



Camden



Gospel Oak
Primary & Nursery School



PLANNING STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF PLANNING APPLICATION FOR A NEW EYFS FACILITY AT GOSPEL OAK PRIMARY SCHOOL

19.12.2013

Overview of the site and Planning History

The application site comprises a single storey nursery school, located on the west side of Savernake Road. The nursery is part of Gospel Oak Primary School which is across Savernake Road with its main entrance on Mansfield Road. Immediately north of the site is 13 Savernake Road, a single family dwellinghouse. To the south of the site are residential dwellings that front Mansfield Road. To the west of the site are residential dwellings fronting Rona Road. The site is located within the Mansfield Conservation Area.

Planning permission was granted on 04/04/1984 for the erection of a nursery school on the site (ref 37348/R1). A separate application has been made for the provision of Portakabin classrooms for the Nursery in advance of this application (2013/7759/P) by Portakabin on the main school site to provide temporary accommodation in advance of the main application which is expected to commence in March/April 2014 for completion by year end 2014.

Relevant Planning Policies

The relevant policies that apply to this proposal are taken from the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework (Core Strategy and Development Policy documents) as adopted on 8th November 2010, the London Plan 2011 and the NPPF adopted on 27th March 2012.

The Council's adopted planning guidance provides further advice on the application of the Council's policies. The following Supplementary Planning Documents are relevant to the proposals: Camden Planning Guidance 1 – Design (2013), Camden Planning Guidance (2013) – Sustainability, Camden Planning Guidance 6 (2011) – Amenity and Camden Planning Guidance 7 (Transport) 2011.

As the site is located within the Mansfield Conservation Area, the Mansfield Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2008 is particularly relevant.

Proposals assessment

Land use

The main policy context from the core strategy is CS10 which states that the Council will work with its partners to ensure that community facilities and services are provided for Camden's communities and people who work in and visit the borough.

The proposals seek to improve the existing educational provisions. Therefore the principle of development is generally supported by planning policy.

Design and conservation

The Council's design policies are aimed at achieving the highest standard of design in all developments. The following considerations contained within policy DP24 are relevant to the application: development should consider the character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings, and the quality of materials to be used. Development policy DP25 'Conserving Camden's Heritage' states that within conservation areas, the Council will only grant permission for development that preserves and enhances its established character and appearance.

The proposals include the extension of the existing building to the north and south, as well as filling in an open, grassy area and removing shrubs and a tree. The height of the building will not increase. The view running north along Savernake Road is noted in the Conservation Area Statement as a key townscape view. The existing modest building is considered to use a highly muted palette of colours, with dark brown brickwork and dark green woodwork. This, combined with its screen of greenery, gives the existing somewhat unprepossessing building a poor impact on the conservation area – it cannot be considered of great architectural merit (it is not listed) and is a building type that is ‘municipal’ and unattractive.

It is proposed to replace this street elevation by means of gently extending the existing building and refurbishing the existing using a limited palette of white render (found on numerous local buildings within the conservation area) and a limited area of grey brick slips which echo the grey of the school building opposite. The material choice therefore marries the local context of the conservation area housing stock and the school building. The material choices are inherently practical as the render and slips sit behind an insulated backing to improve the thermal performance of the existing building which is a key requirement of the sustainability brief. The same materials are used on the extensions to create harmony.

The scale however of the development is still single storey against a predominant mixture of 2 to 3 storey buildings and larger in the fore ground. The building scale responds to the end user and the EYFS year groups. Given the single storey design of the building and the siting of existing surrounding residential dwellings, the proposed development would be unlikely to result in a loss of light. In addition, there would be no significant loss of privacy or harm caused through lightspill as a result of the proposed extensions.

Impact on trees

An Arboricultural report accompanies the application which the case officer in the Pre Application report considers is acceptable with regards to the removal of some existing trees which do not have TPO. The existing trees are all lower quality specimens and their loss will be mitigated through new planting. There is a verdant quality to the frontage of the site which adds to the quality of the streetscape. This will be retained and enhanced.

Biodiversity

In accordance with policies CS15 and DP22 the London Borough of Camden would expect living roofs to be incorporated into the design and other biodiversity enhancement measures such as bird and bat bricks. It is proposed due to the low eaves of the existing building to provide bird boxes and bat boxes in accordance with guidance detailed on the Planning website. It is however not technically or practically possible to provide living roofs to the single storey flat roof extensions for the following reasons –

1. The building insurer Zurich will not provide insurance cover for single storey buildings with living roofs due to the perceived fire risk.
2. An intensive green roof cannot be detailed as there is a very limited floor to ceiling height that the extensions need to abut.
3. The client has neither the Capital or Revenue funding to support a proposal which is in appropriate for such a small scale development.

Conclusions

In summary, it is considered that the proposals conform to Local Planning guidance, are supported by both the School and Client as a key suitability requirement for this site (provision of an integrated EYFS) and follow a rational 21st century design approach that is in scale and in context with the local environment.