

APPENDIX 1 – LOCAL MEETING NOTES

Virtual Local Meeting Notes (Microsoft Teams Format)

Location: SYDENHAM HIGH SENIOR SCHOOL, 19 WESTWOOD HILL, LONDON, SE26 6BL

Meeting date: 19/07/2024

Proposal

Demolition of the existing caretakers cottage, 6th form building and a single storey of the lodge building and the construction of a three-storey building to the front of the site, a new sports pavilion at the rear and a two storey extension and alterations to the facade, installation of steel walkway with glass balustrade and air source heat pump to the lodge building, together with new railings and associated landscaping and cycle parking facilities at Sydenham High Senior School, 19 Westwood Hill SE26.

Panel

Chair: Cllr Chris Best (CllrB)

London Borough of Lewisham: Antigoni Gkiza (ANG)

Applicant Team:

- Matthew Black (Planner) (MB)
- Matt Cawley (Project Manager) (MC)
- Laura Lincoln (GDST (client)) (LL)
- Justin Bean (Architect) (JB)
- Hattie Ward (Architect) (HW)
- Antonia Geldeard (Sydenham staff) (AG)
- Adam Rout (DFO) (AR)
- Lottie Parker (Landscape Architect (maybe)) (LP)

Residents: 4 present (R)

Cllr Best opened the meeting at 7pm and introduced the proposal. The Chair explained the reason for the meeting, and then introduced the panel.

The applicants are invited to give a presentation of the scheme.

The presentation ends at 19:15.

The Chair reads through the key themes, including:

- Urban Design (Large form of development not in keeping with the surrounding context)
- Parking/Access concerns
- Impact on neighbouring amenity (loss of daylight/sunlight, overlooking and loss of privacy, noise disturbance)
- Impact on trees and habitats

Neighbour questions received in advance of the local meeting were then addressed, and attendees were invited to ask questions during the meeting.

Impact on trees and habitats

I am concerned that the new development may impede care of large lime trees which I own, which can only be dealt with from the school area. Access is required for mobile elevating work platform (MEWP) and mechanical shredder. Will the council ensure access of my tree-surgeons as required in the future, during and after the proposed works, to ensure safety of girls and neighbours?

(AR) Confirmed that the school intends to facilitate access so that works could be carried out on trees. There is no reason why the school would not provide access unless there were safety concerns that would not allow them to do so. However, from their perspective they are happy to help any neighbour to do any work that would have a mutual benefit to both parties on the boundaries.

(CllrB) Invited residents to ask questions directly to the panel regarding impact on trees and habitats.

(R) Requested confirmation and reassurance that the proposed development would not impede access to the site for the care of trees.

(AR) Confirmed that the school would certainly have no problem with providing access for a tree surgeon, assuming that it is safe and they are able to do so.

(AG) Clarified that the current planning development is not going to alter their possibility to access the trees. Although they cannot predict what might happen in the future, the reassured the local resident that they would still have access to their trees from the schools premises provided there would be no safety concerns.

(CllrB) Invited residents to ask questions directly to the panel regarding impact on neighbouring amenity.

(R) Concerns about changes to the levels of privacy and overlooking.

(MB) The scheme was considered in detail beforehand to ensure it would not negatively affect properties. It exceeds the Council's guidance in terms of separation distance, which will significantly mitigate the impact of an extra storey on the site.

(JB) Anything new will have a degree of mass that is not there currently. It is understood that there might be a level of overlooking and what they tried to do is bring the height of the building to a lower level than the block of flats on the other side of Amberley Grove. Therefore, in terms of the streetscape, they are trying to not create any new additional height that is not already there and maximize trees at the front and retention of trees on the corner with Amberley Grove to create a natural barrier to stop any overlooking in future years. A lot of the guidance is relating to new residential development overlooking, however this is a

school environment that is used during school hours and so it hopefully is a betterment to any overlooking.

(AG) The higher floor (third floor) has sixth form classrooms accommodating 12 children. It is not a social space.

(R) Raised concerns over the consultation regarding the public exhibition in October 2023. Only a few neighbours received letters regarding the development.

(CllrB) Advised that consultation will be discussed later during the meeting and invited residents to ask any other questions related to impact on neighbouring amenity.

(R) Are there windows on all four sides of the new Entrance Building and specifically to the second and third floors and which way are they looking? Our property is down the hill a bit, so it feels like it will be towering over us.

(JB) Confirmed that block in the middle of the site has windows on the three external edges on the top floor. The ones looking out east are teaching spaces and at the back is a staff office.

(R) Requested clarifications regarding the location of the classrooms.

(JB) The classroom spaces are at the front of the building and the offices are the bottom right-hand corner. The one on the corner is an IT focused teaching space, which is fully inward looking.

(AG) Confirmed that the office is not a staff room. It is an office for an individual doing careers work.

(R) Expressed concerns over noise and disturbance during school time and weekends.

(CllrB) Asked residents to express their concerns over the consultations process.

(R) The local residents stated that they were not invited in the meeting in October.

(AG) Confirmed that they distributed flyers in the doors along the local roads and held an evening and people came along and the architects were present. A website was also set up with information.

(AR) Confirmed that he distributed some of them himself and with his team of minibus drivers. If for any reason they did not arrive, it is disappointing.

(ANG) Confirmed that local residents have been consulted for the current planning application and clarified that the Council was not responsible for the consultation that took place in October as this is a responsibility of the applicants team.

(CllrB) Encouraged the school to commit in the future to making sure there is a good dialogue between them and local residents.

(AG) Confirmed they will commit to having good dialogue and there was no intent not to put those flyers to everybody. They will commit to being thorough in their dialogue going forward. In addition, it was pointed out in terms of noise that the lodge will be part of childrens' use and the areas around it will continue to be areas where children play at break time and at lunchtime that those numbers are not increasing. They do have duty staff on. It was acknowledged that there is a challenge as children do make some noise that is part of a school playground, but they do not have children outside of school hours very often.

It was also confirmed that the school is hired for community benefit. The church does use the space regularly and it is also hired to some of the local primary schools and a gymnastics group. They will continue to monitor and be careful around who they hire to and how they hire.

(CllrB) Invited local residents to express their concerns and ask questions over to the proposed design of the development.

(R) Questions regarding any current plans to significantly increase pupil numbers or rather improve retention. How many people have you failed to retain directly as a result of their of the facilities?

(AG) It is difficult to determine how many pupils has the school failed to retain relating to the facilities, but the current facilities went up as a temporary building and they are still there. There are issues with heating, warmth and classroom space. It is a space that looks less than attractive. It is not about facilities, but good quality teaching spaces and inspirational classroom spaces to make sure that every child has the very best opportunity. There are lots of wonderful schools developed in Sydenham and in Forest Hill.

(R) Does the development achieve its intended purpose, which is to improve retention? Do you ever envisage a scenario where you will be looking to increase pupil numbers because you are retaining more and maybe you are recruiting more?

(AG) There is very little recruitment into girls schools at sixth form level but we are not trying to do that. It would be lovely to retain a few more, but even the size of the Lodge will never allow us to be huge. We are not trying to recruit at 16 plus any more than we do already, which is looking for really good bursary students and sometimes children to replace someone who is leaving. There is no desire to get bigger in terms of recruitment but to retain some of the good students that we have.

(R) I noticed in the planning application and the design, there is kind of a real focus on DT and kind of those of maker spaces, which is obviously great given DT is a declining subject. I was just interested in hearing why the focus on DT. Is that kind of a historic focus or something that you're looking to move into?

(AG) The DT space in the Lodge is difficult to manoeuvre for workshop space and the intention is to move it into a much more manageable space with a bit more room to move around.

(LL) The Lodge would have been the original stable block for the site and is not the best space for teaching. It is should be inspiring, particularly for girls, in subjects such as science, technology, engineering and math. It is from an IT-led point of view as well.

(AR) Confirmed that this will give the chance to enhance that and just be a lot cleaner and more distinct.

(R) If planning permission was granted, does the school have any plans to do a major development in the lower school in the near future as a precedent has been set for the upper school? Is it likely to expect a three storey building in the lower school as well?

(AG) I, I have no knowledge of any plans to do any developments.

(LL) There are no plans to increase the capacity of the Prep School.

(AR) Key elements of playground space would be lost if there were any plans, which are absolute requirements when it comes to children's education.

(R) I was just interested in understanding why as part of the proposals you are putting in a walkway between two of the buildings.

(JB) The walkway at the lodge is about accessibility as the existing first floor of the Lodge building is not accessible to wheelchair users. There is no lift in that building. The simplest option was create that walkway, utilizing the levels on site to bring step free access onto that upper floor of the lodge.

(R) Is there a rough timeline of when buildings are due to begin if should there be no obstacles?

(CllrB) Informed the residents that the case officer will provide further information and gave a summary of the key issues that were discussed during the local meeting and asked the planning officer to take them through the next steps of the process.

(ANG) Advised that the minutes from this meeting will form the appendix one of the committee report and also the people that have submitted representations for the planning application will be invited to the planning committee. If they wish to speak, they will be informed by the committee clerk about how to do that. Flagged that the Council holds only the details of the people that have submitted representations and advised attendees that have not submitted representations, if they wish to attend the committee, they could send their details to the planning inbox.

(CllrB) Is there a specific date scheduled for the planning committee meeting?

ANG sets out next steps.

CllrB closes the meeting at 8pm.