

Application Number

P/2014/1215

Site Address

Combe Pafford School
Steps Lane
Torquay
Devon
TQ2 8NL

Case Officer

Mr Scott Jones

Ward

Watcombe

Description

Removal of detached two storey temporary building and construction of infill building to accommodate teaching space and vocational training.

Executive Summary/Key Outcomes

The site is a mid-sized school that caters for children who have moderate learning difficulties or autism. The school offers a progressive academic system integrated with a range of vocational interests, which is planned for wider personal development.

The application is to replace a two-storey detached temporary building that itself sits amongst buildings in a fairly central location in the site, with a permanent two-storey building linked to adjacent buildings. The aim is to improve the educational space by principally re-providing the previous facilities lost from the temporary building in an improved internal environment.

The proposals are acceptable in principle and are supported by policies in the Saved Adopted Torbay Local Plan and the NPPF.

The development area is not sensitive being developed land that currently holds a building and circulation routes.

The location is not considered sensitive in terms of visual impact or amenity, and the proposal will sit comfortably aside the existing buildings when considering its scale and form.

The established playing fields to the north are unaffected and it is not proposed to increase school numbers and hence transport impact is limited.

The site sits at the head of the Fleet River and hence development may have an impact in terms of wider flood risk away from the site. The Council's Drainage Officer has requested further information in order that there is certainty on there being no increase in risk of flooding. It is considered that this can be achieved by condition in this circumstance.

Recommendation

Approval - Subject to conditions outlined at the end of this report.

Statutory Determination Period

The target date for a decision is 5th March 2015 and subject to the committee resolution a decision is expected prior to this date.

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 existing group of buildings incorporates a variety of building designs as the school has expanded gradually over the years. The development area for the proposal sits amongst this nucleus of buildings.

Detailed Proposals

The application is for a two-storey school building to replace an existing detached two-storey temporary building, set in a courtyard enclosed by buildings to three sides.

The proposed building will be finished in brick and render with elements of glazed curtain walling. The roof will be gently pitched metal sheeting. Internally it will provide 4 classrooms, a hairdressing salon and a fitness suite, along with more ancillary office, storage, pastoral and WC space.

The existing building to be removed is two-storey and flat roofed, and holds 3 classrooms, a 6th form room, a life skills room and a fitness suite.

Summary Of Consultation Responses

South West Water: No objection.

Drainage Department: The applicant should demonstrate that the surface water drainage design will not result in any increased risk of flooding to properties or land adjacent to the site.

Environment Agency: Do not object to the proposal however as the site is in a Critical Drainage Area surface water drainage standards apply.

Highway Officer: No comment, other than there are parking concerns in the area and it is recommended that funding is secured, if possible, to review parking restrictions in the area.

Sustainable Transport Officer: Verbal comment that obligations should not be sought in light of there being no increase in numbers however an updated travel plan should be achieved by condition.

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/2014/1035	New one storey 6th form building - Approved
P/2013/1257	Demolition of portacabin and provision of new learning facility/cafe/teaching accommodation - Approved
P/2011/0387	Extension to form office/interview room to side of existing classroom block - Approved
P/2009/1195	Construction of vocational training centre - Approved
P/2008/0022	Formation Of Business And Enterprise Centre - Approved
P/2007/1457	Ground And First Floor Mobile Classroom With Toilets And Changing Rooms With Showers And Stores - Approved
P/2003/1486	Erection Of 4 New Classrooms; New Multi-Purpose Hall, And Associated External Works - Approved

Key Issues/Material Considerations

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

1. The principle of development
2. Design and visual impact
3. Drainage impact
4. Highway impact
5. Other matters

Each of these matters is addressed in turn below.

1. The principle of development

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

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

In regard to national guidance paragraph 72 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools in support of ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of the community.

The proposal is considered to satisfy the above criteria. The building is considered to be an efficient use of previously developed land within the site and the proposal relates well to the scale of buildings present and reinforces the established building group that sits as a collective in the wider site. It does not affect the playing fields and due to its central location it would not impact adjacent residential areas through noise or disturbance.

2. Design/Visual Impact

The proposal is considered acceptable in regard to its design and visual impact.

The location of the development is not considered sensitive, which limits any impact of development upon the wider built environment. It will be set fairly centrally within the site and enclosed by buildings on three sides. The development area also presently holds a substantial building which will be removed, which again reduces the impact of introducing a slightly larger building in this location.

The two-storey scale relates well with the buildings that it will sit amongst.

The form and palette of materials is unremarkable however it would appear to be a pragmatic design solution for the scale of the building when considering the largely limited architectural merit of the wider group of buildings.

In respect of design and visual impact the proposal is considered an acceptable addition on the site that responds to the context and would be an appropriate change to the wider built environment.

3. Drainage impact

The site sits at the head of the Fleet River and surface water discharge may have implications outside of the site.

The impact of the drainage strategy is uncertain and further detail to demonstrate that the development would not increase the risk of flooding on land adjacent to the site should be secured.

It is considered appropriate to seek to achieve resolution via a planning condition that seeks further detail, to the satisfaction of the Authority's Drainage Department.

4. Highway impact

The development replaces existing educational space and the accompanying detail with the application cites that it is not envisaged that staff of school numbers will increase as a result of the development.

In the absence of any expansion in pupil numbers the highway implications of the proposal are likely to be minimal.

The school's working green travel plan should be updated to respond to the development and this should be achieved by condition, in line with advice from the Authority's Sustainable Transport Officer.

5. Other matters

As the site is over 1hectare the development has been screened in accordance with the EIA regulations. In this circumstance it has been concluded that the development would not have a significant effect on the environment due to its size, location or character. An Environmental Impact Assessment is not required in this instance.

S106/CIL -

N/A.

Conclusions

The fundamental principle of redevelopment to improve the facilities is considered acceptable and the site is considered to have the attributes to comfortably accept the scale of development.

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

The impact upon highways and movement is considered limited due to the building replacing an existing building. An updated travel plan should be secured by condition.

Additional information on drainage is required and a planning condition should secure this.

Condition(s)/Reason(s)

01. Submission of drainage details to the satisfaction of the Authority's Drainage Department
02. An updated travel plan for the school to be submitted and approved
03. A sample of the metal sheet roofing shall be submitted and approved

Relevant Policies

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