

PART A

Report of: **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SECTION HEAD**

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| Date of Committee: | 13th March 2014 |
| Site address: | Former Royal Mail Sorting Office, Ascot Road |
| Reference Number: | 14/00035/REM |
| Description of Development: | Reserved matters application for the appearance, layout, scale and landscaping of a new primary school, pursuant to outline planning permission ref. 12/00792/OUTM. |
| Applicant: | West Herts Community Free School Trust |
| Date received: | 30th January 2014 |
| 13 week date(major): | 1st May 2014 |
| Ward: | HOLYWELL |

SUMMARY AND REASONS FOR DECISION

This application relates to part of the former Royal Mail sorting office site which was granted outline planning permission in November 2012 for the erection of a new primary school (ref. 12/00792/OUTM). This established the principle of a primary school on this site as part of a wider redevelopment that included a Morrison's store on land immediately to the south (approved under ref. 12/00793/FULM). Access details were approved as part of the application and these have now been constructed as part of the development of the Morrison's store which opened in November 2013. The current application is for the approval of the reserved matters of appearance, layout, scale and landscaping for the primary school.

The submitted reserved matters details are similar to the illustrative drawings submitted as part of the outline application, showing a 2 storey building orientated east-west across the southern part of the site. These details are considered acceptable.

The Development Management Section Head therefore recommends that the details of the reserved matters be approved.

BACKGROUND

Site and surroundings

The site forms part of the former Royal Mail sorting office situated at the southern end of Ascot Road. It is rectangular in shape with maximum dimensions of approximately 97m by 84m. To the east it adjoins the playing fields of Westfield Academy and to the south the new Morrison's store. To the west are existing warehouse buildings and vacant industrial land lies to the north, with a disused railway embankment beyond (to be used for the Croxley Rail Link). The former buildings on the site have been cleared and the site is level, however, there is an approximate 3m rise in level along the eastern boundary to the playing fields.

Proposed development

Details have been submitted for the reserved matters of appearance, layout, scale and landscaping for a new primary school, pursuant to outline planning permission ref. 12/00792/OUTM.

Planning history

12/00792/OUTM – Outline planning permission granted on 22nd November 2012 for the demolition of existing buildings and structures and construction of a primary school, formation of new access, associated play space, staff/visitor parking, landscaping and other ancillary features. Access was approved with details of appearance, layout, scale and landscaping reserved for subsequent approval.

Relevant Policies

National Planning Policy Framework

Achieving sustainable development

Section 7 Requiring good design

Section 10 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Section 11 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies

Document 2011-2026

- 1 Strategy for the Provision for Waste Management Facilities
- 1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- 2 Waste Prevention and Reduction
- 12 Sustainable Design, Construction and Demolition

Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016

No relevant policies.

Watford Local Plan Part 1 - Core Strategy 2006-31

- SD1 Sustainable Design
- T2 Location of New Development
- UD1 Delivering High Quality Design
- GI1 Green Infrastructure
- GI3 Biodiversity

Watford District Plan 2000

- SE7 Waste Storage and Recycling in New Development
- SE36 Replacement Trees and Hedgerows
- SE37 Protection of Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
- SE39 Tree and Hedgerow Provision in New Development
- T22 Car Parking Standards
- T27 Car Park Location and Design

Supplementary Planning Documents

Watford Character of Area Study

CONSULTATIONS

Neighbour consultations

Letters were sent to 208 properties in Croxley View, Printers Avenue, The Gateway and Ascot Road. No replies have been received.

Advertisements in local paper/site notices

Three site notices were displayed outside the site on 7th February 2014. A public notice was also published in the Watford Observer on 7th February 2014.

Consultations

Environment Agency

No comments.

Thames Water

No comments.

APPRAISAL

In accordance with s.38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Development Plan for Watford comprises:

- (a) the *Watford Local Plan Part 1 - Core Strategy 2006-31*;
- (b) the continuing “saved” policies of the *Watford District Plan 2000*;

- (c) the *Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document 2011-2026*; and
- (d) the *Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016*.

Principle of development

The principle of the use of this site for the erection of a primary school has been established through the outline planning permission. The purpose of this application is to consider the reserved matters of appearance, layout, scale and landscaping. The outline planning permission was also subject to 18 other conditions, in addition to those relating to the reserved matters, which will also need to be complied with. Where details are required to be submitted for approval pursuant to these conditions, separate applications for the discharge of these conditions will need to be submitted.

The evolution and design of the scheme has been informed by various key objectives:

- To provide sufficient teaching accommodation for a 2 form entry primary school.
- To provide sufficient hard and soft play areas with appropriate access and supervision.
- Have regard to possible residential development on land to the north.
- Construction of a high quality building with appropriate materials.
- Allow for a link between the site and the playing fields to the east.
- Utilise the approved access point.
- Ensure as much vehicular and pedestrian segregation as possible.
- Ensure adequate car, cycle and scooter parking provision.
- Retain tree and shrub planting along eastern boundary as much as possible.
- Provide new landscaping with potential habitat and biodiversity value.
- Provide external spaces with a distinct character that contribute to a cohesive landscape treatment.
- Softening of the proposed building when viewed from Ascot Road.

Six design options were considered against these objectives and the submitted design is considered to be the option that best meets all of the objectives.



Aerial view

Appearance

The building sits within a relatively isolated site with the only adjacent buildings comprising the new Morrison's store to the south and the warehouse buildings to the west, built in the 1960's. As such, there is no dominant style of building or characteristic materials to inform the design. The design itself has been kept simple, much the same as with other recent new school developments, with the main building comprising white rendered elevations, with coloured panels and window reveals, and a high proportion of glazing to maximise natural light to the classrooms. The windows and doors are to be aluminium, coloured grey. Other materials have been introduced to distinguish the main hall and associated single storey kitchen at the front of the site, with brick being used for the lower level and

coloured render for the upper level. At the rear of the building, timber battens are used to enclose an external stair giving access to the play areas.

Overall, the building will have a clean, light and uncluttered appearance and whilst being somewhat uninspiring, it will be constructed of high quality materials and enable the building to be functional and cost effective to build. Having regard to its location and the potential for new development on the surrounding land to the north and west, this approach is considered acceptable and appropriate.



Site layout

Layout

The layout of the site follows closely the illustrative layout shown in the outline application and is very much determined by the constraints of the site. The building is irregular in shape but orientated east-west across the site and sited towards the southern boundary, adjoining the Morrison's car park. This enables the main pedestrian entrance to the site and the building to be sited opposite the Zebra crossing on the access road. The staff car park is sited within the north-western corner of the site, adjacent to the vehicular access point. The main hard and soft play areas for the infants and juniors occupy the central, northern and north-eastern parts of the site with smaller enclosed play areas (serving the nursery and infants) located between the building and the southern boundary. A secondary pedestrian access is provided in the south-eastern corner of the site to allow parents to use the parking spaces within the Morrison's car park for drop-off and pick-up (this formed part of the Morrison's application).

Pedestrian access to the playing fields to the east of the site, which are sited at a higher level, will be via a set of steps and an external platform lift, located close to the eastern end of the building. The use of these playing fields has been negotiated with Westfield Academy.

This layout enables various of the key objectives for the scheme to be met, specifically in ensuring a good separation between vehicles and pedestrians and safe, accessible and easily supervised play areas for children of all ages. The car park also provides for 33 staff parking spaces, in accordance with Condition 20 of the outline planning permission.

The layout also shows the provision of 2 cycle shelters able to accommodate 32 cycles adjacent to the pedestrian entrance to the site and provision for 45 scooters within the pedestrian piazza area.

Scale

Due to the constraints of the site and the requirement to provide sufficient teaching accommodation for a 2 form entry school, a 2 storey building is the only way of meeting this need whilst also providing adequate external play space. The building has overall dimensions of 61.2m long, 37.75m wide and 7.55m high. This scale accords with the illustrative details submitted with the outline planning permission and is acceptable in this location.

Landscaping

The only vegetation currently on the site is along the eastern boundary, comprising a hedge and trees along the top of the embankment. This will be retained with the exception of an 8m length that will be lost to accommodate the steps and platform lift giving access to the playing fields. New soft landscaping will be planted around the boundaries of the site and within the site comprising native hedge planting and native boundary planting. This will also include 42 native trees. Within the site, shrub planting will comprise a mix of native and non-native species. This planting is designed to add colour and interest to the site and significantly enhance the biodiversity value of the site. The soft play areas within the site will be grassed.

The hard landscaping will comprise buff paving slabs to the front of the site to create a pedestrian piazza at the school entrance. The staff car park and hard surfaced play areas will be in black tarmac to provide robust, all weather surfaces and enable court markings to be marked out on the main junior play area.

The boundaries of the site are to be fenced in green painted railings, 1.8m high, to match those already installed along the southern boundary of the site (Jackson's Barbican Railings colour coated Holly Green BS14C39, approved as part of the Morrison's development). Internal fencing will be 1.2m high bow topped fencing, also painted green.

Conclusion

The submitted reserved matters details are similar to the illustrative drawings submitted as part of the outline application, showing a 2 storey building orientated east-west across the southern part of the site. These details are considered acceptable.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The principle of the development of the site for a primary school together with the access to the site from Ascot Road were agreed at outline stage. The approval of the reserved matters of appearance and scale of the building and the layout and landscaping of the site, subject to appropriate conditions, will have no significant impacts on the human rights of the applicant or other third parties.

RECOMMENDATION

That the details of the scale and appearance of the building and the layout and landscaping of the site be approved, pursuant to Condition 1 of outline planning permission ref. 12/00792/OUTM dated 22nd November 2012, in accordance with the submitted details and the conditions as set out below:

Conditions

1. The development shall only be constructed in accordance with the details shown on the following approved drawings:

5016/001, 5016/004.

2376_GAD_100000_B, 120000_B, 120001_F, 120002_E, 140000_B, 140001_B,
140002_E, 140003_E, 150000_B, 1500001_A, 1500016_B.

1100-LS-100_A, 1100-PP-300_A.

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

2. The development shall only be constructed in the following materials:

Main building elevations – Whetherby Render Systems – White.

Lower level of main hall and kitchen – Blockley Brick Charcoal Smooth.

Upper level of main hall and feature panels on main elevations - Whetherby Render Systems – coloured.

Spandrel panels – Trespa – coloured.

Windows and doors – aluminium frames coloured Slate Grey (RAL 7015).

External staircase – Western Red Cedar battens.

Bin store – timber fencing/battens 1.8m high.

Cycle store – Broxap BDS Bike Shelter coloured Light Moss Green (RAL 6005).

Fencing to nursery and early years play areas – 1.2m high bow topped fencing coloured green.

Boundary fencing and gates and fencing to car park - Jackson's Barbican Railings coloured Holly Green (BS14C39).

Pedestrian piazza – Saxon Buff paving slabs 450mm x 450mm.

Car park and hard surfaced play areas – black macadam.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the building and the site, in accordance with Policy UD1 Of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

3. The soft landscaping of the site shall be carried out in accordance with the following details within the first available planting season following completion of the development:

Planting Plan – drawing no. 1100_PP_300_A (UBU Design LLP).

The soft landscaping shall be retained in accordance with the following management plan:

Landscape Management Plan – ref. 1100/MP/600_A dated January 2014 (UBU Design LLP).

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the site, in accordance with Policy UD1 Of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31.

Drawing nos.

5016/001, 5016/004.

2376_GAD_100000_B, 120000_B, 120001_F, 120002_E, 140000_B, 140001_B, 140002_E, 140003_E, 150000_B, 1500001_A, 1500016_B.

1100-LS-100_A, 1100-PP-300_A.

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