



Planning Committee Map

Site address: Sea Cadet Corps Building Welsh Harp & Sea Rangers Caprice Welsh Harp, Birchen Grove, London, NW9 8SA

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This map is indicative only.

RECEIVED: 9 May, 2013

WARD: Welsh Harp

PLANNING AREA: Willesden Consultative Forum

LOCATION: Sea Cadet Corps Building Welsh Harp & Sea Rangers Caprice Welsh Harp, Birchen Grove, London, NW9 8SA

PROPOSAL: Refurbishment of existing boat station to include new gravelled work area at the rear and installation of new spiral staircase to the front, removal of 3 portacabins and erection of a 2 storey extension with a monopitch roof

APPLICANT: The Marine Society and Sea Cadets

CONTACT: The Relph Ross Partnership

PLAN NO'S:

Welsh Harp Boat Station Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey;
Design & Access Statement;
12/1784/100;
12/1784/101;
12/1784/102;
12/1784/103;
12/1784/104;
12/1784/105;
12/1784/106;
12/1784/107;
12/1784/Su01;
12/1784/Su02;
12/1784/Su03;
12/1784/Su04;
12/1784/Su05; and
12/1784/Su06.

Introduction:

This application is reported under the provisions of Clause 28 of the Planning Code of Practice following the resolution at the previous meeting of the Planning Committee on 16 October 2013 of 'minded to grant' permission for "refurbishment of existing boat station to include new gravelled work area at the rear and installation of new spiral staircase to the front, removal of 3 portacabins and erection of a 2 storey extension with a monopitch roof", contrary to the officer recommendation to refuse permission.

This report discusses the implications of the Committee's resolution, maintains the original recommendation to refuse permission but includes suggested planning conditions should the Planning Committee decide to grant permission.

Discussion:

As discussed at the previous meeting, officers recommended refusal of permission for the extension to the existing boat station building as it was considered that, on balance, the extension would have a harmful impact on the openness of the Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). Officers did not consider that 'very special circumstances' existed which would outweigh the harm to the openness of the MOL by reason of its inappropriateness. This is discussed in the *Remarks* section of the Committee Report.

Should Members reconfirm that they take different a view that the level of harm as a result of the extension is not so significant as to unacceptably effect the openness of the MOL and that any impact is outweighed by the benefits of the scheme, the conditions below are recommended to be attached to the garnet of planning permission.

Members discussed at the Planning Committee the need for a community access plan. The applicant's agent confirmed that the facility is available for use by schools and as this is a specialist facility, it is not recommended that a condition is imposed.

Suggested conditions in the event that approval is granted:

If Members wish to grant consent your Officers would recommend that the following conditions be attached to this permission:

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning on 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 permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawing(s) and/or document(s):

Welsh Harp Boat Station Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey;
Design & Access Statement;

12/1784/100; 12/1784/101; 12/1784/102; 12/1784/103; 12/1784/104; 12/1784/105; 12/1784/106; 12/1784/107; 12/1784/Su01; 12/1784/Su02; 12/1784/Su03; 12/1784/Su04; 12/1784/Su05; and 12/1784/Su06.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. Prior to any works commencing on site, a full tree survey in accordance with BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction' in respect of the existing trees to the rear of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The tree survey should be accompanied by an Arboricultural implications assessment and Tree Protection. Works shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved tree-protection plan and construction method statement.

Reasons: To ensure that existing trees are not damaged during the period of construction.

4. Details of materials for all external work shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any work is commenced. The work shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development which does not prejudice the amenity of the locality

5. Prior to occupation of the development hereby approved, the area of the site to the side and rear of the existing building shall be cleared of rubbish and maintained as such. This area shall not be used for external storage.

Reason: To improve the setting of the building and appearance of the area.

Recommendation : Remains refusal, for the reasons set out in the Committee Report and Supplementary Report. However if the Planning Committee resolves to grant planning permission, the conditions set out above are recommended.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse Permission.

EXISTING

The application site comprises a two storey building with an annex in the form of three single storey temporary buildings adjacent (to the south) and is known as the Welsh Harp Boat Station. The facility is operated by the Marine Society and Sea Cadets (MSSC) and provides boat storage/maintenance, office, training and accommodation facilities to train Sea Cadets, the armed forces and fire and ambulance services

in the skills required to operate safely on water.

The site is approximately 0.33Ha and is accessed from Birchen Grove via a security controlled gate. The buildings are situated adjacent to the west shore of Brent Reservoir as part of a group of approximately 10 single and two storey buildings the uses of which are primarily associated with boating activities taking place on the adjacent water. It is noted that the positions and depth of these buildings are reasonably consistent. To the rear of the site are a number of mature trees which provide screening of the site from Birchen Grove and an area for the open storage of boats.

The site lies within the Welsh Harp Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and adjacent to (but not within) a Grade 1 Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

PROPOSAL

The application seeks permission to extend the existing building by way of a two storey extension to the south in the location of the existing temporary buildings. The extension would provide additional floorspace and allow for the internal reconfiguration of the existing building to provide overnight accommodation for 18 no. cadets and 6 no. adults on ground and first floors, a boat storage and maintenance on the ground floor. Office, kitchen and dining, training and an activity room would be provided on the first floor. A lift and accessible bathroom on the ground floor would also be provided.

The proposed extension would occupy the same footprint as the existing temporary buildings but would be two storey as opposed to the existing single storey buildings. The extension would be clad in timber with the same treatment provided to the existing building. The extension been designed with a mono pitch roof, full height glazing between the ground and second floors to the front elevation with clerestory windows provided along the side elevation.

HISTORY

Planning permission was granted in 1959 for a club house' building and a further permission was granted the same year for a 'pavilion' building. No further permissions relate to the this site.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The development plan for the purpose of S38 (6) The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is the Brent Unitary Development Plan 2004, Core Strategy 2010 and the London Plan 2011. Within those documents the following list of policies are considered to be the most pertinent to the application:

Brent UDP 2004

- BE2 Proposals should be designed with regard to local context, making a positive contribution to the character of the area, taking account of existing landforms and natural features. Proposals should improve the quality of the existing urban spaces, materials and townscape features that contribute favourably to the area's character and not cause harm to the character and/or appearance of an area or have an unacceptable visual impact on Conservation Areas.
- BE4 Access for disabled people
- BE7 A high quality of design and materials will be required for the street environment.
- BE9 Creative and high-quality design solutions specific to site's shape, size, location and development opportunities.
- OS1 Designation of MOL
- OS2 Acceptable uses on MOL
- OS3 Development on MOL
- TRN3 Where an application would cause or worsen an unacceptable environmental impact of traffic it will be refused.

Brent Core Strategy 2010

- CP 17 Protecting and enhancing the suburban character of Brent
Balances the regeneration and growth agenda promoted in the Core Strategy, to ensure existing assets (e.g. heritage buildings and conservation areas) are protected and enhanced. Protects the character of suburban housing and garden spaces from out-of-scale buildings.
- CP18 Protecting and Enhancing Open Space, Sports and Biodiversity
Open space should be protected from inappropriate development.

London Plan 2011

Policy 7.17 Metropolitan Open Land

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Chapter 9 Protecting Green Belt Land

CONSULTATION

Letters were sent to neighbouring properties and ward councillors on 23.05.13.

26 letters of support have been received on the following basis:

- Existing facilities out of date and no longer fit for purpose;
- Important facility for young people;
- The proposed development is contained within the existing footprint;
- Extra demand following success of London Olympics in 2012;
- Proposal sympathetic to area and modern design will boost morale of cadets;
- Would enhance facilities for disabled persons; and
- Proposal would enhance the use of the MOL.

Cllr Hopkins & Cllr Ashraf: Further to the 'call-in' request above, an additional letter of support for the proposal on the following basis:

- Existing temporary buildings are unsightly and proposal would enhance the metropolitan open land;
- Provides a facility to disadvantaged children;
- Existing building in need of modernisation (WC's and sleeping arrangements sub-standard); and
- Proposal could lead to greater community participation through schools and ward working fund.

Additional letters of support

Since the Committee Report was published an additional 16 representations have been submitted in support of these proposals on the same basis as outlined above. Members were advised of this in the Supplementary Report.

Transportation: No objection

Design: No objection

Landscape: Objection

REMARKS

1. Background

2. The applicant received pre-application planning advice in November 2012 which set out the key planning issues, including the relevant policy tests applicable to development on Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). At that time, the applicant was advised that proposed first floor extension was likely to be regarded as 'harmful' to the openness of the MOL. The application submission is the same as considered by officers at the pre-application stage. The applicants were offered the opportunity to amend the proposal in light of this concern, however, the application was subsequently 'called-in' for determination by the Planning Committee.

The Supplementary Report set out the details of a 'Visual Assessment' submitted by the applicant in support of their proposal. The assessment concludes that the proposal cannot be considered 'inappropriate development' on the basis that the extension would not be harmful to the openness of the Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). Additional information was also provided regarding the relationship with the surrounding development.

3. Key considerations

4. The key considerations of this proposal are as follows:

- Impact on Metropolitan Open Land and Design
- Impact on Biodiversity
- Landscaping and Trees

- Parking & access
- Community Infrastructure Levy

5. Impact on Metropolitan Open Land and Design

6. Policy 7.17 of the London Plan states that MOL will be regarded as having the same level of protection as Green Belt land. Policy OS3 of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) states that development on MOL will only be permitted where it is small in scale and required to preserve or enhance activities associated with the particular open space. Para 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states *inter alia* that the following types of development will not be regarded as 'inappropriate development' on Green Belt land:

- Provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport...as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of the land of including land within it;
- The replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces; and
- Limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites...which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development

7. In the case of the application proposals, whilst the extension would occupy the same footprint as the existing temporary buildings, the extension would result in the development of an additional storey of accommodation where previously a only a single storey building existed. The extension would result in an additional 74 sqm of floor space, increasing the maximum height from 6.4m to 7.8m, an increase of 1.4m. The first floor extension would project beyond the existing rear elevation by 4.5m and would have a width of 6.5m.

8. The re-provision of the existing boat storage facility and the proposed maintenance area to the rear can be considered as appropriate facilities for outdoor sport as set out in Para 89 of the NPPF. The extension at ground floor and the part of the first floor extension which does not project beyond the existing rear elevation can be regarded as 'infilling' given its position between existing flank elevation the adjacent neighbouring building and are not considered to have an unacceptable impact on the openness of the MOL.

9. However, the proposed first floor extension which projects beyond the rear elevation (by 4.5m), given its rearward projection and excessive height (which is up to 1.4m taller than the existing building) and the design of the roof which adds further bulk to the building without providing additional floor space, is considered to be harmful to the openness of the MOL and is therefore regarded as 'inappropriate development'. This would be particularly noticeable when viewed from the rear of the site, where the group of buildings have reasonably consistent depths and as such exhibit a fairly consistent rear building line. The proposal would therefore project beyond this building line. This is shown on the proposed side elevation (Drawing No. 12/1784/105), where the scope of additional development can be appreciated.

10. In light of this part of the proposal being considered 'inappropriate development' it be should successfully demonstrated that 'very special circumstances' (VSC) exist where the harm to the MOL is by reason of its inappropriateness is clearly outweighed by other considerations. The applicant has subsequently put forward a 'very special circumstances' case in support of the need for the proposed development. In summary, the applicant asserts that the VSC amount to the following:

- The MSSC is the UK's oldest and largest youth maritime charity for 14,000 young people in the Sea Cadets. The Welsh Harp Boat Station provides essential training for MSSC's 1,500 Greater London cadets and other groups including the emergency services;
- Without modernisation in the manner proposed, including provision of a larger classroom area, improved changing rooms, access and facilities for disabled people and good overnight accommodation for 18 cadets and 6 adults, the MSSC would be unable to offer the courses it currently does;
- These new facilities, including the overnight accommodation, could not be located elsewhere outside MOL - there is no available site or premises in close proximity to Welsh Harp which would be affordable to MSSC without severely compromising the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the national training that MSSC aims to provide;
- Modernisation of the Boating Station in the manner proposed would enable MSSC to meet the demand for some 3,000 cadet days of activity per annum. This is currently severely fettered by the physical limitation of the facilities, including inadequate classroom space (essential for teaching and inclement weather), severely substandard changing rooms and unacceptable overnight accommodation; and
- The activities and facilities at Welsh Harp are manifestly of the type which Policies 7.27 and 7.30 of the London Plan recognise 'should be prioritised and ...supported' as an 'important objective' (para 7.83) and

a 'valuable education resource (para 7.101).

11. Para. 88 of the NPPF states "Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."

12. A number of the proposed uses which the building extension would provide such as training, office and accommodation uses in policy terms are not directly related to the use of the Brent Reservoir for water based activities and therefore not supported by the NPPF or Policy OS3 of the UDP which requires proposals to be small in scale and required to preserve or enhance activities associated with the particular open space. It is recognised that some of these are existing uses and form part of the overall 'offer' of the club. However, whilst the need for the accommodation as set out above is not disputed, it is not considered that the above constitutes a VSC case that outweighs the harm caused to the openness of the MOL. Whilst the applicant claims that the proposed accommodation cannot be accommodated off-site, no evidence has been submitted in support of this claim. Furthermore, it is considered that a re-configuration of the internal layout of the building could accommodate the proposed number of bed spaces with a resultant reduction in the some of the ancillary facilities such as the office and dining/relaxation areas which are not directly linked to the use of the MOL.

13. In addition the design of the roof adds unnecessarily to the bulk of the building which in turn reduces the openness of the MOL and this element of the proposal could be easily re-designed to lessen its impact. In light of these considerations it has not been successfully demonstrated a VSC case exists that outweighs the harm caused to the openness of the MOL in accordance with national and local planning policy. It is considered that the scheme could be re-designed in a manner which preserves the openness of the MOL as well as fulfilling the needs of the MSSC.

4. Impact on Biodiversity

14. The application is accompanied by a Phase 1 Habitat Survey given the location of the site adjacent to a SINC and SSSI. The report concludes that given the limited scale and location of the proposal there is unlikely to be any impact on these biodiversity designations. As such it not considered that the proposal would have a significantly adverse impact on biodiversity in accordance with Policy CP18.

5. Landscaping and Trees

15. Given the extensive tree cover to the rear of the site and the proximity of the proposed extension to these trees, the Tree Protection Officer has requested a full tree survey in accordance with BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction'. The tree survey should be accompanied by an Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Tree Protection Plan which should identify any pre-commencement canopy reductions required to enable the development to take place. This information could be secured by condition should the application be granted permission.

16. Parking & access

17. Policy PS10 is applicable to this site, whereby the maximum parking space is 1 space per 60 patrons. The sailing centre as a whole appears to have 24 overnight visitor spaces and 20+ off-street parking spaces. With ample parking available for the centre, any limited additional activity generated at this site will not significantly affect parking requirements, with Birchen Grove able to accommodate some over spill parking if necessary. The centre does not seem to have any provision of cycle parking, in line with policy PS16. Further details in this respect could be secured by planning condition if necessary. The proposal does not affect the access into the site which will also remain the same and therefore visibility splays are retained. It is noted that the eastern arm of Birchen Grove leading to the site entrance does have a height and width restrictions in place.

18. Community Infrastructure Levy

19. The proposal is considered to be a *sui generis* use and therefore not liable for CIL.

20. Conclusion

21. The proposed first floor extension would fail to preserve the openness of the MOL for which very special circumstances do not exist given the changes which could be made to the design of the proposal which would achieve the modernisation of the existing facilities and comply with the policy requirements to preserve

the openness of the MOL. As such, refusal of planning permission is recommended.

RECOMMENDATION: Refuse Consent

CONDITIONS/REASONS:

- (1) The proposed two storey extension by reason of its excessive bulk, height, rearward projection and inappropriate roof design is considered to be an inappropriate development which is harmful to the openness of the Welsh Harp Metropolitan Open Land which is not successfully outweighed by the very special circumstances case put forward. As such the proposal is contrary to Policy OS3 of the UDP, Policy 7.27 of the London Plan and contrary Para. 88 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- (2) To assist applicants the Local Planning Authority has produced policies and written guidance, all of which is available on the Council's website and offers a pre planning application advice service. In this instance, amendments requested to the scheme during the course of the planning application were not made. The Council is ready to enter into discussions with the applicants to assist in the preparation of a new planning application.

INFORMATIVES:

None Specified

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Matthew Harvey, Planning and Regeneration, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, HA9 0FJ, Tel. No. 020 8937 4657