

Application Number

P/2013/1257

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

Mr Scott Jones

Ward

Watcombe

Description

Demolition of temporary portacabin teaching accommodation and provision of a new hospitality learning facility / cafe and teaching accommodation; together with a new controlled access route providing pedestrian and occasional vehicular access from Moor Lane. (Re-Submission of P/2012/1208)

Executive Summary/Key Outcomes

Combe Pafford School is an established educational facility 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 is principally a resubmission of a recently approved scheme that was determined by the Committee in January 2013. It again seeks permission for a new educational facility and hospitality learning space, which is combined with a working community café. The facilities are still located towards the Southwest part of the site, to the West of the main building group.

The key amendments for consideration are the slight re-location of the training and community café block to permit the temporary retention of the adjacent teaching block "2" (previously to be removed), the omission of the previously proposed extension to teaching block "3", which is loosely replaced with the small extension to the rear of the proposed training / café facility block. The resubmission also includes moderate changes to design and material finishes, however the principal design ethos and look of the building is retained.

The proposed building is still orientated to create a courtyard feature to offer a central focus for the site. The limited change in its precise siting also retains the building in a relatively secluded location that will limit the visual impact of the development.

The fundamental principle of further extension, over the broad footprint identified, is still considered acceptable.

The scale and design of the proposed addition will sit comfortably within the context of the adjacent buildings and comfortably with buildings and uses outside the site. The design and change of materials is considered to offer a visually interesting building.

As with the previous scheme highway, drainage and arboricultural matters are still under discussion and can again be resolved by planning conditions.

Recommendation

Conditional Approval; Delegated to the Executive Head of Spatial Planning with outstanding matters subject to the receipt of further information prior to the grant of permission or achieved via planning conditions, to the satisfaction of the Authority's Arboriculture Team, the Authority's Drainage Department; and the Authority's Sustainable Transport Officer / Highways Department.

Site Details

This suburban school site is located to the South of Moor Lane in Watcombe, Torquay. It 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.

The proposed development is to be located to the west of the main school building, adjacent to the boundary with Watcombe Primary School.

Detailed Proposals

This is a school expansion scheme that seeks a revised permission for a new educational facility that will offer a combined teaching and hospitality learning facility that includes a working community café, together with an occasional access off Moor Lane from the North.

The revised scheme offers one block that combines a teaching and hospitality space, supplied in a more contemporary design than the existing buildings of the school. It still offers two pitched roof 'pods' that are interconnected by a single-story flat-roofed link. The proposed block has been extended to the rear over that previously considered in a single-storey flat-roofed form.

The building has been moved slightly towards the western boundary of the site from that previously approved. This allows temporary retention of an existing building that was to be demolished. The form and materials have been amended to suit the schools ambitions going forward, with the footprint / external building lines slightly amended and simplified to suit the internal layout. In addition the

elevation treatment and material have been simplified away from the principal corner and main elevation. The basic principle and form does remain largely similar to that previously approved and the finishes are commensurate with its surrounds and context of the building group that it will sit as part of.

The scheme maintains access from the North off Moor Lane adjacent to the tree-lined border with Watcombe Primary School. The proposal again shows a gated and bollard entrance that will provide access to the community café and Hospitality Learning Block. Limited car parking is shown on the plans to serve occasional necessary access.

Summary Of Consultation Responses

Arboricultural Officer: Pending updated comment. Previously the scheme was considered to 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.

Drainage Department: The applicant is required to provide greater detail in respect to existing discharge and proposed methods of discharge in regard to surface water run-off.

Highway/Sustainable Transport Officers: As the scheme is a basic resubmission previous comments stand. There remains no objection in principle, key matters were;

- 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.
 - 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

One letter of representation received however it does not comment on the merits or impact of the scheme, only wider parking issues. This has been sent electronically for Members consideration.

Relevant Planning History

P/2012/1208 Demolition of 2 existing teaching blocks and replace with educational facilities and central courtyard – Approved 29/01/2012

In addition 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 building is sited to the South western part of the site, fitting neatly between existing buildings. The site is considered an acceptable area for further development, maintaining the swathe of play areas to the North.

The scale of the proposed block is similar to that previously approved and it is again considered appropriate in relation to the bulk and massing of the existing school buildings. The modern form of building proposed is considered acceptable, providing a more contemporary and visually interesting solution.

Whilst there are matters of detail, especially of the access route and extent of retaining walls which require clarification through further information and/or planning condition, the proposed development is a relatively minor amendment from that previously approved and is acceptable in terms of design and visual amenity.

2. Neighbour Amenity

The nearest user to the proposed development is Watcombe Primary School to the West. When considering the scale of the development and the similarity of use there are unlikely to be any affects across this boundary.

The location of the block still sits comfortably within the borders of the site and is unlikely to impact on the amenity enjoyed by occupiers of nearby residential properties, which are around 50 metres to the south west. Residential properties to the North sit to the other side of Moor Lane and are further than 100metres from the block proposed

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.

A direct route to the buildings off Moor Lane is considered essential to the operation of the school, specifically this development and ambitions to link with the local community. It fits well with the school's managed access arrangements and the necessity to provide public access without compromising the school's wider operations.

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 submission of an access management plan. In addition to the technical highway detail there would also need to be some further detail in relation to construction features, such as small retaining walls, and arboricultural implications for the trees alongside the route.

4. Arboriculture

The site is not within a Conservation Area and is not within an area with individual or area Tree Preservation Orders. Hence trees on site are unprotected at present. The Council's arboricultural officer has previously commented on the value of boundary trees alongside the proposed access lane and requested that they be protected via the following pre-commencement requirements:

- 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

Further comments on the revised scheme are awaited however with limited change the proposal is likely to be considered acceptable on arboricultural merit with planning conditions attached.

S106/CIL -
N/A

Conclusions

The principle of expansion of the school is acceptable and is supported by Policy CF10. The specific location for development is also acceptable.

The scale and design of the proposed block is much as previously approved. It sits comfortably within the context of the adjacent buildings and the relationships across the sites boundaries.

The design of the building is visually interesting and acceptable.

There are details of access, drainage and arboricultural matters still to be submitted, but these can be resolved through Planning Conditions or the submission of further information before determination.

Further information or Conditions to include;

- Drainage matters
- Arboricultural matters
- Materials
- Detailed design
- Access detail / 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 onto the highway
- LS Landscape strategy
- L9 Planting and retention of trees