



meeting **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

date **18 MAY 2004**

from: **Director of Environment**

agenda item number

7

**BROXTOWE BOROUGH COUNCIL 5/04/00030/CCR
CONSTRUCT NEW TECHNOLOGY AND ART BLOCK
BRAMCOTE HILLS COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL, MOOR LANE,
BRAMCOTE, NOTTINGHAM
APPLICANT: THE HEADTEACHER, BRAMCOTE HILLS
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

Purpose of Report

1. To consider a planning application for a new Technology and Art Block at Bramcote Hills Comprehensive School. The key issue relates to the appropriateness of the proposals within the Green Belt. The recommendation is to grant planning permission subject to conditions and referral as a departure to the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM).

The Site and Surroundings

2. Bramcote Hills Comprehensive School is located on the western side of Nottingham on land which rises up from Derby Road (A52) to the south. It lies within part of an extensive area of open space shared with other educational establishments. Bramcote Hill forms a densely wooded area upon rising land to the south-west of the site. A former sand pit known as Bramcote Quarry lies to the west and is being infilled to provide public open space and playing fields for the school.
3. Moor Lane runs through a steep sided cutting and forms the eastern boundary from which vehicular access is gained. Residential development is located on the eastern side of Moor Lane and within Ranmore Close which lies on higher ground level with the school site (see Plan).
4. A road lined with attractive lime trees running parallel to Moor Lane provides access to the Lower School. A line of established trees runs adjacent to the site's eastern boundary where a palisade fence is installed.
5. The school comprises separate Upper and Lower Schools contained within the campus along with other schools. At its southern end the campus abuts Bramcote Leisure Centre. The Lower School lies towards the northern end of the campus and contains various buildings up to 4 storeys in height, hard play areas, car parking, playing fields and grassed areas. Planning permission has

recently been issued for a new gymnasium and refurbishment of external hard play areas including provision of floodlighting.

Proposed Development

6. The application seeks to provide a new Technology and Art Block at the Lower School within a sloping grassed area to the west of the existing school buildings. The building would measure approximately 38.2m x 17.1m and would be covered by a shallow pitched roof with a ridge height of 8.7m (5.7m to eaves). It would comprise accommodation arranged on two storeys providing a range of rooms, workshops and stores for various art and technology subjects plus WC facilities.
7. The building would be covered in a light grey coloured cladding sat on top of a plinth of grey/buff brickwork. Doors, window frames and rainwater goods would be coloured dark grey. The roof would comprise dark grey profile cladding sheets. The eastern elevation, closest to the existing school buildings, would contain a triangular shaped entrance feature at a lower height of 7.9m and incorporate a high proportion of glazing. A steel spiral fire escape coloured dark grey would lead from the building's western elevation.
8. The proposals are designed to give access for all and include provision of a lift within the entrance feature. The block is proposed to link to the existing school buildings via a new external path system. It is proposed to plant 5 No. Swedish White Beam trees as 4m high specimens at the top of a slight cutting within the slope to the north of the building.
9. Revised plans have been received proposing to locate the block some 5m further eastwards towards the existing group of school buildings.

Planning Policies

10. Central Government advice in respect of 'Green Belts' is set out in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 2. Policy 3/2 of the Nottinghamshire Structure Plan Review (SPR) refers to Green Belt and confirms that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development. Appropriate development will be permitted provided that it is located and designed so as not to adversely affect the Green Belt, particularly its open character.
11. Policy EV1 of the Adopted Broxtowe Local Plan (BLP) confirms that planning permission will not normally be granted for inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Policy EV1A states that where the principle of development is considered appropriate, the siting, design and materials of any building should not detract from the open character of the Green Belt.
12. Bramcote Hills is designated as a prominent area for special protection by Policy EV6. Policy RE3 designates the site as private playing fields and education land.
13. Policy C01 confirms that proposals for new/improved community facilities will normally be permitted provided that they would not detract from the amenities of nearby residents, detract from the general environmental character of the

surrounding area or result in excessive traffic generation/cause highway safety problems.

14. The Proposals Map accompanying the Broxtowe Local Plan Review (Revised Deposit Draft) confirms the site lies within the Green Belt and designates the site as existing private open space
15. Policy E1 states that planning permission will not be granted for development which does not meet specific criteria for good design. These include the creation of a high standard of amenity for all users; a high standard of architectural design in terms of scale, mass, materials and landscaping; and respect for the character of the setting.
16. Policy E8 refers to development in the Green Belt and generally reaffirms the advice in SPR Policy 3/2 and BLP Policy EV1. It allows permission to be granted for appropriate development provided it is located and designed so as not to adversely affect the Green Belt, particularly its open character. Appropriate development would include limited redevelopment of existing developed sites provided that it does not result in a more intensive development or additional building area.
17. Policy E9 states that development in the Green Belt which is considered appropriate will not be permitted if, by reason of its siting, design or materials, it would harm the open character or visual amenities of the Green Belt.
18. Policy RCX states that proposals for education facilities will be permitted where the following apply:
 - (a) the proposal would be well located in relation to the community it serves and to public transport services;
 - (b) the amenity of neighbouring properties would not be adversely affected;
 - (c) appropriate provision would be made for parking/highway safety; and
 - (d) the character of the area would not be adversely affected.
19. Policy RC5 refers to the protection of open spaces. The development of such spaces for purposes other than the improvement of the recreational potential of the land or the provision of ancillary facilities will not be permitted except where:
 - (a) No local deficiency of formal or informal space would result or, where such a deficiency will result, an equivalent area is made available; and where
 - (b) The development will not detract from the open character or environmental and landscape quality of the land.

Consultations

20. **Broxtowe Borough Council** note the site lies within the Green Belt and confirm that the review of its Local Plan is at an advanced stage. The review proposes to modify Policy E8 by identifying the school as a Major Developed Site allowing for infilling or redevelopment provided there is no greater impact on the purposes of including land in the Green Belt than in respect of existing development, the height of existing buildings is not exceeded and there is no major increase in the developed portion of the site.
21. The Borough Council accept that a need may be demonstrated for the development but consider that by virtue of its size, footprint and siting the original scheme would be intrusive, impacting on existing views to the north and south and thus have a harmful effect upon the character of the Green Belt. Accordingly a holding objection was lodged in the hope that attempts could be made to address its impact by resiting the building lower down the site.
22. The Borough Council notes the attempts to lessen the building's intrusion. Whilst still concerned about the impact upon the open character of the Green Belt, the Borough Council accepts that the revised siting has an improved relationship with existing buildings and appears much less isolated. Taking into account that the site is proposed to be identified as a Major Developed Site, the Borough Council removes its holding objection, providing the County Council can be satisfied that there is no significant harm caused to the open character of the Green Belt.
23. The Council's Environmental Health Officer recommends appropriate gas prevention measures be included in the construction since the proposed development lies within 250m of a landfill site. The Borough Council consider the proposals would require referral to GOEM as a departure from the development plan.
24. **Transco** raise no objection but confirm the presence of apparatus in the vicinity. A copy of their advice note is to be passed on to the applicant.
25. **East Midlands Electricity** raise no objection.
26. **The Crime Prevention and Architectural Liaison Officer** have not responded.
27. **Severn Trent Water** have not responded.

Publicity

28. The application has been publicised by means of a site notice and press notice. No letters of representation have been received.

Highway Observations

29. No objections on highway grounds.

Observations

30. The site lies within the Green Belt and, as such, there is a general presumption against inappropriate development unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.
31. The current adopted policy context only provides for infilling or redevelopment at major existing sites as “identified in adopted local plans.” Notwithstanding the fact that the school undeniably represents a major existing site, it is not, at present, identified as such in the Adopted BLP. On this basis the application has been treated as a departure and the matter will need to be referred to GOEM as the Borough Council suggest.
32. The Local Plan review process is, however, at an advanced stage and the Local Plan Inquiry Inspector advised the Borough Council to reconsider their general stance in respect of major developed sites within the Green Belt, such as this, which are not formally identified as such. The Borough Council has confirmed that it proposes to modify Policy E8 by identifying this school as a major developed site. The proposals would therefore fall to be assessed against the relevant guidance set out in PPG 2, namely that infilling should:
 - (a) have no greater impact on the purposes of including land in the Green Belt than the existing development;
 - (b) not exceed the height of the existing buildings; and
 - (c) not lead to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site.
33. The proposed size of the block represents a significant new building within the site. However, its proposed ‘footprint’ would lie within a relatively contained part of the school campus being screened by Bramcote Hill from the west and south and from the north and east by the existing school complex. The revised position of the block, closer to existing school buildings, would provide greater containment whilst fencing to the external play areas, proposed floodlight columns and existing vegetation would provide further visual containment.
34. It is understood that positioning the building further south would impact upon mains drainage which crosses that part of the site and would also significantly increase excavation costs, although the latter point is of little direct relevance from a planning perspective. Whilst it is accepted that such resiting could reduce the slight visual impact from the north, it is likely to create a greater impact when viewed from the residential properties to the east, some 200m distant. Positioning the building any further eastwards is understood to impact upon existing classrooms directly north in terms of loss of daylight. As proposed, the block would observe established building lines and continue the pattern of previous extensions to the original three storey building which would continue to provide the focal point of the school. Consequently the proposals are not considered to have any significantly impact upon the open character of this part of the Green Belt.
35. The rise in ground level to the north forms a minor ridgeline thereby screening any low level development as viewed from Trowell Moor and the surrounding countryside. The visual impact of the proposals from this direction would be over relatively substantial distances rendering the upper storey and roofline

barely perceptible as seen adjacent to the wooded Bramcote Hill and the variable rooflines of existing buildings. Such irregular rooflines, as viewed from Moor Lane and Derby Road, serve to create an effective screening feature. The proposed building would not exceed the height of existing buildings.

36. Whilst a sizeable building the proposals are not considered to represent a major increase in the developed proportion of the site when taken in the context of existing built development within the campus. The lack of any enclosed linkage assists in 'breaking up' the visual mass of buildings whilst the predominantly grey colour scheme is considered acceptable by contrasting with the generally warmer coloured brickwork on the existing buildings. Views from the north could, however, be further mitigated through the proposed screen planting. The suggested species would produce dense foliage and is tolerant of most soil types. Accordingly the planting proposals are acceptable. In view of the above it is not considered that the building in this location would give rise to any harmful effect upon the character of the Green Belt.
37. Whilst Policy RE3 designates the whole site as private playing fields and education land, the proposals are for an education use and would not involve the loss of any formal playing fields. The playing fields available to the school will, in any event, be extended in the future following restoration of the nearby landfill site.
38. The proposed path is, however, considered somewhat narrow for its likely usage at times of class changes. The proposed alignment would also benefit from being realigned to provide a direct link to the entrances to nearby school buildings thus overcoming anticipated problems of worn grass from short-cutting. Such aspects could be addressed through appropriate planning conditions as could the comments raised by the Environmental Health Officer.

Human Rights Act Implications

39. The relevant issues arising out of consideration of the Human Rights Act have been assessed in accordance with the Council's adopted protocol. Rights under Article 8 and Article 1 of the First Protocol are affected. The proposals have the potential to introduce a slight impact of visual intrusion. However, this consideration needs to be balanced against the building's setting within the context of existing buildings, the substantial distances involved and the needs of the school to provide new teaching accommodation to facilitate the delivery of modern education in the interests of the wider public.

Conclusions

40. Whilst the proposals are not appropriate Green Belt development under the adopted Borough Local Plan, they can as the Borough Council accepts be viewed as appropriate under the emerging plan which has reached an advanced stage. The building has been designed to complement the massing of existing built development and would not give rise to any significant impact on openness within this part of the Green Belt. The visual impact of the block is acceptable due to its revised positioning, the grouping of existing buildings,

topography and distance from adjoining viewpoints and would be further enhanced by the choice of facing materials and proposed landscaping.

Statutory and Policy Implications

41. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, Crime and Disorder and users. Where such implications are material, they have been brought to out in the text of the report. Attention is, however, drawn to specifics as follows:-

Crime and Disorder Implications

42. The development would be located within an existing school site and would benefit from being linked to the existing alarm system.

Statement of reasons for approval

43. The proposals, whilst not in accordance with adopted Borough Local Plan, are capable of being supported by emerging policy without causing unacceptable harm to the Green Belt through loss of openness. The proposed imposition of the attached conditions is considered to deal satisfactorily with mitigation of potential environmental impacts. The proposals would bring about benefits in terms of improved educational accommodation.

RECOMMENDATION

44. It is RECOMMENDED that the application be referred to the Government Office for the East Midlands as a Departure from the Development Plan.
45. In the event that the Government Office do not wish to intervene, it is FURTHER RECOMMENDED that planning permission be granted for the purposes of Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, subject to the conditions set out in Appendix 1.
46. Members need to consider the issues, including the Human Rights Act issues, set out in the report and resolve accordingly.

PETER WEBSTER
Director of Environment

Director of Resources' Financial Comments

This report considers the planning application and has no direct financial implications. [DJK 6.5.04]

Head of Democratic and Legal Services' Comments

Planning Committee have powers to decide the Recommendation. [SHB 6.5.04]

Background Papers Available for Inspection

Letter from East Midlands Electricity dated 20.1.04

Letter from Transco dated 26.1.04

Letter from Broxtowe Borough Council dated 16.2.04

Letter from Broxtowe Borough Council dated 29.4.04

Electoral Division(s) Affected

Bramcote and Stapleford East

epd.js/EP4523 29 April 2004

SUGGESTED PLANNING CONDITIONS

APPENDIX 1

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within 5 years of the date of this permission. The date of commencement shall be notified to the County Planning Authority (CPA) in writing at least seven days in advance.
2. With the exception of the requirements of Condition 3 below, or unless otherwise agreed in writing by the CPA, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the details shown on Drawing Nos. 881/73/JD/03 and 881/72/JD/03 received by the CPA on 30 December 2003 and Drawing No. 881/74/JD/03 Rev A received by the CPA on 23 April 2004.
3. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted the following details shall be submitted to the CPA for its written approval:
 - (a) revisions to the proposed path system so as to provide direct links between existing doorways and the development hereby permitted; and
 - (b) revisions to the width of the proposed path system in the light of the level of anticipated usage.

The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

4. No part of the building hereby permitted shall be carried out until details of appropriate landfill gas prevention measures have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the CPA. No building completed pursuant to this permission shall be occupied or brought into use until:
 - (a) appropriate measures have been carried out in full accordance with the approved details; and
 - (b) it has been certified to the satisfaction of the CPA that necessary remedial measures have been implemented in full.
5. Unless in the event of an emergency or as otherwise may be agreed in writing by the CPA the construction of the development hereby permitted shall only be carried out between 0730 hrs –1800 hrs Mondays to Fridays and 0800 hrs – 1300 hrs on Saturdays. No construction work shall be carried out on Sundays, Public or Bank Holidays.
6. The planting of the trees shall take place in accordance with the details set out in the letter from the applicants dated 29 December 2003 and Drawing No 881/74/JD/03 received by the CPA on 30 December 2003 within the first available planting season following the substantial completion of the development hereby permitted.

7. All planting carried out in accordance with the details approved under Condition 6 shall be maintained in accordance with details which shall have been previously agreed in writing by the CPA and good arboricultural practice for a period of 5 years following its implementation. Any trees which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the following planting season with similar specimens to those originally planted.

Reasons

- 1 To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 2 To ensure the satisfactory visual appearance of the development in accordance with Policy E1 of the Broxtowe Local Plan Review (Revised Deposit Draft) and for the avoidance of doubt.
- 3 To ensure the satisfactory working of the site.
- 4 For health and safety reasons, given that the site of the development is located within 250 metres of a landfill site.
5. To protect the amenity of nearby occupiers.
- 6,7 In the interests of visual amenity.

Notes to Applicant

1. The applicant's attention is drawn to the content of Transco's letter dated 26 January 2004, a copy of which is attached to this decision.
2. It is recommended that the doors and windows to the development comply with British Standard BS 7950 and PAS 24 in respect of security and the building be included in the existing school alarm system.

epd.js/EP4523
29 April 2004

Please note. Copies of the plan referred to in this report may be obtained from: John Sheffield, Environment, Trent Bridge House, Fox Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 6BJ, tel 0115 977 4499, email john.sheffield@nottscc.gov.uk or from Peter Barker at the same address, tel 0115 977 4416, email peter.barker@nottscc.gov.uk.