



Application Reference:	P1156.18
Location:	The Albany School, Broadstone Road
Ward:	Hylands
Description:	Demolition of existing classroom block (part single storey and part three storey) and erection of a replacement two storey classroom block.
Case Officer:	Jacob Lawrence
Reason for Report to Committee:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The application is by or on behalf of the Council and is a significant development.

1 BACKGROUND FOLLOWING DEFERRAL

1.1 This application was previously reported to the 13th of September 2018 Strategic Planning Committee. Following consideration of the application Members resolved to defer the determination of the application to enable a member site visit and (a) to understand from the ESFA what options have been explored for extension/replacement before submission and (b) to obtain confirmation from Sport England exactly what their views are on the alternative options explored by the ESFA and suggested by residents.

1.2 Following the deferral a Members site visit took place on 2nd October 2018. The visit provided an opportunity for Members to view the application site and further understand the relationship between the proposal and adjoining residential properties.

1.3 Following the deferral the Applicant has also provided a detailed summary of the design development process that resulted in the proposed location of the building being selected. As part of this analysis the ESFA engaged with Sport England to identify potential locations that would not conflict with their objectives. A summary of the potential options for the location of the building are detailed below:

- The sports pitch to the north-west of the school buildings
- The area of land to the immediate north of the existing block to be replaced.
- The land to the south of the main school building adjoining the hard-surfaced games court.
- The land to the east of the school buildings.
- Building on the school car park.
- Land to the west of the school building adjoining the boundary with properties fronting Broadstone Road.

1.4 The options listed above were not pursued as although some would not conflict with Sports England objectives they would result in additional impacts that weighed against their suitability. The negative implications of these alternative locations included impacts on amenity, loss of car park spaces, locational requirements of departments, need for the school to remain operational, impact on playing fields and safeguarding during construction. In contrast, the location as proposed represented the most suitable solution when all material planning considerations were taken into account.

1.5 The subject application does not seek permission to expand the existing school in terms of pupil numbers but rather is a result of the Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP) funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The PSBP is a condition led programme that seeks to address substandard educational facilities. It has been identified that the existing school building to be demolished has fallen into disrepair and has surpassed its economic design life.

1.6 Given the above Officers can confirm that there would be no increase in student numbers arising from the proposal. The report as presented to the committee on 13 September is reproduced below.

2 SUMMARY OF KEY REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of an existing classroom block (part single storey and part three storey) and erection of a replacement two storey classroom block.

2.2 The proposed two storey classroom block is required to replace an existing block that is no longer fit for purpose. The proposal would enable the school to maintain existing pupil numbers and provide a learning environment that meets current standards and facilitates continued education provision to meet an identified need within the Borough.

- 2.3 The existing part single storey and part three storey structure does not possess any architectural merit and therefore its demolition to make way for the proposed structure is supported.
- 2.4 Due regard has been given to the proximity of the replacement structure to neighbouring residential occupier's, however, officers are satisfied that the location, massing and detailed design of the structure strikes an acceptable balance between preserving neighbouring amenity and enabling the delivery of the block in a similar location to the existing structure.
- 2.5 The height scale and massing of the proposal is considered appropriate given the existing scale of development onsite. The acceptability of the proposed massing is supported by a simple yet effective design response. The use of brickwork across both the ground and first floor of the building has been secured through negotiation by officers and is considered to provide an enhanced level of robustness and aesthetic quality to the finished elevations.
- 2.6 Given the proposal would not result in an expansion of pupil numbers officers are satisfied that no adverse impacts in terms of highways and parking impacts, over and above current site conditions, would arise. Conditions are recommended to ensure any temporary impacts during the construction phase of the development are appropriately mitigated. Further conditions are recommended to ensure proposed privacy mitigation measures are implemented and the positive elements of the proposal advanced by the applicant are carried through to implementation. Subject to these conditions the proposal is considered acceptable and policy compliant.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the Committee resolve to GRANT planning permission
- 3.3 That the Head of Planning is delegated authority to issue the planning permission and impose conditions and informatives to secure the following matters:

Conditions

1. 3 year time limit
2. In accordance with approved drawings
3. Construction management plan
4. Material samples
5. Plant machinery
6. Construction hours
7. Tree Protection
8. Landscaping
9. Sustainability
10. Obscure glazing

Informatives

1. Working with Applicant
2. Fire safety
3. Thames water
4. Highways

4 PROPOSAL AND LOCATION DETAILS

Proposal

- 4.1 The subject application seeks planning permission to demolish an existing part single and part 3 storey teaching block and construct a replacement 2 storey structure.

The proposed building would be located towards the eastern boundary of the school site where it would occupy a similar position to an existing building to be demolished. The building would have a footprint of 780 square metres(sq.m) and extend to a maximum height of 9m above ground level. The building would benefit from a range of fenestration across ground and first floor level with buff brick cladding.

The proposed structure would provide teaching space as follows:

Ground floor

- Two 55 sq.m classrooms
- Two 96 sq.m resistant materials workshops
- One 83 sq.m electronic and controls system teaching space
- Two staff work rooms
- One group room

First floor

- Five 55 sq.m classrooms
- Two general art rooms (97 and 82 sq.m)

Site and Surroundings

- 4.2 Albany School is located approximately 2km south east of Romford Town Centre. The School currently provides education across a range of buildings extending between 1 and 3 storeys in height. The wider school site is bordered by residential properties to the north, east and west with Harrow Lodge Park to the south.
- 4.3 The area within which the proposed building is to be located is currently occupied by a part single and part three storey building to be demolished. The nearest residential properties are located on Steed Close to the east and Apollo Close to the north. Steed Close is characterised by two storey detached dwellings and Apollo Close is characterised by 2 storey terraced dwellings.

Planning History

- 4.4 The following planning applications are relevant to the application:

Approved application under ref. P0835.18 for: Erection of a two-storey temporary classroom block on part of the north-west playing field of the school, together with the provision of a temporary car park.

5 CONSULTATION RESPONSE

- 5.1 The views of the Planning Service are expressed in the MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS section below.

- 5.2 The following were consulted regarding the application:

Metropolitan Police (Designing Out Crime)

No objection subject to recommended conditions requiring secure by design principles to be incorporated into proposal.

London Fire Brigade

Hydrant officer confirmed that no new hydrants are required.

OFFICER COMMENT: The comments from LFB are noted and an informative is recommended to ensure the applicant is aware of the building regulation requirements in relation to Fire Safety.

LBH Environmental Health

No objection subject to recommended conditions

LBH Highways

No objection subject to recommended conditions and informatives.

Thames Water

No objection. Comments received in relation to surface water drainage and public sewers are noted and informatives are recommended to make the applicant aware of their responsibilities.

6 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

6.1 In accordance with planning legislation, the developer has consulted the local community on these proposals as part of the pre-application process.

6.2 The application has been supported by a Statement of Community Involvement which outlines the pre application public consultation that has taken place. This public consultation was linked to both the permanent development sought under the subject application and the temporary proposals being considered concurrently. The scope of the public consultation has been summarised below.

-The applicant held a public consultation event in the main hall of Albany School on Wednesday 16th May 2018 which ran from 3pm to 7pm.

-The public consultation event was advertised through a leaflet drop and local ward councillors were invited to attend.

-Presentation boards were used to display images which showed the proposal.

-The Applicant has outlined that the event was well attended and 8 members of the public left comments.

6.3 The main issues raised and the developer's responses are set out below.

-School bell alarm should be changed to an alternative system to mitigate noise.

-Letter of comfort requested in relation to the temporary building

-Proximity of temporary accommodation to dwellings questioned.

6.4 Further consultation was also undertaken by the developer during the course of this application after the applicant became aware that several residents stated they had not received the initial invitation to the Public Exhibition. A second consultation event for the residents of Steed Close, Parish Close & Apollo Close was held on Tuesday 8th August. This consultation was attended by 11 residents, Cllr Ciaran White and Cllr Christine Smith.

7 LOCAL REPRESENTATION

7.1 A total of 160 neighbouring properties were notified about the application and invited to comment. The application has been publicised by way of a site notice displayed in the vicinity of the application site and has also been publicised in the local press.

7.2 The number of representations received from neighbours, local groups etc in response to notification and publicity of the application were as follows:

No of individual responses: 14 objections.

Representations

7.5 The following issues were raised in representations that are material to the determination of the application, and they are addressed in substance in the next section of this report:

Objections

- Other alternative sites available with less impact and would not require temporary classroom and associated cost.
- Object on the grounds of privacy and loss of sunlight.
- The height should be lowered and the east facing first floor windows obscure glazed.
- A pale neutral colour building would be better than the red originally proposed.
- Additional noise as a result of the proposal.
- Concerns with lack of consultation.
- Mitigation planting would cause additional shadow.
- Existing trees cannot be relied upon for mitigation.
- Rights to light issues and lack of daylight analysis.
- Impact on wind.
- Construction related impacts.
- Reduced quality of life.

Non-material representations

7.6 The following issues were raised in representations, but they are not material to the determination of the application:

- Impact on property value
- Excessive cost to taxpayers

8 MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The main planning issues raised by the application that the committee must consider are:

- The principle of development and the need for school places
- The design and visual impact of the building
- Impact on amenity
- Parking and Highway issues

Principle of Development

- 8.1 All Local Authorities, including Havering, have a statutory duty to ensure that there are enough school places available in the borough to accommodate all children who live in the borough and might require one.
- 8.2 The NPPF attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of educational facilities are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Authorities are encouraged to take a proactive and positive approach to development that will widen choice in education, with great weight given to the need to create, expand or alter education facilities.
- 8.3 Replicating this, Policy 3.18 of the London Plan details that development proposals which enhance education and skills provision will be supported, including new build, expansion of existing or change of use to educational purposes. Policy DC29 states that the Council will ensure that the provision of primary and secondary education facilities is sufficient to meet the needs of residents by, amongst other things, seeking to meet the need for increased school places within existing sites.
- 8.4 This application seeks to deliver a new purpose 2 storey teaching block to replace an existing structure that is no longer fit for purpose. The proposal would not result in an increase in pupil numbers but would enable the existing pupil numbers to be maintained, thereby ensuring the existing education need in this part of the borough can continue to be met. The location of the building on land previously occupied by an existing building would accord with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which encourages the redevelopment of previously developed land.
- 8.6 In order to ensure continuity of education provision during the construction phase of this proposal an application for a temporary structure was made by the applicant and was granted permission under application ref. P0835.18.
- 8.7 Both the subject application and application approved under ref. P0835.18 would accord with key education based policy objectives and as such are considered acceptable in spatial planning terms.

Design

- 8.8 The proposed building would replace an existing structure that lacks any significant architectural merit. This existing structure is not subject to any form of protection and therefore its loss would not conflict with design based policy objectives of the development plan.
- 8.9 The proposed provides a relatively simple yet successful design response to the site with the form and fenestration of the building dictated by the proposed usage and need to provide a design response to mitigate potential privacy impacts. When compared to the existing structure in situ the proposal would represent a reduction in the overall height of development in this location. Within this context officers are satisfied that the proposed two storey structure would appear appropriate in its setting where it would be surrounded by a range of existing buildings of various scales and forms.
- 8.10 The acceptable height, bulk and massing is supported by the use of a robust brick façade that would ensure the finished elevations maintain a sense of visual interest through the varied tone and texture offered by the proposed brickwork. The use of brickwork as opposed to the partly rendered building as originally proposed represents a significant positive element of the proposal when considered in design terms and is a result of negotiation by officers during the course of the application. In order to ensure a high quality finish is achieved when the building is constructed onsite a condition is recommended requiring the submission of material samples for approval prior to the commencement of above ground works.
- 8.11 For the reasons detailed above officers are of the view that the proposal would accord with the design based policy objectives of with Policy DC61 of the LDF.

Amenity

- 8.12 As previously stated the proposed 2 storey building would be located in a similar position to an existing part single and part 3 storey structure. This existing structure is located within 2m of the sites eastern boundary where it extends to a single storey and 11m from the eastern boundary where it extends to 3 storeys. The proposed structure would be located between 9 and 10m from this eastern boundary which borders the Steed Close properties. The existing structure is located 19m from the sites northern boundary and the proposal would be set back 26m from this northern boundary where it adjoins the Apollo Close properties.
- 8.13 The key difference between the existing and proposed massing has been demonstrated by the applicant through drawings submitted in support of the

application. These drawings provide a visual representation of the key differences between the existing and proposed massing which have been summarised below:

-Reduced maximum height.

- Rationalised building footprint which occupies a net additional area of 25 square meters.

-Increased setback from the eastern boundary by at least 7m compared to where the existing building extends to a single storey.

8.14 When considered against the existing baseline of development on site the proposal is considered to result in a materially similar and arguably reduced level of impacts to neighbouring residential amenity. This conclusion is supported by the overshadowing study submitted in support of the application following an officer request for this study to be commissioned. The results of the study confirm that the residential gardens of the Steed Close properties to the east would continue to benefit from reasonable levels of sunlight. Specifically, it should be noted that the gardens of 6 and 10 Steed Close would suffer no loss as a result of the proposal whilst number 8 Steed Close would suffer a 1% reduction in garden area that would receive at least 2 hours of direct sunlight when considered on the 21st of March.

8.14 Further to the acceptability of the proposal when considered in comparison to the existing structure to be demolished it is noted that the structure would retain separation distances of between 21 and 30m from the nearest neighbouring residential windows. This retained separation is supported by the natural topography of the site which results in a situation in which the ground level of the proposed area to be built on sits approximately 1m lower than the ground floor level of the Steed Close properties.

8.15 In light of the above officers are satisfied that no unacceptable harm to neighbouring outlook, daylight and sunlight would arise as a result of the proposal.

8.16 Due regard has also been given to the potential privacy impacts arising from the proposals. With respect to this matter officers note that the separation distance of 21m between upper floor windows would be commensurate with the typical 18-22m separation distances that prevail in urban and suburban settings across the borough. This distance is considered sufficient to mitigate any unacceptable impacts on neighbouring privacy, however, in this case the applicant has offered further protection through the inclusion of obscure glazing to 1.7m above floor level where the separation distances are reduced to 21m. Where the proposal does not incorporate obscure glazing the

separation distances are in excess of 22m meters and therefore are sufficient so as to not require further mitigation.

- 8.17 In terms of overlooking across gardens the proposal would result in continued overlooking across residential gardens, particularly the Steed Close properties. However, this represents an acceptable continuation of the existing arrangements in addition to the mutual overlooking across residential gardens that already exists in this residential setting.
- 8.18 Further to the acceptability of the proposals considered above it must be acknowledged that the existing structure provides an established level of overlooking towards residential windows and across rear gardens and therefore the subject application broadly represents a continuation of this. Within this context officers are satisfied that any impacts on neighbouring privacy would remain well within acceptable parameters and does not rely on the existing buffer provided by vegetation along the sites eastern boundary.
- 8.19 Further to the assessment above, due regard has been given to the potential for the siting of the structure and associated use to generate additional noise and disturbance over and above existing. With respect to this consideration officers note that the site location is currently occupied by a teaching block surrounded by school grounds and therefore a range of noise generating activities could occur in this area. In contrast the use of the building as a classroom, which generally provides a low noise environment, contained within the fabric of the proposed building would not result in any material increase in potential noise generation. Further to this, the teaching times of the school ensure that the structures will not be in use during the early part of the morning, evening or weekend. As such, officers are satisfied no long term noise impacts would arise as a result of the proposals with construction management conditions recommended to mitigate any short term noise impacts.

Transport and Highways

- 8.20 The subject application would not result in an increase in the capacity of the existing school in terms of student numbers and therefore would not result in any increased trip generation as a result of pick-ups and drop offs. It must be acknowledged that the construction phase of the development would give rise to additional construction vehicle movements and would result in the need for short term parking provision. The temporary nature of these impacts ensures that no significant adverse impacts on the highway network would arise as a result of the proposals. Conditions are recommended to ensure the construction phase of the development accords to best practice and any impacts are appropriately mitigated.

Other Planning Issues

- 8.21 The application has been submitted with an extensive suite of supporting information in relation to ecology, arboriculture and sustainability. Officers have considered these elements of the proposals in detail and are satisfied that they demonstrate that the proposal would achieve compliance with key policy objectives. A range of conditions are recommended to ensure the positive elements of the proposal advanced by the applicant and identified mitigation measures with respect to these matters are secured and carried through to implementation.
- 8.22 Due regard has also been given to the representations made against the application. Whilst the core material planning considerations have been considered within the relevant sections of this report, officers note that a significant number of objectors have raised concern with both the subject proposal and that approved under ref. P0835.18 representing a waste of taxpayer money. The decision of the ESFA to pursue the development as proposed and any associated financial implications on the applicant does not represent a material planning consideration in this instance.

Conclusions

- 8.7 All other relevant policies and considerations have been taken into account. Planning permission should be granted for the reasons set out above. The details of the decision are set out in the RECOMMENDATION.