



# REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE

# REPORT

21 June 2012

**Subject Heading:**

**P0467.12 - A two-storey extension to the existing junior school building to replace the accommodation of the existing infants school building and increase the size of the school to a three-form-entry primary school. New landscaping works including a new vehicular entrance, bin store and multi use games area.**

**Report Author and contact details:**

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**Policy context:**

**Local Development Framework,  
London Plan  
National Planning Policy**

**Financial summary:**

**None**

**The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

Clean, safe and green borough	[ ]
Excellence in education and learning	[x]
Opportunities for all through economic, social and cultural activity	[x]
Value and enhance the life of every individual	[x]
High customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	[ ]

**SUMMARY**

This planning application proposes the erection of a two (part three) storey extension to replace existing, sub standard accommodation at Branfil Primary

School. The proposal would also allow for the expansion of the school from the current 424 pupils and 79 staff (full and part time) to allow for increases of approximately 201 pupils and 14 staff. The proposal would include landscaping works, a new vehicular entrance, a new extended car park, multi use games areas, play areas, and a bin store. Officers consider the proposal to be acceptable having had regard to the Development Plan and all other material considerations, including the principle of development; impact on visual amenity and the character of the area; the impact upon residential and local amenity; along with highways issues and other considerations. It is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted.

This application is brought before the Committee owing to the application being submitted, and the land being owned, by the Council.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. Time Limit – The development to which this permission relates must be commenced not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. Accordance with plans - The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the approved plans, particulars and specifications.

Reason: The Local Planning Authority consider it essential that the whole of the development is carried out and that no departure whatsoever is made from the details approved, since the development would not necessarily be acceptable if partly carried out or carried out differently in any degree from the details submitted. Also, in order that the development accords with the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

3. Travel Plan - The development shall not be occupied unless a Travel Plan for the school has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan shall include measures to reduce private vehicular trips and proposals for monitoring progress, including a timetable for its implementation and review. The agreed Travel Plan shall remain in force permanently and implemented in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: To help bring about a reduction in private car journeys and to minimise the potential for increased on street parking in the area.

4. Boundary Treatment - Before any of the buildings hereby permitted is first occupied, screen fencing of a type to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, shall be erected and shall be permanently retained and maintained thereafter to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:-

To protect the visual amenities of the development and prevent undue overlooking of adjoining property, and that the development accords with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

5. Storage of Refuse -Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, provision shall be made for the storage of refuse awaiting collection according to details which shall previously have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:-

In the interests of amenity of occupiers of the development and also the visual amenity of the development and the locality generally, and in order that the development accords with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

6. Cycle Storage - Prior to completion of the works hereby permitted, cycle storage of a type and in a location previously submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority shall be provided and permanently retained thereafter.

Reason:-

In the interests of providing a wide range of facilities for non-motor car residents, in the interests of sustainability.

7. Secure by Design - Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details of the measures to be incorporated into the development demonstrating compliance with the principles and practices of the 'Secured by Design' scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details, and shall not be occupied or used until written confirmation of compliance with the agreed details has been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.

Reason: In the interest of creating safer, sustainable communities, reflecting guidance set out in PPS1, Policy 4B.6 of the London Plan, and Policies CP17 'Design' and DC63 'Delivering Safer Places' of the LBH LDF.

8. Secure by Design - Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted a scheme showing the details of a CCTV system to be installed for the safety of users and the prevention of crime throughout, shall be

submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Crime Prevention Design Advisor. No part of the development shall be occupied or used before the scheme is implemented as agreed.

Reason: In the interest of creating safer, sustainable communities, reflecting guidance set out in PPS1, Policy 4B.6 of the London Plan, and Policies CP17 'Design' and DC63 'Delivering Safer Places' of the LBH LDF.

9. Materials - Before any of the development hereby permitted is commenced, samples of all materials to be used in the external construction of the building(s) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and thereafter the development shall be constructed with the approved materials.

Reason:-

To ensure that the appearance of the proposed development will harmonise with the character of the surrounding area and comply with Policy DC61 of the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document.

10. Highways - The development hereby approved shall not commence until the detailed design of highway improvements to Cedar Road and Bridge Avenue, including the consideration of speed reduction measures and further parking controls, have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in conjunction with the Highway Authority.

Reason: To ensure the interests of highway safety and amenity and to accord with Policy DC 32.

11. Highways - The necessary agreement, notice or licence to enable the proposed alterations to the Public Highway shall be entered into prior to the commencement of the development.

Reason: To ensure the interests of the travelling public and are maintained and comply with policies of the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies, namely CP10, CP17 and DC61.

12. Highways – The proposed car parking indicated on the approved plans shall be provided prior to the approved building being brought into use, and shall be retained for the life of the development.

Reason: To ensure the interests of highway safety and amenity and to accord with Policy DC 32.

13. Landscaping – The submitted landscaping scheme, received by the Council on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2012, shall be implemented in the first planting season following completion of the development and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the

next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the proposed development will harmonise with the character of the surrounding area and comply with Policy DC61 of the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document.

14. Construction Times - No construction works or deliveries into the site shall take place other than between the hours of 08.00 to 18.00 on Monday to Friday and 08.00 to 13.00 hours on Saturdays unless agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. No construction works or deliveries shall take place on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:-

To protect residential amenity, and in order that the development accords with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

### **Informatives**

1. The Highway Authority requires the Planning Authority to advise the applicant that planning approval does not constitute approval for changes to the public highway. Highway Authority approval will only be given after suitable details have been submitted, considered and agreed. The Highway Authority requests that these comments are passed to the applicant. Any proposals which involve building over the public highway as managed by the London Borough of Havering, will require a licence and the applicant must contact StreetCare, Traffic & Engineering on 01708 433750 to commence the Submission/ Licence Approval process.
2. Should this application be granted planning permission, the developer, their representatives and contractors are advised that this does not discharge the requirements under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 and the Traffic Management Act 2004. Formal notifications and approval will be needed for any highway works (including temporary works) required during the construction of the development.
3. In aiming to satisfy condition 7 the applicant should seek the advice of the Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor. The services of the local Police CPDA are available free of charge through Havering Development and Building Control. It is the policy of the local planning authority to consult with the Borough CPDA in the discharging of community safety condition(s).

## **Reason for Approval (should planning permission be granted)**

The proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle given that it would address an identified shortfall in primary school provision, and improve the standard of the facilities available. Subject to the use of conditions, it is considered that the proposal would not result in any significant adverse impacts in relation to visual amenity and local character, residential amenity, and other considerations, as discussed. The proposal is likely to result in an increase in local traffic congestion during discrete periods of the day during the school week, but given the educational benefits of the proposal along with the potential mitigating factors of the Travel Plan, the highways impact is not considered sufficient to warrant refusal in this case.

Having considered the principle of development, design/street scene issues, amenity implications, parking and highways issues, and other considerations, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the aims and objectives of Policies CP10, CP17, DC18, DC29, DC32, DC33, DC58, DC61, and DC63 of the LDF Development Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD, as well as the provisions of the London Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **REPORT DETAIL**

#### **1. Site Description**

- 1.1 The application site comprises the existing Branfil Primary school, which includes numerous buildings and areas of curtilage containing play areas and other open spaces, along with car parking. The main cluster of school buildings, which mainly date back to the 1920s, are located towards the southern end of the site. This complex of brick buildings is separated by a playground from a further set of buildings located towards the northern end of the site. This latter complex of buildings mainly comprises single storey, temporary structures used as classrooms, which are in a tired state of repair.
- 1.2 The site is located within a residential area approximately 1km to the south west of the centre of Uppminster. The site's eastern boundary runs alongside Cedar Avenue, over the road from residential properties that line the public highway. The site's northern and southern boundaries lie adjacent to residential properties located along the western side of Cedar Avenue. The western boundary lies adjacent to several properties located along Lime Avenue, but mainly abuts an area of woodland.
- 1.3 The site is located on undesignated land but is located alongside a Metropolitan level Site of Nature Conservation Importance and land

designated as Parks, Open Spaces, Playing Fields and Allotments in the LDF.

## **2. Description of Proposal**

- 2.1 This planning application proposes the erection of a 2-3 storey extension at the western side of the existing complex of brick buildings towards the southern end of the site. The proposed extension would provide space, internally, for classrooms and a nursery, amongst other spaces required by the school. The proposed nursery would be kept separate from the remainder of the school, and would have a dedicated pedestrian access through a new entrance at the south eastern corner of the site. The proposed extension would replace the buildings, which it is proposed to demolish at the northern end of the site, and would also allow for an increase in the capacity of the school, with a potential increase of 201 pupils from the current 424, and an increase of 14 staff from the current 79.
- 2.2 The proposal would be built on land that slopes down towards the north meaning that, at its northern end, the proposal would be 3 storeys in height, whilst at its southern end it would be 2 storeys in height. At its northern end, the proposal would be 12m in height from ground level; it would not be taller than the existing, main brick building at any point. The proposal would be approximately 72m length at its longest point, and 23m at its widest point. The proposed extension would run in a north-south direction with its main, and most visible, elevation facing towards the west. The proposal would be visible from Cedar Avenue in the east as it would project beyond the northern end of the existing brick buildings that face the public highway.
- 2.3 The extension would have a flat roof and be clad in a combination of glazing, render, and wood. A platform structure attached to the proposal's western, or main, elevation, with stairs at each end, would provide a level entrance area over what is sloped ground.
- 2.4 The proposed development would also involve the demolition of various buildings. One of the buildings forms part of the brick buildings at the southern end of the site and will be directly replaced by the proposed extension. It is also proposed to demolish the extensive complex of single storey buildings at the northern end of the site, which are being used as classrooms. These would be replaced by a car park and multi use games area. Additional sports and play areas would be provided immediately to the south, alongside the retained brick buildings and proposed extension. An outside play area would be provided at the south western end of the site for use in association with the nursery. New landscaping and pathways would also be provided in various parts of the site.
- 2.5 The existing gross internal floor space of buildings at the site is approximately 2705sqm, 815sqm of which is comprised of classrooms. The existing external play areas are 6353sqm in area. The proposed gross internal floor space is 3652sqm, 1360sqm of which would be classroom space, with the proposed external play area being 7057sqm. The proposal

would therefore result in a significant increase in both classroom space and external play areas and this is achieved by replacing a number of single storey buildings with the proposed two storey extension, making more efficient use of the space available within the site.

- 2.6 The site currently has 50 parking spaces and these would be increased by 14, which corresponds with the proposed increase in staff numbers. Cycle parking would be provided at the site with a total of 72 spaces.

### **3. Relevant History**

- 3.1 The previous planning decisions of most relevance to this application are as follows:

P0204.10 - Temporary storage container on playing field.

P0616.10 - Temporary storage container on school playing field.

P1681.99 - Single storey extension to provide computer suite – Approved.

### **4. Consultations/Representations**

- 4.1 Notification letters were sent to 84 neighbouring properties with 70 objection letters being received from residents in the surrounding area along with 4 letter of support. The objections raised are on the following grounds:

- a) There is insufficient capacity in the local highway network for more traffic;
- b) The proposal would provide insufficient parking spaces;
- c) The increase in traffic will result in further damage to the highway and reduce highway safety;
- d) There is intense traffic congestion during the mornings and afternoons;
- e) Vehicles are parked along the highway and prevent the passage of emergency vehicles;
- f) A memorial tree within the site will be destroyed;
- g) The existing school railings are of historical importance;
- h) There will be an increase in noise;
- i) Litter dropped from vehicles;
- j) There will be an adverse effect on property prices;
- k) The site is too small to accommodate the proposed expansion compared to other schools in the area;
- l) The design does not match the existing buildings;
- m) A single storey extension would be preferred;
- n) The proposal would result in the loss of light, overlooking, noise, and odour impacts on neighbouring occupiers;
- o) The need for an expanded school in this location has not been demonstrated;
- p) The proposal would be contrary to planning policies;



- q) The submitted traffic assessment is inaccurate;
- r) The Design and Access Statement is inaccurate in its description of neighbouring properties;
- s) A proposed new footpath at the southern end of the site would result in significant noise and overlooking to No.16 Cedar Avenue.

The four letters of support state that the proposal would provide a welcome improvement to the facilities at the school.

- 4.2 Responses have been received from the following statutory and internal consultees:

Environment Agency – Comments awaited.

Sport England – No objections.

Highway Authority – No objections; conditions recommended.

Crime Prevention Design Advisor – No objections; conditions recommended.

London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority – No objections.

## **5. Relevant Policies**

- 5.1 The following policies of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (“the LDF”) are material in this case:

CP10 (Sustainable Transport)

CP17 (Design)

DC18 (Parks, Open Spaces, Playing Fields, and Allotments)

DC29 (Educational Premises)

DC32 (The Road Network)

DC33 (Car parking)

DC55 (Noise)

DC58 (Sites of Nature Conversation Importance)

DC61 (Urban Design)

- 5.2 The following policies of the London Plan are of relevance:

Policy 3.18 (Education Facilities)

- 5.3 National Planning Policy Framework is also a material consideration.

## **6. Staff Comments**

- 6.1 This proposal is put before the Committee owing to the application being submitted, and the land being owned, by the Council. The main issues to be considered by Members in this case are the principle of development,

design/street scene issues, amenity implications, parking and highways issues, and other considerations.

## **7. Principle of Development**

7.1 Policy 3.18 of the London Plan states that:

*“Development proposals which enhance education and skills provision will be supported, including new build, expansion of existing facilities or change of use to educational purposes. Those which address the current projected shortage of primary school places will be particularly encouraged.”*

7.2 Policy DC29 seeks to ensure that the provision of primary and secondary education facilities is sufficient in quantity and quality to meet the needs of residents. The need for increased school places will normally be met by seeking opportunities within existing sites.

7.3 The submitted information states that the proposed expansion of the school’s facilities would address an identified shortage of primary school places and is therefore supported by planning policy. Given the existing use of the site and the objectives of the above mentioned policies, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in principle.

## **8. Design/Impact on Street scene**

8.1 Policy DC61 seeks to ensure that new developments/alterations are satisfactorily located and are of a high standard of design and layout. Furthermore, it seeks that the appearance of new developments/alterations is compatible with the character of the surrounding area, and does not prejudice the environment of the occupiers and adjacent properties.

8.2 Objections have been raised by neighbouring occupiers stating that the proposal would have a significant adverse visual impact on the character of the area.

8.3 The bulk of the proposal would not be visible from beyond the site. The site’s eastern boundary is heavily screened by adjoining woodland, beyond which is open land. The proposal would be partially visible from the rear of residential properties located along Cedar Avenue and Lime Avenue, although the view would be broken up by a combination of trees and other vegetation, boundary fencing, and the topography of the land. The existing landscaping along the boundary with the Lime Avenue properties would be reinforced by the planting of trees. The proposal would also be partially visible from the public highway, Cedar Avenue, as it would extend beyond the northern elevation of the existing buildings.

8.4 Whilst the proposal would be visible from certain vantage points, it is not considered that it would result in any significant adverse impacts on visual amenity or the character of the area. The height of the proposed extension is below the ridge height of the existing brick buildings, and it is largely

screened by the existing buildings and other features in the surrounding landscape. Whilst the modern design of the extension differs from that of the existing buildings, it is considered that its use of materials and overall appearance would complement the brick buildings to be retained and would be an improvement over the dilapidated complex of buildings in use at the northern end of the site.

- 8.5 The proposed extension, along with the other aspects of the proposal, is considered to be acceptable in terms of their design, appearance, and impact upon the character of the area. In this regard, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy DC61 of the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document.

## **9. Impact on amenity**

- 9.1 Policy DC61 of the LDF states that planning permission will not be granted for proposals that would significantly diminish local and residential amenity.
- 9.2 Objections have been received from neighbouring occupiers stating that the proposal would result in significant adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, including noise and overlooking. The occupiers of No.16 Cedar Avenue have objected to the proposal on the grounds that a proposed path, to run alongside the southern boundary of the site, would have a significant adverse impact on the amenity
- 9.3 It is considered that in relation to the physical development of the site, only the proposed extension would result in any potential adverse impacts on neighbouring occupiers. Given the change in ground level between these properties and the site, the proposal would be more noticeable than the existing buildings. However, the separation distances and the presence of screening are such that, it is considered, the proposal would not result in a significant adverse visual impact from neighbouring properties.
- 9.4 The proposed extension would be located approximately 41m from the rear of the nearest dwellings located along Lime Avenue, and around 8m from the boundaries of the curtilages of these properties, although the boundaries are screened by vegetation and fencing. The proposal would be located approximately 30m from the rear curtilage of No.16 Cedar Avenue, and in excess of 70m from other properties located along Cedar Avenue. Openings located in the southern and western elevations of the proposed extension, and relating to classrooms and service areas, would face towards properties along Cedar Avenue and Lime Avenue. The openings in the western elevation in particular would be the nearest to neighbouring properties although they would be at an oblique angle. Given the separation distances between these openings and the properties in question and the oblique angles involved, along with the presence of landscaping, it is considered that there would not be any significant adverse overlooking to these properties. Given the siting, design, and scale of the proposal, particularly in relation to neighbouring properties, and given the nature of the surrounding

landscape, it is considered that the proposal would not result in any significant adverse impacts in terms of overlooking, outlook, or loss of light.

- 9.5 In terms of noise impacts, the main outdoor play areas would be located towards the centre and northern end of the site. The site remains as a school and there will inevitably be noise during the school day, particularly during break times. The Council's Environmental Health officers have been consulted about the proposal but comments have yet to be received. Members will be updated at Committee of the comments received.
- 9.6 In relation to the comments made by the occupants of No.16 Cedar Avenue, it is considered that the proposed pathway would not result in a significant adverse impact on their amenity. The proposed path is only intended to provide access to the nursery, which would have around 30 places. For security reasons, access to the pathway would be strictly controlled by a gateway on to the public highway. In terms of noise, it is considered that the proposed pathway would not be used intensively enough to cause any significant nuisance, particularly given the limited numbers that would attend the nursery and the discrete times of weekdays that they would generally visit. In terms of overlooking, a condition could be imposed requiring the submission of details relating to screen fencing along that boundary, to prevent any significant overlooking.
- 9.7 Subject to no adverse comments being received from Environmental Health officers, and subject to the afore mentioned conditions, it is considered that the proposal would be in accordance with Policy DC61 of the LDF in relation to amenity considerations.

## **10. Highway/parking Issues**

- 10.1 The proposal would result in a significant increase in the number of children attending the school, along with an increase in the number of teaching staff. An increase of 14 parking spaces, over and above what is already provided, is proposed to accommodate the increase in staff numbers.
- 10.2 Objections have been received from local residents stating that the proposal would have a significant adverse impact on access arrangements in the local area. It is likely that there will be an increase in the number of vehicle movements in the local area, however, the vast majority of the traffic generated by the school occurs at discrete periods of the day; usually a 30 minute window in the morning and then in the afternoon on weekdays. Moreover, the submitted Travel Plan proposed various measures for reducing car use.
- 10.3 The proposal could result in an increase in traffic congestion in the local area during the morning and afternoon peak times. To address this, the application is accompanied by a draft Travel Plan, which discusses various means of encouraging alternative modes of transport to the use of cars. It is recommended that a condition be imposed requiring the implementation and monitoring of this Travel Plan, should planning permission be granted.

However, even with the proposed Travel Plan measures, it is considered likely that there will still be an increase in the use of car trips to and from the site. Any increase in traffic should be weighed against the favourable policy position of the proposal, in that it would address a shortfall in school places and improve the standard of school provision within the borough by replacing existing, poor quality accommodation.

- 10.4 The Highway Authority was consulted about the proposal but raised no objections subject to the imposition of planning conditions and informatives, which it is recommended should be imposed if planning permission is granted.
- 10.5 Whilst the proposal is likely to result in periodic increases in local traffic congestion, given that no objections have been raised by the Highway Authority, and given that the increased highway impact would generally only occur at specific periods of time, the impact of the proposal, in terms of highway safety and access arrangements, is considered to be acceptable, subject to the use of the afore mentioned conditions.

## **11. Other Considerations**

- 11.1 The Council's Crime Prevention Design Advisor has raised no objections to the proposal but has suggested conditions relating to the installation of CCTV and measures to design out crime. It is recommended that these conditions be imposed should planning permission be granted.
- 11.2 The site is located in Flood Zone 1 but is more than 1 hectare in area, meaning that a Flood Risk Assessment is required. The Environment Agency have been consulted about the proposal but have yet to respond. Members will be updated of any comments received at Planning Committee.
- 11.3 Objections have received stating that the proposal would have a detrimental impact on local property values. This is not a material planning consideration.
- 11.4 Given the nature of the proposal, including its siting, scale and design, it is considered that it would not have any significant adverse impacts on the neighbouring Site of Nature Conservation Importance or open space.

## **12. Conclusion**

- 12.1 The proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle given that it would address an identified shortfall in primary school provision, and improve the standard of the facilities available. Subject to the use of conditions, it is considered that the proposal would not result in any significant adverse impacts in relation to visual amenity and local character, residential amenity, and other considerations, as discussed. The proposal is likely to result in an increase in local traffic congestion during discrete periods of the day during the school week, but given the educational benefits of the proposal and the absence of objections from the Highway Authority, along with the potential

mitigating factors of the Travel Plan, the highways impact is not considered sufficient to warrant refusal in this case.

12.2 Subject to there being no adverse comments from consultees, and subject to the recommended conditions, Officers consider the proposal to be acceptable having considered Policies CP10, CP17, DC18, DC29, DC32, DC33, DC55, DC58, DC61, and DC63 of the LDF and all other material considerations, and therefore recommend that the application be approved.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

### **Financial implications and risks:**

None.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

This application is considered on its own merits and independently from the Council's interest as applicant and owner of the site.

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

None.

### **Equalities implications and risks:**

The Council's planning policies are implemented with regard to Equalities and Diversity. The proposal will enhance accessibility to educational facilities.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Application form, plans and a Design and Access Statement.