Raddlebarn School, Gristhorpe Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 7TD

Erection of two storey nursery block

Applicant: Birmingham City Council
Development & Culture, 1 Lancaster Circus, Queensway, Birmingham, B4 7DQ

Agent: Acivico
1 Lancaster Circus, Queensway, Birmingham, B4 7DG

Recommendation

Determine

Report Back

1.1. Your Committee will recall deferring this application at your last meeting on 25 July 2013 in order for the matters raised by the public speaker to be responded to, as the agent was not present at the meeting. The key concerns were the siting and design of the proposed nursery block.

1.2. With regard to siting, Acivico has confirmed that the proposed block is in the same location and has a similar sized footprint to the previous nursery building. The siting has been chosen taking account of the following circumstances:

* It allows for the removal of the temporary classroom which is located on the staff car park and so is displacing vehicles onto Gristhorpe Road, exacerbating congestion there;
* It uses land which is difficult to supervise at playtime due to it being out of sight;
* It forms a courtyard at the end of the front play area and addresses the park.

It is clear to me that there is no realistic, alternative location in the site, and that the applicant's choice of the location of the former nursery building is an entirely appropriate re-instatement.

1.3. Concerning the design, Acivico acknowledges the appearance does not replicate the Victorian style of the original school buildings but advises that to accommodate the same floorspace in a more traditionally designed building would most likely have increased the footprint and produced a more obtrusive extension.

1.4. Other issues raised included access and means of escape from the existing school building due to the proximity of the proposed nursery and Acivico has confirmed that the scheme has preliminary approval from Building Consultancy. The objector also alleged that the internal layout was poor but Acivico has defended it saying it is extremely efficient and offers a balance between providing appropriate circulation space and keeping the footprint to a minimum.
1.5. I am satisfied that the proposal is well-considered, I have no objection to the contemporary design, and I consider the scheme offers the accommodation which the school requires in an appropriate place within the site.

**Original Report**

Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions

1. **Proposal**

1.1. This application proposes the erection of a two storey detached building to accommodate the nursery class.

1.2. In September 2012 consent was granted for a temporary classroom to accommodate the nursery while the former nursery block was demolished. This application proposes a new permanent nursery building in approximately the same location as the demolished block.

1.3. The nursery would be positioned centrally along the southeast boundary of the site adjacent to Muntz Park. Access would be through the main school gates on Gristhorpe Road and a dedicated external play area for the nursery class would be located to the rear of the building. Total floorspace of 383sqm would be provided across the two floors with the nursery classroom and associated toilets and staffroom on the ground floor. Offices, training and intervention rooms would be on the first floor. The building would measure 6.6m high x 9.9m wide x 21.6m long (two storey section only) and 27.2m long (including canopy).

1.4. A contemporary design is proposed incorporating a cylindrical feature at the entrance, a large canopy to the rear and a flat roof over the main block. Materials would consist of yellow coloured render, timber weatherboard and aluminium/wood composite window and door frames.

1.5. No changes are proposed to the number of children, staff or parking spaces within the site.

2. **Site & Surroundings**

2.1. The application site comprises three separate school buildings laid out parallel to Umberslade Road and Gristhorpe Road and evenly spaced within the site creating two separate playgrounds. The buildings, a mix of one and two storey, date from the early 1900s and there is an associated caretaker's house in the northern corner of the site. The main entrance is on Gristhorpe Road where there is vehicular access into an informal parking area alongside the caretaker's house. Dwellings and shops at Nos. 82-114 Raddlebarn Road adjoin the site to the northwest and there is a park to the south. Gristhorpe Road and Umberslade Road are predominantly residential.

3. **Planning History**

3.1. Various old applications relating to extensions to the school and new boundary railings, and the following most recent application:

3.2. 19/09/2012 - 2012/05209/PA – Temporary planning permission granted for one year for the retention of temporary portacabin for replacement nursery space.
4. Consultation/PP Responses

4.1. Transportation Development: No objection since there is no increase in the number of children.

4.2. Regulatory Services: No objection.

4.3. Site notice posted and local Councillors, Residents’ Associations and the occupiers of neighbouring properties notified of the application; two responses received from local residents commenting as follows:

* 1 letter supporting the proposal on the grounds that it will be important to the education of the children who will use it

* 1 letter objecting to the proposal on the following grounds:

- Loss of external play space, encroaches significantly on junior playground and the large area of glazing will further reduce potential for playing ball games.
- Impact on adjoining public parkland - blocks views. Also have significant impact on backdrop of Victorian park.
- Alternative sites for the nursery have not been adequately explored.
- Too close to infants’ building - may affect fire escape routes and be difficult for parents with pushchairs to negotiate.
- design does not respect design of the original school buildings.
- Poor entrance design - too small
- full height glazing on the south east elevation creates issues of privacy for children.
- Design and Access Statement is very poorly written, high number of factual errors.
- Redevelopment of the Selly Oak Hospital site will increase pressure on primary school places locally: using this site compromises the potential for the school to meet this demand.
- should be referred to Sport England to see how site might be developed whilst maximising the opportunities for physical activity within the school grounds.

5. Policy Context


6. Planning Considerations

6.1. The key issues for consideration in the assessment of this application are the impact of the proposal on visual amenity, on residential amenity and on parking and highway safety.

6.2. The proposed nursery would be located in a similar position to the former nursery building, although it would be more substantial having first floor accommodation. It would be visible from Gristhorpe Road, Umberslade Road and Muntz Park due to its position close to the southeast boundary of the site and the openness of the park but the design is such that it would make an interesting, contemporary addition to the school site. The design offers a contrast to the typical Victorian style of the original school buildings but at the same general scale. Apexes of the steeply pitched roofs of the existing buildings and the flat roof of the proposed block are virtually the same height and in the general streetscene I would not expect it to be overly prominent in
the streetscene. There are mature trees around the perimeter of the park and semi-
mature trees at the boundary with the school site which would offer some screening,
especially during the summer. The City Designer has some reservations about the
durability of the materials, particularly the timber weatherboard and samples have
been requested, but these could be dealt with by condition to ensure that the new
building retains its initial appearance. It is noted that the plans suggest the windows
would have tinted glass but the agent has confirmed verbally that they would be
clear glazed.

6.3. The proposal makes provision for replacement rather than additional
accommodation and no increase in pupil places is intended. Consequently, the
impact on local residents in terms of noise and disturbance and parking and highway
safety would be negligible. Also, the building would be positioned away from
residential properties and there would be no impact on light or outlook for residents.

6.4. Objections to the proposal are noted, particularly relating to the loss of outdoor play
space, however consultation with Sport England was not required and the amount of
outdoor space for schools cannot be controlled through the Planning system.

7. Conclusion

7.1. This application is recommended for approval; it would replace the existing
temporary nursery classroom, which is neither practical for long term use nor
visually appropriate, with a more suitable permanent building in a style which would
add interest to the school site.

8. Recommendation

8.1. Approve subject to conditions

1  Requires the scheme to be in accordance with the listed approved plans

2  Requires the prior submission of sample materials

3  Limits the approval to 3 years (Full)

Reason for Approval

1  Birmingham City Council grants Planning Permission subject to the condition(s) listed
below (if appropriate). The reason for granting permission is because the development
is in accordance with:
   Policies 3.8, 3.10 and 3.14 of the Birmingham Unitary Development Plan 2005; Places
   for All (2001); and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Case Officer: Amy Stevenson