

RECEIVED: 12 May, 2006

WARD: Willesden Green

PLANNING AREA: Willesden Consultative Forum

LOCATION: School Main Building, St Mary Magdalen Roman Catholic School, Linacre Road, London, NW2 5BB

PROPOSAL: Demolition of existing buildings and erection of single-storey and two-storey replacement school building, comprising two-storey main school building fronting Lechmere Road, new sports hall and creation of external play space areas, including all-weather pitch fronting Linacre Road (as accompanied by Travel Plan September 2005; Skylight & Sunlight Indicator Study 21 April 2006; Design Statement 21 April 2006) (as amended by plans received on 10 July 2006)

APPLICANT: Westminster Diocese Education Services

CONTACT: Curl La Tourelle Architects

PLAN NO'S:

- 777PL 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.
- Elevation 1 to 14 (inclusive).

RECOMMENDATION

Approval

EXISTING

Existing St Mary Magdalen's Junior School on the western side of Linacre Road. The school has two road frontages, with Lechmere Road to the west of the school. There is currently no access, pedestrian or otherwise, to the school from Lechmere Road. It is currently a 3-form entry school and this would not change as a result of the application proposal.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed to demolish the existing buildings on the site and to erect a single-storey and two-storey replacement school building, comprising a two-storey main school building fronting Lechmere Road, creation of external play space areas and new sports hall and an all-weather pitch fronting Linacre Road.

Officers have previously asked the applicants to confirm the following in connection with this application:-

- Numbers of children will not change (360).
- Proposal is to provide accommodation that meets DofE's standards. Funding has been secured.
- All access (pedestrian & vehicular) will be from Linacre Road.
- All-weather pitch will be the existing one fronting Lechmere Road and is so small that it won't be floodlit and unlikely to be used for hire outside school hours.

The School's Board of Governors have confirmed (letter dated 11 May 2006) that they plan to open the school until 10pm on weekdays to the wider community. They state that there are many well-established groups who would benefit from the improved facilities on site. As far as social events are concerned, they will be school- or parish-based, as at present, and they will not be letting any part of the premises on a

commercial basis to third parties.

HISTORY

There are no planning decisions that are considered relevant to this application.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Brent UDP 2004

- BE4 – Suitable access and facilities for disabled people shall be provided in developments open to the public, or used for employment or educational purposes.
- BE6 - High standard of landscaping required as an integral element of development, including a design which reflects how the area will be used and the character of the locality and surrounding buildings, boundary treatments to complement the development and enhance the streetscene.
- BE9 - New buildings should be designed to embody a creative and high quality design solution specific to the sites shape, size, location and development opportunity and be of a scale , massing and height appropriate to their setting, civic function and location.
- CF8 - Proposals are supported to enlarge school size to enable schools to meet DfES standards or where it is necessary to accommodate the forecast growth in pupil numbers.
- CF10 – Development which complements the educational functions of the school and, where appropriate allow dual use of school facilities will be permitted. Development which result in sub-stand educational facilities or prejudice future expansion of the school will be resisted.
- PS12 - School Parking Standards

Brent Supplementary Planning Guidance

SPG 17 "Design Guide for New Development" Adopted October 2001

Provides comprehensive and detailed design guidance for new development within the borough. The guidance specifically sets out advice relating to siting, landscaping, parking, design, scale, density and layout.

SPG19 - "Sustainable Development." Adopted April 2003

Seeks to ensure a sustainable environment with the needs of the future, as well as the present, in mind. Sustainability needs to be a part of the design from the start of any development project. Sets out the principles of sustainable development.

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

The applicants have provided a completed sustainability checklist which has raised a number of issues in relation to the development of the site. The need for the principles of sustainability to be taken into account by the school should be made clear to the applicants.

CONSULTATION

Adjoining occupiers in Lechmere Road and Linacre Road were consulted by letter. A total of 7 site notices were displayed in the vicinity of the site in both Lechmere and Linacre Roads on 17 May 2006. In addition, a Press Notice was published on both 25 May and 1 June 2006.

Two letters have been received in relation to the original application, raising the following points:-

- Loss of building would detract from the character of the area.
- Playground fronting onto Linacre Road will result in noise and disturbance to residents and will allow children to look into properties.
- All-weather pitch likely to be used out of hours, generating even more noise.
- Increase in litter.
- Linacre Road residents will suffer as compared to Lechmere Road, with all cars, pedestrians, noise, etc. at this end of the site.

- Buildings will block out light to residents.
- Concern about security. Children already climb into the school site and cause problems.

All residents were re-notified about the fact that amended drawings proposed the re-siting of the new Sports Hall on the site nearer to the Linacre Road frontage, on 10 July 2006, and any additional views will be reported at the meeting.

BRENT CAPITAL PROJECT MANAGER - CHILDREN & FAMILIES

"Brent Council has supported, and continues to support, the replacement of the existing school building with a new school building within the school site, which shall address the extreme limitations of suitability and condition on learning, teaching, outreach, aspirations and attainment, all highlighted by the Children & Families Asset Management Plan data and OFSTED report 2004."

TRANSPORTATION ENGINEER

The applicants have provided a Travel Plan (September 2005). No objections.

LANDSCAPE DESIGNER

The site has several mature trees, which are shown to be removed. These trees are mainly Sycamore and clearly provide some amenity for surrounding residents.

Any consent should be conditioned to require tree planting and landscaping. An indication of proposed landscaping is shown on submitted drawings, but more details of tree planting are needed and can be comfortably accommodated on the site.

In addition, a sum for off-site tree planting, particularly street tree-planting, should be sought, partly to cover the possible loss of the existing street tree in Lechmere Road which is shown as been close to the proposed building. A contribution of £5,000 would be appropriate.

REMARKS

This application raises a number of key issues requiring consideration.

HIGHWAY ISSUES

The Council's Director of Transportation has considered the application, and the submitted Travel Plan, and does not object to the proposal to demolish the existing buildings on the site and to erect the replacement school buildings and new sports hall fronting Linacre Road. Both Linacre and Lechmere Road are local access roads and both are defined as been "heavily parked". The site lies within a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) and access to public transport is rated as good with a PTAL (public transport accessibility level) rating of 4.

The Council's adopted standards require the provision of a maximum of one parking space per five members of staff (plus 20% extra for visitors/students) in educational schemes. However, in this case, there would be no increase in the number of children attending the school and on this basis, there is no issue about car parking or traffic generation. There is no parking available on the site at present and none is proposed as a result of the scheme. However, the Transportation Engineer considers that as the proposal will not result in any increase in pupil numbers and, consequently, no additional school traffic is likely to be generated by the facilities, there would be no greater impact on pedestrian and highway safety than the present situation.

Bicycle parking is proposed on site and this will be likely to meet the needs of teachers and visitors. For the avoidance of doubt, it is unlikely that children attending the school, given their age, will be using bicycles, so the parking spaces will be used by staff and visitors only.

The applicants have clarified that all pedestrian access will be from Linacre Road (as existing) and that the emergency access onto Lechmere Road will not be available to school children. Providing that this is the subject of a condition attached to any approval, (any other access arrangements would be likely to result in safety concerns for children) there are no highway objections to the scheme.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

The current school site is dominated by tarmac, and, it could be argued, provides a less-than-ideal environment for the children using these areas. The application does provide for an opportunity to improve the appearance of the site, retain existing trees and provide for additional planting, as well as make a positive contribution to the play environment for children, providing shade for playground users. This point

has been put to the applicants and they have confirmed that it is their intention to develop the treatment of the site along the lines of an approach such as 'Learning through Landscape'.

This type of approach, which allows children to take a role in forming their own external education and recreation spaces, is supported by the Council's Landscape Designers. Landscaping would form an important enhancement of the site, with a garden area to the rear of the new classroom block, and should form a fundamental part of the overall development of the site. In the circumstances, it is considered that it would be appropriate to condition the detailed landscaping scheme, on the understanding that the Council's Landscape Designers are able to input into the proposed on-site arrangements. It does, however, have to be acknowledged that the majority of the site would remain as given over to hardsurfacing.

There is an issue about the fact that a large London Plane street tree is located in Lechmere Road immediately adjacent to the proposed new school building. Officers have visited the site and have concluded that there is the possibility that this tree will be impacted upon by the erection of the development, given its size and canopy. In order to ameliorate the possible loss, the applicants have made a contribution of £5,000, by means of a unilateral agreement, to go towards street planting or other environmental improvements in the locality. Whilst the issue is balanced, it is considered that this financial contribution would serve to ensure that, in the event that the Plane tree were lost, the loss on amenity would be minimised.

LOSS OF THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS

The existing buildings are not in a Conservation Area (although the Willesden Conservation Area does take in the High Road to the immediate south of the site) and nor are they statutorily listed. This does not, however, mean that the demolition of buildings will always be allowed, where the Council has control, but if they are to be removed, then any replacement building should be of the necessary design quality, relating well to what is around.

In this case, the school buildings, whilst not without merit, do have something of a mixed architectural quality, been made up of a number of obvious, contrasting elements. It is not considered that those existing buildings are of such quality that the Council should object, in principle, to their loss.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

It is considered that the additions to the school are considered to be acceptable, in terms of their relationship with the existing locality. The classroom accommodation would be sited on the Lechmere Road frontage, with the new hall and other associated buildings towards Linacre Road.

The school is located on a tight, town-centre site, and both elements of the proposal are in prominent locations, with the classroom building being built on an area of the site currently given over to grass and an existing small all-weather pitch. The Lechmere Road block is a double-storey structure, designed to fill in the gap between existing residential terraces and for the information of Councillors, aerial photographs reveal that as recently as 1998, terraced housing did exist on this part of the site. The applicants have indicated that large bay windows will break up the facade of this building and will reflect the features in the existing residential properties and that the height of the building will be only slightly higher (by approx. 0.8 metres) than the eaves of these adjacent buildings. It is considered that whilst the new structure would inevitably be prominent, given its siting and the fact that the site is open at present, the design and appearance of the development would be acceptable and would not have such an impact on the streetscene so as to justify withholding consent.

It is acknowledged that the elevations of the proposed hall would contrast with the classroom block fronting Lechmere Road and would, relatively speaking, be somewhat stark, in that there would be areas of the front wall unbroken by openings. However, the provision of a single-storey element fronting the road does help to break up this elevation, and it is considered that overall the appearance does reflect the function to which it will be put. Some interest and relief will be provided to the building by the use of a variety of materials, glazing and relatively large opening at high level. It is now envisaged that the existing front wall and railings be retained along Linacre Road and this is welcomed by Officers. The building would be sited no closer to the Linacre Road pavement than the existing school buildings and would be much less wide, and consequently the visual impact in the streetscene would be reduced, as compared to the existing.

IMPACT ON RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

The applicants have considered the contents of the Council's SPG17 document and have submitted a scheme that complies with the guidance, in terms of how the buildings relate to adjoining residential properties. All single-storey elements of the proposal are sited away from the site boundary and the two-storey buildings have been sited so as to relate acceptably to neighbours, in terms of outlook, light and

privacy. The last remaining area of concern, in terms of the development impacting on residential amenity related to the impact of the sports hall on the amenities of No. 34 Linacre Road. Originally, the hall, which will be in excess of 7.0 metres in height, was sited beyond the rear wall of No. 34, so that it would have been significantly overbearing, detracting from the amenities currently enjoyed by residents of that property. The applicants have now agreed to bring the hall forward so as to be nearer to Linacre Road, minimising impact on No. 34 and having the added advantage of allowing the space in the centre of the site to be given over to play area for children. The issue is balanced because the resiting does mean that the hall has more of an impact on the established streetscene, but the main hall would still be 3.0 metres further back into the site than the existing school building (the single-storey element would line up with the existing front wall of the school), as well as been significantly less wide, being less than half the length of the existing building. For information, the applicants had produced a sunlight and daylight report that indicated that the original siting of the hall would have an acceptable impact on all residents, but your Officers considered that further work was needed to improve matters and the applicants agreed to amend the scheme to take account of this.

The two-storey classroom building fronting Lechmere Road would be sited to the rear of residential gardens in Linacre Road. In order to ensure that this impact would also be acceptable, the scheme has used a combination of louvres/screening to physically prevent overlooking from classroom windows, the removal of an element of the first floor of the building, so as to move the two-storey element further way from the most affected areas and the omission of any openings from this nearest second-storey elevation, so as to also prevent any real, or perceived, loss of privacy.

OTHER INFORMATION

The support of the Council's Children's & Families Directorate is noted and the proposal to improve existing facilities for the benefit of children attending the school is supported. It is considered that, after amendments, the scheme would allow for these improvements to take place, without impacting unacceptably on matters such as residential amenity, highway considerations or the appearance of the area. It is inevitable that the continued use of the site for educational purposes, whether or not the new buildings are built, will create some noise and disturbance for people living nearby, simply on the basis that activities will take place on the site and there will be comings and goings associated with a school. However, it is your Officer's view that the development proposal would not make matters worse for people living nearby and on this basis the application is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION: Grant Consent

REASON FOR GRANTING

(1) The proposed development is in general accordance with policies contained in the:-

- Brent's Unitary Development Plan 2004
- Central Government Guidance
- Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance

Relevant policies in the Adopted Unitary Development Plan are those in the following chapters:-

- Built Environment: in terms of the protection and enhancement of the environment
- Environmental Protection: in terms of protecting specific features of the environment and protecting the public
- Transport: in terms of sustainability, safety and servicing needs
- Community Facilities: in terms of meeting the demand for community services

CONDITIONS/REASONS:

(1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: To conform with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

(2) The development hereby approved shall be carried out and completed in all respects in

accordance with the proposals contained in the application, and any plans or other particulars submitted therewith.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development will be carried out as approved so as to avoid any detriment to the amenities of the locality.

- (3) Details of materials for all external work (including windows, external doors, canopy, louvres/screening to rear of classroom block), including samples, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any work is commenced.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development which does not prejudice the amenity of the locality or people living nearby.

- (4) The areas so designated within the site shall be suitably landscaped in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any works commence on site. The landscape work shall be completed during the first available planting season following completion of the development hereby approved and shall be maintained thereafter to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Any trees and shrubs planted in accordance with the landscaping scheme which, within 5 years of planting, are removed, dying, seriously damaged or become diseased, shall be replaced to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority, by trees and shrubs of similar species.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory standard of appearance and that the proposed development enhances the visual amenity of the locality.

- (5) Details of the air-conditioning, ventilation and flue extraction systems, including particulars of noise and emission levels, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any works commence on site. Once approved, those systems must be installed on site and maintained as such, unless the the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority is obtained.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

- (6) Details of all fencing, walls, gates and means of enclosure shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before the development hereby approved is completed and the work shall be carried out prior to occupation, in accordance with the details so approved, and subsequently maintained to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure a proper standard of visual amenity.

- (7) Revised drawings showing the ability of a servicing vehicle to park on the site shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority prior to the development hereby approved commencing. This parking area must be maintained as a permanent servicing space to the development and must be available prior to the new school buildings being brought into use.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

- (8) The access points onto the Lechmere Road frontage of the site shall be locked at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway and pedestrian safety in the vicinity of the site.

- (9) Details of the proposed bicycle-parking facilities shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any work is commenced on site.

Reason: To ensure a balanced approach to non-car modes of transport.

INFORMATIVES:

- (1) The attention of the applicants is drawn towards the following additional information that

should be taken into account in the implementation of the development/discharge of planning conditions to ensure a sustainable form of development.

1. Water Efficiency – the Design Statement mentions rainwater harvesting and use of aerated taps. The Design Statement should be amended to also incorporate low-flush toilets.
2. No mention of renewables within the Design Statement.
3. Localised lighting with user controls should be used as well as low-energy fittings.
4. A highly visible renewable-energy technology installation (e.g. solar/wind) is recommended, which could double up as educational tool.
5. FSC timber is mentioned in the Sustainability Checklist, but is not specified in the Design Statement.
6. The applicants have proposed to reuse existing materials “if possible”, but have not proposed to use a construction management system/demolition protocol. You should refer to ICE demolition protocol (details available from Brent Planning Service).

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:

- Brent UDP 2004
- SPG17
- SPG19
- Two letters of objection.

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Andy Bates, The Planning Service, Brent House, 349 High Road, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 6BZ, Tel. No. 020 8937 5377



Planning Committee Map

Site address: School Main Building, St Mary Magdalen Roman Catholic School, Linacre Road, London, NW2 5BB

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