

APPLICATION: MA/10/0323 Date: 19 February 2010 Received: 29 April 2010

APPLICANT: Mr Mark Beaman, KCC 14 - 24 INNOVATION UNIT

LOCATION: SENACRE COMMUNITY HALL, TITCHFIELD ROAD, MAIDSTONE,
KENT, ME15 8FX

PARISH: Otham

PROPOSAL: Erection of a two storey extension to the west elevation and a single storey extension to the north elevation in accordance with the design and access statement, and plans numbered 08142/PLA/06; 08142/PLA/02; 08142/PLA/03; 08142/PLA/04; 08142/PLAS/05; 08142/PLA/07; 08142/PLA/08; 08142/PLA/09; 08142/PLA/10; 08142/PLA/11; 08142/EX/003; 08142/EX/004; 08142/EX/005; 08142/EX/006 as received on the 23 February 2010 and site layout plan numbered 08142/EX/001 received on the 29 April 2010.

AGENDA DATE: 20th May 2010

CASE OFFICER: Chris Hawkins

The recommendation for this application is being reported to Committee for decision because:

- The Borough Council own the land

POLICIES

Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000: CF1, T13
South East Plan 2009: CC4, BE1, T4
Village Design Statement: N/A
Government Policy: PPS1, PPG13

HISTORY

MA/92/0793 Land between Titchfield Road & Gore Court Road, Otham. Erection of new Senacre Community Hall and sports changing facilities. Approved.

MA/89/2236 Land between Titchfield Road & Gore Court Road, Otham. Community Sports Centre. Approved.

1.0 CONSULTATIONS

1.1 Kent Highway Services were consulted and raised no objections to this proposal.

2.0 REPRESENTATIONS

2.1.1 **Cllr D Marchant** was notified and made the following comments: -

2.1.2 'As the Ward Member I am delighted that this project is now reached the official planning stage. There is no question in my mind that this is a great improvement on the original and will enhance the facilities locally.

2.1.3 I have been copied in by the Parish Clerk on their reply to the consultation. At the Parish Council meeting the plans were quickly looked at before being passed to a sub-committee for more detailed study. The site plan was immediately commented on.

2.1.4 It was noted that the eastern boundary was not, as might have been expected, the boundary of the playing field, which is surely part of the whole site, but merely delineates the curtilage of the building.

2.1.5 This is a very important issue. There have been serious incursions onto the playing fields by motorcycles as well as pedestrians from Gore Court Road. You will not be aware that our ASB team joined me in a detailed discussion with the police area commander, the rural inspector and others in January. One of the specific areas that the police asked us to take forward to the borough was the need for more robust fencing along this road, and they especially asked for the present gap to be closed. Any access, pedestrian or otherwise along that boundary is very dangerous. Had this been an ordinary commercial developer I would have asked for a section 102 (?) contribution to enhancing the security of this site.

2.1.6 I am not certain who the lead officer from the Borough is on this project. Perhaps you could find out, and bring forward the well founded concerns of residents and police to that department before we are faced with a fait accompli.'

2.1.7 ***Officer comment:** My view is that it is not be appropriate to request that a new fence be erected along the eastern boundary through this planning application. Planning gain can only be requested when it can be clearly demonstrated that its necessity is brought about by the impact of the proposal. This appears to be an existing problem that would not be exacerbated by the proposed changes to the community centre, with the proposal not considered likely to make problems of anti-social behaviour

any worse. I have however, made the applicant aware of the concerns raised, so that they may address this issue separately.

2.2 Neighbouring properties were notified and 5 letters of objection have been received. The concerns raised within these letters are summarised below: -

- The proposal would result in a loss of light to neighbouring occupiers;
- There would be a loss of outlook to neighbouring occupiers;
- There would be an increase in noise and disturbance to neighbouring occupiers;
- Concern about security to the neighbouring occupiers;
- Smells – in particular smokers being located outside of the entrance;
- Increased traffic and parking problems around the site;
- Problems with litter outside of the site.

3.0 CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Site Description

3.1.1 The application site is located within the urban area of Maidstone, adjacent to open countryside. The site lies to the north and east of Gore Court Road, and is approximately 500metres north of the A274. To the south of the building are football pitches which are well used at weekends.

3.1.2 To the north of the building are residential properties within Goodwood Close, which are two storey dwellings. These properties have gardens of approximately 7-9metres in depth. There is a 1.8metre high boundary fence running to the rear of these properties.

3.1.3 To the west of the application site is the existing car park, with residential properties beyond. These residential properties would be over 30metres away from the extended community centre when completed.

3.1.2 The site currently contains a community centre, which also has a children's nursery attached. I have been informed that at present the community centre is under-used, with the halls not utilised on a regular basis.

3.2 Proposal

3.2.1 The proposal is for the extension and refurbishment of the existing community facility. There would be two distinct extensions to the property, one on the northern side and one to the front (west).

3.2.2 The side extension would accommodate a children's nursery (and improvement on the existing facilities). This would also include a play area to the side of the

nursery (this would have a length of 20.7metres) and would run from the side of the building to the boundary fence (a distance of between 4metres and 13metres). The nursery would have a separate entrance, but would also be linked into the main building, to ensure that there is suitable security on site. This extension would have mono-pitched roof, which would run down to form a valley gutter with the eaves of the existing building. It would have a length of 20.7metres, a width of 6.5metres, and a maximum height of 4.5metres. The extension would be clad in metallic panels, with the end panels being provided with a colourful 'leaf' design. The panels facing the residential properties would be a more subdued grey colour to reflect that used on the main building.

3.2.3 The extension to the front of the building would allow for a greater amount of facilities to be provided internally, including a community café. This extension would follow the form of the existing building, and would have a maximum depth of 15metres, a width of 17.6metres, and a maximum height of 9metres (as per the existing building). This building would be finished with metal cladding, with the recessed entrance point finished in a different colour (green). Applied lettering upon the front elevation would be provided. This extension would have one large window on the front elevation (which would be projecting) as well as ground floor level windows on either side. The detailing of these windows would be simple, reflecting the form of the existing building.

3.2.4 The building would be used for a number of different purposes, one being to provide vocational training to young people from the area. Similar schemes exist in Kent and have proved to be successful in providing training in particular trades, which would not be possible to provide within existing schools. As this is a community centre, it is important to ensure that the building is retained for 'community use'. As such, it is proposed to provide a café within the building, which can be used by all, and for there to be sports facilities for the local youth club, and evening classes will also be run. This will hopefully see the building used by a significantly larger portion of the community than at present, and by a wide age group – ranging from small children at the nursery, to elderly people taking advantage of evening classes.

3.2.5 43 car parking spaces are to be retained to the front of the building.

3.3 Principle of Development

3.3.1 The proposal is to extend the community facility, and would involve the improvement of facilities within the building. There would be no facility lost as a result of this proposal, and as such, I consider the principle of development acceptable subject to all other material consideration being met.

3.4 Visual Amenity

- 3.4.1 The proposal would see the extension of the existing community centre both to the front, and to the side (nearest the residential properties). The extension to the front of the building would follow the ridge and eaves line of the existing community hall. This extension would be of a different material to the community centre, as it would be clad (with graffiti proof material) and finished in a metallic colour. I consider that this would respect the original, simple form of the existing building, with the change in material denoting the new element of the building. I do not consider the brickwork of the existing building to be such quality as to warrant replication in this instance.
- 3.4.2 The side extension would have a mono-pitch roof which would adjoin the eaves of the existing building. This element would be clad in the same material, with the exception of the two end elevations, which would have a more colourful 'leaf' pattern. Again, I consider that these extensions are sympathetic to the host building, whilst not simply replicating what is currently on site.
- 3.4.3 Windows are shown to be both recessed, and to project from the building, giving a good level of depth to the elevations, and providing interest. I am of the opinion that the existing building does little to enhance the area's character, but the proposal would see a greater variety of materials used, as well as a more varied roofslope, which would give the building more interest. To the front of the building would be a first floor overhang which would also give the building a more layered appearance. These changes to what is currently a rather straightforward building would add significantly more interest, and as such I consider that these changes to the building must be seen as a progressive step to the overall appearance of the locality.
- 3.4.4 The proposal seeks to encourage the use of the outside space, with a children's play area, and a small garden proposed. This would not require the benefit of planning permission, but in any event, this would not detract from the character of the area.
- 3.4.5 Therefore I consider that the changes proposed would have a positive impact upon both the appearance of the building, as well as the wider area, as not only would the building be used to a greater extent – and as therefore appear more active – but the well considered additions to the buildings, together with the materials used would ensure that the community centre would be a better designed building. I therefore conclude that the proposal complies with the policies within the Development Plan and PPS1.

3.5 Residential Amenity

- 3.5.1 Concern has been raised by neighbouring occupiers with regard to impact upon the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers, adjacent to the community centre. Through an extensive public consultation process, it has been agreed to push the

side extension as far back into the site as possible, so as to reduce the impact, particularly in terms of overshadowing.

- 3.5.2 The extension would be a minimum of 12.5metres from the rear of the nearest residential property (3metres from the boundary with this property) being 8 Goodwood Close. At the point, the extension would be single storey with a maximum height of 4.5metres. I do not consider that this element of the proposal would result in any significant overshadowing, or the creation of a sense of enclosure to the occupiers of this property (or any other neighbouring properties) by virtue of this distance, and relatively small scale.
- 3.5.3 Whilst the side extension would have side facing windows which would face on to the rear boundaries of properties within Goodwood Close, these would be single storey only, and as such, would not result in direct overlooking, due to the height of the existing boundary fencing.
- 3.5.4 With regards to the front extension to the community centre, this would follow the form of the existing building. As this building has low eaves (2.8metres) along the boundary with the residential properties, I do not consider that this would have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers, in terms of overshadowing, or the creation of a sense of enclosure. There would be no side facing windows on this extension that would be above ground floor level, and as such, there would be no overlooking to neighbouring occupiers.
- 3.5.5 Neighbouring occupiers have raised concerns about noise and disturbance and increased smells. Whilst the community centre would be used to a greater extent than at present, I do not consider that this would result in an unacceptable impact upon the nearby residents in this respect. The building has been designed in such a way to ensure that the noisiest activities (i.e. sports use and vocational training) would be located on the southern side, away from the residents. Whilst children from the nursery playing outside would generate noise, I do not consider this to be unacceptable, and would also occur during the day, not during the late evening. With regards to smells, I do not consider that this would be unacceptable, as any odours would dissipate into the open air.
- 3.5.6 With regards to security, the building has been designed with a mono-pitched roof, to prevent this being used to access the rear gardens of neighbouring properties. In any event, there is a 3metre gap between the extension and the boundary.
- 3.5.6 I therefore consider that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact upon the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers.

3.6 Highways

3.6.1 The proposal would now see the loss of five of the existing parking spaces to the front of the building. However, there would still be 43 spaces provided for this community centre, which is considered to be sufficient. The additional uses of the building will generate more demand for parking at the site, however, the numbers provided are considered sufficient for such a use. In any event, should parking overspill on to the neighbouring roads, as the route to the site is not a main thoroughfare, I do not consider that this would give rise to any highway safety concerns.

3.6.2 It is on this basis that I consider the proposal to be acceptable in terms of highway safety, and as such, comply with the requirements of national guidance (PPG13) and the Development Plan.

3.7 Other Matters

3.7.1 The proposal would not see the loss of any existing sports pitches. As set out above, the property would retain the internal changing facilities for these pitches which will enable their continued use. The pitches would also remain, and as such there would be no detrimental impact upon these facilities.

4.0 Conclusion

4.0.1 I consider the proposal would be an improvement in the facilities available for local residents, and would also provide additional vocational training facilities for local schools. Furthermore, the proposal would improve the appearance of the existing property, and would not detrimentally impact upon the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers. I therefore conclude that the proposal is in accordance with the policies within the Development Plan, and would be a positive addition to the community facilities within the locality. It is on this basis that I recommend that Members give this application favourable consideration, and grant planning permission subject to the imposition of the conditions as set out below.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:

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

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development shall not commence until, written details and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the development shall be constructed using the approved materials;

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development in accordance with PPS1.

3. No development shall take place until precise details of the boundary treatments within the application site have been submitted to the Local Planning Authority and agreed in writing.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity in accordance with PPS1.

The proposed development, subject to the conditions stated, is considered to comply with the policies of the Development Plan (Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000 and South East Plan 2009) and there are no overriding material considerations to indicate a refusal of planning consent.