

REPORT FOR CONSIDERATION AT PLANNING APPLICATIONS SUB COMMITTEE

Reference No: HGY/2005/1787

Ward: Fortis Green

Date received: 23/09/2005

Last amended date: 7 November 2005

Drawing number of plans:135-PL-01, 02A to 10A inclusive.

Address: Treehouse School Woodside AvenueN10

Proposal: Construction of two storey school building with play areas, sports pitch, access road, drop off area and car parking (Revised Scheme).

Existing Use: Disused; former playing fields.

Proposed Use: School (non-residential)

Applicant: The Treehouse Trust

Ownership: Private

PLANNING DESIGNATIONS

Road - Classified
Area Plans and Planning Briefs
Conservation Area
Area of Special Character
EVS - Local Importance
Restricted Conversion Area
Significant Local Open Land

Officer Contact: Paul Tomkins

RECOMMENDATION

Grant Permission subject to conditions

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application site is on the north side of Woodside Avenue, and bounded by St. Lukes Hospital to the east, houses in Grand Avenue and Tetherdown School to the north, and a lane leading from Woodside Avenue to Lauradale Road to the west. It is of approx. 1.6 hectares and slopes upward from Woodside Avenue. It is currently unmown grass, bordered by trees on the northern and eastern edges.

PLANNING HISTORY

The land is believed to have been last used as a school playing field in the 1980's by the Central Foundation School.

In 1990 two applications were submitted for housing development, (one for 42, one for 38, units) Both were refused and subsequent appeals were dismissed in Sept 1991.

March 1995 (HGY/48384); application for use as plant nursery with glass house, growing tunnels, ancillary office accommodation. Not determined: appeal against non-determination was dismissed.

2003/1214 Construction of two storey school, with play areas , sports pitch, access and car parking. Approved, with Unilateral Undertaking on shared use of Sports Pitch. Not implemented.

2004/0523 Construction of temporary two storey school building with parking and access road. Approved; implemented.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

A two-storey rectangular school building with a floor area of 3,970 sq.m. is proposed. (Previous scheme was 3,670 sq.m).

The proposal is an amendment to the scheme granted planning permission on 14 October 2003. The siting is similar to the approved scheme, i.e. towards the rear of the site (60 metres back from the Woodside Avenue frontage). The main changes are:-

- a) Footprint reduced; 64 m wide, 30.5m deep (was 70 m by 35 m.)
The building is now to be rectangular, whereas previous scheme had H-shaped footprint with 'wings'
- b) Height 6m to eaves at front 4m. to eaves at rear (due to changes in ground level). Previous scheme was 7m. to eaves. Overall height to top of ridge 9m. (was 8.5m.).
- c) Materials; a curved Sedum roof is proposed (previously a metal roof was approved); penetrated by some fairly prominent roof lights and light shafts. The walls on southern elevation to be mostly timber-clad; and on the north mostly brick-clad.
- d) Sustainable design; a number of energy efficiency features incorporated including ; Ground-Coupled Air cooling system, high performance glazing to minimise heat loss, photocell controlled dimmers on artificial lighting. Rainwater recycling.

The following elements have not changed since the previous approval; access; parking (34 spaces plus coach dropping -off points); landscaping; sports pitch.

CONSULTATION

07/10/2005

Muswell Hill CAAC

41-51(Odd) 70 – 88 (even) Woodside Avenue N10;
1-10 (consec) Holt Close, N10
50-50 (even) Grand Avenue N10
2-20 (even) Lauradale Road N10
76 Wilton Road N10
St. Lukes Hospital
St. James School
Tetherdown School
Camden and Islington NHS Trust
Muswell Hill Friends of the Earth
Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Residents Assocn

Ward Councillors

GLA

Thames Water

Transportation Group

Conservation Area Officer

Site Notices also posted

RESPONSES

Local Residents

Two letters received; one expressing support, the second pointing out that the siting of the school is such as to allow room for expansion in say 10 or 20 years time, and that for autistic children brick-walled play areas are not a good idea.

Transportation Group; No objection subject to suitable dropping –off and turning areas.

Thames Water; draw attention to 3 public sewers crossing the site; no building to be undertaken within three metres of the sewers without Thames Water's written agreement. [Note; The applicant's architects have designed the layout with this restriction in mind]

GLA

State that the proposals will be a significant opportunity to increase specialist autism education. They also comment favourably on the energy efficiency and energy conservation measures and recommend a condition to this effect.

Mr Hammerson of the Highgate Society has made representation regarding the archaeological interest of the site, pointing out that in his view the previous archaeological investigation on site was very small and in one corner of the site, and a much fuller assessment needs to be made, as the site is within the boundary of the Mediaeval Bishop of London's Hunting Park.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

ADOPTED UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 1998

DES 2.2 Preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. States that the Council will seek to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas and will normally refuse proposals within, adjacent to, or affecting a conservation area detrimental to the appearance, character or setting of the local area.

OP3.3 Significant Local Open Land (SLOL) The Council will only permit development proposals which would preserve the open character and appearance of Significant Local Open Land, except where; (1) The operational need of an educational or other institution for development is clearly demonstrated to be overriding; or (2) The loss of private recreational open space, sports grounds and playing fields is justified by the exceptions in OP2.3. (these exceptions relate to (1) where the recreation facilities can best be retained by redevelopment of a small part of the site, (2) provision of equivalent alternative community benefit, or (3) where there is an excess of sports pitch or public open space in the area.

OP 4.1 Ecologically valuable sites Development not permitted on such sites unless there will be no adverse effect on the value of the site for nature conservation. There are various grades of importance, Metropolitan, Borough and Local; this Central Foundation Playing field site is scheduled in Schedule 7 (No.45) as being of Local Importance; which is defined as being of value to nearby residents or schools.

OP 1.6 Tree Protection and Tree masses. Council will seek to protect and improve the contribution of trees and tree masses to local landscape character

CSF 2 Provision of Educational Facilities. States the overall objective of facilitating the provision of nursery, educational and training facilities to meet the needs of the Borough's residents and, where appropriate, the wider needs of London.

SSP No.2. **Site Specific Proposal** This site is identified in Schedule 11 of the UDP, as one suitable for expansion of Tetherdown School, to take place on SLOL, but only on the basis of an equivalent amount of the existing school site being laid out and designated as SLOL.

TSP 7.1 **Parking** Applications will be assessed against Council Parking standards and if they do not pay regard to these standards will normally be refused.

2004 REVISED UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN ;

This plan is a material consideration for Development Control purposes. In comparison with the Policies of the existing UDP, there are two main changes in this Draft Deposit Plan:-

Significant Local Open Land ; policy OS2 is stricter and does not contain the 'exceptions' Policy for Educational uses of the current UDP. Under this policy only small-scale development, ancillary to the use of the open space, contributing positively to the setting and quality of the open space, would be allowable.

Parking Standards; the Council will adopt Maximum parking standards, i.e. levels of parking which should not be exceeded, rather than minimum standards.

ANALYSIS/ASSESSMENT OF THE APPLICATION

Following the granting of permission in October 2003 for the creation of a facility for a special school on this disused former playing field site, there have been a number of developments;

- a temporary two storey school has been permitted, and is in operation, on the southern part of the site, within a demountable building structure;
- permission has been granted for the expansion of Tetherdown School to the north, and this expansion would use part of the former playing field site and would be adjacent to the Tree House School proposal;
- and Tree House have been re-assessing their initial scheme following visits to similar specialist schools in USA and this has led to a different and more compact yet, within the building envelope , a more flexible approach to layout;
-

The main issues with the revised scheme are :-

1. Principle of development.
2. Amended design;, Impact on Conservation Area and Street Scene.
3. Impact on local residents and Tetherdown School.

4. Traffic, Parking and Landscaping.; Sports Pitch.
5. Sustainable development issues.

1. Principle of development.

The issues of principle were fully addressed in considering the 2003 application; in brief, the loss of Significant Local Open Land was accepted because the applicants had made a case for overriding Educational need (they had searched extensively for a suitable site in North London and not found one; the functional needs of a special school were such that they could not be met by adapting or converting an existing building; there was an acknowledged and unmet need for special school places of the type provided by Tree House school. Further, in relation to the former School playing field, it was disused for a round 20 years, was never open to the public, and was of little ecological value in the sense that it was largely overgrown grassland; ecological interest mostly found in the perimeter tree screening which was to be retained.

For the above reasons, it was accepted that the development of the site by a special school was acceptable in principle; the fact that the proposal was leaving much of the site open, with the building set well back into the site, and cut into the slope of the site so as to reduce its visual impact, were also considered to be advantageous.

2. Amended Design; Effect on Conservation Area and Street Scene.

As the siting of the revised scheme is so similar to the approved development in terms of its distance back from Woodside Avenue, and its overall height, its impact on the Conservation area is also similar. The proposal to have a curved sedum roof will help it to blend in more with the surroundings and be less conspicuous in more distant views than would have been the case with the metal roof. The proposed landscaping also will improve the setting of the scheme within the Conservation Area.

3. Impact on nearby residents.

There are no residential properties on three boundaries of the application site; St. Lukes Hospital on the eastern boundary is quite well screened from the proposal. The main effect on residents would be the rear gardens and outlook from 6 houses at Nos. 50 – 60 Grand Avenue. Due to the sinking of the proposed scheme into the site, the rear eaves height would be 4 metres, which at a distance of 35 metres from the southern boundary of the gardens would not have an adverse visual impact; the school would be 7 metres further away than the approved scheme, due to its lesser footprint.

The development has been designed with full awareness of the proposed expansion of Tetherdown School to the north and west; in fact the revised scheme shows a greater separation between the two school buildings (15 m. building-to-building as opposed to 10 m. on previous scheme). This will give more space for a tree screen buffer between the two sites.

4. Traffic, Parking and Landscaping.

The provision of a new vehicular access and car parking has already been implemented pursuant to the planning permission of October 2003 and the temporary classrooms permitted in April 2004. The scheme entails 35 parking spaces, and twelve drop-off places for mini-buses would be provided on completion of the permanent school building.

The previous application was accompanied by a Transport Analysis which was accepted by the Transportation Group at the time, and was subject to a condition requiring the preparation and implementation of a Green Travel Plan.

Landscaping proposals will, as before, maintain and in some areas strengthen, the boundary tree screening; additional planting of trees will take place between the car park area and the front boundary of the site to Woodside Avenue, and the meadow area in the southwest corner of the site is also retained.

The layout provides as before for a sports play pitch in the southwest part of the site, adjacent to the public path on the west side of the site; this would be made available for shared use with Tetherdown School and St. James Junior School, and the applicants are offering a Unilateral Agreement under S.106 of the Planning Acts to secure this.

5. Sustainable Development Issues.

The introduction of a number of energy efficiency issues is a feature in this application; the main aspect is a Ground-Coupled Air Cooling System, which relies on a system of pipes buried beneath the building and inducted into the school by slow –velocity fans; this avoids the need for conventional air-conditioning systems. This is predicted to achieve a carbon saving of 10.0%, and with a payback period of 46 years.

The applicant's Consultants have examined a range of renewable energy technologies, including wind-turbines, Solar Panels, Biomass Boilers, and Ground Source Heat Pumps; they have concluded that the Ground Coupled Air System will offer the best return for the investment involved, as well as being less visually intrusive than either Solar Panels or Turbines.

Other energy efficiency features will reduce the electricity load, by using maximum natural lighting – Light shafts and roof lights are significant here – and high performance glazing to reduce summer heat gain. With the exception of kitchens and toilets, the building would be naturally ventilated.

The proposed sedum roof will make the building thermally heavier and improve insulation, and also add some attenuation to the rainwater drainage system.

There is a rainwater recycling system to flush WCs, and a sustainable urban drainage system to reduce the load on the main drain at times of heavy rainfall. The extra cost of installing these energy efficiency measures, including the Ground-Coupled Air Cooling pipes, is expected to be over £200,000.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The principle of development of this site for a Special School was accepted in consideration of the previous application in October 2003, on the basis that a case of overriding Educational need had been demonstrated, which amounted to very special circumstances allowing the development on a disused playing field that had never had public access and had been in disuse for around 20 years.

The current application would be on a similar siting to the approved scheme, but with a reduced footprint. The impact on residential properties, on the street scene, and on the Conservation Area would if anything be an improvement on the previous approval, noting the introduction of a sedum roof; further, the scheme introduces significant energy conservation measures and a renewable energy element, by a Ground-Coupled Air Cooling system.

Traffic parking and landscaping aspects are broadly similar to the approved development.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PERMISSION

Registered No. HGY/2005/1787

Applicant's drawing No.(s) 135-PL-01 and 02A to 10A.

Subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby authorised must be begun not later than the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission, failing which the permission shall be of no effect.

Reason: This condition is imposed by virtue of the provisions of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and to prevent the accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

2. The development hereby authorised shall be carried out in complete accordance with the plans and specifications submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the approved details and in the interests of amenity.

3. Samples of all materials to be used for the external surfaces of the development shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority before any development is commenced. Samples should include sample panels or brick types and a roofing material sample combined with a schedule of the exact product references.

Reason: In order for the Local Planning Authority to retain control over the exact materials to be used for the proposed development and to assess the suitability of the samples submitted in the interests of visual amenity.

4. That the garages and parking spaces shown on the approved drawings shall be constructed to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority and shall be permanently retained and used in connection with the dwellings forming part of the development.

Reason: In order to ensure that the approved standards of provision of garages and parking spaces are maintained.

5. The construction works of the development hereby granted shall not be carried out before 0800 or after 1800 hours Monday to Friday or before 0800 or after 1200 hours on Saturday and not at all on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: In order to ensure that the proposal does not prejudice the enjoyment of neighbouring occupiers of their properties.

6. The development hereby approved shall only be used for purposes within Class D1(c) of the Use Classes Order 1987 - use for the provision of Education- and for purposes ancillary to the provision of education, and for no other purpose.

Reason: This permission has been granted in the light of the special circumstances of the application, and because an exceptional case has been made out for development on Significant Local Open Land in terms of Policy OP 3.3 of the Adopted Haringey Unitary Development Plan. Any use of the

site for other purposes would be inappropriate given the setting of the site and its position adjacent to other educational and institutional uses.

7. Details of the arrangements for the handling of surface water drainage shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.

Reason; In order that the development of an open sit by new building and hard surfacing shall not have a detrimental effect on the surrounding environment.

8. The landscaping and ecological scheme shown on the submitted plans and incorporating (a) the planting of additional trees on the northern boundary of the site; (b) the planting of some specimen native trees including Oaks within the application site. (c) provision of suitable nesting boxes for birds within the landscaped areas of the site; shall be implemented within the first planting season following the completion of the authorised development.

Reason; In order that a satisfactory setting for the development shall be provided, which will enhance its setting in the Conservation Area and Significant Local Open Land.

9. The development hereby authorised shall first be occupied by Tree House Trust and by no other persons.

Reason; This permission has been granted in the light of the special circumstances of the application, and because an exceptional case for development of Significant Local Open Space in terms of Policy OP 3.3 of the Adopted Haringey Unitary Development Plan has been made, in terms of overriding Educational need.

10. A Green Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, prior to the commencement of development on the site. Such agreed plan shall be implemented to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason; In order to minimise the impact of additional traffic generation on the locality and to ensure that the development does not prejudice the free flow and safety of traffic on the highway.

11. The development shall incorporate the energy conservation measures shown on the submitted drawings and described in the Tree House Trust Energy Study submitted as part of the application by Max Fordham Associates dated 10 October 2005, and shall include a Ground Coupled Air System as an energy efficiency measure.

Reason; In order that the scheme shall encourage energy efficiency and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

12. Prior to commencement, details of a programme for investigation of the archaeological features of interest within the site, including the digging of trial trenches, shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in conjunction with English Heritage.

Reason; In order not to detract from the archaeological interest of the site, which is believed to form part of a mediaeval deer park.

INFORMATIVE: There is a Thames Water main crossing the development site which may/will need to be diverted at the Developers cost, or necessitate amendments to the proposed developemnt design so that the aforementioned main can be retained. Unrestricted access must be available at all times for maintenance and repair. Please contact Thames Water Developer Services, Contract Centre on telephone no. 0845 850 2777 for further information.

REASONS FOR APPROVAL

The principle of development of this site for a Special School was accepted in consideration of the previous application in October 2003, on the basis that a case of overriding Educational need had been demonstrated, which amounted to very special circumstances allowing the development on a disused playing field that had never had public access and had been in disuse for around 20 years.

The current application would be on a similar siting to the approved scheme, but with a reduced footprint. The impact on residential properties, on the street scene, and on the Conservation Area would if anything be an improvement on the previous approval, noting the introduction of a sedum roof; further, the scheme introduces significant energy conservation measures and a renewable energy element, by a Ground-Coupled Air Cooling system.

Traffic parking and landscaping aspects are broadly similar to the approved development.