

PLANNING COMMITTEE **17th October 2012**

THE FOLLOWING ALTERATIONS AND AMENDMENTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED SINCE THE PLANNING OFFICER'S REPORT WAS PRESENTED TO MEMBERS

AGENDA ITEM 4

P/06015/026

Transport and Highways.

This is a proposal to increase the size of Priory School by 150 children by constructing 5 additional classrooms and a range of other facilities totalling an increase in floor space of approximately 649sqm. The application states no additional staff members will be employed.

The submitted documents state that currently there are 149 members of staff (60 full-time) and only 40 staff parking spaces. 108 car parking spaces are currently provided on-site (40 for staff, 49 for visitors and 19 for the Early Years Nursery) with an additional 35 spaces proposed (note the submitted documents only state 25 but Drawing No. 1917/PL00 shows a total of 143 spaces). Cycle parking is proposed to increase from 15 to 50 spaces.

Scope of Assessment

The Transport Statement prepared to support the application is very limited in its scope and as a result does not provide a fair assessment of the full impact of the development. Paragraph 3.1 of the Transport Statement assumes that there are only two highway considerations in this application. Firstly whether the increases in pupil numbers will cause additional parking and traffic problems in Orchard Avenue and secondly whether the school can implement a successful school travel plan. Whilst the consultant has identified some of the impacts, it is my view that a number of impacts have been overlooked including:

- impact on road safety;
- impact of the additional traffic on the wider highway network; and
- impact of parking on other local streets.

Even though the consultant has prepared only a Transport Statement, these impacts could have considered within this Statement. These issues have not been assessed and are pertinent to the determination of the application.

Pupil Numbers

The Table in Paragraph 3.3 of the Transport Statement sets out there will be a 250 increase in pupils between July 2012 and September 2016. The July 2012 column actually totals 822 children instead of 770 and generally the information about the increase in school roll is misleading. However on the basis that there were 770 children on the school roll in July 2012, then a further 152 children have joined the school roll without the need for extending the school and thus planning permission in September 2012. This proposal therefore seeks to increase the size of the school by 5 classrooms all of which can contain 30 pupils, therefore this application seeks to increase the pupil roll by a further 150 pupils (5 classrooms for 30 children, although initially it is expected that only 98 children will have joined the school roll by September 2016).

Existing Traffic Conditions

There is no mention in the Transport Statement of the existing conditions on the highway network around the site. Burnham Lane suffers severe congestion in the morning peak hour, school collection period and the evening peak hours. On 26 September 2012 I observed the queue from the junction of Burnham Lane with Station Road extending back beyond the Orchard Avenue junction, which prevented vehicles from turning right out of Orchard Avenue. This had the knock on effect of causing very long delays for vehicles trying to egress the school car park such that the queue extended back into the school visitor car park. I have also observed this queue on a number of occasions in the morning peak hour.

Illegal and hazardous also parking occurs on Orchard Avenue causing inconvenience to local residents and hazards to pedestrians and cyclists.

Parents dropping off and collecting children have been observed to park in a number of streets surrounding the school including:

- the cul-de-sac, Mead Way, which becomes very congested;
- illegal parking occurs on Burnham Lane obstructing the on-road cycle lanes and the footways causing additional hazards for children walking and cycling to school;
- Royston Way, suffers from some footway parking but has the capacity to accommodate a greater number of parent vehicles;

- Derwent Drive, is very congested with widespread parking on the footway causing obstruction to pedestrians.

These existing issues, except for the parking issues on Orchard Avenue, have not been identified in the Transport Statement, no mitigation has been proposed to address these issues, the parking issues are directly related to the school, and the congestion on Burnham Lane is made worse by the existing school traffic. Increases in pupil numbers will make all of these existing problems worse.

Trip Generation

Very limited information on trip generation is provided within the Transport Statement. A traffic survey of Orchard Avenue was undertaken on 10 September 2012, but this clearly does not identify all of the trips to the site, as parents arrive from the west through Our Lady of Peace School, from the South from Mead Way/Royston Way and park on Burnham Lane. The traffic survey submitted with the transport statement is difficult to interpret as there are no column headings; this needs to be provided.

The existing modal split information has been provided in the School Travel Plan, which can be used to derive the likely proportion of pupils who will arrive by car with the increase in pupils. The survey results found that private vehicle based travel to the school was 36% of pupil trips in 2012. However this result was only based on a sample of 25% of the school population. In the School Census returns of 2009-2011, which were collected by the school, the modal share for pupil travel to school by private vehicle was 51% for each of those years. As I am unaware of any significant measures that the school has implemented during 2011-12 which would indicate shift away from the car of 15% it is reasonable to challenge the results provided via the travel survey. On this basis therefore I have taken the view that the School Census results provide the most robust indication of likely trip behaviour for the new pupils.

No information has been provided on the proportion of staff travelling to the site by car; if this school is similar to other schools in Slough, then this proportion is likely to be around 70-80% of staff travelling to school by car.

The impact of this application will lead to an additional 150 children joining the school. Based on the current modal split 77 of these children will arrive by car excluding any children car sharing. In the morning peak hour there will be an additional 154 vehicle trips (77 arrivals and 77 departures) and 154 vehicle trips in the afternoon (77 arrivals and 77 departures). This would give a daily increase of vehicle trips being generated by the school of 308, whereas the Transport Statement concluded that there would only be an increase in 36 trips.

Trip Distribution

Whilst not all of the 308 vehicle trips will impact on Orchard Avenue, it can be estimated that 86 percent of the new trips will have an impact on Burnham Lane. This has been calculated from information supplied in the School Travel Plan that 110 of the 770 current pupils (14%) live to the west of the school and use the pedestrian access via Derwent Drive and Our Lady of Peace Schools. Therefore the additional pupils will have a significant impact on the current flow of traffic on Burnham Lane.

Car Parking

Paragraph 3.2 states that there is no debate that the school has caused parking issues in Orchard Avenue and in response to the existing problems they propose to provide verge protection measures along Orchard Avenue which is welcomed. These works will involve the setting back of the footway so it is adjacent the school boundary and the bringing forward of the verge so it can be protected using double height kerbs to prevent vehicle incursion. The land required to relocate the footway to the rear of the verge is within the ownership of the School Board and would need to be dedicated to the Local Highway Authority as part of the S106/legal agreement and the works covered by a Grampian condition.

The School proposes to increase the number of parking spaces by 35 to help alleviate some of the parking problems. However it is not fully clear how effective this measure will be as no parking accumulation surveys of car operation have been undertaken and therefore the number of available spaces for parents within the car park is not currently known. There is a risk that by providing more parking it could generate greater parking demand.

Car Parking Policy

In terms of the development complying with Local Plan Policy, the proposed development does closely conform to parking standards which requires 1 space per member of staff plus 3 per school. Whilst there are

149 staff, only 60 are full time so if the remainder of the staff all worked half-time then the minimum number of spaces required would be 108. Therefore the provision of 143 is clearly within the required standard.

Access

A new IN only access is to be created into the school at the southern end of Orchard Avenue at the existing turning head; this is considered acceptable. A new vehicle gate and a separate pedestrian gate are to be provided. I would request that the pedestrian gate is located a couple of metres further to the south so that there is a small amount of separation between the two accesses. If there is no separation then there is a risk that parents will mount the footway and park on it. Double height kerbing will need to be installed to prevent this and on other sections protecting green space within the car park. Alterations to the access are covered by condition.

Highway Safety

No information has been provided within the Transport Statement on the number of or location of accidents in the vicinity of the school and therefore I cannot assess whether the impact of the expansion would lead to an increase in casualties. In my comments of 26 July 2012 I requested that highway safety be considered in the further work, but this has not been undertaken.

School Travel Plan

An updated school travel plan has been submitted, but this is not of approval standard. It is a surprise that there is no existing School Travel Plan co-ordinator in place already. It is a concern that a staff travel survey has not been conducted and therefore there is little explanation within the Transport Statement as to where staff are currently parking. Targets are proposed for staff travel, which are optimistic given that the baseline position is not understood.

The travel plan contains a number of initiatives to change travel behaviour, but none of them are sufficiently ambitious such that I am not convinced that they would actually lead to a change in travel behaviour of even 4-5% as suggested in the targets. The provision of additional cycle parking whilst welcomed is unlikely to be effective on its own without a travel behaviour change programme (e.g. Bike-IT) running alongside to ignite the interest of pupils and parents to take part. A Walk to School programme will be promoted for one week, whilst these initiatives can be effective during the week of the promotion; the challenge is maintaining the commitment thereafter. Whilst I appreciate that schools cannot be held entirely responsible for school travel and that the Council has an active role to play, the travel plan needs to be suitably ambitious and therefore there needs to be clear and unambiguous commitment from the head teacher and governors to the travel plan in order that resources are made available to make a difference to change travel behaviour of pupils and staff. Once updated the travel plan should be secured through condition. A travel plan monitoring fee of £6,000 would be required to help ensure Council resources can be made available to assist the school in the future.

I note that the cycle parking is being split up in various locations around the site; I do not think that this is a sensible approach. From a security perspective and for efficiency of space utilisation if all the cycle racks were located together it would work better and be easier to manage. The cycle parking facilities should be secured through condition.

Traffic and Parking Impact

In terms of the wider impact of the development, no assessment has been undertaken of the existing congestion issues on Burnham Lane, with queues from the junction with Station Road extending back beyond the junction with Orchard Avenue in both the morning and afternoon school drop off and collection periods. This prevents vehicles egressing from Orchard Avenue to turn right, which some parents attempt, causing excessive delays, which is less of a problem for parents, but is an issue particularly for Orchard Avenue residents who have no way of avoiding the congestion. Further increases in traffic using Orchard Avenue and Burnham Lane will only make this worse unless a traffic management scheme to relieve the queuing at the Burnham Lane/Station Road junctions and covering both of the routes underneath the railway can be implemented. The Education Department has agreed to make a significant financial contribution (£50,000) towards this scheme, which is currently being developed and to which public consultation will be conducted during financial year 2013/14. Without this contribution being made I would not be able to foresee a way that congestion could be reduced on Burnham Lane, such that any relief to the operation of the Orchard Avenue junction could be achieved.

Summary

Taking account of the submitted documents and the existing site conditions, the case for this development has not been well made from a transport perspective. However some mitigation measures have been agreed:

- the off-site highway contribution;
- the increase in parking on the site;
- prevention of hazardous parking on the west side of Orchard Avenue;
- increase in cycle parking.

The Travel Plan needs further work and commitment from the School that they will take part in the Council's LSTF funded Bike-IT scheme and wider travel behaviour change programme.

Recommendation

Subject to the further work being undertaken and being considered satisfactory by the Local Planning Authority, I would not raise a highway objection. If the applicant is unable to provide satisfactory information and commitment on the following points and issues then the application should be refused.

Further Work

- assess the impact on highway safety of the development;
- clarify any outstanding information;
- conduct a survey of staff travel habits to understand the proportion of staff driving, the locations where staff are parking (on-site and off-site); the parking accumulation and wait times in the site car parks including initial occupancy include this information in an updated travel plan
- update travel plan with more ambitious initiatives and commitment to Bike-IT and the LSTF funded travel behaviour change programme;
- Conduct parking survey on local streets to determine available capacity on 15 minute basis during drop off and collection times;
- undertake surveys to determine the journey time between leaving the school car park and egressing out of Orchard Avenue during school drop off and collection times (survey to collect data every 5 minutes);
- Undertake queue length surveys of Burnham Lane in school drop-off and collection periods;

The Travel Plan will need to include:

- a target to reduce the current journey time between leaving the school car park and egressing out of Orchard Avenue by 20% (i.e. bring it back to what it was with the current capacity of the school);
- investigate whether a temporary right turn ban out of Orchard Avenue into Burnham Lane can be implemented during school drop off and collection periods and if this is feasible pay all necessary costs to implement such a scheme (Traffic Regulation Order, Public Consultation and Signing);
- School to commit to the Council's LSTF Travel to School Programme (and request to be part of BIKE-IT initiative) and commit itself to making the necessary resources available to be an active participant in the programme;

It is important to note that the Education Department has committed to payment of £50,000 via letter dated 16th October 2012. The letter states,

“As Principle Asset Manager for Slough Borough Council I am the budget manager for the Prior Expansion Project. The Education Dept has agree to fund a number of highway projects in order to meet planning requirements on this project. As well as funding improvements along Orchard Avenue and on the school itself, the Education Dept has agreed to make a contribution of £50K towards a highway improvement along Burnham Lane.”

Additional information for committee

An amended plan showing a revised parking arrangement was received on 24th September 2012 this consultation period expired 15th October 2012. As such a revised round of consultation letters were sent out that day notifying affected properties about the changes.

As a result of this re-consultation 2 additional letters have been received today (16th October 2012),

-The proposal will increase the cars parked on yellow lines causing hazards.

-Increasing pupils will increase congestion.

-the planned expansion is far too big for the local infrastructure that serves the site and will put intolerable pressure on the surrounding roads, putting pupils lives' in danger and adversely affecting local residents and current pupils

NO CHANGE TO RECOMMENDATION

AGENDA ITEM 5

P/09961/002 - Brook and Future House, Poyle Road, Colnbrook, Slough, SL3 0AA

An additional letter of objection has been received from a neighbouring site outlining the following reasons for objection:

The new building will be close to the boundary fence and overbearing leading to a loss of natural daylight to the rooms at the rear of the building.

RESPONSE: This issue is fully considered in paragraphs 11.2 – 11.3 of the Officers Report. The proposed development is not considered to have a detrimental impact to the neighbouring unit and it is not considered that any loss of light to the rest and food preparation area of an industrial unit is justification for refusal of the application. Any area which is affected would have to rely on natural day light in order to operate. Furthermore the detailing with regards to mass and positioning are reserved matters and will be considered at the reserved matters stage rather, and amendments can be made to resolve such issues should the need arise.

The rear of the neighbouring building contains food preparation and lunchroom facilities which is close to the HGV service vehicle yard and will be effected by the increased pollution associated with the number of HGV's that will use the site.

RESPONSE: The impact upon the food preparation area and lunchroom is not considered to be detrimental harm and it would not be sustainable to refuse the application on this basis. However with the layout to be agreed at a later stage this could be addressed at the reserved matters stage if considered suitable to do so.

It is not agreed that the increased numbers of HGV's will not have a significant impact upon the Poyle Industrial Estate as HGV vehicles already cause congestion on Blackthorne Road, which would be made worse and HGV's turning into the access from Horton Road will need to turn across traffic and will cause hold ups on the roundabout when waiting to do this turn.

RESPONSE: This issue is fully considered in paragraphs 12.4 – 12.5 of the Officers Report. The proposed development is not considered to have a detrimental impact on highway safety. However if the Council's Transport Consultant considered there to be an issue with highway safety then it can be considered prior to the final determination of the application.

The new building will affect TV and mobile phone signals.

RESPONSE: Issues regarding TV and mobile phone signals are not material planning considerations and would be civil matters between land owners and can not be taken into consideration under this application.

Further information has been received from the Applicant's confirming that talks are ongoing with the Environment Agency with regards to the buffer zone and an indicative drawing has been produced showing that the appropriate zone can be achieved once the application comes to reserved matters stage when layout is formally considered. The response is awaited from the Environment Agency and the application can be determined once they have provided their full response. Further confirmation has been given that the parking issues would be considered at the reserved matters stage and B2 use come forward then the building would be changed to incorporate the required parking. They have further confirmed that the existing offices on the site employed 400 people and therefore the proposed number of employees would be substantially

reduced within the Public Safety Zone. They have further confirmed that issues around drainage are being discussed and that no issues are due to arise from this.

NO CHANGE TO RECOMMENDATION