

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)**

**SITE AT THE CAVENDISH SCHOOL**  
**31 INVERNESS STREET, LONDON NW1 7HB**

**PLANNING APPLICATION BY**

**THE CAVENDISH SCHOOL CHARITABLE TRUST LIMITED**

**PROPOSED RETENTION OF PLAYGROUND CANOPY**

**PLANNING, HERITAGE, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT**

April 2015

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Planning, Heritage, Design & Access Statement forms part of the planning application by The Cavendish School Charitable Trust Limited for the '*Retention of playground canopy attached to rear elevation of main school building*' at The Cavendish School, 31 Inverness Street, London NW1.
- 1.2 The statement should be read in conjunction with the application drawing. A photograph of the canopy is also provided with the application documents.

## **2. THE APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA**

- 2.1 The Cavendish School is an independent, non-selective preparatory school catering for girls between 3 and 11 years and their young brothers between 3 and 7 years.
- 2.2 The school is situated in the Camden Town Conservation Area on the south side of Inverness Street and the west side of Arlington Road. It occupies a site which is centred upon the mid-nineteenth century buildings of the former St Mark's Parochial School. The school site also includes a modern single storey block, converted former gas board offices, play areas, and a staff parking area on the site of a former gas depot. The latter is accessed from Inverness Street, and this access point also serves as the main pedestrian entrance to the school for staff, pupils and visitors. The school's eastern frontage onto Arlington Road is defined by St Mark's Gatehouse and the adjacent former gas board office building.
- 2.3 The application site is defined to include the main school building and the associated playground areas to the south and east. The western, southern and eastern boundaries of the application site adjoin various residential and commercial buildings in Gloucester Crescent, Parkway and Arlington Road respectively. These boundaries are enclosed by walls with metal post and wire mesh fencing above. The adjacent terrace of residential properties in Gloucester Crescent is listed, and is situated within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area.

2.4 The playground canopy, the subject of this application, is attached to the western section of the south elevation of the main school building.

### **3. PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1 Planning consent was granted on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1990 under reference 9003170 for '*the erection of a single storey extension to provide school offices*'. This consent was not subject to any conditions other than the standard time limit for implementation.

3.2 Planning consent was granted on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1991 under reference 9003478 for the '*erection of a single storey rear extension and three storey extension to provide additional classrooms and storage and sanitary accommodation*'. This consent was subject to a condition requiring the use of matching external materials.

3.3 Planning consent was granted on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1992 under reference 9201137 in respect of the British Gas Depot on Arlington Street for the '*change of use of part of the site from a gas depot to educational use*'.

3.4 Planning consent was granted on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1994 under reference 9400964 for '*the temporary change of use of office accommodation (Class B1) to provide additional school space (Class D1) in the two storey building fronting Arlington Road*'. This consent was granted for a limited period until 30<sup>th</sup> September 1999.

3.5 Planning consent was granted on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2000 under reference PEX0000029 for '*the erection of a single storey infill extension on site of existing storage sheds in eastern corner of the site plus alterations to main building windows to form doors, for educational use*'.

3.6 Planning consent was granted on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2003 under reference PEX0300205/P for '*alterations to the vehicular and pedestrian arrangement and erection of a single storey extension to incorporate offices for administration including the demolition of external stores and lean-to*'.

- 3.7 Planning permission was granted on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2015 under reference 2014/3117/P for the 'erection of part 1 and part 3 storey building comprising assembly hall, classrooms, and roof plant; alterations to existing boundary treatment and associated hard and soft landscaping'. The consent is subject to the terms of a s.106 agreement.

#### **4. THE APPLICATION PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 The planning application seeks consent for the retention of the playground canopy. The canopy provides a covered play area as part of the established school playground. It projects approximately 3.6 metres out from the building from a point just below the heads of the ground floor windows, and has an elevational length of approximately 14.25 metres. The canopy, which includes a metal and GRP framework with translucent GRP roof panels, has a sloping cantilevered roof. The framework of the canopy is painted green.
- 4.2 The canopy provides necessary all-weather cover for the school's younger pupils, covering the age range 3 to 5. Department of Education regulations stipulate 'free-flow' play for children at this Early Years Foundation stage, both inside and outside the classroom. The canopy permits the children to have 'free-flow' play from the classroom to the outside, in all weathers.

#### **5. PLANNING POLICY**

##### *The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

- 5.1 The NPPF lays down a series of core principles which should underpin the planning system. There is a strong presumption in favour of sustainable development which is defined as the 'golden thread' running through both plan-making and decision taking. Sustainable development comprises economic, social and environmental dimensions. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth.

- 5.2 The NPPF states that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. The NPPF advises that local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. Great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools.
- 5.3 The NPPF also states that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Planning decisions should ensure that that developments function well, establish a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site, respond to local character while not preventing appropriate innovation, create safe and accessible environments, and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture. Design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription of detail but should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access for new development in relation to the local area. LPAs should not impose architectural styles or tastes.
- 5.4 In determining applications, LPAs should require an applicant to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

#### *The Development Plan*

- 5.5 The statutory development plan comprises the London Plan of July 2011 (subject Revised Early Minor Alterations in 2013 and to Further Alterations in 2015), the Camden Core Strategy which was adopted in November 2010, and the Camden Development Policies DPD which was also adopted in November 2010. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications and appeals to be determined in accordance with the development

plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### *The London Plan*

- 5.6 Policy 3.18 states that the Mayor will support the provision of early years, primary and secondary school education facilities adequate to meet the demands of a growing and changing population and to enable greater educational choice, particularly in parts of London with poor educational performance. The Mayor strongly supports proposals which enhance provision, including the expansion of existing educational facilities. Part C of Policy 3.18 states as follows:-

**‘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.’**

### *The Core Strategy*

- 5.7 The following policies of the adopted Core Strategy, as summarised, are considered to be relevant:-

- Policy CS1 seeks to direct growth in Camden to the most suitable locations. Development should make full use of its site whilst respecting context and taking into account the quality of design;
- Policy CS3 states that the Council will promote development, including community facilities, in highly accessible areas including the town centre of Camden Town. Development in these areas should be of a suitable scale and character, and should take account of amenity and community safety;
- Policy CS5 states that the Council will manage the impact of growth and development in Camden including the need to protect and enhance heritage assets. The amenities of residents will be protected, and the needs of development will be balanced with the

needs and characteristics of local communities;

- Policy CS10 states that the Council will support the retention and enhancement of existing community facilities including schools; and
- Policy CS14 states that the Council will ensure that Camden's places and buildings are attractive, safe and easy to use by requiring development to be of the highest standard of design.

#### *Camden Development Policies DPD*

5.8 The following policies of the Camden Development Policies DPD, as summarised, are considered to be relevant:-

- Policy DP15 states that new community facilities (including educational facilities) should be close or accessible to the community they serve, should be accessible by a range of transport modes, in particular walking, cycling and public transport;
- Policy DP24 requires all developments, including alterations and extensions, to be of the highest standard of design having regard to character, setting, context, the quality of materials, landscaping and accessibility;
- Policy DP25 states that, in order to maintain the character of conservation areas, the Council will only permit development that preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area. Development should also protect the setting of listed buildings; and
- Policy DP26 states that planning permission will only be granted for development which does not cause harm to amenity.

*Camden Planning Guidance*

- 5.9 The Council has adopted a series of supplementary planning documents under the overarching title of Camden Planning Guidance (CPG).
- 5.10 CPG1 (Design) states that the Council is committed to excellence in design, and schemes should consider the context of the development and its surrounding area, the design and use of the building itself, and the materials used. Good design should positively enhance the character, history and nature of existing buildings on the site and in the surrounding area.
- 5.11 CPG6 (Amenity) provides guidance on a range of amenity issues including air quality, contamination, noise and vibration, daylight and sunlight, outlook and privacy, and construction management plans.

*Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Strategy (CTCAA&MS)*

- 5.12 The Camden Town Conservation Area was designated by the London Borough of Camden in 1986. The boundary was extended in 1997 to include the triangle behind Camden Town Tube Station formed by Camden High Street, Kentish Town Road and Buck Street and an area east of Camden High Street including Pratt Street [south side], Pratt Mews, King's Terrace, Bayham Place and Bayham Street. The application site is situated within Commercial Sub Area 1 which comprises the commercial corridors of Camden High Street and Parkway, and associated side roads.
- 5.13 The CTCAA&MS notes that the conservation area has a high proportion of 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, both listed and unlisted, which make a positive contribution to the historic character and appearance of the area. There is an overall 19<sup>th</sup> century architectural and historic character and appearance throughout. The Cavendish School is described as being located to the north of Parkway, on the west side of Arlington Street, and being an independent Catholic preparatory school housed in the 1850's buildings of the former St Mark's Parochial School. The school and



adjacent frontage buildings on Arlington Road and Parkway are identified as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

#### *The Primrose Hill Conservation Area Statement*

- 5.14 The adjacent residential buildings in Gloucester Crescent are located within sub-area 4 of the Primrose Hill Conservation Area.

## **6. PLANNING & HERITAGE CONSIDERATIONS**

### *Amount of Development*

- 6.1 The canopy provides basic weather protection over an area of existing playground of approximately 50 square metres. No internal floorspace has been created by the development. It should be noted that eastern half of the canopy, if a separate structure, would probably be permitted development under Class M to Part 7 to Schedule 2 of the 2015 GPDP. The western half falls outside Class M by virtue of its proximity to the site boundary.

### *Layout & Neighbour Amenity*

- 6.2 The canopy has a maximum height of 3.6 metres where it is attached to the school building, and an eaves height of 2.9 metres. The canopy extends out from the building by 3.6 metres. The canopy adjoins teaching space within the main school building, and its provision is in line with Department of Education stipulations to provide 'all-weather' 'free-flow' play areas from the class rooms to the outside. The installation of the canopy has no impact on the number of children using the playground but allows use of the covered area during bad weather. This is important for the health of pupils who are therefore not confined to the indoors when it is raining.
- 6.3 Given that the canopy has been erected over an area that has long been used by the school as a main playground, the development does not have any material

impact on noise or activity levels in this part of the school site, and therefore does not cause any loss of residential amenity by virtue of increased noise or disturbance. The low level position of the canopy, allied to its distance from neighbouring buildings, ensures that the structure has no impact on levels of light, sunlight and outlook experienced in adjacent properties.

- 6.4 For the above reasons, it is considered that the canopy is supportable as a feature that enhances educational provision, and one that does not materially harm the living conditions of nearby residents. Compliance is therefore achieved with London Plan Policy 3.18, Core Strategy Policies CS1, CS3, CS5, CS10 and CS14, Development Policies DP15 and DP26, and the guidance set out in CPG6.

*Impact on Heritage Assets (Scale, Design & Appearance)*

- 6.5 The application site is located within the Camden Town Conservation Area which is a designated heritage asset. It adjoins other designated heritage assets, namely the listed buildings in Gloucester Crescent which are located within the Primrose Hill Conservation Area. The main Cavendish School building, and properties to the south in Parkway, are positive contributors to the character and appearance of the Camden Town Conservation Area. The application site therefore occupies a sensitive location in heritage terms although it should be noted that the character of the immediate area has a mixed and transitional character in terms of land-uses, building types, and townscape scale. The Cavendish School is an important and long-established institution within this transitional part of the Camden Town Conservation Area.
- 6.6 In its context, the canopy can be regarded as a visually coherent and legitimate feature on an educational building. School buildings and associated external areas need to be designed to provide functional spaces for the education, recreation and movement of children during the school day, and planning policies are strongly supportive of improvements that enhance the educational offer of schools. The school is required to provide an area of shelter for outdoor play for its youngest pupils, and such structures are commonly found attached to school buildings to provide sheltered play areas or covered links between buildings.

6.7 The canopy is a low level structure attached to part of the ground floor elevation of the (rear) southern elevation of the main school building which faces onto the enclosed playground. The canopy has no support posts into the ground, and is attached to the building with the minimum necessary structural framework which does not extend down to the ground. Given its low position and visually lightweight design, the canopy is not considered to have any harmful impact on the host building, in particular given the important link between the use of the host building as a purpose-built and now long-established school, and the need for and benefit of the canopy in providing enhanced facilities for younger pupils.

6.8 In its enclosed and non-prominent position, the canopy has only minimal visual impact on the immediate surrounding area. The roof canopy is visible from the upper floor levels of some adjacent properties but cannot be viewed from any point in the public realm. Views of the canopy from adjacent private land and buildings, including the adjacent listed buildings, are obscured or otherwise 'filtered' by established boundary walls, fencing and vegetation. Furthermore, the mono-pitch design of the canopy slopes down from its low-level intersection with the school building, thus minimising its visibility and general impact. Its bulk is further reduced by the use of translucent roof panels between the slender supports that make up its framework. The green finish to this framework also assists in reducing the visibility of the canopy through boundary landscaping.

6.9 For all the above reasons, it is considered that the canopy does not harm the character or appearance of the host building or this part of the Camden Town Conservation Area, and also does not harm the setting of nearby listed buildings or the Primrose Hill Conservation Area. The development, as constructed, therefore complies with the Core Strategy Policies CS1, CS3, CS5 and CS14, Development Policies DP24 and DP25, and relevant guidance in CPG1.

## **7. ACCESS**

7.1 The canopy has no direct impact on accessibility into and out of the school building but does beneficially facilitate all-weather access to the playground.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 The canopy is considered to enhance educational provision without harm to residential and visual amenity, and with no adverse impact on heritage assets. As such, the application is considered to comply with the development plan and with national policy and local guidance.
- 8.2 The applicant therefore looks forward to discussing the merits of the application with officers, and to the early and favourable determination of the planning application.

**CHRISTOPHER WICKHAM ASSOCIATES**  
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