the complex of buildings within this site. The position of the proposed building has been amended since the application was submitted. As originally proposed, the building would have been positioned less than 9m away from the boundary with the dwellings within Taylor Close. Following discussions with the applicant, the position of the proposed building has now shifted westwards and would be 19m away from the boundary of these nearest residential properties. The rear elevation has also been amended to now be of brick construction rather than clad with zinc panels as was previously proposed. The rear elevation would also have Clematis plants growing up cables affixed to this wall and three Silver Birch trees would be planted in a row between the new building and the boundary with Taylor Close. These soft landscaping proposals, coupled with the revised position of the building and the use of brickwork for the rear wall would result in the building not appearing unduly overbearing when viewed from the neighbouring properties within Taylor Close.
- 6.7 I am also satisfied that in its current position within the site, the proposed building would not cause an unacceptable loss of light to the neighbouring residential properties either. A concern has been expressed that the windows located within the north and south elevations of the building would cause a loss of privacy to the adjacent residential properties in Taylor Close. However, due to the orientation of the windows concerned and their distance from the properties in Taylor Close, I am satisfied that the proposed building would not cause an unacceptable loss of privacy to these residential properties.
- 6.8 The building takes a simple form that is derived from its intended use as a modern school building. Objections have been raised to the detailed design and use of external materials which some consider not to be in keeping with the surrounding buildings. The school contains buildings that vary in size, form and appearance. Materials such as buff brick, red brick, render, metal cladding and plain roof tiles are used on the existing buildings within this site. Given the existing variety of materials and building forms within the school site, the proposed building is not

considered to harm the character of the site. The building would be viewed from Taylor Close, but would be seen amongst groups of large school buildings that vary in terms of size, form and external appearance. Accordingly, the proposal would not detract from the character of the wider locality.

- 6.9 A significant area of concern raised by local residents relates to the use of the proposed building in terms of additional disturbance from school use and from its use outside of normal school hours (such as for parent consultation evenings, open days or when various clubs/organisations make use of the school's buildings).
- 6.10 Members will recall the recent application (TM/13/03128/FL) to construct an all weather hockey pitch within the school site was refused permission due to the harm its use by external clubs/groups would cause to the amenity of local residents. In light of that experience and as a result of some of the initial consultation responses to the current application, the school has now reviewed the application and has put forward a number of revisions to it in an attempt to address the longstanding traffic and amenity problems the use of its facilities has caused to local residents and which are intended to also mitigate the additional use of the site generated by the proposed development.
- 6.11 The applicant has provided clarification regarding the anticipated rise in pupil numbers generated by the proposed building. The current capacity of the school is 1109 pupils, and it currently has 1081 pupils. The proposed building would increase the capacity of the school as a whole to a maximum of 1260 pupils, an increase of 151 pupils (a 13% increase to the existing capacity). The existing number of school staff is 102 and this is anticipated to increase to 109 with the use of the new building at full capacity.
- 6.12 The school is aware that the existing car parking arrangements are inadequate to serve the school as it currently stands and has already provided an additional 14 car parking spaces on an existing area of hardstanding (a total of 84). In addition to this, it is also now proposed to provide an additional 46 car parking spaces by laying grass reinforcing mesh on either side of the access road outside the Hands Building. This level of car parking provision now accords with the current adopted vehicle parking standards and the Highway Authority is satisfied with the proposed car parking provisions.
- 6.13 Whilst the proposed building would be provided for the school's sixth form, it is not anticipated that all of the additional pupils will be sixth formers. (The additional building would allow the lower years to grow in number as well). The submitted transport statement refers to an increase of 98 sixth form pupils as a result of the proposed building (which would increase the school's sixth form capacity to 360). Not all of the sixth form pupils drive themselves to school. Indeed a survey carried out by the applicant last month indicated that of the existing 216 sixth form pupils, 18 drove themselves to school (8.3%). It is a possibility that increasing the number

of sixth form pupils would result in more pupils driving themselves to school. It has to be noted that at the start of the sixth form considerably less pupils would be eligible to drive than at the end of the school year. Undertaking the survey in May is considered to present a reasonable indication of the percentage of sixth form pupils that would drive to school in a given year. Based on this, the proposed building could generate an additional 9 sixth formers driving themselves to school by the end of the academic year.

- 6.14 As has been said earlier in this report, the application is also seeking to significantly increase the level of car parking within the site as a whole to deal with the historic under provision of car parking within this site. The level of car parking currently proposed would meet the adopted vehicle parking standards. The school has stated that previously it has not allowed pupils to park within the school, but this policy has now changed. Consequently, pupil drivers would not now have to find spaces within the surrounding streets to park their cars.
- 6.15 The school has acknowledged that inconsiderate driving by people trying to access the school out of normal school hours has caused disruption and detriment to the amenity of local residents (particularly in Deakin Leas). Indeed, many of the local residents objecting to the development have documented the occasions when gridlock has occurred within the street when people have tried to access the school or park close to it. Local residents are concerned that the proposed building would just make the existing problems worse for local residents were it to be used for extra-curricular activities as well as the existing buildings.
- 6.16 Increasing the amount of on-site car parking is part of the answer to the historic and ongoing traffic problems that exist in Deakin Leas. The school has also acknowledged that it needs to improve its relationship with local residents. This will take time but the school has stated that it also wishes to better manage how traffic gets into and out of the site when events are held outside of normal school hours and attract large numbers of cars (such as parent consultation evenings, open evenings or when different clubs use the school buildings at the same time).
- 6.17 The school intends to review its agreements with outside bodies to try to avoid them occurring at the same times/days of the week and to ensure that outside clubs do not use the site when evening school events that are likely to attract large amounts of car traffic are planned as well.
- 6.18 The school also intends to make use of the netball courts for additional temporary car parking for evening events when the need arises, again in an attempt to provide better management of the traffic that the school premises generates. The school also intends to advise car drivers leaving the site to turn left into Deakin Leas only to reduce the amount of two way traffic between the school's main entrance and the junction of Deakin Leas with Pembury Road. This is to be overseen by parking attendants during busier events.

- 6.19 The school has also submitted a Travel Plan in which it would seek to promote walking, cycling and car sharing in order to reduce the amount of individual car journeys to the school (both in respect of its day time use and extra-curricular activities). The plan refers to the fact that it will be reviewed on a yearly basis, which tallies with the advice from the Highway Authority.
- 6.20 It is apparent that the school is keen to improve its relationship with and reduce the impacts of its activities upon local residents. It would, of course, be naïve to say that all of the measures put forward in this submission by the school will solve all of the existing problems experienced by local residents. However, the provision of car parking to a level that now meets the adopted standards and management of the traffic and of different groups using the site should prevent the situation getting worse. In so far as the current application for the sixth form building is concerned, I am satisfied that its use by the school and other groups outside school hours would not cause such additional harm to the amenities of local residents that would warrant a recommendation to refuse permission.
- 6.21 There is a large amount of support for this application from a number of people, although very few of them live close to the school itself. It must also be remembered that the Government supports the expansion of public funded schools. A ministerial statement issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Secretary of State for Education, sets out the following principles that need to be applied:
- There should be a presumption in favour of the development of state funded schools as expressed in the NPPF.
 - Local authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling the development of state funded schools in their planning decisions.
 - Local authorities should make full use of their planning powers to support state funded school applications.
- 6.22 In conclusion, there is Governmental and development plan policy support for the proposed building. The concerns of local residents are well founded in terms of how the school currently impacts upon the local residents but the school is seeking to redress the existing problems. The provision of additional car parking within the school, together with changes to the school's policies concerning the use of its facilities are such that the proposed building is unlikely to cause significant additional harm to highway safety or the amenities of local residents. Consequently, I consider that the current proposal is now acceptable in planning terms and therefore recommend that permission be granted.

7. Recommendation:

- 7.1 **Grant Planning Permission** in accordance with the following submitted details: Planning Statement dated 14.02.2014, Ecological Survey dated 14.02.2014, Desk Study Assessment PHASE 1 A dated 14.02.2014, Topographical Survey G01-004 PLO dated 14.02.2014, Sections G04-500 PLO dated 14.02.2014, Design and Access Statement dated 20.05.2014, Other Drainage Strategy dated 20.05.2014, Assessment Arboricultural dated 20.05.2014, Existing Site Plan G01-001 PL1 dated 15.05.2014, Block Plan G01-003 PL1 dated 15.05.2014, Site Plan G06-001 PL3 dated 15.05.2014, Landscaping G06-003 PL1 dated 15.05.2014, Floor Plan G07-001 PL1 dated 15.05.2014, Floor Plan G07-002 PL1 dated 15.05.2014, Roof Plan G07-004 PL1 dated 15.05.2014, Elevations G08-004 PL2 dated 15.05.2014, Sections G09-001 PL1 dated 16.05.2014, Transport Statement dated 15.05.2014, Travel Plan dated 15.05.2014, Letter dated 15.05.2014, Letter dated 15.05.2014, 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 of all materials to be used externally have been approved by the Local Planning Authority. In order to seek such approval, written details and photographs of the materials (preferably in digital format) shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and samples of the materials shall be made available at the site for inspection by officers of the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

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

3. The scheme of landscaping and boundary treatment shown on the approved plans shall be carried out in the first planting season following occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the earlier. Any trees or plants which within 10 years of planting are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

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.

4. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in such a manner as to avoid damage to the existing trees, including their root system, or other planting to be retained as part of the landscaping scheme by observing the following:
- (a) All trees to be preserved shall be marked on site and protected during any operation on site by a fence erected at 0.5 metres beyond the canopy spread (or as otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority).
 - (b) No fires shall be lit within the spread of the branches of the trees.
 - (c) No materials or equipment shall be stored within the spread of the branches of the trees.
 - (d) Any damage to trees shall be made good with a coating of fungicidal sealant.
 - (e) No roots over 50mm diameter shall be cut and unless expressly authorised by this permission no buildings, roads or other engineering operations shall be constructed or carried out within the spread of the branches of the trees.
 - (f) Ground levels within the spread of the branches of the trees shall not be raised or lowered in relation to the existing ground level, except as may be otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

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

5. 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.

6. 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 east (rear) or south (flank) elevations 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 amenity and privacy of adjoining property.

7. The measures set out in sections 5 (Travel Plan Measures) and 8 (Monitoring and Review) of the approved Travel Plan ref: 886/5443 shall be undertaken prior to the first occupation of the building hereby approved and shall be adhered to at all times thereafter.

Reason: In in the interest of highway safety and residential amenity.

8. No development shall be commenced until:

(a) a site investigation has been undertaken to determine the nature and extent of any contamination, and

(b) the results of the investigation, together with an assessment by a competent person and details of a scheme to contain, treat or remove any contamination, as appropriate, have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The assessment and scheme shall have regard to the need to ensure that contaminants do not escape from the site to cause air and water pollution or pollution of adjoining land.

The scheme submitted pursuant to (b) shall include details of arrangements for responding to any discovery of unforeseen contamination during the undertaking of the development hereby permitted. Such arrangements shall include a requirement to notify the Local Planning Authority of the presence of any such unforeseen contamination.

Prior to the first occupation of the development or any part of the development hereby permitted

(c) the approved remediation scheme shall be fully implemented insofar as it relates to that part of the development which is to be occupied, and

(d) a Certificate shall be provided to the Local Planning Authority by a responsible person stating that remediation has been completed and the site is suitable for the permitted end use.

Thereafter, no works shall take place within the site such as to prejudice the effectiveness of the approved scheme of remediation.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and public safety.

9 No external lighting shall be erected on the building unless details of the external lighting have been agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of the character and amenity of the locality.

Informatives

1. The applicant is advised to register the Travel Plan with Kent County Council's School Travel Plan Advisor.
2. The applicant is advised to limit the hours of work during the construction phase to between 08:00 - 18:00 Mondays to Fridays, 08:00 - 13:00 Saturdays with no working on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays.

Contact: Matthew Broome