

PART 5: Development Presentations

Item 5.1

1. DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

Ref: 17/05470/PRE
Location: Coombe Lodge Playing Fields, South Croydon, CR2 7HY.
Ward: Croham
Description: Presentation of a pre-application scheme for the change of use of site from playing fields (D2) to 1,680 pupil secondary school (D1), with associated erection of new three storey school building and two storey sports block, car park, service yard, new pedestrian and vehicle entrance and associated landscaping including provision of an all-weather pitch.
Drawing Nos: N/A
Applicant: Wates Construction Limited
Agent: Alan Gunne-Jones of P+DA
Case Officer: Barry Valentine

2. PROCEDURAL NOTE

- 2.1 This pre-application report is presented in new style that is being trialled which provides a more focussed approach to pre application presentation to and engagement with Planning Committee. The report covers the following points:
- a. Executive summary of key issues with scheme
 - b. Site briefing
 - c. Summary of matters for consideration
 - d. Officers' preliminary conclusions
 - e. Specific feedback requests

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES WITH SCHEME

- 3.1 The proposal is a mixed comprehensive free school providing 1,680 pupil places for girls and boys, aged between 11 and 18 years. There will be 8 forms of entry with each year group comprising 240 pupils. It is also proposed that there will be a sixth form of up to 480 pupils. The school will operate as a sports specialism and offer enhanced sporting facilities.
- 3.2 The school is proposed with a GIA of approximately 12,320m², including a sports hall, car park with 130 spaces, 3G all-weather pitch and grass pitches. Access to and from the car park would be via a new 'in' and 'out' access off Coombe Road. A new service area would also be created that utilises the existing access from Melville Avenue.
- 3.3 The scheme has developed through a series of pre-application meetings and was reviewed by the Place Review Panel on 18th January 2018. The draft

conclusions of the Place Review Panel are included at the end of this report. The applicant intends to submit the planning application towards the end of March 2018.

- 3.4 Officers consider that the scheme is developing in a positive fashion. There are some key issues which officers are keen to draw to Members attention and to generate debate:

Loss of Playing Field Area

The proposed development will inevitably result in a loss of playing field area. Sports England are a statutory consultee who have raised some concerns and have suggested modifications, some of which would compromise (in officer's view) the design quality of the scheme.

Pupil Safety, Highway Alterations and Impact on Traffic Flow

To ensure the safety of pupils travelling to and from the site, modifications to existing highway conditions are necessary. There is likely to be some consequences with these highway alterations in terms of traffic movements and flows, potentially affecting residential amenity. This will need to be carefully thought through, to ensure that an appropriate balance is reached.

Intensification of Use and Potential Impact on Neighbouring Living Conditions

At present, the site is not well used; a small number of sports teams (largely football based) use the playing fields at weekends. The development, both through the introduction of 1,680 pupil school and through the provision of sports facilities by the wider community, would increase the level of activity on the site. A careful balance will need to be struck between maximising the potential of the site and respecting the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers to a reasonable extent.

4. SITE BRIEFING

- 4.1 The application site (outlined in red in the two images below) is a 10.57 hectare area of land located at the junction of Coombe Road (A212) and Melville Avenue. The site consists of a dilapidated and boarded up changing room pavilion, playing fields, access road and small gravel and concrete car park. At the time of the site visit, four football pitches were marked out. Access to the car park is from the northern end of Melville Avenue and there is a pedestrian entrance at the junction of Coombe Road and Melville Avenue. There are a significant number of trees within the site and a significant change of land levels across the site, with the land rising to the south and east.



- 4.2 The site is bound to the north by Coombe Road, to the west by Melville Avenue, to the south by Coombe Wood and residential dwellings and to the east by 100/102 Coombe Road and the Grade II listed Coombe Lodge. The surrounding area comprises a mix of residential, woodland and green open space.
- 4.3 The site is currently designated as Green Belt, although under the latest modified version of Emerging Local Plan, which is due to be adopted on the 27th February 2018, the site is proposed to be de-designated as Green Belt. The Emerging Local Plan designation of the site states the following 'secondary school with retention of playing pitches.'
- 4.4 The site is not in a conservation area and does not contain any listed buildings. There are no conservation areas within the vicinity of the site whose setting would be impacted by the development.
- 4.5 The site is in close vicinity to the following listed buildings/structures whose setting could be impacted by the development: Coombe Lodge (Grade II), Lodge to Combe House (St Margaret's School) (Grade II) and Coombe House (St Margaret's School) (Grade II). The site is located within Archaeological Priority Zone.
- 4.6 The site is adjacent to the following locally listed historic park and gardens: Geoffrey Harris House/Coombe House, Lloyd Park and Royal Russell School.
- 4.7 The site is located within Flood Risk Zone 1, as defined by the Environment Agency. The site is modelled as being at risk from surface water flooding on a 1 in 100-year basis.
- 4.8 Due to the size of the site, the Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) varies between 2 (poor) and 0 (worst). The entrance to the site has a PTAL rating of 1b (very poor). Despite the poor PTAL rating for the site, the site is within a short

walk of Lloyd Park Tram Stop and a reasonable walking distance from two bus service routes on Croham Road.

- 4.9 The southernmost part of the site is in a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.
- 4.10 The site is surrounded by many schools, including Old Palace of John Whitgift Junior School and Rutherford School to the south on Melville Avenue, The Cedars School and Royal Russell School to the East on Coombe Road and St Peter's Primary School to the south east on Normanton Road.

5. SUMMARY OF MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 The main matters for consideration in a future submission are as follows:

Principle of Development

- 5.2 The site is currently located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. However, this is not envisaged to be a policy restraint on the development due to the new emerging local plan which (if adopted) will de-designate the site from the Metropolitan Green Belt. Simultaneously, the new emerging local plan would allocate the site as a 'secondary school with retention of playing pitches' thus establishing the use of the site as suitable for education.
- 5.3 Paragraph 74 of the NPPF seeks to protect playing fields from development and inevitably, the proposal would result in a significant loss of playing field area. There is considered scope in this instance to justify development on parts of the playing fields through improvements in quality of facilities, intensifying use and through increasing local community participation – facilitated by a community use agreement. Officers have requested the applicant to ensure that the scheme benefits as broad range of the community as possible, including the introduction of activities/sports that may benefit those with mental or physical disabilities.
- 5.4 It is worth noting that whilst Sports England have raised initial concerns about the loss of playing fields area, they have indicated a willingness to work with the applicant and the local planning authority. Initially they have inquired whether the following changes could be made to the scheme:
- Moving the car parking away from the playing fields (and if necessary reducing its size) so that it is located directly to the front of the school, thereby reducing the impact on the playing field and to provide more pitches to the rear.
 - The location of landscaping (including trees) needs more careful consideration so that trees are not located where there is the potential to provide smaller pitches that could accommodate mini or junior football use on the site.
 - Sport England and the ECB would like to see some provision made for cricket on the site. It should be noted that the school do not intend to put cricket on their curriculum and do not consider that there is sufficient need for this provision to be provided.
 - An agronomist report covering the grass pitches should be provided which should include recommendations for improvements to the whole of the remaining grass area.

- More consideration to be given on whether more could be done to retain the open space/playing field on this site, for example through a MUGA on the roof of the sports hall or sunken sports hall, or other innovative solutions?

Character, Scale and Massing

- 5.5 Officers' are supportive of the proposed site layout, scale and massing and feel that the scheme successfully balances the dichotomy of achieving a strong civic presence when viewed from Coombe Lane, whilst having a respectful balanced relationship to surrounding neighbouring residential properties. The footprint of the main school building helps achieve this balance, with the 'finger' form of the building allowing the façade to run parallel to Coombe Lane. This should help ensure that building has a suitable presence, whilst simultaneously breaking up the massing of the building when viewed from the rear and sides. The variation in sizing of the "fingers" should also help alleviate the massing of the development away from residential properties and towards the less sensitive, more open central areas. The 'finger' approach also allows light into the centre of the building and should provide views out into the pleasant surroundings of the school.
- 5.6 Officers were initially critical of the relationship between the main school building to the sport hall, with the latter shown as recessed into the site, especially given the likely intended community use of these facilities and the school's intention to promote sporting excellence. Officers feel that the applicant has successfully responded to issue, by pushing the school back further into the site, which allows the school to align with the Sports Hall more successfully. The pushing of the school back also presents an opportunity to insert more landscaping to the front that could help integrate the development into the wider Green Belt and local listed park setting. Notwithstanding the above, these design changes work against the views of Sport England to a certain extent. A balanced approach to these two, somewhat competing objectives needs to be determined.
- 5.7 The articulation of the volumes of the building should introduce visual interest to the proposed school range, helping to break up the massing of the site, whilst also giving the site legibility. The projecting corner metal clad entrance should introduce a visually interesting positive element although officers feel that this has yet to be fully resolved and is required to be further developed.
- 5.8 Officer's support the use of metal seam, brick and glass as the main materials which should be of suitable quality and robustness. Officers have some concerns over the use of large areas of render (particularly the rear courtyard elevations) and we have encouraged the use of other treatments and materials.

Residential Amenity

- 5.9 It is not envisaged that the proposed development would have a significant impact on quality of neighbouring properties' living conditions in terms of light and outlook, or privacy.
- 5.10 The principle impact of the development is likely be associated with the intensification of the use of the site and its associated impacts in terms of noise

generation, comings and goings at the beginning and end of the school day, visual intrusion and potential loss of privacy.

- 5.11 In terms of privacy, visual intrusion and noise disturbance, the external areas of the school that are likely to be intensely used or which could generate significant levels of noise disturbance (such as playgrounds) are currently shown to be located away from the boundaries of the site and/or surrounded by the courtyard buildings which should help mitigate noise transfer. Further work on landscaping may be needed to ensure that pupils are directed away from neighbouring property boundaries, which should also help mitigate any privacy effects.
- 5.12 Any additional noise effects associated with (for example) additional car movements and pupil movements is likely to be during the less sensitive daytime hours. Conditions/restrictions are likely to be required to prevent early morning/late night deliveries. Similarly, hours of use on the community use are likely to be required and the applicant will be expected to model all these various potential noise effects as part of a noise assessment (that will need to accompany an eventual planning application).
- 5.13 In terms of light pollution, it is noted that the existing site does not benefit from extensive external lighting and that additional lighting will need to be assessed, particularly any floodlighting of the proposed multi-use games area. It is expected that the applicant will be able to demonstrate upon application that lighting has been designed so as not to cause disturbance to neighbouring properties – but this will need to be tested as part of the application process. The effect of floodlighting on wildlife (in view of the open wooded character of neighbouring sites) would also need to be properly considered.

Highways and Parking

- 5.14 It is critical that the proposed development ensures the safety of pupils and other users of the school, especially considering the proximity of the school to the busy Coombe Lane. To ensure the safety of the public, a package of highway works will be required – and delivered as part of the development. Options that will need to be considered include one-way access/exit arrangements in the case of Melville Avenue, a review of road markings/signage, installation of pedestrian crossings, removal of existing crossings, pelican/toucan crossings and signalised junctions. The consequences of these highway alterations will need to be balanced against the impact on highway movements/flow, as well as residential amenity. A pelican crossing in Coombe Road – directing pupils to a primary pedestrian entrance into the school would interrupt the natural flow of traffic and in turn, would result in some localised congestion. However, controlled crossings would significantly enhance pedestrian safety near the school – and enhance links to nearby public transport options.
- 5.15 A Preliminary Transport Scoping Note has been submitted alongside this pre-application process which provides a framework for the submission of the Transport Assessment – to assess the impacts of the proposed development on all road users, the immediate highway/transportation infrastructure and environment.

5.16 This initial scoping covers the following:

- appraisal of existing transport conditions,
- baseline and future traffic conditions,
- preferred location form and access, mode share and trip generation,
- assessment of access arrangements,
- vehicle and cycle parking.

5.17 The scoping note confirms that the following documents will be necessary:

- a transport assessment,
- school travel plan,
- a delivery service plan,
- a car park management plan,
- preliminary design of access arrangements and
- stage one road safety assist in respect of the new access and crossing arrangements.

5.18 The transport assessment would include traffic modelling of the access arrangements, car park capacity/demand assessment, pedestrian desire lines, PERS and CERS Audits, personal injury accident assessment data analysis together with the public transport capacity assessment for buses and trams.

5.19 The proposed development provides a significant number of parking spaces, as well as drop off areas. This should help render the site more self-sufficient, thereby reducing the impact of the development on parking stress on neighbouring roads. However, excessive on site car parking can result in higher levels of car journeys in the vicinity of the site and counteract the benefits of more sustainable forms of travel (including walking, cycling and public transport).

Trees

5.20 The site contains and is surrounded by many good quality mature trees that make a significant contribution to visual amenity of the area. Significant trees should be retained as much as possible and replacements planted where necessary.

5.21 Officers have advised the applicant that a full application should include a tree survey, constraints plan and a tree protection plan. A landscape scheme will also be required.

Archaeology

5.22 Whilst the Local Plan designates the site as being in an Archaeological Priority Area, the site is excluded from the latest Historic England's Archaeological Priority Area Appraisal (completed in February 2016). A desktop study will be required to be submitted with the application and sent to Historic England's Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS). It is not expected that archaeological remains will be a significant restraint on the development.

Sustainability and Environment

- 5.23 Policy requires that major developments are designed in accordance with the London Sustainable Design and Construction SPG and achieve a 35% reduction in carbon and meet BREEAM Excellent.
- 5.24 The applicant has indicated that the 35% reduction is likely to be able to be achieved through on-site measures such as photovoltaic panels. They have also indicated that they expect that the development will achieve BREEAM Excellent.
- 5.25 A flood risk assessment will be required to be submitted with the application including a detailed SuDs scheme. SuDs will need to be integrated into the design of the scheme and it is expected that the development achieves better than greenfield run-off rates.
- 5.26 The application site includes and is adjacent to a designated site of nature conservation importance. The application will be expected to include a preliminary survey of the site to ensure there is no protected flora and fauna. Opportunities should be taken where possible to enhance biodiversity along with the use of green roofs and green roofs.
- 5.27 The entire borough is located within an Air Quality Management Area. The development both during construction and once complete could have an adverse impact on air quality if not sufficiently managed. A detailed Air Quality Management Assessment will be required to be submitted upon application. An air quality contribution is also likely to be required through the legal agreement.
- 5.28 The site contains habitat value for breeding birds, bats, reptiles and amphibians. Mitigation and enhancement measures are likely to be required to deal with the effects of the development.
- 5.29 EIA Screening Opinion has been submitted and the local planning authority has confirmed that it does not consider that an EIA is required.
- 5.20 Due to the presence of previously worked land, there is the possibility that some land contamination might be present. Any risk will need to be identified through application of a desktop study, with remediation measures secured by way of a planning condition.

6. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Whilst discussions remain on-going, the proposed development has the potential to be an appropriate design response to the challenges of the site and should be creating a building that has a strong civic presence whilst maintaining a respectful relationship with neighbouring properties, whilst also creating high quality sports facilities. Whilst the comments of Sports England are noted, it is considered that some of their suggestions might well compromise the architectural quality of the school design and the strength of the proposed community use offer. Issues raised by Sports England might be able to be overcome through robust

demonstration of enhanced sports facilities on site alongside associated enhanced sports engagement and participation (including a robust community use agreement) involving the broadest range of the local population as possible.

- 6.2 The proposed development is sufficiently located away from neighbouring properties that any impacts from the built form on neighbouring properties' light, outlook and privacy would be negligible. Impact on neighbouring properties' living conditions through intensification of use would likely to be able to managed through good design, mitigation measures (landscaping) and conditions (hours of use).
- 6.3 Transport and ensuring pupil safety is one of the critical challenges of the site. The proposed scope of the studies that the applicant has indicated they will undertake is should be welcomed and should help deliver the most appropriate solution for the site. This is an area that will need further thought, development and consideration.
- 6.4 Pre-application engagement has (to date) been extremely positive and if the pre-application process continues to progress in this manner and the planning application is supported by high quality reports and plans, officers are reasonably confident that a high quality, well thought out sustainable development should prevail and should successfully address the borough's deficit in secondary school places.

7 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM PLACE REVIEW PANEL

- 7.1 The Place Review Panel reviewed the scheme on the 18th January 2018. The final comments are awaiting sign off from the PRP. The draft of the comments sent to the PRP are outlined below. Any substantial changes from the draft comments below will be outlined in the addendum prior to the committee meeting.

Summary

The panel thanks the applicant's team for presenting the scheme. The panel considers the scheme to be a well resolved response to the brief and site, the product of which is an excellent proposal for a school. The panel commends the design team for their work thus far. Further work is required to resolve the following issues: vehicular access and future proof for increased parking provision; use of render on walls; roofing material and appearance of roof; and positioning of the sports centre.

The panel's response in detail is set out below:

Layout & Experience

- The layout of the school and internal arrangement are considered successful. The scheme works well to create a relationship between the inside and outside. There are playful and serious moments appropriate to a school environment.
- The applicant should make the sports hub more visible as you approach from the west so that it is easily located from the road. This is important given its community function. This may be achieved by pushing the school back.
- The applicant should consider the orientation of internal windows along classroom wing corridors and how this impacts on the experience of children moving through the school. It is important that the classroom wings are not over-bearing or too serious which is a risk given that they are long and narrow, with only 1 window with direct outlook to the outside located at the far end.
- The staircases at the end of the wings should be well designed to ensure they are positive and well used access routes rather than functional additions / fire escapes. The applicant should investigate the orientation and positioning of the stairs so that the corner classrooms can have windows on the end wall, thus achieving a dual-aspect for these rooms.

Access to Site & Parking

- The panel considers it unrealistic that half of the staff will cycle given the busy nature of the road, the lack of cycle lane, banking sides and significant tree coverage. A full transport assessment needs to take place with consideration to whether cycling is feasible and safe and the capacity of the tram.
- Access to the car parking would be ramped. The panel is unclear on whether the access would be too steep and have safety concerns given the busy nature of the road and the potential that the entrance may not be sufficiently visible. A survey providing exact levels should be carried out

and sections drawn to demonstrate landscaping/hedges and the relationship between the road & school and road & car park.

- The applicant should design the car parking for future potential expansion and consider how this would work with the landscape.
- The car park may need to be set further back to ensure that the intention of providing a green buffer between the car park and road is achieved. A retaining wall should be avoided.
- The applicants proposed reconsideration of the exact building positions is welcomed.

Fenestration of façade / openings to main hall

- Currently the façade of the hall presents a highly composed elevation to the front with a limited number of openings. There is a risk that this appears too 'shed like'. The applicant should investigate the potential to add more openings, and how this may benefit both the external appearance and internal quality of the hall.

Materiality

- The panel considers the use of metal standing seam as positive, but note that the standing seam detail is important to add visual depth and that this shouldn't be substituted with a panelised system.
- Careful consideration should be given to the use of standing seam zinc at low level.
- The panel does not support the use of render due to issues of maintenance and poor weathering. The panel advocates replacing the render with brick. Ideally this should be at all levels, but as a minimum at ground level to provide a harder wearing wall surfaces where there is most activity.
- The applicant should investigate maintaining a link in materiality between school and sports pavilion.

- Given that this site is currently open land and that the roof will be visible from the top of the site, it should be treated as a 5th elevation. A green roof should be used with the PV panels placed with consideration to create a resolved rooftop that sits as part of the landscape.

Community Engagement

- The panel considers it important that the local community be properly consulted. It will be important to consider the impact of increased traffic during school run times on the local community.
- They should be fully briefed on the change in use and encouraged to make use of the new community functions of the proposal once built.

Heritage

- A heritage statement should be provided and take consideration of the setting of the nearby listed lodge. The applicant should investigate the Tithe Map of 1841 to check the historic land use and what the large open space was historically used for/associated with, and whether there is an intangible impact on the land other than an association with the lodge. It should be noted that this is not likely to impact the scheme but should be considered.

Environment

- Flooding is an issue on the site that needs to be properly demonstrated. The panel were comfortable with the applicant's verbal response on this. A green roof may help with water attenuation issues.
- The panel supports the ambition for BREEAM excellent.

8 SPECIFIC FEEDBACK REQUESTS

8.1 Member expectations in dealing with

- Views of Members of the design of the scheme (siting, scale, mass, legibility, use of materials).

- Guidance on how to approach the loss of playing field area and sports provision considering Sports England's likely concerns. Any opportunities that applicant might wish to consider in response to Sport England's issues.
- Community use of the school – outside hours
- Consideration of the appropriate balance between prioritisation of pupil safety and managing traffic movements and effects on residential amenity.
- Car parking levels and the desire to encourage sustainable journeys to and from the site and managing on street car parking supply and demand.
- Impact of the development on the residential amenities of neighbours and how the scheme might be further developed to minimise any effects.