

WEST AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

12th November 2013

Application Number: 13/01645/FUL

Decision Due by: 25th September 2013

Proposal: Demolition of existing music school, annex, rifle range and estates/storage buildings. Erection of a two storey building accommodating music school and ancillary facilities (amended plans)

Site Address: St Edward's School, Woodstock Road (Appendix 1)

Ward: Summertown

Agent: Tim Ronalds Architects

Applicant: The Governors Of St Edward's School

Recommendation:

APPLICATION BE APPROVED

Reasons for Approval

- 1 The proposed new music school building is considered to be, on balance, of a form, scale and general appearance that ensures it will satisfactorily integrate with the South Parade streetscene and views from Alexandra Park as well as respect the character of established built development within its immediate context. The proposals will also ensure no material harm occurs to trees of significance either on the site or in the immediate locality. Consequently the proposals are considered to comply with all relevant policies of the development plan.
- 2 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. 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 Samples of materials required
- 4 Cycle parking details required
- 5 Tree Protection Plan (TPP) 2
- 6 Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) 2
- 7 Bat survey recommendations to be carried out
- 8 Biodiversity enhancement measures required
- 9 External lighting scheme details required
- 10 SuDS
- 11 Phased contamination risk assessment required prior to commencement

Principal Planning Policies:

Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016

- CP1** - Development Proposals
- CP6** - Efficient Use of Land & Density
- CP8** - Design Development to Relate to its Context
- CP9** - Creating Successful New Places
- CP10** - Siting Development to Meet Functional Needs
- TR3** - Car Parking Standards
- TR4** - Pedestrian & Cycle Facilities
- NE15** - Loss of Trees and Hedgerows
- CP11** - Landscape Design

Core Strategy

- CS16** - Access to education
- CS18** - Urban design, town character, historic environment
- CS13** - Supporting access to new development

Relevant Site History:

- 58/06875/A_H - Miniature rifle range - Permitted 22nd April 1958
- 61/06522/A_H - Erection of building for music room - Permitted 24th October 1961
- 61/11376/A_H - Erection of building for music room - Permitted 24th October 1961.

Public Consultation:

Statutory and Internal Consultees:

Thames Water Plc – No objection

Local Highway Authority – No objection

Drainage Officers (County Council) – No objection subject to hardsurfacing being SuDS compliant.

Environmental Development – A phased contamination risk assessment is required before commencement of development.

Third Party Representations:

Oxford Civic Society – The proposed new building is large and dominant and the impact on surrounding historic buildings needs to be carefully considered

Consultation on amended proposals:

Following concerns raised by officers about the scale and massing of the proposed building, amended plans were submitted which reduced the height of the building and amended the roof form. Re-consultation was carried out for a period of three weeks though no further comments were received.

Officers' Assessment:

Application Site and Locality

1. The application site consists of part of the St Edward's School site on the northern side of South Parade. The site is currently home to a number of 1960's era buildings that provide a music school, rifle range and estate management offices amongst a row of more traditional domestically scaled buildings that date back to the 19th century. The site sits behind the Lemon Tree public house and Jack FM building when viewed from Woodstock Road and to the south of Alexandra Park. To the east of the site is the County Council maintained Northern House School. Summertown Court (a small development of flats) also lies immediately to the west. The application site can be seen within its context on the site location plan attached as appendix 1.

Description of Proposed Development

2. The application seeks consent for the demolition of the existing music school, annex, rifle range and estates buildings on the site to facilitate the erection of a new two storey music school building that would extend from the South Parade street frontage through to the rear boundary with Alexandra Park encompassing the majority of the footprint of the site.

3. Following concerns raised by offices over the scale of the building and its apparent dominance over neighbouring buildings, amended proposals were submitted that reduced the height of the building and, following an amendment to the roof form, also reduced its mass. It is on the basis of these amended proposals that the application

has been considered.

4. Officers' consider the principal determining issues in this case to be:

- Principle;
- Design and appearance;
- Impact on Neighbouring Properties;
- Trees;
- Ecology; and
- Parking.

Principle

5. Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy states that the City Council will work with the County Council and other organisations to improve access to all levels of education within the City through new or improved facilities. It also states that planning permission will only be granted for new educational facilities in locations accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.

6. The proposed music school would improve the facilities offered to pupils by St Edward's School on a site that is well established and easily accessible by transport modes other than the private car. Consequently officers are satisfied that the proposals accord with the requirements of policy CS16 of the Core Strategy and as such support the proposals in principle.

Design and Appearance

7. Policy CP8 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will only be granted where new development integrates well with the wider area, where building design respects its context and enhances the style and perception of the area where of high public visibility. Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy further adds that planning permission will only be granted for development that demonstrates good quality design through high quality architecture that responds appropriately to the site and its surroundings. These policies are consistent with Government guidance which emphasises the importance of high quality design and states that "*proposals that fail to take the opportunities available to improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions should be rejected*". It is against this planning policy context that the proposals should be considered with respect to design.

8. The principal elevation of the proposed building faces the northern side of South Parade which contains a range of buildings of mostly domestic scale and character. With the exception of the existing music school and rifle range buildings, they are generally both visually pleasant and of architectural merit such that they contribute positively to the appearance of the street. Glimpsed views of the buildings are also available from Woodstock Road. To the east lies a 19th century School House at No. 24 South Parade designed in a regency style that is locally listed and of more notable architectural merit. To the west of the site in South Parade lies a traditional Victorian L-shaped building used as part of the School's estate offices that projects into the site leaving a small courtyard to its front. Further to the west lies a terrace of two storey red-brick modestly proportioned houses of late 19th century construction. Officers therefore consider the building to sit within a more domestic setting both in terms of the use of surrounding buildings as well as their appearance and that any proposed development should respect this established character.

9. Officers raised concerns about the scale of the building originally proposed which was considered to dominate the adjacent properties and detrimentally affect their setting within the street. The revised proposals have sought to address this by reducing the height of the building and the volume of roof. This has, in effect, taken reference from the style of the regency house adjacent to the site and increased its proportions. The result is a building of proportions more consistent with the traditional domestic buildings in its immediate context in South Parade though the roof will, in officers' view, appear somewhat squat in comparison to the bulk of the building as a whole with a flat roof being partly in view from Woodstock Road.

10. However, the existing buildings are already having a significant adverse effect on the setting of the neighbouring more historic buildings and the streetscene in general. This stems from their blank, windowless and unappealing elevations that turn their back on South Parade. Their demolition is therefore welcomed by officers and the replacement building is considered to be acceptable in visual terms despite its large scale when viewed from Woodstock Road. The use of stone cream brick as well as clay tiles is also considered to represent a significant improvement upon the existing buildings. Larger windows designed in a more classical style improve the building's interaction with the street.

11. Views of the proposed building will be generally limited from Woodstock Road and the adjacent Northern House School but the rear of the building will be prominent from Alexandra Park and have a significant visual impact on it given that it abuts the boundary and replaces single storey rifle range and storage buildings. However, in the context of the scale of buildings that already exist at Northern House School, the building is considered to be appropriate in its size and massing.

12. Overall therefore officers conclude that the proposed building will still be significant in size but that, on balance, the scale of the building and its form and detailing are appropriate to its setting and represent an enhancement over the existing poor quality buildings that it will replace.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties

13. The existing music school building runs along the western boundary of the site with Summertown Court. Flats 5-10 have small rear gardens that face towards the back of this existing two storey building which results in their gardens being somewhat dominated by the structure. The proposed building is similar in height to the existing building and in fact has a lower eaves line so that the mass of walling facing these gardens is actually slightly reduced. Consequently officers have concluded that conditions would be improved for these properties and that the proposals will adequately safeguard their living conditions in accordance with the requirements of policies CP1 and CP10 of the Local Plan. There are no other residential properties in close proximity to the site and no other existing uses that would be likely to be affected by the proposals.

Trees

14. Policy NE15 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will not be granted for development proposals which include the removal of trees, hedgerows and other valuable landscape features that are important to public amenity. The proposals

require 3 small trees (birch, cherry plum and yew) to be removed and modest pruning will be undertaken to some of the retained sycamore trees. Pile and beam foundations are to be used where the new building encroaches within the root protection areas of the large sycamore trees which stand adjacent to the site. Officers' consider the submitted tree protection plan and arboricultural method statement make adequate provision for the protection of retained trees and officers recommend a condition be imposed requiring the works to proceed in accordance with these details.

Ecology

15. Two of the buildings proposed to be demolished have been found to be home to roosting bats. Policy NE21 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will not be granted for development that would harm animal species protected by law unless the harm can be overcome through appropriate mitigation. In this case the works would be scheduled to take place outside the bat roosting season with replacement bat tubes, boxes and bricks to be incorporated into the new design as secured by condition. Officers consider that this will adequately mitigate for any loss of habitat space resulting from the development. The applicant will also need to be obtain a license for the works from Natural England separately from the planning application process.

Parking

16. The application proposes no net loss of off-street car parking. The building is a replacement facility on an existing school site and officers see no planning policy reason why any additional off-street parking should be provided for the development. However, additional cycle parking spaces are proposed to the side of the building and officers recommend imposing a condition requiring further details of this provision. Consequently, officers have no concerns about the transport implications of the development proposed.

Conclusion:

17. The proposals will provide new and improved teaching accommodation for St Edward's School which officers, in principle, support. The existing buildings are bland and detract from the quality of the street and so officers have no objection to their demolition. The proposed building is large and would have a significant presence within the existing more domestically scaled buildings located at the western end of South Parade. However, the amended proposals have reduced the scale of the building such that, on balance, officers have concluded that the building is of an appropriate scale in comparison to surrounding buildings and is of a form and appearance that ensures it adequately responds to the character and setting of neighbouring buildings. Important trees and biodiversity will also be satisfactory safeguarded. Overall therefore, officers find that the proposals accord with all relevant policies of the development plan and recommend that Committee approves the application subject to the conditions set out at the beginning of this report.

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 approve, officers consider that the proposal will not undermine crime prevention or the promotion of community safety.

Background Papers:

58/06875/A_H

61/06522/A_H

61/11376/A_H

13/01645/FUL

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Date: 28th October 2013

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