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Target Date: 03/12/2014
Ward: Northfield

Turves Green Boys School, Turves Green, Birmingham, B31 4BS

Demolition of existing school buildings including caretakers dwelling and development of new three storey secondary school building, hardstanding, car parking, landscaping and associated infrastructure

Applicant: Interserve Construction Ltd
c/o Agent
Agent: RPS Planning & Development
Highfield House, 5 Ridgeway, Quinton Business Park, Birmingham, B32 1AF

Recommendation
Approve Subject To Conditions

1. Proposal

1.1. This application proposes demolition of the existing school buildings (except the existing Sports Hall in the south eastern corner of the site), and the erection of a new three storey ‘superblock’ School along with associated parking and access improvements, landscaping and other associated sports provision and hardstanding. The approximate new floor area of the new school would be 6,131sqm.

1.2. The new building would be located to the northern end of the existing school site; approximately 10m from the north eastern boundary. The building would be 11.2m in height with a flat roof. It would be set back from Turves Green by approximately 18.5m. The building would be 38m wide fronting Turves Green and would have a depth of 62.6m into the site.

1.3. The new building would be three storeys formed of one rectangular ‘superblock’. The building would be brick built with a simple palette of materials. The lower part of the building would have grey brickwork whilst the upper floors would be rendered white with grey rendering between windows. The main entrance and pupil entrance would be defined by double and triple height glass walling respectively. With a canopy/brise soleil covering part of the north western and south western elevations. Windows would have a predominantly horizontal emphasis and constructed with aluminium frames. Rooflights would be provided for natural light, with provision made to access plant and other services on the roof. There would be a staircase overrun projecting above the roof, close to the north east elevation.

1.4. The building would consist of the two central areas, one being the school hall, the other circulation and dining space that would be open plan and void at first and second floor. These areas would provide links to other areas of the school including classrooms that would be arranged in a rectangular formation around the building.
The kitchen area would be located to the north eastern corner of the building, with administration and toilet facilities located centrally.

1.5. The existing sports hall would remain to the south east corner of the site. New hard play areas would be laid out centrally within the site, with a new basketball court provided. A soft play grassed area would also be introduced to the south west of the site. The sports hall would remain available to the local community.

1.6. The existing vehicular access point to the north of the site from Turves Green would remain and would provide access both to the staff and visitor car park in the north east corner of the site and for service vehicles. The existing central vehicle access would be removed, whilst the southern access would be retained although fixed closed. The current traffic light system for the northern access will continue to be used. A new open entrance area for pedestrians to the front of the school building would be provided, with a small soft landscaped area and pathways to the main entrance. 42 car parking spaces would be provided, including three disabled spaces along with cycle parking.

1.7. Staff levels are expected to rise from 72 to 95 full time equivalent teaching and administrative staff and pupil numbers are expected to increase from 600 to 862, with the introduction of a new 6th Form.

1.8. New landscaping is proposed across the site in particular to the front. There are 16 individual trees and 3 groups of trees within or adjacent to the school grounds. One Category B Oak Tree is to be removed from the site’s frontage, and two Category C Cypress and one Category C Cherry tree from within the site. There would be tree protection measures put in place to protect all other trees from any potential construction works.

1.9. The demolition of the existing school would be phased to enable the school to remain open during the construction period. An accompanying planning application for temporary class room accommodation is also on this agenda.

1.10. A Design and Access Statement, (including a Planning Statement, Statement of Community Involvement and Energy Statement); a Flood Risk Assessment, Ecological Appraisal, Bat Survey, Transport Statement and Travel Plan, Tree Survey, Acoustic Report and Geo-environmental Desk Study report have all been submitted in support of the application.

1.11. The proposal has been screened in accordance with EIA regulations and has been concluded not to require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

1.12. Site Area is 1.4 hectares.

Proposed site plan

Ground floor plan

Proposed elevations

2. Site & Surroundings

2.1. The application site relates to Turves Green Boys School located to the eastern side of Turves Green, within Northfield Ward. The school is located within a predominantly residential area and the site currently comprises of a purpose built
school building with a courtyard at its centre and a number of wings of differing heights, mostly two storeys and incorporating a caretakers dwelling. A modern sports hall sits in the south east corner of the site. The one, sizeable three-storey element sits at the centre of the site, albeit appearing as a two storey due to land level difference. There is approximately 2.3m of fall from the existing entrance from Turves Green at the north-west, to the south east of the site.

2.2. The school is bounded by Clunbury Road residential properties to the north, Titterstone Road residential properties to the east and Worthen Grove and Merino Avenue residential properties to the south. Further to the north of the site is Turves Green Primary School and Turves Green Girls School; whilst to the south is Albert Bradbeer Primary School.

2.3. There are no protected trees on the site and the site is not within a Conservation Area; however it is within close proximity of the Austin Village Conservation Area.

Location map
Street view

3. Planning History

3.1. There is an extensive planning history associated with the site and in particular for the provision of temporary accommodation. However an application of note is;

3.2. 30/06/2006 – 2004/01445/PA Construction of new sports hall, fitness room and dance studio with associated ancillary facilities. Approved subject to conditions.

3.3. Being considered concurrently with this application elsewhere on this agenda is;

3.4. 2014/06321/PA Demolition of existing school building, including the caretakers dwelling and the erection of two storey temporary classroom accommodation.

4. Consultation/PP Responses

4.1. Transportation Development – No objection subject to conditions for a construction management plan, submission of cycle storage details, reinstatement of redundant vehicle crossings, revised school travel plan and other safeguarding conditions.

4.2. Regulatory Services - No objection.

4.3. West Midlands Police – No objection, recommend that the proposal is developed to enhanced security standards produced by Police Crime Reduction initiative ‘Secured by Design’.

4.4. West Midlands Fire Services – No objection, advise that the fire hydrant indicated on the fire strategy plan, would be better located to the rear car park where it would be accessible to a fire appliance.

4.5. Severn Trent – No objection subject to a condition for drainage plans for the disposal of foul and surface water flows.

4.6. Birmingham Public Health – No comments received.

4.8. Letters of notification have been sent to surrounding occupiers, local residents associations, Northfield Ward Councillors, Planning Committee members form the Northfield Constituency and the MP for Northfield. A site and press notice has also been posted.

4.9. One letter of objection has been received from a neighbouring occupier, objecting to the proposal on the following grounds.

- There has already been loud work and construction in the area for 2 years.
- The school is high enough already.

5. Policy Context

5.1. The following local policies are relevant.

- The Birmingham Unitary Development Plan (2005)
- Draft Birmingham Development Plan (2013)
- SPG: Places for All

5.2. The following national policy is relevant.


6. Planning Considerations

6.1. Background

The school is to be re-developed under the Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP). The programme is centrally managed and has been set up to address the needs of the schools most in need of urgent repair. Through the programme, 261 schools across England will be rebuilt or have their condition needs met by the Education Funding Agency (EFA). It is intended that all schools within the programme will be delivered by the end of 2017. Turves Green Boys School is one of six schools within the city that has been identified for funding. This has led to the development of a series of design proposals for the site and culminated in the scheme presented in this application.

6.2. Principle

The NPPF confirms that 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 and encourages local planning authorities to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. It goes on to state that local planning authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools.

6.3. The application site currently comprises of Turves Green Boys School, along with an existing sports hall to the rear. The existing buildings have been identified as having serious shortcomings, sufficient to justify rebuilding and the proposal therefore seeks permission to demolish the existing school buildings (except the existing sports hall) and erect a new three storey school building comprising a single ‘superblock’ building consistent with the Education Funding Agency’s baseline design, which includes new classrooms, circulation areas, the reorganisation and laying out of play areas.
including a basketball court, soft play area, consolidation of the existing car parking and access and provision of new landscaping.

6.4. The redevelopment of the site would enable the school to continue providing education to the city’s children and strengthen its links with the community. Consequently, as the existing school buildings are of no particular architectural or historical importance and the site is currently in educational use and the proposal would contribute to an efficient use of land through its re-use and is within a sustainable location, I have no objection in principle to the proposed school redevelopment.

6.5. Design and Amenity
The proposed new building would be positioned to the north eastern part of the site approximately 10m from the boundary with 205 Turves Green and the gardens of properties on Clunbury Road. The proposed building with maximum width of 62m and being 3 storeys in height would result in a significant mass along this north eastern boundary. However, it is noted that the main bulk of the existing building sits within 5m of the boundary and therefore the new building would be situated a further 5m away. The overall massing of the proposed building has been a key design consideration. Most significantly, at pre-application stage the proposal was revised to improve the relationship between the new building and the neighbouring properties to the north. In addition, the topography of the land is such that the ground level of the new building is set 1m lower that the ground level of neighbouring properties therefore slightly reducing the impact of the building and creating a similar relationship as existing. No objections have been received from these residents.

6.6. The proposed building is closest to 205 Turves Green at its north western frontage, with a distance of 13m between the two buildings. The new building would then extend along the boundary with properties on Clunbury Road, with approximately 45m separation between the new building and these residential dwellings. It is clear that the proposed new building would change building relationships and outlook along this boundary and residents would have full view of the new building. However, I consider that the distance to the proposed new building, combined crucially with the very extensive, mostly dense, mature boundary trees and large shrubs and that 400mm high obscure glazing is proposed on second floor windows along this elevation of the building would be sufficient to ensure that no significant overshadowing, loss of outlook or light to residents would occur sufficient to warrant the refusal of the application. Even in winter, I consider the density of trunks, branches and some evergreen planting combined with the distance between the two buildings and the elevation treatment would mean that the building would not be overly dominant, in my opinion.

6.7. Other residents’ amenities are also considered: those on Merino Avenue would see buildings removed from within close proximity, and the addition of a soft play area next to the existing hard play area with no change to the boundary treatment. Those on Worthen Grove would be almost unaffected by the proposal given that the sports hall would remain and those on Titterstone Road would have a much larger degree of separation from the school building than at present with a distance of approximately 45m between building faces.

6.8. Internally, the accommodation would be organised into learning areas based on combinations of generic and specialist accommodation clusters. These would be arranged to be as flexible and adaptable as possible to enable multi use of learning spaces and accessibility to all learning resources. The design of the building has seen a simple palette of materials, with a combination of traditional brick, to reference
the material of the surrounding architecture, white and grey coloured render to help break down the scale and massing of the generic 'superblock' volume in a contemporary manner. The front and south western elevation has been designed to provide more activity as these would be the public facing elevations, entrances are provided with full height glazing and a canopy/brise soleil is provided wrapping around the south western corner of the building.

6.9. Consequently, I consider that the design and scale of the building, use of the materials and its position within the site, when considered with the landscape setting would result in a large but not unduly imposing building appropriate to its site, setting and function, which would accord with both local and national policy which would provide an inspirational, flexible and long lasting learning environment.

6.10. **Landscaping**
The proposed landscaping of the site has been informed through careful considerations and respect for the existing landscape elements and tree cover, maintaining as much as possible the existing biodiversity of the site. Particular attention has been applied to the external main approach to the school entrance. As the proposed new development is set back from the road it is clearly identifiable, with the landscaping of this area ensuring legibility of the entrance area. The proposed entrance provides a combination of ornamental planting creating an attractive external realm to the frontage of the school.

6.11. The landscaping plan submitted illustrates the new soft planting that would be predominantly with native planting selected with particular attention to species appropriate to a school environment. No refurbishments to existing boundary treatments is proposed, however existing boundary treatments to neighbouring properties are robust with screen planting already well-established to gardens abutting the site. Repairs would be carried out where there are any holes/gaps in fences which put the site at risk.

6.12. Whilst considerable effort has been made with regards to the landscape plan, a few details remain to be improved including planting detail; however I consider this can be satisfactorily dealt with by adding an appropriate condition and therefore I raise no objection to the proposal on this basis.

6.13. A tree survey has been submitted with the application and a tree retention plan indicates that most trees within the site would be retained specifically to the front of the site along Turves Green. However, the plan shows the removal of an Oak Tree to the front of the site and two smaller Cypress and Cherry trees from within the site, none of which are afforded statutory protection.

6.14. My Arboricultural Officer has accepted that the removal of the trees is required to facilitate the development. Consideration was given to try and retain the Oak Tree to the front; however this included moving the building which would have compromised surrounding residents' amenity. Furthermore, replacement tree planting is indicated on landscaping proposals submitted. In addition safeguarding conditions to ensure the protection of trees throughout the site are recommended.

6.15. **Transportation**
The applicants have submitted a Transportation Statement and the existing school’s travel plan. The existing vehicle access from Turves Green to the north of the site would be retained and would provide access both to the staff car park in the north east corner of the site and for service vehicles. An existing central vehicle access would be removed, whilst a southern access would be retained but fixed closed. The
current traffic light system for the northern access would continue to be used. In addition, the school benefits from a range of school safety measures. The road is traffic calmed and is within a 20mph zone. There are 'School Keep Clear' markings provided along the school frontage, supported by a Traffic Regulation Order indicated by signs prohibiting stopping on entrance markings between 8.00am and 5.00pm. In addition it is noted that the two other Turves Green Schools (Primary and Girls School) have staggered leaving times, to reduce local congestion.

6.16. There are currently 54 car parking spaces within the site including 4 disability spaces), which accommodates all required parking. This would change to a proposed 45 spaces (including 3 disability spaces). Current staffing levels will increase from 72 to 95 full time members of teaching and support staff. Current adopted car parking guidelines suggest a maximum 1 space per 2 staff which in this instance equates to 48 spaces. Although there is a shortfall of three spaces, it is considered that the parking provision proposed would be sufficient to meet the needs of the school. It is noted that there is potential for some (ad-hoc) additional on-site parking if required (double parking etc.).

6.17. Parking standards also state that 1 cycle parking space should be provided per 10 staff or students. However, it is noted 3% of students and 3% of staff currently travel to school by bicycle. It is considered that providing spaces at the ratio recommended (95 spaces), could be counterproductive by having a large number of vacant stands. For this reason, it is proposed to retain the existing cycle stands which provide 40 covered cycle parking spaces. The spaces will be covered and secure and will be monitored for usage under the Travel Plan. Further stands can be provided should the need arise. A condition requiring further details of this cycle parking is recommended.

6.18. The school is currently part of Centro’s “Smart Network, Smarter Choices” project (funded through the Department for Transport’s ‘Local Sustainable Transport Fund’), with an overall aim to develop a Travel Plan to promote economic growth, whilst reducing carbon emissions. The School Travel Plan (Sept 2013) confirms it’s aims to resolve a number of transport issues at the school and identifies a need to target an increase in walking and cycling to the school while reducing congestion at peak drop off and collection time and establish a viable means of promoting the benefits of sustainable transport to staff and pupils, to improve health and well-being and improve the local environment. Whilst not included within the supporting Transport Statement & Travel Plan submitted with the application, my Transportation Development officers have obtained the Year 1 (2014) ‘Review Document’ of the school travel plan dated July 2014 (approved by Centro in Sept 2014). This states that due to the school’s Travel Plan coordinator leaving the school, the travel plan has not achieved its full potential. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the impact of the proposed development will be reflected in the proposed (and final) Year 2 (2015) review. It is therefore recommend that prior to occupation the School Travel Plan is rewritten and submitted for approval by the Local Planning Authority.

6.19. The site is within a sustainable location and is well served by Public Transport with numerous bus services serving Turves Green. Therefore on the basis of the information provided, Transportation Development consider the proposal acceptable subject to a number of conditions including reinstatement of redundant vehicular accesses, a detailed demolition/construction phase management plan and phasing plans to understand the parking strategy during construction. Given the above, I therefore raise no objection on highway grounds.

6.20. Ecology
A Phase 1 habitat survey submitted with the application found that the site is dominated by buildings and hardstanding, as such, the site has limited ecological value; although the survey made a number of recommendations including that a bat survey of the buildings should be undertaken.

6.21. A bat survey revealed that no bats were found using the buildings as a roost site and no bats were using the site to forage. The trees that did offer some limited potential revealed no bats to be present. It was concluded that bats do not present a barrier to development on this site.

6.22. The Council’s Ecologist notes that the site offers limited scope for ecological enhancement. However, he does consider that there is some potential for the site to incorporate features to support local wildlife which would benefit local biodiversity and create valuable opportunities for the schools pupils to interact with and learn about nature. It is therefore considered a condition to secure a scheme of ecological/biodiversity enhancement measure is added to any approval.

6.23. **Land Contamination**
The Geo-environmental Assessment submitted in support of the application has been reviewed and my Regulatory Services Officer raises no objection. The assessment recommends that an intrusive ground investigation is undertaken comprising of a number of tests including exploratory boreholes to obtain information regarding the onsite presence, distribution and nature of made ground. As such, my regulatory services office recommends that a condition requiring a contaminated land assessment along with appropriate verification report is added to any permission given. I concur with this view.

6.23. **Noise**
The proposal is unlikely to give rise to a material increase in noise, given the existing use of the site. A noise assessment submitted with the application states that plant and equipment noise limits have been set to a Rating Level (LAr,Tr) 10dB below the lowest background noise level (LA90). This should see that noise attributable to the proposed development does not increase the background noise levels at the nearest affected residential façades. Regulatory Services have raised no objection to the application in this respect.

6.30. **Flood Risk**
A flood risk assessment has been submitted with the application as the site is over a hectare. The Environment Agency has raised no objection to the proposal subject to the imposition of appropriate drainage conditions. This view is echoed by Severn Trent.

6.31 **Energy Saving**
Energy efficient measures would be implemented to reduce the overall energy consumption and CO2 emission of the development, including air handling plant with low specific fan power and high heat recovery, efficient lighting with daytime dimming and absence detection. By incorporating such measures, predicted energy consumption would be over Buildings Regulations Part L by 11.47% and CO2 emissions by 8.16%

7. **Conclusion**

7.1. The proposed development would result in the provision of a new purpose built school, of an appropriate design that would not have any undue impact on the visual or residential amenities of the surrounding area. The school would be provided with
good quality sporting and recreational facilities which would be available for community use and would be in a sustainable location. The proposal would therefore accord with policies within the Birmingham Unitary Development and those set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

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 a contamination remediation scheme
3. Requires the prior submission of a contaminated land verification report
4. Requires the prior submission of a drainage scheme
5. Requires the prior submission of a scheme for ecological/biodiversity/enhancement measures
6. Requires the prior submission of extraction and odour control details
7. Limits the noise levels for Plant and Machinery
8. Requires the prior submission of hard and/or soft landscape details
9. Requires the prior submission of hard surfacing materials
10. Requires the prior submission of boundary treatment details
11. Requires the prior submission of level details
12. Requires the prior submission of a landscape management plan
13. Requires the prior submission of a lighting scheme
14. Requires the prior submission of a construction method statement/management plan
15. Requires the prior submission of sample materials
16. Requires the prior submission of a phasing plan
17. Requires the implementation of tree protection
18. Requires the prior submission and completion of works for the S278/TRO Agreement
19. Requires the prior installation of means of access
20. Requires the prior submission of a parking management strategy
21. Requires the delivery and service area prior to occupation
22. Requires the parking area to be laid out prior to use
Requires the prior submission of details of parking
Requires the prior submission of cycle storage details
Requires the prior submission of a School Travel Plan
Limits the approval to 3 years (Full)

Case Officer: James Mead
Photograph 1: Existing vehicles access along north eastern boundary

Photograph 2: Existing school frontage (southern end)
Photograph 3: Existing school frontage (northern end)