

PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBER:P06/1639

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| Type of approval sought | Full Planning Permission |
| Ward | Belle Vale |
| Applicant | Halesowen College |
| Location: | HALESOWEN COLLEGE, WHITTINGHAM ROAD, HALESOWEN, B63 3NA |
| Proposal | ERECTION OF NEW EDUCATION BUILDING TO INCLUDE SHOP, REFECTORY AND SOCIAL LEARNING FACILITY (RESUBMISSION OF REFUSED APPLICATION P06/0171) |
| Recommendation Summary: | APPROVE SUBJECT TO A 106 AGREEMENT |

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

1. The application site is the Halesowen College campus. The campus buildings are predominantly red brick. They are also fairly prominent – they are sited on a ridge (Furnace Hill rises from the Town Centre, leading into Whittingham Road) and within a relatively open setting, with playing fields to the north-west (to Newfield Park Primary School) and south. There are residential properties nearby, particularly centred in Whittingham Road (to the west) and Furnace Hill and Melbourne Road to the east.
2. Vehicular access is gained into the campus off Whittingham Road, into car parks with barriers across the entrance points. Main pedestrian access is also off there. There is a further car park alongside the open space to the south of the site (on the opposite side of Whittingham Road). A Public Right of Way (Newfield Lane) runs alongside that car park and continues north of Whittingham Road on the edge of the school playing fields adjacent to the application site.

PROPOSAL

3. It is proposed to redevelop part of a building block within the centre of the campus (Block O) – the south western quarter of that block. The applicants have stated that the proposal is seen as phase 1 of a three phased scheme to replace Block O.

- 4 Block O is a single storey block with a saw tooth glass roof, around a central courtyard. A tall chimney dominates the western elevation (unaffected by the proposal). Part of the building contains the existing refectory. This application relates solely to phase 1 of the redevelopment of Block O.
- 5 The proposed building is shown as 3 storey, with a ceiling void beneath a pitch roof falling from the front to the rear. The roof is 14 metres high at its highest point with a projecting canopy on the front of the building. There is a lift shaft column shown rising 2 metres above the roof. This forms a clearly distinguishable feature on the front elevation. The column projects forward of the main building, which comprises glass panels in front of a louvred screen (a brise soleil) attached to the façade by an arm underneath the roof canopy. Ribbon glazing is shown at the third floor on the rear elevation with a series of vents projecting above the ridge line visible from this aspect.
- 6 The footprint of the proposed building is shown extending to the west of that of the existing block. This narrows the gap between that block and the adjoining block (Block 3) to 4 metres, and entails the loss of a landscaped bed. The paving to the rear of the proposed building is proposed to be raised and finished with new paving. A row of three trees is proposed in front of the building.
- 7 The proposed building is shown as accommodating a refectory and shop at ground floor, a coffee lounge, gym and social learning centre at first floor, and 9 classrooms at second floor. The total floor area proposed is given as 1968 square metres. That part of the existing block to be demolished is 311 square metres.
- 8 This is a resubmission of a refused scheme for similar development (P06/0171). That scheme was refused under delegated authority for the following reasons:-
 1. *The Local Planning Authority consider that, without the benefit of assessing how the proposed building would appear alongside the proposed design of the future phases of the redevelopment for the remainder of Block O, per se, it is considered out of scale and context and fails to integrate in with the built form of the rest of the college campus. Furthermore, it is considered that the design of the frontage of the building lacks legibility, including a distinct*

entrance point. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy DD1 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan.

2. *The Local Planning Authority consider that there is an existing parking problem at the college site. The proposal may lead to the aggravation of that problem, but no information has been submitted so that this may be properly assessed. The proposal also does not contain any measures which would help alleviate this problem. In addition, there is no scope given for assessing the cumulative impact of the proposal on parking at the College, in conjunction with the future phased redevelopment of Block O. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies DD6 and AM14 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan.*

9 The applicants have sought to address the first reason for refusal on scale and design grounds by –

- providing a planning context report, setting out, in outline, proposed future phases of the redevelopment of Block O;
- showing a canopy in front of the main entrance extending in front of the lift shaft and brise soleil screen.

10 The applicants have sought to address the second reason for refusal on highway grounds by providing –

- a transport assessment;
- a parking survey;
- and a (final) Travel Plan.

11 In support of the proposal, the applicants have stated the following –

- student numbers overall have declined and will continue to do so for some years to come – the proposal seeks to improve facilities for a reduced number of students at the college;
- there will be a temporary increase in the floor area at the campus during the development phases;
- Block O is the last of the old facilities and its eventual removal will give Halesowen an asset to be proud of;
- the proposal is in part a response to an Ofsted comment that there is a lack of student space at the college;

- the car parks have been managed to secure the most effective and efficient use of spaces – all staff and students are required to have a parking permit;
- the College has been in touch with the main bus operator and requested that the arrival and departure of buses is staggered;
- the College is exploring ways of improving community relations.

HISTORY

- 12 There are a number of applications relating to the development of the college on the site since the 1960s. The most recent, relevant permission being for the erection of 6 mobile buildings – see table below.
- 13 This is considered relevant to the current application as a supporting statement with P04/0627 indicated that the mobile buildings were associated with the proposed future redevelopment of Block O. The assessment of that application also made reference to a draft travel plan.
- 14 For details on P06/0171, refer to paragraph 8 of this report.

| APPLICATION No. | PROPOSAL | DECISION | DATE |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|--|------------|
| P04/0627 | Erection of 6 mobile buildings. | Approved for a temporary period until 30/09/07 | 24/05/2004 |
| P06/0171 | Erection of new educational building | Refused | 27/04/2006 |

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 15 11 individual representations objecting to the proposal, including ones from all Local Ward Members, together with a petition with 564 signatories against the proposal, have been received. The issues raised, in summary, are:-

- the proposed building is out of keeping with the area due to its height, scale and design;
 - it will be a blot on the landscape and (visually) intrude on nearby properties;
- the proposal will result in the overdevelopment of the site;
- the building is intended for use by companies to hold conferences, which would lead to further parking problems
- there are insufficient car parking spaces at the college;
- coaches dropping off/collecting students cause severe traffic congestion – leaving insufficient space in the highway for two cars to pass each other;
- students are choking (sic.) residential roads because of their parking habits;
- cars are parked illegally, including on pavements;
- highway problems are compounded by cars parked waiting to pick students up;
- the parking charge for on site parking encourages more cars to park outside the campus;
- there seems to be an absolute disregard for the road safety of residents, their children and the young students of Earls High School and Newfield Primary School
- increasingly over the past few years, the detrimental impact and behaviour of quite a large element of students has resulted in anti-social behaviour blighting the area –
 - this includes litter, drug taking/dealing, large gatherings of students creating a feeling of intimidation to local residents, alcohol and associated drunken behaviour, and loud music from stationary and moving cars;

- residents are dismayed by the lack of consideration shown by the College to local residents – there have been a number of residents group meetings to discuss issues of concern in relation to the college;
- the number of staff and students who attend this facility has reached saturation point – numbers are likely to increase as a result of this proposal – the refectory gym and seminar rooms are more than likely to increase numbers further still;
- disabled facilities could have been accomplished without the need for 6 portacabins which are now shown to be replaced by the 9 classrooms;
- this is a residential area, and the residents should be allowed a reasonable quality of life.

OTHER CONSULTATION

- 16 Group Engineer (Development): The proposal is considered acceptable subject to the implementation of an amended Travel Plan and the provision of an additional coach lay-by.
- 17 Head of Environmental Protection (HEP):- no adverse comments.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

- 18 The following Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies are relevant:-
- DD1 (Urban Design);
 - DD4 (Development in residential areas)
 - DD6 (Access and transport infrastructure);
 - CR9 (Edge of centre and out of centre development)
 - AM14 (Parking);
 - AM16 (Travel plans)
 - CS4 (Education provision)
 - NC4 (Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation)
 - S02 (Linear Open Space)
 - S03 (access and enhancement of Linear Open Space)

ASSESSMENT

19 This proposal is a resubmission of a previously refused scheme (P06/0171), seeking to address the reasons for refusal on that previous scheme. As such, it is not considered reasonable to assess the current scheme on any other issues than those which featured in the reasons for refusal for P06/0171. These issues relate to design and highway considerations.

20 Design

There were essentially two elements to the reason for refusal on the previous scheme (P06/0171) in relation to this issue - a) the proposal failed to successfully assimilate into the design context of the existing campus – this was particularly without the benefit of an understanding as to how the proposed building would sit alongside future phases of the proposed redevelopment of Block O; b) the lack of a defined entrance feature to the proposed building.

21 In relation to the design context, the applicants have submitted information to show how it is intended that the proposed building would be the first of three phases for the redevelopment of Block O. The applicants consider a phased development to be necessary to maintain some functions in some parts of Block O, while demolishing other parts to make space needed for replacement buildings. They envisage that Phase 2 would entail the progressive removal of the remaining parts of Block O with linked 2 and 3 storey buildings, and Phase 3 would involve the removal of the remaining temporary mobile buildings and the demolition of the bungalow on the campus frontage.

22 From the illustrative plans showing this phased development, it is noted that the currently proposed building (Phase 1) is shown to essentially stand alone when viewed from its frontage with a gap to a proposed adjoining building under Phase 2, which is of a similar height (3 storey). The eastern elevation of the proposed Phase 1 building onto that gap is now shown with additional windows - on the refused scheme that elevation was shown as mostly blank.

23 It is considered that this enables the proposed building to be viewed as effectively assimilating into the existing and proposed design context of the campus. The general design of the proposed building is consequently now considered satisfactory.

- 24 In terms of the details of the design in relation to the proposed entrance to the building, it is considered that the canopy now shown above the main entrance to the proposed building helps to emphasise this opening, and gives greater legibility to the building overall. This element of the design is consequently now considered satisfactory.
- 25 Highway and parking considerations
The applicants have submitted a Transport Statement, parking survey and Travel Plan seeking to address the reason for refusal levelled at the previous scheme on this issue.
- 26 The parking survey concludes that while students are responsible for some of the parked vehicles on the roads surrounding the campus, they are not responsible for the majority of parked cars. In addition, coaches do occasionally wait on roads surrounding the campus and infrequently overspill from the lay by on Whittingham Road. However, it is considered that this can be addressed by staggering coach arrival times.
- 27 The Transport Statement concludes that- a) there is an appropriate level of parking provided at the college (315 spaces): b) on street parking is well controlled (with traffic regulation orders); c) with the provision of the college coach service, the proximity of Halesowen Bus Station, the high costs involved with car ownership, the advantages of car travel to the campus is significantly outweighed by the numerous alternative methods of travel; d) the College's Travel Plan has the objective of reducing car travel – the provision of additional spaces would be contrary to this aim.
- 28 The Travel Plan sets out targets for traffic reduction to the site as well as actions as to how this can be achieved. The solutions range from encouraging cycling and walking to setting up a car share scheme and promoting public transport alternatives to reduce single car occupancy and use.
- 29 Also relevant to this issue is the supporting information on the application set out in paragraph 11 of this report, particularly in relation to the potential for a drop in future student numbers.

- 30 It is considered that given this evidence, it would be potentially unreasonable to arrive at a conclusion that the proposal, per se, would significantly exacerbate the parking in and around the site, to the detriment of highway safety.
- 31 It is also recognised that, by taking forward the recommendations of the Group Engineer – Development, the proposal provides the opportunity to help ameliorate existing highway concerns, thereby benefiting the local environment. This is in relation to the parking of coaches at the college and the implementation of the Travel Plan.
- 32 In relation to the parking of coaches in connection with the college, conditions have been recommended requiring a) the provision of an additional coach lay-by and b) measures by which the Local Planning Authority can exercise a degree of control over the arrival, departure and parking of coaches taking students to and from the campus.

CONCLUSION

- 33 This revised proposal has satisfactorily addressed the reasons for refusal on the previous scheme (P06/0171), by showing how the proposed building would satisfactorily assimilate into the existing and proposed design context, and providing evidence to enable the conclusion to be reached that, subject to conditions, the proposal would not significantly exacerbate highway safety concerns.

RECOMMENDATION

- 34 It is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to:-
- a) the owners entering into a Section 106 Obligation to pay for a Traffic Regulation Order associated with the provision of a coach lay-by;
 - b) in the event that the Obligation is not entered into/completed within 2 months of the resolution to grant approval, the application will be refused if appropriate;
 - c) the following conditions, with delegated authority for the Director of the Urban Environment to make amendments to these as necessary.

Reason for approval

The Local Planning Authority consider that this revised proposal has satisfactorily addressed the reasons for refusal on the previous scheme (P06/0171), by showing

how the proposed building would satisfactorily assimilate into the existing and proposed design context, and providing evidence to enable the conclusion to be reached that, subject to conditions, the proposal would not significantly exacerbate highway safety concerns. The proposal is consequently acceptable and in compliance with the development plan, in particular policies DD1, DD6 and AM16 of the Unitary Development Plan.

Conditions and/or reasons:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
2. Development shall not begin until details of the existing and proposed levels of the site, which should be related to those of adjoining land and highways, have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. Develop in accordance with agreed details.
3. Development shall not begin until details of the type, texture and colour of materials to be used in the external elevations have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. Development shall be in accordance with the agreed details.
4. Development shall not commence until a detailed scheme for the arrival, departure and parking of coaches taking students to and from the campus, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be in operation before the building is occupied, and, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, thereafter be in force for the life of the development.
5. No development shall commence until an amended Travel Plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The measures within that Travel Plan shall be informed by survey results from responses from at least 10% of the student population and shall include:
 - a) a car parking management scheme, addressing the re-allocation of parking spaces within the campus;
 - b) a timetable for the implementation of the measures contained therein.The amended, approved Travel Plan shall then be implemented in accordance with the approved timetable and in partnership with the Council's Travel Plan Co-ordinator.

6. No development shall commence until a scheme for the provision of an additional lay-by for coach parking, including details of its design and position, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved.
7. No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority a scheme of proposed landscaping, which shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of the development.
8. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the details of landscaping approved in accordance with condition 6 shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development whichever is the sooner; and any trees, hedgerows or plants contained in the approved planting scheme which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.