

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

RPC SUB-GROUP – STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

Date: 25 February 2008

Subject: Planning application consultation ref A/08/011

Site Address:	St John's Catholic Comprehensive School, Rochester Road, Gravesend, Kent
Proposal:	Full application for construction of new two storey school building, an extended multi-use games area, associated car parking and landscaping and demolition of all existing secondary school buildings.
Local Planning Authority:	Kent County Council
Applicant:	Land Securities Trillium and Kent County Council Children, Families and Education
Date consultation issued:	7 February 2008

Report of: **Regional Planner**

Recommendation:

The South East England Regional Assembly makes the following observations:

- On the basis of the information provided, it is considered that the proposed development would not materially conflict with or prejudice the implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG9 and Alterations) or the draft South East Plan (March 2006).
- The county council should use appropriately worded conditions and/or legal agreements to:
 - Secure an appropriate package of transport infrastructure and other measures to promote alternatives to the car and an agreed travel plan in accordance with Policies T1, T10 and T13 of RPG9 and Policies T1, T5 and T8 of the draft South East Plan and to satisfy Policy CC5 of the draft South East Plan;
 - Secure an appropriate level of car and cycle parking to comply with Policy T12 of RPG9 and Policy T7 of the draft South East Plan;
 - Secure the incorporation of water and energy efficiency measures and the promotion of renewable energy and sustainable construction in accordance with Policies INF2 and INF4 of RPG9 (as altered) and Policies CC2, CC3, CC4, NRMI, EN1, EN2, W2 and M1 of the draft South East Plan;

- Secure a design relevant to context that promotes a high quality of environment consistent with Policy Q2 of RPG9 and Policies CC12 and BE1 of the draft South East Plan;
 - Secure an appropriate package of measures to prevent and mitigate against air and noise pollution in accordance with Policy E7 of RPG9 and Policies NRM7 and NRM8 of the draft South East Plan;
 - Ensure the incorporation of appropriate mitigation measures in relation to flood risk management and impacts on groundwater and rivers, such as sustainable drainage systems and other measures, in accordance with Policies NRM1 and NRM3 of the draft South East Plan;
 - Ensure an appropriate package of protection and mitigation measures to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the site and surrounding area in accordance with Policy E2 of RPG9 and Policy NRM4 of the draft South East Plan.
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to assess the proposed development against the Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG9 plus Alterations) and the draft South East Plan (March 2006) and set out the recommended consultation response for consideration and agreement.

2. Site Description and Background

- 2.1 The application site comprises some 6.0 ha and forms part of St John's Catholic Comprehensive School and St John's Catholic Primary School and playing fields. It is situated in the Denton residential area of Gravesend, approximately 800 m south of the River Thames and bounded by Rochester Road to the north, a track serving the back gardens and garages of houses on Abbey Road to the east, Old Road East to the south and Pine Avenue to the west. The site is surrounded by housing and the Gravesend Grammar School for Boys, which adjoins it to the north-west. There is a vehicular and pedestrian access to the site from Rochester Road and a pedestrian entrance off Old East Road.
- 2.2 The existing school buildings, dating from the 1960s and 1970s together with some mobile classrooms, are located along the site's western boundary. To the east of these are a multi-use games area (MUGA) and playing fields and there are tennis courts in the south-western corner. The north-east corner of the site has been identified by the Environment Agency as being at risk from flooding.

2.3 A site location plan is attached at Appendix I to this report.

3. Details of the proposal

3.1 This proposal is to rebuild the school as part of the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme and to promote community use both of the buildings and through enhancing the provision of sports field facilities at the school. The application seeks full planning permission to redevelop the site for education purposes, demolishing the existing school buildings and constructing a new school on the southern part of the site. No development is proposed in the area at risk from flooding.

3.2 The planning application is accompanied by several supporting documents including a Design and Access Statement.

4. Main Issues and Relevant Policy Considerations

4.1 The following are the main regional issues associated with the application, along with the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy policies that need to be considered:

- The location of the proposal, with the following policies being relevant :
 - Policy Q1 of RPG9 and Policy CC8a of the draft South East Plan – urban focus;
- Education and community facilities, with the following being relevant:
 - Policy Q6 of RPG9 and Policies S5, S6 and S7 of the draft South East Plan – education and skills, higher education and sports facilities;
- Traffic and transport, with the following policies being relevant:
 - Policies T1, T10, T12 and T13 of RPG9 and Policies T1, T5, T7 and T8 of the draft South East Plan– mobility management, parking and travel plans.
- Green grid networks, with the following policies being relevant:
 - Policies NRM4 and KTG10 of the draft South East Plan – green initiatives.

5. Policy Assessment

Location of Development

- 5.1 Policy Q1 of RPG9 and Policy CC8a of the draft South East Plan look to urban areas as the prime focus for new development and redevelopment and Policies S5, S6 and S7 of the draft South East Plan seek to ensure adequate educational provision, including mixed use approaches on education sites and sporting infrastructure. The proposed development is on an existing school site in the Gravesend urban area. It seeks to enhance educational and sports pitch provision and promote community use of the school facilities. Therefore, the principle of development associated with this proposal is consistent with the draft South East Plan.
- 5.2 The land surrounding the current buildings is identified in the deposit version Gravesham Local Plan Second Review as 'Green Grid'; part of a framework of green spaces, areas of open land and green corridors important for landscape and visual quality, ecological and wildlife value, access and recreation in Kent Thames-side. Although the green grid is not referred to in the saved Local Plan policies, which relate to the adopted Local Plan First Review (1994), Policy NRM4 of the draft South East Plan seeks to maintain and establish accessible green networks and open green space in urban areas and Policy KTG10 seeks provision for green grid networks, recreation and public access. The scheme proposes to retain and extend the existing playing field area after demolition of the existing school and promote the community use of the sports facilities. Thus it supports regional policy and green grid objectives.

Transport

- 5.3 Policy T1 of the Regional Transport Strategy (RPG9 as altered) and Policy T1 of the draft South East Plan seek to achieve a rebalancing of the transport system in favour of non-car modes as a means of access to services and facilities. Policy T10 of the RTS and Policy T5 of the draft South East Plan indicate that this should be through an integrated package of measures. Policy T12 of RPG9 (as altered) and Policy T7 of the draft South East Plan relate to parking and support maximum parking standards and the provision of sufficient cycle parking at new developments. Policy T13 of RPG9 (as altered) and Policy T8 of the draft South East Plan relate to travel plans and advice.
- 5.4 The school's travel plan, dated 2004, is provided as supplementary information with the application. This indicates that some 44% of students travelled to school by car and that a fourth school coach was being planned. The increase in community use of the facilities envisaged could result in an increase in visitors to the site. Therefore, consideration should be given to updating the travel plan to discourage travel by private car.

- 5.5 To ensure that the development contributes to the rebalancing of the transport system in favour of non-car modes, the county council will need to ensure that an appropriate package of measures is committed to, and in place including covered cycle storage facilities and an up to date, agreed travel plan that sets out arrangements to promote alternatives to the car.

Other Matters

- 5.6 In addition to the above, there are a number of priorities arising out of RPG9 and the draft South East Plan which can be dealt with by way of condition or legal agreement. These relate to the following policy areas:

- Infrastructure
- Water resources and flooding
- Air and noise
- Natural environment
- Sustainable construction and energy efficiency

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The rebuilding of the school on this existing educational site in the urban area and the extension of the playing fields and promotion of community use of the school facilities is consistent with regional policy objectives. The county council will need to be satisfied that the design of the scheme fully addresses water efficiency, energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable construction. An appropriate package of transport infrastructure and an up to date agreed travel plan will need to be secured.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 Members are requested to agree the following recommendation to the local authority:-

The South East England Regional Assembly makes the following observations:

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- The county council should use appropriately worded conditions and/or legal agreements to:
 - Secure an appropriate package of transport infrastructure and other measures to promote alternatives to the car and an up to date agreed travel plan in accordance with Policies T1, T10 and T13 of RPG9 and Policies T1, T5 and T8 of the draft South East Plan and to satisfy Policy CC5 of the draft South East Plan;
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 - Secure a design relevant to context that promotes a high quality of environment consistent with Policy Q2 of RPG9 and Policies CC12 and BE1 of the draft South East Plan;
 - Secure an appropriate package of measures to prevent and mitigate against air and noise pollution in accordance with Policy E7 of RPG9 and Policies NRM7 and NRM8 of the draft South East Plan;
 - Ensure the incorporation of appropriate mitigation measures in relation to flood risk management and impacts on groundwater and rivers, such as sustainable drainage systems and other measures, in accordance with Policies NRM1 and NRM3 of the draft South East Plan;
 - Ensure an appropriate package of protection and mitigation measures to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the site and surrounding area in accordance with Policy E2 of RPG9 and Policy NRM4 of the draft South East Plan.

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Date: 25 February 2008

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