

Agenda Item: 6.2

07/03765/P

25/09/2007

Selsdon and Ballards

Application for full planning permission

Agent:

Mr Jon Grantham
43 Charlton Street
London
NW1 1JD

Applicant:

Royal Russell School
Coombe Lane
Croydon
CR9 5BX

Location: Royal Russell School, Coombe Lane, Croydon

Description: Erection of two/three storey link extension to provide performing arts centre, enhanced kitchen and dining facilities and ancillary office accommodation

Drawing No(s): 2445 B001; B002; L001; L002; S001; S008; S009; S010; S012; A310; A311; A312; A313; A320; A321; A330

Recommendation: Grant Permission

Subject to the following condition(s) and reason(s):-

1. A scheme of protective fencing to be erected around each tree or group of trees to be retained shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and implemented prior to the commencement of any demolition, site clearance or development works. The fencing shall be erected around each tree or group of trees at a distance to be specified in the scheme and in accordance with British Standard 5837:2005. The fencing shall be not less than 2 metres in height and shall comprise a vertical and horizontal framework of scaffolding, well braced to resist impacts, supporting 'Heras' panel fencing or 20mm exterior grade ply or other robust man-made boards (in accordance with British Standard 5837:2005). The fencing shall be kept in position at all times unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority until the completion of the development

Reason: To ensure that the trees to be retained are not damaged by the construction and associated works in accordance with Policy UD14 of the Croydon Replacement Unitary Development Plan (The Croydon Plan)

2. Unless otherwise previously agreed by the Local Planning Authority in writing the following shall be submitted for approval prior to the first occupation of the development. The development shall only be used in accordance with the approved details.

(1) A scheme for community use of the Performing Arts Centre

(2) A scheme for the use of a living roof

(3) Details for a local employment and training strategy

(4) Provision of a travel plan

Reason: To ensure an acceptable standard of development having regard to the policies of the Croydon Replacement Unitary Development Plan (The Croydon Plan)

3. Unless otherwise previously agreed by the Local Planning Authority in writing the following shall be provided as specified in the application before any part of the development is occupied and shall be retained for so long as the development remains in existence:-
 - (1) finished floor levels
 - (2) parking arrangementsReason: To ensure an acceptable standard of development having regard to the Policies of the Croydon Replacement Unitary Development Plan (The Croydon Plan)

4. No works on site shall commence until details of the external facing materials have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing. The development shall only be implemented in accordance with such approved details.
Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory in accordance with Policy UD3 of the Croydon Replacement Unitary Development Plan (The Croydon Plan)

5. Prior to the commencement of the development the approval of the Local Planning Authority shall be obtained with respect to the following matters and once agreed, the provisions shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details:-
 - (a) external lighting for safety and security
 - (b) refuse storage facilities
 - (c) site huts, areas for spoil, materials storage areasReason: To ensure an acceptable standard of development having regard to the policies of the Croydon Replacement Unitary Development Plan (The Croydon Plan)

6. Unless previously agreed by the Local Planning Authority in writing no development shall take place until the applicant has provided to the Local Planning Authority for approval an independently verified BREEAM report that achieves 'Excellent' rating with certification. The approved scheme shall then be provided in accordance with these details. A certificated BREEAM Post Construction Review, or other verification process agreed with the Local Planning Authority, shall be provided, confirming that the agreed standards have been met, prior to the first occupation of the development.
Reason: To accord with Policies UD1-3 of the Croydon Replacement Unitary Development Plan (The Croydon Plan)

7. No development shall take place until the applicant has provided to the Local Planning Authority a report for approval identifying how a minimum of 10% of the carbon emissions for which the development is responsible are off-set by on-site renewable energy production methods. The carbon savings which result from this will be above and beyond what is required to comply with Part L Building Regulations. If such requirements are to be provided by means of a biomass boiler in full or part, details shall also be provided to demonstrate that the boiler will be used, which shall include a commitment to maintain the boiler and details of how a long term fuel supply can be secured and delivered. The approved scheme shall then be provided in accordance with these details prior to the first occupation of the development and thereafter retained and used for energy supply for so long as the development remains in existence.
Reason: To comply with Policy EP16 of the Croydon Replacement Unitary Development Plan (The Croydon Plan)

8. The development shall be begun within three years of the date of the permission.
Reason: To comply with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

In granting permission the local planning authority had regard to the following policies:-

1. The relevant policies of the Croydon Replacement Unitary Development Plan (the Croydon Plan) are SP1-3, UD1-3, UD6-9, UD12-16, SP4, UC9, UC11-UC14, SP5-7, RO1, RO4, RO5, RO6, SP8, NC1, NC3-4, EP16, SP9, SP10, SP13, SP14, T2, T8, T11, SP27 and CS3.

The development is considered to be satisfactory in relation to the following:-

- (a) the appearance of the development in the street scene
- (b) the relationship of the development to adjacent property
- (c) the character of the development in the surrounding area
- (d) the impact on the amenities of the occupiers of adjacent and nearby properties
- (e) the privacy of occupiers of adjacent and nearby properties
- (f) the relationship of the development to trees to be retained
- (g) the safety of pedestrians and motorists on the adjacent highway
- (h) the safety and security of buildings and the spaces around them
- (i) accessibility to buildings
- (j) the archaeology policies of the development plan
- (k) the setting of the nearby listed building
- (l) sustainability issues
- (m) maintaining the open character of the Metropolitan Green Belt
- (n) the urban design policies of the development plan
- (o) the nature conservation policies of the development plan
- (p) the environmental protection policies of the development plan
- (q) the urban conservation policies of the development plan

and having regard to all other matters raised.

Ward: Selsdon and Ballards PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE
Lead Officer: Head of Planning Control 6th December 2007

07/03765/P- Royal Russell School, Coombe Lane, Croydon

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This application is for full planning permission for the demolition of two existing single storey buildings used as a Bursary and Uniform Shop, the erection of two/three storey link extension and building to provide a performing arts centre, the erection of a new kitchen extension located on an existing tarmac service road area to the rear of the existing dining hall and would provide enhanced kitchen and dining facilities and other ancillary accommodation.
- 1.2 The application would need to be referred to the Government Office for London (GOL) under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning

(Shopping Development)(England and Wales) No 2 Direction, 1993 in that the development would not accord with the provisions of the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and would normally be inappropriate development within the Green Belt. There are however considered to be very special circumstances to allow such development in this particular case. The Secretary of State could either “call in” the application and determine it himself, normally after a public inquiry, or direct that the Local Planning Authority is free to grant permission.

- 1.3 The application is also referable to the Greater London Authority (GLA) under the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000 because the development would result in an amount of proposed floorspace of more than 1,000 square metres on land allocated as Green Belt in the development plan. Once again the development would not accord with the provisions of the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and would normally be inappropriate development within the Green Belt. However it is considered that there are very special circumstances to allow such development in this particular case.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Subject to the prior approval of the GLA and GOL, grant permission subject to the conditions, reasons and informative set out in the Agenda.
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3. BACKGROUND

(a) Site Description

- 3.1 The Royal Russel School is situated on the south western side of Coombe Lane and comprises a parkland setting of 110 acres to the south of Addington Hills. Land levels in the proximity of the new works fall gradually from south to north. There are a number of significant buildings within the site. Royal Russell is an independent school providing education for approximately 800 pupils from kindergarten age to sixth form for day scholars and boarders. The majority of the senior school campus was designed and built in the 1920's, including five large blocks of 1960's Laingspan buildings, a sports hall, swimming pool and most recently, the Library and Sixth Form Centre. The only vehicular access to the site is from Coombe Lane (A212).
- 3.2 The buildings are set within landscaped grounds containing an abundance of trees throughout. Many of the individual trees and some groups of trees are protected by Tree Preservation Order No.27, 1970 and much of the remaining site boundaries are bounded by woodland and open space forming part of the surrounding Green Belt.
- 3.3 The whole of the site is located within the Green Belt and an Archaeological Priority Zone. The cottage, Old Ballards on the southern boundary of the School site is a Grade II statutory listed building. Main Lodge to the north of the site is included on the Local List. The area immediately to the north of the site is a Metropolitan Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (Addington Hills).The area surrounding the built envelope of the school is a Borough Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. Further east, south and west is generally residential in nature characterised by predominately two storey properties.

(b) Planning History

- 3.4 The site has been subject of proposals for a library, swimming pool and gymnasium. Below is the most recent relevant planning history.

98/2825/P- On 1 June 1999, outline permission was granted for the erection of a 2-storey extension to the existing sports hall comprising replacement gymnasium and changing rooms. The gross floor area was shown as 612sq.m. Only the siting of the building was considered.

98/2826/P- On 1 June 1999, full planning permission was granted for the demolition of existing gymnasium erection of a two storey extension comprising a library and sixth form study centre, additional classrooms and staff offices.

00/00816/P- On the 3rd August 2000 permission was granted for the erection of an extension to the sports hall to provide changing rooms, store rooms and offices on the ground floor with gymnasium, plant room and store on first floor. The footprint of the building is similar to that which was permitted in the outline application above, with the addition of a side store extension on the western side and fire escape staircase. There would also be a fire escape staircase on the eastern side.

01/02573/P- On 7th November 2001 a similar proposal to that granted in application 98/2826/P was submitted and approved planning permission. The eaves of the original application were raised by 1.5m to increase the internal height of the new gymnasium to enable the playing of basketball and trampolining safely. The footprint and external ridge height have remained the same.

03/3822/P- On 11th March 2003 a replacement of a existing single-storey building with a new 2-storey building on a similar footprint was approved.

07/02850/DT- Under Regulation 10 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, the Council confirmed the Screening opinion of the Environmental Impact Assessment was not required on 28th August 2007.

(c) Proposal

- 3.5 This application is for full planning permission for the demolition of the existing Bursary and Uniform Shop buildings and the erection of a two storey building having 3,747 sq.m of floorspace to provide a Performing Arts Centre. The Centre would be used for the music and drama departments, a flat floor auditorium and rolling seats for 240 people, 10 practice rooms, recording studio, general classrooms, make-up areas, 'prop' stores, Sixth Form Bistro, conference room, administrative offices, and reception/foyer. Additionally a two/three storey extension is proposed to the north east of the existing dining room to accommodate a new kitchen and servery.
- 3.6 The applicant has submitted a number of supporting statements in relation to the application including a Supporting Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement, Tree Survey, Environmental Performance Statement and Archaeological Assessment.
- 3.7 Following the Screening Opinion (as described in 3.4 above), pursuant to Regulation 5 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact

Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, it was resolved that an Environmental Impact Assessment was not necessary.

4. PLANNING POLICIES

- 4.1 The policies of the Croydon Replacement Unitary Development Plan (the Croydon Plan) are SP1-3, UD1-3, UD6-9, UD12-16, SP4, UC9, UC11-UC14, SP5-7, RO1, RO4, RO5, RO6, SP8, NC1, NC3-4, EP16, SP9, SP10, SP13, SP14, T2, T8, T11, SP27 and CS3.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 The application has been advertised on site and in the local press.
- 5.2 Four individual adjoining and nearby occupiers have been notified of the application. No representations were received.
- 5.3 Natural England have no objection to the scheme.
- 5.4 English Heritage have recommended there are no archaeological requirements.
- 5.5 The Greater London Authority have indicated that the Mayor has concluded that the very special circumstances required to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt have been adequately demonstrated by the applicant. The proposal includes a 25% reduction in carbon emissions, including 20% from renewable energy and demonstrates good practice in sustainable design and construction. However, living roofs and sustainable drainage should be considered. The school should also produce a Travel Plan, consider community use of the buildings and the creation of training and employment opportunities for the local community during construction buildings.

6 CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The principal considerations are:

(1) Whether the development is appropriate or inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and if inappropriate, whether there are any very special circumstances in which to justify such inappropriate development,

(2) The effect of the proposed development in terms of;

- (i) The visual amenities of the Green Belt;
- (ii) the amenities of adjoining and nearby occupiers;
- (iii) trees and nature conservation interests;

(3)The sustainability of the development

Green Belt - Appropriate or Inappropriate Development?

- 6.2 The site is well within Green Belt land. In the Green Belt there is a general presumption against “*inappropriate*” development. Inappropriate development

should not be approved, except in very special circumstances. Local planning policies and PPG2 identify what may be appropriate or inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

- 6.3 The construction of new buildings inside a Green Belt is inappropriate unless it is for agriculture and forestry purposes, the limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings, limited infilling in existing villages, or limited infilling or redevelopment of Major Existing Developed Sites identified in adopted local plans. The site is not identified as a Major Existing Developed Site in either the UDP or the Croydon Plan.

As such the construction of new buildings for the proposed purposes is by definition inappropriate in the Green Belt – Are There Very Special Circumstances?

- 6.4 Paragraph 3.2 of PPG2 states that *“Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It is for the applicant to show why permission should be granted. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations...”*

The applicants state that the following very special circumstances exist to justify the inappropriate development definition inappropriate development.

- (a) the poor standard of existing music, drama and kitchen facilities.
- (b) The lack of alternative locations to provide these facilities
- (c) The need to replace the Laingspan buildings no longer fit for use.

- 6.5 These “special circumstances” are examined in turn below;

(a) Poor standard of existing music, drama and kitchen facilities

The applicants state that the existing drama, music and kitchen facilities are inadequate to meet the needs of the school. The music department is limited to one room and seven practice rooms (which are not sound-proofed). Similarly the drama department comprises one studio which also serves as a classroom, office, performance and workshop. Music is a key department at Royal Russell School, the existing music and drama facilities are considered inadequate at present. The accreditation report for the School’s membership to the Headmasters’ and Headmistresses’ Conference found that the high teaching standard and the important role of music and drama at the school do not equal the current facilities available for these subjects. The drama department *‘clearly enhances the intellectual and aesthetic life of the school’* but found that the teaching space was *‘adequate’*, similarly music teaching was *‘very good or excellent’*, with *‘adequate’* sound-proofing of the practice rooms. The report noted that the plans for a performing arts centre *‘would be a sensible way forward’*.

- 6.6 With regard to the existing dining hall and kitchen the report noted that *‘the kitchens are distinctly old-fashioned and require refurbishment’* and that *‘the dining hall is shabby and could be improved considerably’*. Following this poor appraisal of catering and dining facilities a more detailed review of catering was carried out in 2004. This concluded that without significant investment only limited improvements can be made. The kitchen is poorly designed and

very dated resulting in a difficult and ineffective working environment. As a result the students are receiving poor catering provision and the nutritional needs of certain parts of the school are not being addressed.

6.7 The proposed development would enable the School to remove one of the five Laingspan buildings. These were prefabricated system built structures, which not only detract from the overall visual amenity of the site but also have been found to have structural defects that could lead to structural failure. The School has a long-term plan to replace all of these buildings, which would enhance the visual amenity of the Green Belt as well as provide better quality buildings for the school.

6.8 In this respect it is considered that the proposed link extension to the existing dining hall and kitchen and Bursary would be a significant benefit enhancing the educational needs of the school and the local community. The siting, form and design of the extension would replace the unsympathetic buildings improving the relationship with the existing high quality design buildings within the educational core of the campus. The development would improve upon the openness of the green belt, and subject to conditions, enhance it.

6.9 Taking all the above into account it is considered that the buildings would have significantly less impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing buildings in relation to the site coverage, form and location of the buildings. There is a requirement to ensure that any development contributes to the achievement of the objectives for the use of land in Green Belts, and in this case this has clearly been achieved.

6.10 (b) The lack of alternative locations to provide these facilities

Alternative locations for the proposed Performing Arts Centre and Kitchen were identified early on in the design process. However, these are limited given the planning constraints at the site and the operational needs of the school. Following discussions between the school BHM and MYA Consulting two final options resulted. Given that one option would have increased harming the openness of the Green Belt the current proposal was selected and taken forward and provides a third side to a quadrangle of buildings thus creating a more coherent built form.

6.11 The chosen location would be sensitive to the scale and proportions of the existing development completing the third side of Lime Tree quadrangle. The proposed development is considered to be the preferable location, a modest addition that further minimises the impact on openness by locating the development within the built core.

6.12 c) The need to replace the Laingspan buildings no longer fit for use.

In the post war years the Laingspan building system was developed to reduce the amount of site activity required to erect buildings through the pre-fabrication of elements off site, which did not rely on traditional materials and skills. However, there are inherent structural issues associated with these types of buildings.

6.13 Laingspan buildings are less robust than similar buildings constructed with insitu-reinforced concrete or steel frames. Inspections of the buildings have

identified a number of areas where the general degradation/condition of the structures was raised that could lead to structural failure. The School has plans for a long-term programme to replace all of these buildings, which would enhance the visual amenity of the Green Belt as well as provide better quality buildings for the school.

- 6.14 It is therefore considered that the demolition of the Laingspan building to accommodate the development would improve its setting and contribute to the very special circumstance argument in justifying a limited development in the Green Belt.

Conclusion on the very special circumstances

- 6.15 Overall, it is considered that the applicant has justified the very special circumstances to allow this inappropriate development. The “harm” caused by the inappropriate development is “clearly outweighed” by other considerations. Furthermore, the GLA have indicated that they too feel very special circumstances have been demonstrated. Notwithstanding this, consideration should be given to the effect of the development in respect of other material considerations as detailed below.

Other Material Considerations

Visual Amenities of the Green Belt

- 6.16 Bearing in mind the changes in levels and screening in between the visual amenities of the Green Belt from outside views would not be harmed. The development has been located sensitively within the building core.

The amenities of adjoining and nearby occupiers

- 6.17 Similarly, in view of the distances from the nearest residential occupiers, the changes in levels and the screening in between it is unlikely that there would be harm caused to the amenities of adjoining and nearby occupiers.

Trees and Nature Conservation Interests

- 6.18 A number of documents including a Landscape Assessment and Tree Survey have been prepared by the applicant, which together set out general objectives and procedures for the site during and after completion of the development. The proposals would appear consistent with the nature of the site and the need to retain trees of significant note and landscaping appropriate to the Green Belt setting.
- 6.19 TPO No.27, 1970 protects a number of individual trees and groups of trees on the site. The proposal would result in the loss of three trees: a larch, pine and birch, none of which are subject to the TPO. There is a mature oak tree between the proposed development and the existing swimming pool which could be compromised by the proposal. The tree has been categorised as a Grade A specimen in accordance with BS5837. The Council’s Tree Officer concludes that the tree will not be directly affected by the siting of the proposed buildings and although some pruning will be carried out, this would be the case regardless of whether or not the development were to go ahead.

Tree protection measures would be in place for the duration of the development.

Sustainability

- 6.20 Overall the scheme demonstrates good practice in sustainable design and construction. The applicant has also carried a BREEAM Schools assessment and demonstrated that it will achieve an 'excellent' rating. The energy assessment demonstrates that a 5.45% reduction in carbon emissions can be achieved through energy efficiency and that a further 20% reduction can be achieved through the use of a biomass boiler. This would be consistent with the Council's policies in respect of such matters.
- 6.21 The GLA have commented on the proposed development. The applicant has used the relevant essential and preferred standards in the Mayor's Sustainable Design and Construction SPG to assess the sustainable development credentials of the scheme. The GLA is happy that the scheme meets all the essential standards of the SPG, of particular note the use of wind catchers for the classrooms to avoid the need for mechanical ventilation and cooling, various water reduction measures and the re-use of excavation spoil on-site as aggregates to avoid the need for off-site transportation and possibly landfill. However, there are elements of the scheme for which the GLA request further consideration and these include an assessment as to whether the biomass boiler would be a viable option, as well as further details of the cost and supply of the biomass fuel in comparison with the gas and oil needs to be provided. Details of the provision of a living roof are to be investigated together with the application of the drainage hierarchy. The matters should be covered by a condition of the permission.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.2 The applicants have confirmed their commitment BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' in respect of the development. These could be secured through condition.
- 7.3 The applicants are committed to the incorporation of renewable energy facilities to provide at least 10% of predicted energy requirements. This could be secured by condition.

8. EQUALITIES CONSIDERATIONS

The Councils Access Officer has commented on the proposal and is satisfied that the scheme would meet the accessibility requirements for all.

Case Officer: Priscilla Nhembe

Background Documents: Letters from the Greater London Authority, Natural England and English Heritage

Contact Officer: Mr. P. Mills 020 8760 5419