

West Area Planning Committee

13th December 2016

Application Number: 16/01725/FUL

Decision Due by: 20th December 2016

Proposal: Application advice for the demolition of existing school hall. Construction of a new hall, library and teaching accommodation and associated landscape works and alterations to a listed building.

Site Address: St Edward's School Woodstock Road Oxford

Ward:

Agent: TSH Architects

Applicant: The Governors of St Edwards School

Recommendation:

West Area Planning Committee is recommended to grant planning permission for the following reasons:

1. The Council considers that the proposal accords with the policies of the development plan as summarised below. It has taken into consideration all other material matters, including matters raised in response to consultation and publicity. In reaching a decision to grant planning permission, the Council has carefully considered all objections raised and the impact of the proposed development on listed buildings and their setting. Any material harm that the development would otherwise give rise to can be offset by the conditions imposed.

Conditions

1. Development begun within time limit
2. Develop in accordance with approved plans
3. Materials
4. Construction Traffic Management Plan
5. Swept Path Analysis
6. Parking and Turning Space
7. Flooding and surface water drainage
8. SUDs Maintenance
9. Implementation of drainage
10. Archaeology
11. Bats

12. Biodiversity enhancements
13. Landscape plan required
14. Landscape carry out by completion
15. Landscape underground services - tree roots
16. Tree Protection Plan (TPP) 1
17. Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) 1
18. Top soil
19. Unexpected Contamination
20. External lighting
21. Noise and Sound Amplification
22. Noise and Hours of Operation
23. Energy requirements

Legal Agreement and CIL

No legal agreement would be required but a CIL contribution would be required if planning permission is granted.

Main Local Plan Policies

Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016

- CP1** - Development Proposals
- CP6** - Efficient Use of Land & Density
- CP8** - Design Development to Relate to its Context
- CP10** - Siting Development to Meet Functional Needs
- CP11** - Landscape Design
- CP13** - Accessibility
- CP19** - Nuisance
- CP20** - Lighting
- CP21** - Noise
- HE3** – Listed Buildings and their Setting
- TR3** - Car Parking Standards
- TR4** - Pedestrian & Cycle Facilities

Core Strategy

- CS2_** - Previously developed and greenfield land
- CS9_** - Energy and natural resources
- CS10_** - Waste and recycling
- CS11_** - Flooding
- CS12_** - Biodiversity
- CS17_** - Infrastructure and developer contributions
- CS18_** - Urban design, town character, historic environment
- CS19_** - Community safety

Sites and Housing Plan

- HP9_** - Design, Character and Context
- HP14_** - Privacy and Daylight

Other Planning Documents

National Planning Policy Framework

Relevant Site History

None

Statutory and Internal Consultees

Oxfordshire County Council Highways

No objections subject to conditions relating to the submission of a construction traffic management plan, swept path analysis, parking and turning space and drainage details.

Thames Water

No objections subject to a condition requiring the submission of a satisfactory drainage scheme to be approved prior to commencement.

Representations Received

29, 30, 31, 35, 38, 39, 44 Stratfield Road, Stanville Road (Cumnor) objections

- Impact on surrounding properties
- Light and disturbance
- Noise impact
- Lack of public consultation
- Overbearing impact (concerns about height of buildings proposed)
- Proximity of plant to neighbouring properties
- Unsuitable use of materials
- Impact on character of the area
- Overdevelopment of site
- Impact on trees and ecology
- Size and scale of development is unsuitable
- Lack of a drainage strategy
- Not sufficient information to assess proposals
- Development would alter appearance of quad
- Contamination (potential presence of asbestos)
- Impact on air quality
- Poor design
- Impact on infrastructure

NB. The comments listed above relate to both the public consultation on the originally submitted plans and the revised plans.

Site Description

1. The application site relates to the main St Edwards School site on the east side of Woodstock Road in North Oxford. The application site encompasses the existing library, 1970s hall building and an area of open space in front of other buildings on the school site (including Cowell's House, which is one of the main boarding houses for the school). St Edwards School is an independent boarding school with a current roll of around 670 pupils.
2. The St Edwards School site is centred around a central quad which is fronted by Victorian neo-gothic buildings. The buildings around the quad include the

main school building (Apsley House), a stone chapel, the library (the building is called 'Big School') and boarding houses ('Tilly's' and 'Macnamara's'). The south-east corner of the central quad is more open and leads into an area of open space which contains a number of mature trees. It is around this smaller area of open space that the application site is centred. Fronting this space is the main school hall, Cowell's House, a temporary teaching block and a work block which is also used for teaching.

3. The main school buildings that are centred around the quad date from 1873 to 1886 and some of these buildings are listed (Grade II), including the library ('Big School'). These buildings are all constructed from red brick and are typical of the neo-gothic style. The chapel is also Grade II Listed and is constructed from coarse ragstone (the large tower of the chapel is visible from nearby roads). The application site is not in a conservation area and many of the school buildings are not visible from nearby roads because of high walls surrounding the site (though some buildings are visible from nearby gardens).
4. At the rear of Big School is the school's main hall which dates from the 1970s. This building has a darker brick and has a flat roof.

Proposed Development

5. It is proposed to demolish the existing 1970s hall at the rear of Big School and erect a new multi-purpose auditorium and hall. This would have an oval form and would be sited away from the walls of Big School. The proposed hall would have a basement, ground floor seating and two additional tiers of seating with a control level above. Plant would be contained within the roof level of the building and changing rooms and additional circulation space would be provided at the basement level. Sections of the proposed hall show that it would have an overall height that would be similar to the adjacent Big School building.
6. The proposed hall would be constructed from Ashlar stone, pre-cast concrete, bronze aluminium cladding, zinc sheet roofing and aluminium windows and doors.
7. Adjacent to the proposed new hall and in the existing open space in front of Cowell's House it is proposed to erect an 'L-shaped' three storey building that would link into Big School (and form a continuation of the cloisters fronting the central quad). The western façade of this proposed building would face onto the quad and fill what is currently a gap that opens out into the area of open space fronting Cowell's House. This building would have a multi-purpose ground floor area (proposed to be a break out space from the hall, an area where refreshments could be served, a meeting room, exhibition and lecture space). The first floor would provide additional teaching and exam space and the second floor is proposed to be a new library.
8. The proposed new library would have an overall height to the ridge that would be similar to the existing Big School building (and higher than the adjacent proposed hall).

9. The proposed new library and teaching block would be constructed from red facing bricks to match Big School with pre-cast concrete elements, zinc sheet roofing and aluminium windows and doors. The plans for the new library and classroom building would have a façade finished in ashlar; the proportions and detailing of this façade which have been designed to complement existing gables in the main school quad.
10. It should be noted that in addition to creating new buildings within the application site the proposals would also provide new spaces around the buildings and circulation spaces in this part of the school site. Because the proposed new hall would be sited away from Big School it would create new circulation space behind Big School and out to the proposed new entrance at the south side of Big School. A new quad would be created out of the residual area of open space outside of the new library and teaching block. A courtyard area is proposed in front of Cowell's House and a new connection between the hall and the space in front of the school chapel would be created (into the memorial garden). The proposed new spaces and routes through the site are proposed to represent a significant improvement to the functioning of the school site.
11. It is proposed to remove the fire escape area at the rear of Big School and remove the mezzanine level from within the library at the upper floor of Big School (the internal changes do not require planning permission but do require listed building consent).
12. The proposals would involve the loss of existing trees on the site of the proposed new library and teaching block. Landscaping is proposed throughout the scheme; notably within the proposed new spaces between buildings to define these open areas and provide replacement planting for the trees that would be lost.
13. The principal determining issues of the application are:
 - Principle of development
 - Design and impact on Listed Buildings and their setting
 - Impact on Amenity
 - Car Parking and Access
 - Flooding and Surface Water Drainage
14. A separate application has been submitted that relates to Listed Building Consent of the proposed development (16/01727/LBC).

Officer Assessment

Principle of Development

15. The majority of land where development is proposed would be considered to be previously developed land. Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy (2011) together with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires

that previously developed land should be the focus of new development. The proposed development would also make more efficient use of existing land by providing more modern facilities on the school site and a higher density of development. By providing a more efficient use of land the development is supported in principle by Policy CP6 of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016. On this basis, Officers would suggest that in terms of the principle of development the proposals would be acceptable.

Design

Siting, External Appearance and Impact on Listed Buildings

16. The proposals have included significant justifications that relate to the siting of the buildings proposed, the form of the buildings, their height and external appearance. More specifically, the proposals seek to work from the original masterplan of the school and to enclose the corner of the central quad. The proposed library and classroom buildings would be sited in the existing open area in front of Cowell's House but would retain a courtyard in front of Cowells House and a smaller quad would be created in front of the new classroom block. Arguably the most striking feature of the proposed development would be the proposed façade of the library which would be sited prominently within the main quad. The proposed library emulates the form and proportions of other gables within the quad and the rhythm of detailing emulates the design features of neighbouring fenestration and detailing on the older school buildings. The proposed materials for the classroom and library building would incorporate some materials that match neighbouring buildings whilst also incorporating complementary materials (with the use of high quality materials such as ashlar for the façade of the library). Officers recommend that the proposed building would be acceptable in design terms as it considers both the context of neighbouring buildings and incorporates high quality contemporary design. Officers would also suggest that the proposed building would not detrimentally impact on the setting of adjacent listed buildings and would comply with the requirements of Policy HE3 of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016.
17. The replacement hall would represent a significant improvement having had regard to the existing building; which is both dated and does not meet the school's requirements. The proposed replacement building would be a flexible space that would enable different school functions to take place (as well as be large enough to accommodate the whole school). The building would be visible within the central quad but as a result of the high quality materials proposed for its external finish it would not be obtrusive or detract from the appearance of adjacent listed buildings (notably Big School). The replacement hall would be acceptable in design terms and represents high quality design.
18. The bulk of the proposed development would not be visible in the public realm (apart from glimpsed views from neighbouring roads, including Stratfield Road) and from some private rear gardens and dwellinghouses.

Officers therefore recommend that the proposed development would not have an impact on the streetscene.

Boundary Treatments

19. The application site is currently bordered by high walls which would reduce the visibility of the proposed development.

Landscaping and Trees

20. The proposed development would involve the loss of a substantial number of trees, particularly in the area where the proposed library and teaching block would be located. These trees are not protected nor are they visible in the public realm but they do contribute positively to the overall appearance of the site and to some extent they form part of the setting of adjacent listed buildings. A more formal and planned landscaping scheme is proposed with the application that would both define the new areas of open spaces created (notably outside of Cowell's House and the New Quad area in front of the classroom block). Officers recommend that in principle the proposed landscaping changes would be acceptable and would preserve the overall appearance of the site, complement the proposed new development and not detrimentally alter the setting of listed buildings.
21. Officers have recommended conditions relating to a landscape plan, the implementation of that plan, design of hard surfaces, underground services plan, tree protection plan and the submission of an arboricultural statement; these would all be required prior to commencement of work.

Energy and Plant

22. The application includes information relating to energy efficiency measures which include specific circulation of air within the proposed hall building. Plant areas would be concealed within the roof of that building and the proposed library and teaching block. It is proposed to install photovoltaic panels on the roof of Cowell's House to provide additional electricity for the new buildings and provide on-site generation. Officers recommend a condition is required to ensure that these energy efficiency measures and on-site generation are provided as specified.

Impact on Amenity

23. The application site is contained by surrounding buildings on the school site (notably the art and design block, Cowell's House, the language block and the work block). This, combined with the distance to the boundary would ensure that the buildings would not have an overbearing impact or an impact in terms of loss of privacy for surrounding residential occupiers. Following concerns raised by local residents, Officers have received an additional elevation plan which shows the proposed development as viewed from the rear of Stratfield Road; the proposed development would

be visible but would not have a harmful impact because of the distance between the proposed buildings and the neighbouring rear gardens. The proposed buildings would not be visible from Woodstock Road.

24. There is substantial distance between the proposed development and the nearest dwellinghouses in Stratfield and Oakthorpe Roads and South Parade which would ensure that the development would not give rise to a loss of light for neighbouring occupiers.
25. The proposed development would not have an increased impact in terms of noise and disturbance. The proposed hall would be contained (and therefore heated and air conditioned mechanically) in order to ensure that there would be no noise impact. Officers recommend that if planning permission is granted then a condition should be included to require details of external lighting prior to commencement. A condition is also recommended that would require no additional mechanical plant or noise amplification equipment could be installed on any part of the development without the prior written consent of the Council.
26. Concerns have been raised by neighbouring residents relating to increased noise and disturbance; principally in relation to the replacement hall. Officers recommend that a condition is included that relates to noise from the site; which would limit the noise between the hours of 11pm and 8am. The condition that is recommended would bring the noise restrictions from this part of the site in line with the North Wall Theatre on South Parade.

Access and Car Parking

27. There is currently access to the application site from the main vehicular access to the school on Woodstock Road. A one-way system is currently in place that takes vehicles to the back of the quad, this would be retained as part of the proposals with sufficient space and turning areas to enable vehicles to manoeuvre around the proposed buildings. The majority of vehicle movements on the site are to the car existing car park which is close to the entrance; there are presumably vehicle movements associated with the collection of pupils from boarding houses at the beginning and end of term but this is managed within the school site.
28. The highway authority has not raised objections subject to conditions if planning permission is approved; these have been included in the Officer recommendation.

Car Parking

29. Limited car parking is retained in front of Cowell's House (six spaces) and in front of Big School. The application states that it would result in the loss of five car parking spaces but there is ample parking on the other side of Woodstock Road on land owned by the school (and connected to the main school site by a private underpass).

Flooding and Surface Water Drainage

30. The application site does not lie in an area of high flood risk. There are limited details relating to surface water drainage provided with the application; though given the ample amount of space on the site it is considered that this could be dealt with by condition by requiring the submission of an acceptable scheme prior to commencement.
31. Thames Water have provided comments that recommend that if planning permission is granted then a condition should be included relating to the submission of a drainage strategy prior to the commencement of work.
32. On the basis of the above, Officers recommend that the development would comply with the requirements of Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy (2011) subject to a condition being included as recommended.

Archaeology

33. The application site is of interest in terms of archaeology; specifically in relation to both Roman and prehistoric remains. Officers recommend a condition is included that relates to the recording of any archaeology on the site and appropriate mitigation if any remains are found.

Contaminated Land

34. There are no objections in terms of the land quality impacts of the proposed development. However, if planning permission was granted it would be necessary to include conditions relating to the submission of details for topsoil and details if any unexpected contamination is found.

Biodiversity

35. It is not considered that there would be an impact on protected species as a result of the proposed development. If planning permission was granted then mitigation measures and a condition relating to protected species would be required.

Natural Resources Impact Assessment (NRIA)

36. The application would involve the net addition of over 2000 square metres of non-residential floorspace; it is necessary for the development to be considered in the context of a Natural Resources Impact Assessment (NRIA) and the requirements of Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy. Officers have reviewed the submission provided with the application which includes the appropriate checklist and recommend that this is acceptable for the purposes of NRIA.

Conclusion:

37. On the basis of the above and for the reasons outlined in this report, Officers recommend that the West Area Planning Committee grant planning permission subject to the conditions included.

Human Rights Act 1998

Officers have considered the Human Rights Act 1998 in reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission, subject to conditions. Officers have considered the potential interference with the rights of the owners/occupiers of surrounding properties under Article 8 and/or Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Act and consider that it is proportionate.

Officers have also considered the interference with the human rights of the applicant under Article 8 and/or Article 1 of the First Protocol caused by imposing conditions. Officers consider that the conditions are necessary to protect the rights and freedoms of others and to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest. The interference is therefore justifiable and proportionate.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Officers have considered, with due regard, the likely effect of the proposal on the need to reduce crime and disorder as part of the determination of this application, in accordance with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission officers consider that the proposal will not undermine crime prevention or the promotion of community safety.

Background Papers:

16/01725/FUL

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Extension: 2104

Date: 30th November 2016