

**Application Number**

P/2012/1208

**Site Address**Combe Pafford School  
Steps Lane  
Torquay  
Devon  
TQ2 8NL**Case Officer**

Mr Scott Jones

**Ward**

Watcombe

**Description**

Demolition of 2 existing teaching blocks and replace with 2 new educational facilities and central courtyard. The new accommodation includes:-

Block C - new teaching facility;

Block D - new hospitality learning facility and cafe and a new controlled access route provides vehicular and pedestrian access from Moor Lane.

**Executive Summary/Key Outcomes**

The proposal site is that of Combe Pafford School, a long-established educational site that caters for children who have moderate learning difficulties or autism. The school offers a progressive academic system integrated with vocational interests including animal care, horticulture, construction, motor vehicle mechanics and hairdressing, which coalesce with academic learning to offer pupils an environment designed for wider personal development.

The proposal seeks permission for two new educational facilities that will offer a new teaching block (Block C) and a new hospitality learning facility that is combined with a working community café (Block D). The facilities are located towards the Southwest of the site, to the West of the main building group, in an area where two buildings currently exist. The existing buildings are to be removed.

The proposed buildings are orientated to create a courtyard feature to offer a central focus for the site. The location of the buildings together with the associated access, limits the visual impact of the development whilst allowing access for public use and use to specific user groups without impacting the schools wider movement strategy.

The fundamental principle of further extension over the broad footprint identified is considered acceptable, as the general area currently offers two school buildings and the location appears a suitable one for any further school redevelopment/expansion. The suitability of the location is strengthened by the general constraint to development in the Northern part of the site, where there is

a swathe of playing fields and play space.

The scale and design of the proposed additions are considered to sit comfortably within the context of the adjacent buildings, and with the relationships across the sites' borders.

The design offers a mixed approach with Block C more industrial and traditional, aligning its character with the adjacent buildings and its expected use. Block D offers a more visually interesting and transparent building that will draw the eye, enliven the space, and aid with a pseudo-community use that is envisaged. This mixed approach is considered acceptable.

There are highway, drainage and arboricultural matters to be resolved, however Officers consider that there is scope for these to be resolved through Planning Conditions or the submission of further information and/or amendments to the satisfaction of the relevant departments.

### **Recommendation**

Site Visit; Conditional Approval delegated to the Executive Head of Spatial Planning with conditions to include arboricultural matters to the satisfaction of the Authority's Arboriculture Team, and drainage matters to the satisfaction of the Authority's Drainage Department; subject to the resolution of highway and transportation matters, in regard to access and management of the Northern access, being to the satisfaction of the Authority's Sustainable Transport Officer and Highways Department.

### **Site Details**

A suburban school site that sits to the South of Moor Lane in Watcombe, Torquay, which is bounded by areas of residential use, Local Authority playing fields (to the East) and a further school site (to the West). The plot is loosely divided into an expanse of playing fields and play space to the North with school buildings contained to the South. The building group incorporates a variety of building designs as the school has expanded gradually over the years.

### **Detailed Proposals**

School expansion scheme that seeks permission for two new educational facilities that will offer a new teaching block (Block C) and a new hospitality learning facility combined with a working community café (Block D), together with a form of access off Moor Lane from the North.

The new teaching block (Block C) sits as an extension to the existing Business and Engineering block (Known as Block B) and will echo the industrial form of the existing buildings, with brick and zinc metal roof cladding being the predominant

materials. The block is single-storey and covers a footprint approximately 15 metres by 12 metres.

The Hospitality Learning and Community Café block (Block D) has a more contemporary design and provides two pitched roof 'pods' that are interconnected by a single-story flat-roofed link. The two pods are to offer separate space for the hospitality leaning and for the community café. The central link provides a central operational area for the kitchen space and ancillary facilities that would serve both of the pods. The pitched-roof pods are finished in zinc metal roofing and are scaled to future-proof potential first floor expansion. The central link is largely finished as a green roof. Elevations feature a mix of glazing, timber cladding and metal cladding. Block D covers a footprint loosely 25 metres by 11 metres.

Aside the proposed buildings the scheme includes a Northern access off Moor Lane adjacent to the tree-lined border with Watcombe Primary School. The proposal shows a gated and bollarded entrance that will offer access to the community café and Hospitality Learning Block, which will be retained where necessary to manage the drop in levels towards this area. Cycle parking and a degree of car parking are also shown on the plans.

### **Summary Of Consultation Responses**

Re-produced at Page T.200.

*Arboricultural Officer:* That the scheme be suitable for approval on arboricultural merit if the following points can be addressed by way of pre-commencement conditions as follows

- Detailed landscaping plan to be submitted and approved to define replacements for the 3 trees lost.
- A detailed submission in line with B.S5837 2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction Recommendations to be submitted

*South West Water:* No objection subject to foul flows only being connected to the public sewer.

*Drainage Department:* The applicant should provide details of how treated effluent is to be disposed of and the detailed design of the soakaways.

*Highway/Sustainable Transport Officers:* No objection in principle, key matters raised are;

- The proposed access path should be primarily and overwhelmingly a pedestrian/cycle path and designed as so, especially given the desire for the

public to walk in.

- The entry point is closed at all times, except when unlocked by school staff to facilitate occasional and infrequent access by minibuses and coaches bringing in students / visitors who need to be dropped off right at the front door of the new facilities.

- A minibus / coach turning area is required by the new facility. Private car individual drop off parking is not an acceptable component.

- Service vehicles should not use the new access, and instead need to use the existing on site road. A condition should also be required to keep the existing road and proposed new access path separate as a circuit around the site must be discouraged given the unsuitability of having a second vehicular access onto Moor Lane in close proximity to Watcombe Primary's own access.

- The access onto the Adopted Public Highway at Moor Lane, given its intended use for more than just pedestrians, will need to have a suitable visibility. Current guidance is 43m at 2.4m back from the carriageway in each direction unless speed readings can prove a lower 85th percentile speed along Moor Lane.

- The access road, due to its length, should have a passing bay. This appears to be provided for near to the access onto the highway in the submitted drawing, and therefore would satisfy this criterion. Further detailed drawings are required to confirm this.

- Given the proposed security bollard / gate to the access road, it must be clearly visible as a vehicle approaches along Moor Lane to ensure no prohibited vehicle attempts to gain access, and is then forced to reverse back out again onto the highway.

### **Summary Of Representations**

None received.

### **Relevant Planning History**

There is an extensive planning history for the site covering various large and small scale matters. The most pertinent proposals in the past 10 years are as follows;

P/2011/0387                      Extension to form office/interview room to side of existing classroom block - PER - 03/06/2011

P/2009/1195                      Construction of vocational training centre - PER - 28/01/2010

P/2008/0022	Formation Of Business And Enterprise Centre - PER - 22/07/2008
P/2007/1457	Ground And First Floor Mobile Classroom With Toilets And Changing Rooms With Showers And Stores - PER - 20/11/2007
P/2003/1486	Erection Of 4 New Classrooms; New Multi-Purpose Hall, And Associated External Works - PER - 27/10/2003

## **Key Issues/Material Considerations**

### **Principle and Planning Policy -**

The most directly relevant Local Plan Policy is that of CF10 *New schools and improved school facilities*. The policy provides for the improvement and expansion of existing school facilities providing the following four criteria are met:

- 1) The sites for new schools are well related to residential areas
- 2) School sites are of a sufficient size to accommodate the design and layout
- 3) Proposals have regard to the need to safeguard existing playing fields
- 4) Proposals can be accommodated without undue detriment to surrounding residential areas

Considering the context of the site and policy guidance the key issues in respect of this application are:

1. Design and Visual Impact
2. Neighbour Amenity
3. Highway Implications
4. Arboricultural Implications

Each of these matters is addressed in turn below.

### **1. Design / Visual Impact**

The proposed buildings are sited to the South-western part of the site and the development area appears to sit as a natural location for redevelopment or extension to the existing cluster of buildings. The proposal seeks to provide a scheme of expansion in an area of the site in which buildings already reside and sit aside the established building group contained within the Southern portion of the site. The development area is therefore considered an acceptable area for further development, maintaining the swathe of play areas to the North and a pragmatic solution given the site's constraints.

The scale of the proposed blocks are considered appropriate in relation to the

bulk and massing of the existing school buildings and the extent of the plot that they sit in. The mixed form of building proposed is considered acceptable in relation to the visual characteristics of the wider site. Block C (new teaching block) sits as a natural extension to the industrial character of the adjacent building and Block D (Hospitality Learning and Community Café) offers a more contemporary and visually interesting solution for use that seeks to connect to the wider community and draw people in to the site off a long permissive access. Within an area with such a diverse building form each solution is considered acceptable.

All matters considered the proposal is a positive expansion that responds to the sites development constraints and the schools requirements for minimising further access through the site through secure areas.

There are matters of detail, especially of the access route and extent of retaining walls, which require establishing through further information and/or planning condition, it is considered that appropriate development can be achieved through planning conditions or minor alterations to current plans.

## **2. Neighbour Amenity**

The location of the two blocks offers development that sits comfortably within the borders of the site and is unlikely to affect neighbouring amenity levels. The nearest user to the proposed development is the adjacent school site of Watcombe Primary School to the West and when considering the scale of the development and the similarity of use there are unlikely to be any affects across this border. Residential properties to the North sit to the other side of Moor Lane and are further than 100metres from the nearest of the two blocks proposed. To the Southeast residential properties are nearer, however they still sit some 60-70metres away. Due to the distances involved residential amenity levels are unlikely to be affected.

## **3. Highway Matters**

The access arrangements have evolved from the aspiration to offer further teaching facilities and a community café within a central location of the site.

Within the context of the schools managed access arrangements and the necessity to provide access without compromising the schools wider operations, a direct route to the buildings off Moor Lane is considered essential to the developments operation and ambitions to link with the local community.

The model of a permissive pedestrian route that also offers some form of limited and managed vehicular access for specific user groups by arrangement, is considered achievable subject to detail regarding materials and finish of the route, parking levels at its culmination, and details of the access gate and bollard arrangements. These matters are considered achievable via further information and/or revised plans to remove permanent parking spaces in favour of a hatched

drop-off and pick-up area, together with planning conditions attached to any approval for detail on the surface finish and extent of retaining walls. In addition to the technical highway detail there would also need to be some further detail in relation to visual impact and arboricultural implications upon the trees aligned to the route.

#### **4. Arboriculture**

The site does not sit within a Conservation Area or within an area with individual or area Tree Preservation Orders and hence tree specimens present are protected at this time. The Council's arboricultural officer has however highlighted that the boundary trees aside the proposed access lane are of some landscape value and hence consideration towards their protection and future health should be forthcoming.

Following consideration, the scheme is currently considered to be suitable for approval on arboricultural merit if the following points can be addressed by way of pre-commencement conditions;

- Detailed landscaping plan to be submitted and approved to define replacements for the 3 trees lost.
- A detailed submission in line with B.S5837 2012 Trees In Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction Recommendations to be submitted

**S106/CIL - N/A**

#### **Conclusions**

The fundamental principle of expansion is considered acceptable as the site is considered to have the attributes to comfortably accept the scale of development.

The scale and design of the proposed blocks are considered to sit comfortably within the context of the adjacent buildings and the relationships across the sites borders.

The design, which offers a mixed approach with Block C more industrial and traditional, aligning itself with the adjacent buildings and expected use, and Block D offering a more visually interesting and transparent building that will enliven the space and aid with a pseudo-community use that is envisaged. This mixed approach is considered acceptable.

There are highway, drainage and arboricultural matters outstanding, however Officer's consider that there is scope for these matters to be resolved through Planning Conditions or the submission of further information and/or amendments to the satisfaction each department.

*Conditions to include;*

- Drainage matters
- Arboricultural matters
- Materials
- Detailed design
- Details of access including materials and retaining structures
- Revised parking arrangements in favour of a drop off point
- Management strategy for the access
- Management of the café ancillary to the school and learning facility

**Relevant Policies**

- BES Built environment strategy
- BE1 Design of new development
- CFS Sustainable communities strategy
- CF10 New schools and improved school facilities
- T25 Car parking in new development
- T26 Access from development on to the highway
- LS Landscape strategy
- L9 Planting and retention of trees