

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE 20 April 2017

APPLICATION NO.

DATE VALID

17/P0148

25/01/2017

Address/Site: The Perseid Upper School, Middleton Road, Morden, SM4 6RU

Ward: St. Helier

Proposal: Erection of a single storey north-west extension, a two storey rear central extension and 2 x single storey south east extensions

Drawing No.'s: 2000 (Rev: P1), 2100 (Rev: P1), 2110 (Rev: P0), 2150 (Rev: P0), 3000 (Rev: P1), 3001 (Rev: P1), 4000 (Rev: T0), 4001 (Rev: T0), E2004 and Design & Access Statement (received 23/02/2017).

Contact Officer: Jock Farrow (020 8545 3114)

RECOMMENDATION

Grant planning permission subject to conditions.

CHECKLIST INFORMATION

- Is a screening opinion required: No
- Is an Environmental Statement required: No
- Has an Environmental Statement been submitted: No
- Press notice: Yes (major application)
- Site notice: Yes (major application)
- Design Review Panel consulted: No
- Number of neighbours consulted: 8
- External consultations: 0
- Conservation area: No
- Listed building: No
- Tree protection orders: No
- Controlled parking zone: No
- Site of importance for nature conservation (SINC) – Yes (to the western portion of the site)
- Green corridor – Yes (to the western portion of the site)
- Flood risk zone: No

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is being brought to the Planning Applications Committee for determination as it falls outside the scheme of delegation to officers, being a major Council application and given it is a departure from the adopted development plan.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application site is a back land site which is located on the north western side of Middleton Road. The site is occupied by Perseid Upper School, a special educational facility for children with severe and complex learning difficulties, aged from 11 – 19. The site is not readily visible from the street, being largely surrounded by buildings and open space. The site is bordered by a three storey (with high pitched roofs) terrace building to the south west (fronting Green Lane); a 2 to 3 storey block of flats to the south east (fronting Middleton Road); designated open space which is a SINC (Sutton line south of Wimbledon SINC) and Green Corridor to the west, which is intersected by a railway line; a multi-use games area (including a pitch constructed to Sports England standards) to the north, beyond which is Morden Recreation Ground (designated open space).
- 2.2 The site was formerly known as Risley Playing Fields; however, in 2009 permission was granted for the redevelopment of the site to provide a school, with construction being completed in 2010. The existing building is located centrally within the site, spanning from east to west roughly in an 'S' shape, the building is part single, part two storeys in height and has a floor area of approximately 3,300sq.m. Access to the site is from Middleton Road. The southern portion of the site is used as a carpark while the northern portion is used as a play area. The site has an area of approximately 1.5ha.

3. CURRENT PROPOSAL

- 3.1 This application seeks planning permission for 4 (3 x single storey and 1 x two storey) separate extensions to the school.
- 3.2 The proposed extension to the north west would be single storey with a flat roof and would roughly match the width of the existing building at that point. The proposed central extension would be two storeys with a flat roof and would roughly match the height of the building at that point. The central-south east extension would be single storey with a flat roof. The south east extension would be single storey with a flat roof. All proposed materials would match those existing.
- 3.3 The proposed extensions would have the following dimensions:
- North west extension: 8m deep, 27m wide and 4m in height.
 - Central extension: 5.1m deep, 14.5m wide and 7.4m in height.
 - Central-south east extension: 5.6m deep, 4m wide and 3.7m in height.
 - South east extension: 8.9m deep, 9.4 wide and 3.7m in height.

The proposed extensions would increase the floor area of the building by 495sq.m to 3,795sq.m.

- 3.4 This application is a departure from the development plan given it proposes to build part of the development (the north west extension) on designated open space, with no equivalent provision offered in return. The applicant has provided a statement in support of the application which outlines the necessity of the proposed expansion to the school along with the need to extend into the designated open space, the statement advises the following:
- 3.5 Perseid Upper School caters for special educational needs students between ages 11 – 19; whereas Perseid Lower School caters for special educational need students up to the age of 11. Organisationally, Perseid School (both upper and lower) is one school under a single governing body and Headteacher.
- 3.6 The London Borough of Merton has a legal obligation to secure the provision of sufficient school places for its area. There has been a significant increase in demand

for school accommodation in Merton, with more children entering school age, fuelled by the number of live births that has risen by approximately 39% in the last ten years, which is now flowing into secondary school age. This rise in demand for school accommodation has also impacted upon the provision for pupils with special educational needs. This was confirmed in the recent paper which was presented to Councils Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 11 October 2016; the paper highlighted the shortfall in places for children with special educational needs and in particular the need to expand Perseid Upper School to keep up with demand in the borough and those students coming from Perseid Lower School.

- 3.7 Perseid Upper School was originally designed for 56 pupils. However, due to the increase in demand, the lower school has already expanded within the past two years to accommodate an additional 28 students. As the lower school is a feeder for the upper school and as these are specialised facilities providing for the entire borough (no readily available alternatives), the upper school needs to be expanded in turn to ensure these students will still have a school to attend when they reach 11 years. It is proposed to increase the capacity from 56 pupils to 84, which would also result in an additional 15 members of staff.
- 3.8 Developing the existing building is severely constrained at the front and rear by essential car, van and coach parking and playground space respectively (due to the special needs of the children, the majority arrive by taxi or mini bus). Development to the East is prevented by the sport pitch (constructed to Sport England standards). The only way to avoid building on either the front area or open space is to build up. However, this is problematic due to the nature of the existing building where the ventilation comes from the roof, and the nature of the pupil disabilities, teaching methods and special needs circumstances requiring the extra classrooms to be required in specific areas at ground level. Where possible, extensions have been accommodated within the site on first floor and within the playground area, it has also been necessary to expand onto an area of the designated open space/SINC. The area of SINC to be built upon constitutes approximately 0.4% of the total SINC.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 There is extensive planning history associated with the site formerly known as Risley Playing Fields; however, the summary below will relate solely to the site now occupied by Perseid Upper School:
- 4.2 08/P1509: Construction of a part single, part double storey building for a new special needs centre, providing secondary education, with a new football pitch and games area, incorporating 8 floodlighting columns to a height of 8m, car parking with access from Middleton Road – Planning permission granted.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Public consultation was undertaken by way of site and press notices which identified the application as a departure from the adopted development plan; in addition, letters were sent to neighbouring properties which were considered to be potentially affected – no representations were received.
- 5.2 LBM Transport/Highways officers: No objection. It is not considered the proposal would have a significant impact upon the highway network. Recommended conditions requiring an updated travel plan.
- 5.3 LBM Tree Officer: No objection.

- 5.4 LBM Climate Change Officer: No objection.
- 5.5 LBM Green Spaces: No objection. With regard to the affected open space/SINC land: the methodology, findings and recommendations in the submitted Ecological Appraisal along with the proposed Site Management Plan are considered to be acceptable. The loss of the area of SINC is considered to be acceptable subject to the implementation of the management plan and to conditions to protect biodiversity during and post construction. The scheme would include a 10 year maintenance schedule which would be funded by the applicant who would appoint contractors experienced in habitat creation; any works would be undertaken in consultation with LBM Green Spaces. Advised that a 10 year maintenance schedule is acceptable as it is considered to be a maximum reasonable time the developer should be liable for maintenance costs.

6. POLICY CONTEXT

- 6.1 NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework (2012):
11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 6.2 London Plan Consolidated 2015:
2.6 Outer London: vision and strategy
2.18 Green infrastructure: the multi-functional network of green and open spaces
3.1 Ensuring equal life chances for all
3.18 Education facilities
5.3 Sustainable design and construction
5.10 Urban greening
6.3 Assessing effects of development on transport capacity
6.9 Cycling
6.13 Parking
7.4 Local character
7.5 Public realm
7.6 Architecture
7.18 Protecting open space and addressing deficiency
7.19 Biodiversity and access to nature
7.21 Trees and woodlands
- 6.3 Merton Core Strategy 2011 policy (CS):
CS11 Infrastructure
CS13 Open space, nature conservation, Leisure and culture
CS14 Design
CS18 Active transport
CS19 Public transport
CS20 Parking, servicing and delivery
- 6.4 Merton Sites and Policies Plan July 2014 policies (SPP):
DMC1 Community facilities
DMC2 Education for children and young people
DMO1 Open space
DMO2 Nature conservation, trees, hedges and landscape features
DMD1 Urban design and the public realm
DMD2 Design considerations in all development
DMT2 Transport impact of development
DMT3 Car parking and Servicing Standards
DMT5 Access to the road network

7. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Material Considerations

The key issues in the assessment of this planning application are:

- Principle of development;
- Design and impact upon the character and appearance of the area;
- Impact upon neighbouring amenity;
- Impact upon transport, road safety, parking & sustainable transport;
- Nature conservation and impact upon SINC.

Principle of development

7.2 The principle of development should be considered in the context of the site's designation as open space. London Plan policy 7.18 states that the loss of open space must be resisted unless an equivalent or better provision is made in the same catchment to offset the loss, and that any re-provision must be supported by an up to date needs assessment. Policy CS13 of the CS states that the Council must protect and enhance the boroughs open space. Policy DMO1 of the SPP states that open space will be protected from inappropriate development and that in accordance with the NPPF, open space should not be built upon unless: an assessment clearly demonstrates the open space is surplus to requirement; or, a suitable re-provision offsets the loss; or, the development is for sports and recreation where the need clearly outweighs the loss.

7.3 The proposal is unable to meet the criteria for development on open space in accordance with London Plan policy 7.18 or SPP policy DMO1 given the open space is not surplus to requirement, a suitable re-provision to offset the loss has not been identified and the proposal is not for sports and recreation purposes. Therefore, this application constitutes a departure from the adopted development management plan. It is therefore considered necessary to assess this application on the balance of the need for additional accommodation for children with special educational needs, any practical alternatives to developing on the open space and the harm which would arise as a result of the loss of open space.

7.4 London Plan policy 3.18 states that development which would enhance education and skills provision will be supported including the expansion of existing facilities and those that address the current and projected shortage of primary and secondary schools will be particularly encouraged. Policy DMC2 aims to ensure there are sufficient school places of sufficient standard to meet statutory requirements and that proposals to improve education facilities will be encouraged particularly where new facilities are required in an area to meet an identified shortfall.

7.5 As discussed in section 3 of this report, there is a clearly demonstrated need for additional school accommodation for children with special educational needs between ages 11 - 19, which, in practice, could only reasonably be provided at Perseid Upper School. In addition, given the constraints of the site along with the special requirements of the students, part of the extensions would need to be built upon open space, resulting in the loss of 414sq.m of open space.

7.6 To assess the harm which would arise as a result of the loss of open space the applicant has reviewed the loss against Merton's Open Space Study 2010-2011. The study finds that the borough has a sufficient amount of accessible open space and SINC's based on the Mayor's biodiversity strategy criteria of built up areas. The Sutton Line South of Wimbledon SINC is referenced in the study as Grade 2 which is of the lowest importance; in addition, when officer's visited the site it was confirmed that the SINC has been neglected and used for dumping rubbish. The Sutton Line South of Wimbledon SINC is an extremely small SINC in the context of Borough wide SINC's and of this the proposal would reduce the SINC by approximately 0.4%.

While the proposal would result in the loss of some open space/SINC, the proposal would also include a SINC management plan which would serve to enhance the remaining area of SINC (this is discussed in more detail in the assessment below).

- 7.7 The proposal is unable to accord with London Plan policy 7.18 or SPP policy DMO1 which seek to protect open space; however, it is in full accordance with London Plan policy 3.18 and SPP policy DMC2 which seek to provide a suitable level of educational facilities. The applicant has investigated alternatives to avoid the loss of open space and where they have found that there is no practical alternative, they have minimised the loss as far as practicable by positioning 3 of the 4 extensions within the existing site. The SINC is Grade 2 which is of the lowest importance and the amount of open space lost is not considered to materially reduce the borough wide provision. In addition, to somewhat offset the loss of open space, it is proposed to increase the quality of the remaining space through the implementation of a management plan. Given the above, it is considered that on balance, the unique nature of the use and the associated extensions which would result in the loss of open space are considered to be acceptable, in principle, in this specific instance.

Design and impact upon the character and appearance of the area

- 7.8 The NPPF, London Plan policies 7.4 and 7.6, Core Strategy policy CS14 and SPP Policies DM D2 & DM D3 require well designed proposals which make a positive contribution to the public realm, are of the highest quality materials and design and which are appropriate in their context, thus they must respect the appearance, materials, scale, bulk, proportions and character of the existing building and their surroundings. In addition, specifically in relation to development on open space, policy DM O1 of the SPP requires proposals to be of a high quality design and to not harm the character, appearance or function of open space.
- 7.9 The existing school buildings are predominantly single storey with a central two storey element. While the building has a flat roof, given the large lantern style rooflights and the ventilation extending from the roof, a varied roof form is created. The façade of the building is largely a combination orange/red brick and pre-fabricated cladding. The architectural elements vary across the building; however, when viewed holistically the individual elements work well together and it reads as one building.
- 7.10 The proposed extensions would continue the architectural style of the existing building, being sympathetic in terms of scale and form and incorporating matching materials. It is considered that the proposed extensions would respect the existing building along with the surrounding open space and the wider area.

Impact upon neighbouring amenity

- 7.11 SPP policy DM D2 states that proposals must be designed to ensure that they would not have an undue negative impact upon the amenity of neighbouring properties in terms of light spill/pollution, loss of light, quality of living conditions, privacy, visual intrusion and noise.
- 7.12 Given the positioning, scale and form of the proposed extensions along with the placement of windows, it is not considered the proposed extensions would unduly impact upon neighbouring amenity in terms of loss of light, visual intrusion or loss of privacy.
- 7.13 Given the nature of the school, having a very high ratio of teachers to students and as only small groups of students would be outside at a time, it is not considered that the proposal would generate significant levels of noise. In addition, the play area of

the school would remain on the northern side of the building, meaning there would be a minimum separation distance from the play area to the nearest residential premises of approximately 48m and the building would provide screening from the residential properties. In addition, school is in attendance from Monday to Friday between the hours of 09:00 and 15:15, thus any noise generated would occur outside of sensitive times.

- 7.14 The proposal would include some external lighting which could impact upon neighbouring amenity. It is therefore recommended to include a condition to ensure external lights are directed away from residential properties.

- 7.15 Given the above, it is not considered the proposed development would unduly impact upon neighbouring amenity.

Impact upon transport, road safety, parking & sustainable transport

- 7.16 London Plan policies 6.3 and 6.12, CS policies CS20 and CS18 and SPP policy DM T2 seek to reduce congestion of road networks, reduce conflict between walking and cycling, and other modes of transport, to increase safety and to not adversely effect on street parking or traffic management. London Plan policies 6.9, 6.10 6.13, CS policy CS20 and SPP policies DM T1 and DM T3 seek to promote sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling, electric charging points, the use of Travel Plans and by providing no more vehicle parking spaces than necessary for any development.

- 7.17 Merton's Transport Planners have reviewed the application and advised that the proposal would not generate a significant negative impact upon the surrounding highway network. It is noted that the main access and parking provisions would remain unchanged. In addition, it is recommended to include a condition which would require a travel plan to be compiled and/or updated to accommodate the additional staff. Furthermore, it is noted that the school already has a significant provision of cycle parking.

- 7.18 Given the above, it is considered that the proposal would be acceptable in terms of its impact upon highway matters.

Nature conversation and impact upon SINC

- 7.19 NPPF section 11, London Plan policy 7.19 and SPP policy DM O2 seek to protect and enhance biodiversity, encourage proposals to result in a net gain in biodiversity and to discourage proposal that result in harm to the environment, particularly on sites of recognised nature conservation.
- 7.20 The applicant submitted a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which included a Phase 1 habitat survey, protected species assessment and ecological evaluation of land at Perseid Upper School. The survey found the SINC has suitable habitat for breeding birds, reptiles, badgers, hedgehogs and it found that invasive plants were present.
- 7.21 The applicant also submitted a proposed Site Management Plan for the SINC which would include habitat creation to compensate for the loss of approximately 0.04ha of species-poor semi-improved grassland and scattered scrub within the SINC. The management of the SINC would include clearance of nuisance plants; planting of woodland wildflower species; planting of native hedgerows; the creation of habitat through planting, log piles (for invertebrates, amphibians, widespread reptiles and small mammals) and bat boxes; the repair and replacement of boundary fencing and paths to be cut through the SINC to ensure public access and benefit. The scheme would include a 10 year maintenance schedule which would be funded by the

applicant whom would appoint contractors experienced in habitat creation; any works would be undertaken in consultation with LBM Green Spaces. The LBM Green Spaces team have advised that a 10 year maintenance schedule is acceptable as it is considered to be a maximum reasonable time the developer should be liable for maintenance costs.

- 7.22 The methodology, findings and recommendations of the submitted Ecological Appraisal and the proposed Site Management Plan are considered to be acceptable. It is considered that the implementation of the management plan would significantly enhance the SINC. In addition, conditions are recommended to minimise disturbance of the SINC by ensuring materials are stored on existing hardstanding and to prohibit vehicles entering the SINC, to avoid works in breeding and hibernation seasons of protected species, avoid disturbance to reptiles and badgers and to ensure nuisance plants are removed from the SINC.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The principle of development is considered to be acceptable given there is a clear and overriding need for the proposed school expansion, there are no practical alternatives and as the harm to the open space and SINC are considered minimal. The proposed extensions are considered to be sympathetic to the existing building along with the wider area. It is not considered the proposal would unduly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring properties. It is not considered the proposal would unduly impact upon the highway network. Despite the scheme resulting in a loss of area to the SINC, it is considered that suitably conditioned the scheme would enhance the SINC through the implementation of the management plan.

- 8.2 The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to appropriate conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

Grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard condition [Commencement of development]: The development to which this permission relates shall be commenced not later than the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 (as amended) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

2. Standard condition [Approved plans]: The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: [Refer to the schedule on page 1 of this report].

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. Standard condition [Materials]: The facing materials used in the development hereby permitted shall match those of the existing building in materials, style, colour, texture and, in the case of brickwork, bonding, coursing and pointing.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance of the development and to comply with policy CS14 of Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011 and policies DM, D2 and D3 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

4. Amended standard condition [Travel plan]: Prior to the commencement of the use of the development hereby permitted, a new Travel Plan or an update to the

existing Travel Plan, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall follow the current 'Travel Plan Development Control Guidance' issued by TfL and shall include:

- (i) Targets for sustainable travel arrangements;
- (ii) Effective measures for the on-going monitoring of the Plan;
- (iii) A commitment to delivering the Plan objectives for a period of at least 5 years from the first occupation of the development;
- (iv) Effective mechanisms to achieve the objectives of the Plan by both present and future occupiers of the development.

The development shall be implemented only on accordance with the approved Travel Plan.

5. Standard condition [construction times]: No demolition, construction work or deliveries shall take place before 8am or after 6pm Mondays - Fridays inclusive, before 8am or after 1pm on Saturdays or at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the area and the occupiers of neighbouring properties and ensure compliance with the following Development Plan policies for Merton: policy 7.15 of the London Plan 2015 and policy DM EP2 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

6. Amended standard condition [External lighting direction]: Any external lighting shall be positioned and angled to prevent any light spillage or glare beyond the site boundaries shared with residential properties.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the area and the occupiers of neighbouring properties and ensure compliance with the following Development Plan policies for Merton: policies DM D2 and DM EP4 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

7. Non-standard condition [External lighting lux levels]: All external lighting shall be designed in accordance with, and shall not exceed to the levels specified in, the SINC Isoplot drawing No: E2004.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the area and the occupiers of neighbouring properties and to protect nature conservation in the area, in accordance with policies DM D2 and DM EP4 and DM O2 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

8. Non-standard condition [SINC management plan]: The details and measures proposed in Appendix D (SINC Management Plan v4) of the 'Design and Access Statement' received 23/02/2017 shall be implemented in accordance with, and follow the sequence of events specified in, the document.

Reason: To mitigate and offset the impact of the development hereby approved and to ensure a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with NPPF section 11 and Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014 policy DM O2.

9. Non-standard condition [Working method around SINC]: The storage of any materials and vehicles shall be confined to existing hardstanding areas and no vehicle movements shall be permitted on land which is outside of the footprint of the proposed extension and where those movements would occur on land designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).

Reason: To protect and enhance biodiversity, in accordance with policy DM O2 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

10. Non-standard condition [Bird breeding season]: The removal of any vegetation within the SINC with the potential to support breeding birds must be carried out between the months of September to February inclusive; unless, a suitably qualified ecologist is appointed to undertake a nest survey which lists the nests and proposed mitigation measures to ensure the proposed works do not adversely affect birds nesting on site. If works which are the subject of this condition are intended to take place outside of September to February (inclusive), no works shall be carried out until the details of the nest survey are approved by the Local Planning Authority; any vegetation clearance shall then be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To protect and enhance biodiversity, namely breeding birds, in accordance with policy DM O2 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

11. Non-standard condition [Reptiles]: The clearance of any low lying vegetation or ground works within the SINC shall only be carried out between the months of April and September (inclusive) when reptiles on site are active. Any removal of low lying vegetation and/or ground works on site shall be carried out in accordance with the instructions in the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal dated 3.11.2016.

Reason: To protect and enhance biodiversity, namely reptiles, in accordance with policy DM O2 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

[Click here](#) for full plans and documents related to this application.
Please note these web pages may be slow to load