

Application Number

P/2013/0183

Site Address

Torre C Of E Primary School
Barton Road
Torquay
Devon
TQ1 4DN

Case Officer

Matt Diamond

Ward

Tormohun

Description

Construction of 4 classrooms with vehicular access for grounds maintenance; formation of hard surface play area

Executive Summary/Key Outcomes

The application is for a new school building comprising a new nursery and key stage 1 classrooms on the existing hard surfaced games court and play area at Torre Church of England Primary School, Barton Road, Torquay. The application seeks to meet the growing demand for primary school places in Torbay, whilst at the same time improving the design layout of the school in terms of its functionality and security. A replacement hard court is included in the application to the east of the site, which is larger than the hard court that was approved last year following the demolition of the former scout hut on the site. The application also includes a new vehicular access onto Barton Road for maintenance vehicles in order to improve security in this respect also.

National planning guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages local planning authorities to work positively and collaboratively with schools to help to meet their needs in providing sufficient choice of school places and places great importance on this issue. Local planning authorities must work with schools to overcome any relevant planning issues.

The key planning issue with this proposal is the impact of traffic generation on local highways, which is already perceived as a significant problem by local residents. Therefore, the applicant has submitted a new Travel Plan setting out how car trips will be reduced by promoting more sustainable modes of travel. Provided the Travel Plan is proactively implemented and monitored by the school and Local Planning Authority, the application is considered to be suitable for approval. This and other measures should be secured by condition.

Recommendation

Conditional approval; subject to soakaway and surface water drainage design proposals being agreed with Drainage & Structures within the 13 week determination date or agreement by Drainage & Structures to a pre-commencement condition requiring these details, otherwise the application be refused on 13 week determination date; subject also to the payment of the cost of the required highways measures or s106 agreement securing payment of these costs by the 13 week determination date, otherwise the application be refused on 13 week determination date; approval be delegated to the Executive Head of Spatial Planning in order that the detailed wording of the conditions

can be finalised (a list of condition headings is provided, but more may be required).

Statutory Determination Period

The application is a major application because the site area is greater than 1 hectare. The application was validated on 25.06.2013. The 13 week determination date is 25.09.2013.

Site Details

The site is the Torre C of E Primary School, Barton Road, Torquay. The site area is 1.02 hectares. It is a triangular shaped site bounded by Barton Road to the west and residential properties to the northeast and southeast. Vehicular access is from Barton Road.

The site is allocated for an extension to form nursery accommodation in the Adopted Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011 (the 'Local Plan') (Policy CF8.4), but this has been built. No other allocations or designations affect the site.

The site layout comprises the school buildings to the south and grass playing fields to the north, with a hard surfaced games court and play area in-between. There are a number of trees on the site, mainly around the site boundary.

Detailed Proposals

The proposals are for a new classroom and nursery building on the existing hard surfaced games court and play area and partly on the man-made grass embankment, a replacement hard surfaced games court and play area on an area of informal grass to the east, and a new vehicular access for maintenance vehicles north of the existing vehicular access on Barton Road. The application also includes the installation of two barrel vault canopies on the remaining hard surfaced play area between the new and existing buildings to provide covered play and outdoor learning, and some alterations to the existing car park to improve pedestrian access. Informal play equipment currently to the east of the site would be relocated to the north of the playing field.

The new building would be single storey and include three classrooms (reception and key stage 1) and a nursery with toilets and a kitchen. It would have a gross floor area of 430 sq m. It would have separate pedestrian access to the nursery and classrooms. An external ramp would be built to provide access to the building to the north due to the change in levels on the site. The building would have a low pitched roof of grey concrete slate and incorporate photovoltaic solar panels on the south facing side. The walls would consist of limestone coloured concrete blocks and lavender blue coloured Cedral Weatherboard cladding at ground floor level, and yorkstone coloured concrete blocks at lower ground floor level, with a blue black engineering brick stringcourse between. The doors and windows would be powder coated aluminium. The southern elevation would include powder coated aluminium brise soleil over the windows.

The new hard court would have an area of 457 sq m and would require regrading of the land to be level. A fence would be erected around the perimeter of the court, which would be 2.4m high adjacent to the neighbouring properties.

The new vehicular access has already been constructed and is intended to provide access to grounds staff directly onto the playing field instead of them using the main access in order to improve security. It would be used on a monthly basis during the

growing season.

Surface water drainage from the new building and hard court would be to soakaways.

The proposals result in the removal of three small silver birch trees (one dead).

Summary Of Consultation Responses

Highways/Strategic Transportation: Highways raise no objection in principle, but recommend a Travel Plan to ensure additional parking does not affect nearby streets as no additional parking is proposed.

Additional loading restrictions on the opposite side of Barton Road are also recommended to ensure the free flow of traffic during school drop-off and collection times, as the school already suffers from major congestion at these times. These measures would cost £1,500. A new Travel Plan should be produced to try and reduce the number of car journeys to the school.

Strategic Transportation has added that they have concerns that expansion of the school will create additional traffic congestion and not help address the local accident record. However, the Travel Plan submitted with the application will help to rectify this if it is implemented effectively in which case the application can be supported. The proposed cycle and scooter parking are also positive benefits.

Strategic Transportation has requested a £8,000 bond to enforce the implementation of the Travel Plan, to be monitored annually. Also, in addition to the loading restrictions recommended by Highways, further zigzag road marking is required towards St Michael's Road costing £200.

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

Drainage & Structures: No details of surface water drainage or soakaway locations on the plans. No information on location of trial holes undertaken. No design calculations for soakaways provided. Design of soakaways must be submitted before planning permission is granted and must be carried out in accordance with Building Research Establishment Digest 365.

Environment Agency: No comment - provided best practice guidance for surface water drainage.

Arboricultural Officer: The proposal does not negatively affect any significant arboricultural features. The new access should not be sited to affect the present or future rooting zone of the highway birch tree opposite St Michael's Road.

Summary Of Representations

Five objections have been received from local residents. The following material considerations have been raised:

- o Additional on-street parking in Valley View Close making access to residential properties more difficult
- o Additional on-street parking on Barton Road

- o Loss of green areas on the site
- o Loss of privacy
- o Impact of noise from more pupils and location of hard surfaced court
- o Extra traffic impacting on highway safety
- o Impact of soakaways on local drainage issues
- o Overdevelopment
- o Double yellow lines or a no entry sign required for Valley View Close to discourage parking during school drop-off and pick-up times
- o Parents currently park illegally
- o Teachers park in Valley View Close.

Relevant Planning History

P/2001/1472 Erection Of Detached Building To Provide "Pre School" Teaching Facilities And Outdoor Play Area (Revised Scheme) (As Revised By Drawing No. 99.715.00 Received On 20 November 2001): Approved 29.01.2002.

P/2012/0580 Installation of single mobile classroom: Approved 22.08.2012.

P/2012/0581 Removal of existing scout hut and formation of new hard surface play area in same location: Approved 06.09.2012.

Key Issues/Material Considerations

The key issues are:

1. The Principle of the Development
2. Design
3. Access
4. Impact of Traffic on Highways
5. Impact on Amenity
6. Drainage

1. The Principle of the Development

The principle of the development is acceptable. Local Plan Policy CFS approves all educational infrastructure in principle and Policy CF10 permits the improvement of educational facilities at existing schools provided that:

1. Sites for new schools are well related to existing or proposed residential areas, accessible to public transport and have safe pedestrian and vehicular access;
2. School sites are of a sufficient size to accommodate the satisfactory design and layout of new or improved school facilities;
3. Proposals have regard to the need to safeguard existing playing fields within the school site; and
4. Proposals can be accommodated without undue detriment to surrounding residential areas.

It is considered that the proposal accords with criteria 1, 2 and 3. Criterion 4 will be discussed below.

Furthermore, paragraph 72 of the NPPF states:

"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. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

- o give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools; and
- o work with schools promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted."

Therefore, the NPPF places great weight on providing new school facilities where they are needed and local planning authorities should work positively to resolve any resulting planning issues.

The proposed development is needed to meet the growing demand for primary school places within Torquay. The new building has been sited on the existing hard surfaced games court and play area in order to safeguard the school playing fields. A replacement hard court would be provided to the east of the site, partly on the area already approved for a new hard surfaced play area following the demolition of the former scout hut. The new hard court would be larger than the hard court already approved, but it is considered that it can be satisfactorily accommodated on the site in accordance with Policy CF10.2.

2. Design

The new building has been designed to match the character of the nursery building that was approved in 2002. The layout has been designed to better organise the school site in terms of age groups and security. The new nursery has been sited close to the school entrance on Barton Road. Consequently, parents would be able to collect nursery children without having to enter the school site and disturb older children. This is the case with the current nursery and reception classrooms, which OFSTED has commented as being relatively isolated to the east of the site. It has also been identified as a potential security risk.

The new building would accommodate new reception and key stage 1 classrooms next to the new nursery, allowing a logical progression from one age group to the next. The existing nursery would be converted into classrooms for older children.

Therefore, the layout of the proposal is considered to be appropriate and an improvement on the existing arrangement. The height and massing of the new building is also considered appropriate, as it would fit in with the scale of the existing buildings.

No new landscaping is proposed, but the Design and Access Statement states that the intention is that a landscaping plan will be prepared for the site following involvement with the school children and the Local Planning Authority is invited to add a condition in this regard. A condition is considered appropriate to ensure the landscaping is acceptable for the site and enhances biodiversity.

Therefore, the proposal accords with Policies CF2, BES and BE1 of the Local Plan.

3. Access

Highways have not objected to the new vehicular access for maintenance vehicles on Barton Road. Therefore, this access is acceptable, subject to conditions for drawings showing that the requisite visibility splays can be achieved and details of the proposed stone piers.

The proposed alterations to the car park are also acceptable and would improve access for pedestrians, including disabled people.

Therefore, the proposal accords with Policy T7 and T26.1 and T26.3.

4. Impact of Traffic on Highways

The proposal would result in the school increasing in size by 85 pupils from 282 to 367. However, due to the split of the nursery into morning and afternoon sessions, the number of additional pupils travelling to/from the school during the peak times is estimated as approximately 59 in the submitted Transport Statement (TS).

62% are expected to travel to school by car. Taking into account car sharing by siblings, the TS calculates that there would be 26 additional two way trips in each peak hour from new pupils.

The proposal would also require four new full-time employees and four new part-time employees, equating to six full time equivalent employees, who are also expected to drive to/from the school. The TS calculates there would be a total of 32 additional two way trips in each peak hour as a result of new pupils and staff.

Whilst representations have referred to teachers parking in Valley View Close, there are 10 car parking spaces within the school car park and the TS states there would be a total of 24 full-time employees at the school. They state a standard of 1 space per 3 full-time equivalent staff has been agreed with Torbay Council, therefore only 8 spaces are required and no further parking is necessary. However, the TS also states that there are currently 39 staff employed at the school, 20 of whom drive. This evidence demonstrates that there is insufficient parking at the school to cope with the existing demand and this is likely to become worse after the development.

The key issue raised by local residents objecting to the application is the impact of additional traffic generation on local roads, which is already seen as a significant problem at the school. However, having discussed this issue with Highways and Strategic Transportation colleagues, and bearing in mind the national guidance in paragraph 74 of the NPPF to positively work with schools to resolve planning issues, the proposal is considered acceptable with regard to this issue provided that the school takes proactive steps to reduce car trips to and from the school by parents and staff.

A new Travel Plan has been submitted by the applicant as part of the application and it is important that this is properly implemented and monitored by the school/Local Planning Authority to ensure that more sustainable travel modes are undertaken in future. New cycle and scooter parking is also proposed and Highways/Strategic Transportation have recommended highways measures on Barton Road. The cost of these will need to be paid either as an upfront payment or secured via a section 106 agreement before the 13 week determination date.

Therefore, subject to a suitably worded condition regarding the implementation and monitoring of the Travel Plan and the highways measures to Barton Road, the proposal is considered to accord with Policies CF1.3, CF10.4 and T26.2.

5. Impact on Amenity

Representations have raised concerns with the impact of the proposal on privacy and potential increase in noise. It is considered that there would be no impact on privacy, as the new building is sited well away from neighbouring properties and there is vegetative screening around the boundary in any case. The previous application to build a new hard surfaced play area following the demolition of the former scout hut was granted subject to a condition requiring a report on the proposed fencing to ensure it provides adequate visual screening and noise attenuation. Therefore, a similar condition should be added to this development if approved.

6. Drainage

Surface water drainage is proposed to soakaways, but inadequate information was provided in the application regarding their design and suitability. Further information has recently been submitted and additional comments are awaited from Drainage & Structures. These comments shall either be included as a late representation or reported verbally at committee. The aim is to approve the surface water drainage details within the 13 week determination period, otherwise a pre-commencement condition would be required.

S106/CIL -

Highways/Strategic Transportation require the following highways measures to be paid either as an upfront payment or secured in a s106 agreement:

- o Loading restrictions on the opposite side of Barton Road (£1,500)
- o Further zigzag road marking towards St Michael's Road (£200).

Strategic Transportation have also recommended an £8,000 bond to be used on further measures if the Travel Plan fails to reduce car trips at the school. This has been discussed with Legal and is considered unnecessary and unreasonable given the imposition of a Travel Plan condition.

Conclusions

The application is acceptable, subject to conditions discussed above. The proposal is needed to meet the demand for additional primary school places and would result in an improved design layout at the school with regard to functionality and security. Whilst there are recognisable problems at the school with traffic parking during school drop-off and pick-up times, it is believed that these can be overcome through the successful implementation of the submitted Travel Plan in order to promote more sustainable modes of travel, such as walking, scootering, cycling and public transport.

Condition(s)/Reason(s)

01. Landscaping and Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)
02. Access drawing showing visibility splays

03. Drawing of stone piers either side of new access
04. Implementation/monitoring of Travel Plan
05. Details of hard court fencing re visual screening and noise attenuation
06. Drainage (tbc)

Relevant Policies

CFS - Sustainable communities strategy
CF1 - Provision of new and improved community
CF2 - Crime prevention
CF6 - Community infrastructure contributions
CF10 - New schools and improved school facilities
EP1 - Energy efficient design
EP4 - Noise
BES - Built environment strategy
BE1 - Design of new development
BE2 - Landscaping and design
TS - Land use transportation strategy
T1 - Development accessibility
T2 - Transport hierarchy
T7 - Access for people with disabilities
T25 - Car parking in new development
T26 - Access from development on to the highway