

# The Canterbury Society

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Kent County Council  
Planning Applications Group  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor Invicta House  
County Hall  
Maidstone  
Kent ME14 1XX

10 June 2012

Dear Sir or Madam

**Re: Planning Application No: KCC/CA/0133/2012**

*Partial demolition of building known as AEC (Adult Education Centre), new 2 storey building within retained facade of AEC, new link to existing Primary School, minor demolition to part of wc on rear elevation of existing Primary School, and associated landscaping and external works at St John's Primary School, St John's Place, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1BD*

I am contacting you as Chairman of the Canterbury Society, the premier amenity society in Canterbury which was first formed in 1961 and re-constituted in 2008

I refer to the above proposal that was discussed by the Canterbury Society at their Committee meeting on Wednesday, 23 May 2012.

Please could you ensure that these comments are reported to the County Development Control Committee to ensure that our views are made known to them.

This is a proposal connected with the impending move of the Diocesan and Payne Smith School from its old school site in Broad Street to a joint campus at Kingsmead School. There are four elements to the proposal:

1. The demolition of the former Adult Education Centre, retaining only some parts of the three external walls, and three of the seven feature gables;
2. The erection of a new two storey classroom block within the retained shell;
3. The construction of a new two storey block linking the proposed school to the main Kingsmead School building with a joint foyer entrance; and
4. Areas of landscaping to the front (NE) and rear (SW) of the school, involving the demolition of various boundary walls.

Both Kingsmead School and the former Adult Education Centre (AEC) are fine works of late Victorian architecture in the Queen Anne revival style, better described by Osbert Lancaster as "*Pont Street Dutch*".

The former AEC is confidently detailed using quality materials, a Canterbury soft red brick, with Portland stone dressings, under a range of steeply pitched Kent peg tile roofs.

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The overall design is very characterful with its multi-pitched tiled roofs terminated by seven Dutch style gables with segmental stone dressings and with the entrances marked by generous semi-circular hood canopies also in stone.

The traditional design, detailing and roofscape, we consider are an ornament to the Conservation Area, which we understand was extended to specifically include both the AEC and the main school buildings in the mid-1990's.

The proposal is to demolish the majority of the building, retaining only three sides of the façade and only three of the seven gables. Within this shell is proposed a two storey flat roofed box, finished in white render with large plain grey aluminium windows. All the original white painted window and door joinery within the retained facade is shown to be removed and replaced with aluminium glazing.

Around the building, the proposed landscaping involves demolition of the ancient flint walls of an historic former orchard plot to the rear of the school, (currently containing the swimming pool) and the boundary wall and pedestrian gate at the end of St John's Lane.

The Canterbury Society has considered the plans in detail and wishes to object to both the proposed demolition works and the design of the new buildings for the following reasons.

- The existing building is a high quality, traditionally designed building using traditional local materials and as such, contributes significantly to the character of the Conservation Area.
- The proposal building is designed in a modern style in white render with a flat roof. We consider that this design will be out of character with the Conservation Area and the existing school buildings.
- We are also concerned about the design of the new link building and consider the architectural design to be inappropriate in the context of Kingsmead School and suggest that if the school wishes to create a joint foyer, then this should be done more elegantly using frameless glazing, similar to the recent extension to the old Payne Smith school.
- The design does not follow the Design Recommendations contained within the Canterbury Local Plan and would appear a strident intervention in what is otherwise an attractive traditional townscape of pitched roof buildings in local materials.
- The proposal to retain only part of the façade (with only three gables of the seven existing retained) applied to the face of the new white box building set within it, will appear ridiculous and will rob the building of its existing coherence.
- As such, the demolition proposal will fail to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area and thus fails the test required by national guidelines and planning case law
- The ancient flint boundary walls to the rear of the school define a historic orchard plot and the line shows how St Radigunds Place used to extend right up to the gates of the Kingsmead School, which we also feel should be retained in their entirety, as such their demolition runs contrary to the guidance in the Local Plan requiring the retention of historic plot boundaries.
- The demolition of the front boundary wall and gateway to St John's Place will destroy the sense of enclosure at the end of the street, created by this wall, in an area that has already suffered by the unfortunate removal of other historic features in the past. We feel that, instead, these features removed without consent over about the last 20years should instead be re-instated as part of the project

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- Both these walls should require specific Conservation Area Consent for their demolition (due to their height adjacent to the highway) and the Society considers that their demolition is detrimental to the Conservation Area and should be resisted.

In addition, the Society is also concerned about the proposal to block the current pedestrian route between the end of St Radigunds Place and St John's Lane. This is a well used route which we understand to be invaluable to local residents as a shortcut out to the riverside walk and into Northgate. We appreciate that this is not a public right of way, but as this route has been available ever since the school was built in 1903, then we consider it should not now be stopped up.

The Canterbury Society is generally supportive of the idea to move the Diocesan and Payne Smith School to this site, but feels that the damaging impact of these proposals outweighs the benefits of so doing. The Committee therefore suggests that, instead, the school authorities should think again and consider an alternative way of forming the new accommodation that they require and suggests that they erect a wholly new building on the opposite side of the entrance from St John's Place, in the NE corner of the site, next to the former chapel instead. This would leave the former AEC available for another separate use, yet to be determined.

This strategy would have the advantage of making the new building a far simpler building to construct, whilst also retaining the asset that the AEC represents for future use, rather than destroying it to make way for the new school.

We therefore urge the County Planning Committee to refuse this application, due to its adverse impact on the Conservation Area.

Yours faithfully

**Professor Jan Pahl CBE**  
**Chair**