

**BLOCK B, UPPER SCHOOL SITE, NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME SCHOOL, LANCASTER ROAD
NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME SCHOOL. 12/00646/FUL**

The Application is for full planning permission for the demolition of the western side of the quadrangle of "Block B" of this independent day school and the infilling of the courtyard and formation of a new western facing elevation. External alterations are also proposed to part of the southern facing elevation of Block B. The development would provide new science classrooms, a new replacement library and a multi-functional social area – a net increase of some 808 m². External hard landscaping works are also proposed immediately adjacent to the building overlooking the adjacent Multi Use Games Area.

The application site is located within the urban area of Newcastle-under-Lyme whilst also being within the Stubbs Walk Conservation Area as shown on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The 13 week determination period expires on 24 January 2013.

RECOMMENDATION

Permit subject to the following conditions relating to the following matters:-

- (i) Standard time limit.
- (ii) Approved plans.
- (iii) External materials

Reason for Recommendation

The proposal would create a high quality development that would benefit the character and appearance of the Stubbs Walk Conservation Area. There are no other concerns that would justify refusal of the application. The proposed development therefore accords with Policies D2 and NC19 of the Structure Plan, Policies B9, B10, B13 and B14 of the Local Plan, Policies CSP1 and CSP2 of the Core Spatial Strategy as well as the aims and objectives of the NPPF.

Policies and Proposals in the Approved Development Plan Relevant to This Decision:-

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy 2008 (WMRSS)

- Policy QE1: Conserving and Enhancing the Environment
- Policy QE3: Creating a high quality built environment for all
- Policy QE5: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996 – 2011 (SSSP)

- Policy D1: Sustainable Forms of Development
- Policy D2: The Design and Environmental Quality of Development
- Policy NC19: Conservation Areas
- Policy T18A: Transport and Development

Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy 2006-2026 (adopted 2009) (CSS)

- Policy SP3: Spatial Principles of Movement and Access
- Policy CSP1: Design Quality
- Policy CSP2: Historic Environment

Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan 2011 (NLP)

- Policy N17: Landscape Character – General Considerations
- Policy T16: Development – General Parking Requirements
- Policy B9: Prevention of harm to Conservation Areas
- Policy B10: The requirement to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area

Policy B13: Design and development in the Conservation Areas
Policy B14: Development in or adjoining the boundary of the Conservation Areas

Other Material Considerations Include:

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (2010)

Waste Management and Recycling Planning Practice Guidance Note (January 2011)

The Secretary of State's Announcement of His Intention to Abolish RSS

The Secretary of State has made it clear that it is the Government's intention to revoke RSSs and the Localism Act 2011, which includes powers to give effect to that intention, received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011. However, pending the making of a revocation order in accordance with the new Act, the RSS remains part of the statutory development plan. Nevertheless, the intention to revoke the RSS and the enactment are material considerations.

Relevant Planning History

N14983 Conversion and alteration to form library – permitted 21 January 1986

Views of Consultees

The **Conservation Officer** raises no objection to the proposals specifying that elements will actually enhance the building.

The **Highway Authority** raises no objection to the proposals indicating that there are no highway implications.

The **Conservation Advisory Working Party** has no objections.

The views of the **Environmental Health Division** have been sought and if received will be reported.

Representations

At the time of writing this report no representations have been received however the publicity period does not end until 30 November.

Applicants/Agents Submission

The requisite application forms and plans were submitted along with a Design and Access Statement incorporating a heritage statement. These documents are available for inspection at www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning/nulschool

Key Issues

As stated above the application is for part demolition of the western side of the quadrangle, and the subsequent infilling of the courtyard and the formation of a new western elevation – at Block B which is on the Lancaster Road frontage. Some existing UPVC cladding would also be removed on the southern elevation and replaced with larger windows and horizontal louvres to maximise natural light and control solar glare. The application site is located within the urban area and is within the Stubbs Walk Conservation Area.

Conservation area consent is not required for these works of partial demolition of an unlisted building within the Conservation Area.

The key issues in the determination of the development are:

- Design of the proposals and the impact on the visual amenity of the area and Stubbs Walk Conservation Area.
- Would the development lead to any other consequences that would require mitigation.

Design of the proposals and the impact on the visual amenity of the area and the character and appearance of the Stubbs Walk Conservation Area

The Local Planning Authority has a duty to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of a Conservation Area in the exercise of its planning duties. The existing library which is to be demolished is a part of this building which was extensively altered in the mid 80's. It is not especially attractive in architectural terms. The new western elevation – with its contemporary glazing system and projecting upper floor section will enhance this elevation providing a stronger contrast between the traditional and contemporary build. The new element – a full two storey - does have a flat roof at about the level of the eaves of the remainder of the building. From most views this feature will be fully hidden by the taller pitched roof of the surrounding traditional building. Due to the context, scale and location of the proposal in relation to public vantage points, it would not be a prominent addition, with some views from Mount Pleasant and Stubbs Walk Park. It must be noted however that these views would be from a lower level and in the main glimpses through gaps in mature tree cover. It is therefore considered that no adverse impact upon the Stubbs Walk Conservation Area would ensue as a result of the proposals.

The infilling of the proposed courtyard would not have an adverse impact upon the character of the building or the visual amenity of the Conservation Area due to it being an internal hidden feature. The existing courtyard is not in any case a particularly inviting or designed space and the existing internal elevations are of no particular architectural merit. Accordingly nothing of design merit would be lost but a more useful environment would be created for the students.

The proposed alterations to the southern elevation which is a more visible frontage from public vantage points on Lancaster Road are to be welcomed. Not only would they replace an unsympathetic and incongruous addition to the building with a more modern and high quality feature but the design (use of louvres) would also provide protection from the solar glare that is received on this south facing elevation thus making the building more thermally stable and sustainable.

Although the proposed external materials appear acceptable in principle, it is considered that due to the scale and nature of the proposals within the Conservation Area samples of the external materials to be used should be provided in this instance for the Planning Authority's approval. This could be done through an appropriately worded condition unless otherwise agreed prior to the determination of the application.

Would the development lead to any other consequences that would require mitigation ?

The school do not appear to anticipate an increase in overall pupil numbers as a result of development. There is almost certainly a correlation of some form between pupil numbers, traffic generation and parking demand, albeit a fairly complex one, and notwithstanding the position of the school close to the town centre and bus station. Although the development does notionally add a further 880 m² of accommodation – this is a small addition relative to the size of the school as a whole, and there are reasons to consider that no increase in pupil numbers is likely to result in this particular case by reason of the content of the new development – the enhancement of the school's library, the provision of a covered social/multi functional space and that the two new science classrooms are in place of four existing ones. The scheme is presented primarily as an improvement in the quality of facilities rather than of their quantity. Although once floorspace has been created subsequent changes in the exact use of internal space lies outside the scope of planning control (unless there is a material change of use) the likelihood of this happening appears remote in this particular case given the design.

The existing classrooms which would be vacated are on Vessey Street, another part of the school's campus and the agent has indicated that the long term aspiration of the school would be to demolish that building but in the interim it is likely to be used as additional storage or ancillary space – and that no increase in pupil numbers would be associated with that use. Whilst clearly there is the possibility that the freed up space could increase the capacity of the school, again it is understood that the floorspace involved is not that significant. If the future use of Block M was a concern to Members it would be possible for the Local Planning Authority to bring that use within the scope of planning control (by an appropriately worded condition), but your Officer does not consider that to be necessary.

In this connection it is to be noted that the Highway Authority have no objections to the proposal and they do not ask for any conditions to be attached to an approval – indicating their view that the proposal will help facilitate the existing running of the school and there are no highway implications. Similarly they do not indicate that any contribution towards the Newcastle urban Transport and Development Strategy (NTADS) is required - presumably for the same reason, and because educational developments are unlikely to generate traffic during the afternoon peak hour (17:00 to 18:00) – the basis for the agreed method of calculation of NTADS contributions.

In conclusion your Officer's view is that there are no material traffic generation or parking demand implications arising from this proposal.

Background Papers

Planning files referred to

Planning Documents referred to

Date Report Prepared

19 November 2012