



Mr Matt Blythin
DHA Planning

Sent by email:



11 January 2021

Dear Mr Blythin

PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE: RESPONSE
Reference: 20/03320/PAMEET

Proposal: Pre Application Advice (Second Meeting) – Proposed Community Centre

Location: Paddock Wood Memorial Recreation Ground, Maidstone Road, Paddock Wood, Tonbridge, Kent.

People in attendance

Mathew Blythin - DHA Planning
Simon Moon – DHA Transport
Patrick Hudson – Miller Bourne Architects
Lyndsay Cann- Baxhall Construction
Steve Turner - Baxhall Construction
Graham Tutall - Baxhall Construction
Nassim Esfahani - Baxhall Construction
Andrew Baldwin - Baxhall Construction
Keith Miller – Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology
Nichola Reay – Clerk to Paddock Wood Town Council
Hannah Young – Strategic Sites and Delivery Team Leader
Debbie Salter – Conservation and Design Officer
Denise Haylett- Head of Facilities and Community Hubs
Jonathan White- Project Surveyor
Myself

Documents submitted

Pre-App Design Statement
Pre-app Planning Report Nov 20 Appendices
SK-044 Rev E - Proposed Site Plan 1 to 200
SK-057 Rev B - Proposed Site Plan 1 to 500
SK-037 Rev H - Proposed Elevations
SK-040 Rev K - Proposed Plans
SK-041 Rev F - Proposed Sections
Aerial Entrance View
Main Entrance
Perspective South East
Tennis Court View
View from Football Pitch

West View

A184-KCL-ZZ-RF-DR-E-3400 Elec Services Prop Roof PV Layout

LLD2101-ARB-DWG-001-Tree Retention Protection Plan

LLD2101-ARB-SCH-001-Existing Tree Schedule

LLD2101-LAN-SKE-002_Pitch Analysis existing winter-03

LLD2101-LAN-SKE-003_Pitch Analysis existing summer-03

LLD2101-LAN-SKE-006_Pitch Analysis winter-03

LLD2101-LAN-SKE-007_Pitch Analysis summer-02

I refer to your request for pre-application advice regarding the above location and proposal. Your proposals were discussed at our meeting on 12 November 2020. This is a record of the main points discussed at our meeting held by Microsoft Teams, and our overall advice. My apologies for the delay in response.

Background

The following is relevant from the Design Statement submitted. Frankham Consultancy Group Ltd (FCG) was appointed by Paddock Wood Town Council (PWTC) to develop up to RIBA Stage 3 proposals for a new community centre in Paddock Wood. Their commission ran from 2017 to the end of 2019.

During that time, a Pre Application meeting was held in February 2020 and the revised design has evolved from this process. Importantly the FCG design process was very useful to inform the design and the revised approach now undertaken by Miller Bourne Architects. You have advised that several meetings with the PWTC have taken place since February 2020. The redesign and location of the nursery has largely led the redesign, to be DfE compliant, amongst some other matters as set out in the planning and design statements submitted.

Need for a Revised Approach

The proposals include a community centre with a complementary pre-school nursery and a café. The initial design was rectangular in both elevation and plan and with a modern appearance. The car park wrapped around the building to the north, and to allow for delivery vehicle turning, and also included a corner of the existing tennis courts. The design included an external plant room located close to the road, as well as a nursery play area, that was separated from the classrooms by a public footpath.

When the above proposals were put out to tender, it was found that the scheme was significantly over budget due to the proposed construction methodology, for the reasons set out in the Design Statement.

In addition and having further reviewed the design, the FCG scheme unfortunately did not meet the DfE minimum requirements for a nursery and the office provisions were not suitable for their proposed future uses (meeting room and reception to manage the building). Subsequently the design and approach was amended.

The Proposal

The following is from the Pre App Planning Statement submitted:

“The proposal is for the erection of a new community centre, with nursery and associated play space, car parking and landscaping. The proposals currently include the refurbishment and relocation of the existing tennis courts as the preferred option, although this is still subject to final confirmation of affordability. If this cannot be delivered, the existing courts will be retained and the proposed site layout adjusted accordingly.

The new centre would provide 658.9m² of floorspace, which would provide a variety of facilities for future use including community hall, a community café and pre-school.

The main hall will provide accommodation for a maximum number of 299 seats, with a stage. This hall will then have the capacity to be split into three smaller halls at 2no. 90m² and one smaller hall at 60m².

Additional elements include a reception area and office space, as well as a number of cupboards and storage facilities for clubs and activities, as well as cleaning and maintenance. A kitchen will be provided to allow for catering for larger events and other activities. A small café is to be located to the centre of the building for use by the local community.

The plans include the provision of a pre-school nursery which will provide capacity of 40 children across two classrooms in line with Department for Education requirements. This area will include the provision of a small staff office/work area as well as kitchenette.

The proposed design would be of a contemporary style, with butterfly roof design, which will accommodate photovoltaic panels. The scheme will be designed to incorporate a mix of robust, environmentally friendly, and long lasting materials. Natural daylight will be utilised as part of the development, making use of carefully positioned windows and skylights to ensure as much natural light as possible within the building.

A full detailed description of the proposed development, and how it evolved, will be set out in the Design and Access Statement of the future application and a summary design statement accompanies this pre-application submission.

The site will be accessed from Maidstone Road, as per existing, and will include the provision of a pedestrian footway. In terms of parking, a total of 64no. parking spaces are to be provided, which will include 4no. disabled parking bays. Five motorcycle parking spaces and twenty cycle parking spaces will also be provided. A full Transport Assessment will accompany the future application.”

Design

An introduction and a comprehensive run through of the plans was given at our meeting, and the background since the last Pre Application meeting held in February 2020.

The following is taken from the Planning Statement submitted:

“Taking those elements into consideration our revised proposal has further minimised the impact on the playing field by rationalising the proposed car parking and compacting it close to the existing vehicular entrance and introducing a larger amount of natural finish (cellular grassed paving).

The proposed community centre has an easily recognisable and distinctive form, achieved with the aid of a butterfly roof arrangement. The building footprint has been rationalised (when compared with the original Frankham scheme) to ensure that all circulation spaces are as efficient as possible, which will in turn reduce the impact on the field. The nursery is now located to the north of the building, with a dedicated play area located immediately adjacent. This avoids the previous safeguarding issue of public footpaths separating the internal and external spaces.

The community centre forms the central and southern parts of the building, with core services located along the central spine with the main hall to the south. A glazed café area is positioned by the main entrance to the east, creating an interesting visual link between people approaching the centre and building users within. The south facade has a careful balance of glazing and solid structure to maximise the light and views across the Memorial Field whilst avoiding solar gain, which assists in making the building more efficient and sustainable. The butterfly roof profile allows for natural cross ventilation of the full height spaces, eliminating the need for air conditioning, and also provides large areas suitable for south-facing PV panels, hidden from view due to the roof design.”

Planning Policy

The Planning Statement addresses the policy issues adequately. The assessment of alternative sites has been addressed, and this is key to the choice of this site.

In terms of the general principle of development, the assessment submitted is compliant with existing planning policy, and the choice of this site is acceptable in principle. This is subject to Sport England confirmation that the proposal complies with Sport England specific criteria for sports pitches, and a formal consultation will be undertaken during the planning process when the application is submitted. This is because Sport England are a statutory consultee for this planning application.

The proposed design and external materials are considered to be acceptable. You advised that the colour of the building will not be black weatherboard effect (as shown on the plans submitted), but rather a light grey finish. Revised images were shared at our meeting. This revised external appearance was the result of discussions at a recent Local Residents Working Group, with Councillors in Paddock Wood, who agreed a modern grey composite exterior finish, of multi plank wood effect. This is to be an inert material, maintenance free, hardwearing and fire resistant etc. The lighter modern approach to the exterior is supported by Debbie Salter (Conservation and Urban Design Officer) at our meeting.

Wider Master Planning Issues

Hannah Young (Strategic Sites and Delivery Team Leader) introduced the wider master planning issues. The following is relevant from the Planning Statement submitted:

“**Policy AL/PW 4** of the emerging Local Plan allocates the Land at the Memorial Field, west of Maidstone Road. The site is allocated for the provision of a community hub. Development on the site shall accord with the following requirements:

1. An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the area of playing field which would be lost as a result of the development is surplus to requirements; or the loss of playing fields resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location;
2. The remainder of the site is to be retained as playing fields, amenity/natural green space, parks and recreation grounds, children’s play space and youth play space in accordance with the requirements of Policy OSSR 2: Provision of publicly accessible open space and recreation;
3. The design and location to have regard to the setting of the Listed Buildings on the opposite side of Maidstone Road.”

Sport England

As mentioned above, sports pitches will be shown on the drawings to comply with the Sport England criteria. It was suggested at our meeting that the cricket pitch be shown on the CGI’s. to present to both Sport England and to the the local community.

With regard to MUGA query you raised, (Multiple Use Games Area) i.e. whether a MUGA should be provided for at this site, a sports surface which is suitable for multiple different activities. MUGA’s usually have different sets of sports line markings. Hannah Young has advised that provision is made within the Masterplan for 10ha of formal open space on land in Capel to the west of Paddock Wood. The viability model is running assumptions of this including various indoor and outdoor sports provision which does include a MUGA. However, what is to be delivered is going to be based on much wider discussions regarding the need

for different sports facilities and how these are provided borough wide, and discussions are in the very early stages.

In summary a MUGA is being considered elsewhere within the area, although that would not necessarily rule out the possibility of one on this site. However, the key concern with such a proposal at this site is the loss of green open space and sports pitches, and therefore on this basis it follows that preference should be given for grass pitches accordingly, so as to maximise the residual open space.

Community Consultation

You advised that Public consultation is intended to start from 20th November, with online consultation, owing to the Lockdown Measures in place for COVID 19, and a proposed newsletter to the community. A full summary will be provided in the proposed "Statement of Community Involvement" to be submitted with the application.

Access and Parking

The Pre App planning Statement states:

"The site will be accessed from Maidstone Road, as per existing, and will include the provision of a pedestrian footway. In terms of parking, a total of 64 no. parking spaces are to be provided, which will include 4no. disabled parking bays. Five motorcycle parking spaces and twenty cycle parking spaces will also be provided. A full Transport Assessment will accompany the future application."

In terms of advice on the access and the layout of the carpark for the community hall and pre school nurse, separate Pre Application advice can be obtained from KCC Highways, for a separate fee. This is advised, although it is noted that in this case you have sought your own independent highways advice.

If any amendments are sought during the application process by KCC Highways, as a statutory consultee, it is anticipated that any can be dealt with at that time.

Ecology

David Scully (Landscape and Biodiversity Officer) has commented as follows. As this site is an existing sports field then ecology should not be much of an issue. We require net gain, and this can be achieved via a scheme of biodiversity enhancements across the site (areas of longer grass/wild areas in corners, bird and bat boxes in trees, new native planting etc) and this can be incorporated into the build (bat tubes and bird boxes for urban species such as sparrow and starling).

You advised that the car park area is to be softened by grasscrete or similar to be used on the edges of the carpark adjacent to the field, so as to avoid a hard landscaped edge to the carpark

Arboriculture

With regard to the Arboricultural drawings submitted, Jeff Mashburn, (Tree Officer) has commented as follows regarding the access arrangement plan and tree retention/protection plan.

"I am relaxed about most of the RPA incursions and the position of the proposed footpath, as long as it does not require excessive crown lifting and incorporates no-dig, compaction resistant surfacing.

I am, however, concerned about the viability of retaining T28. I was involved in some discussions last year over this site and noted at the time that there is substantial shallow

rooting activity beneath the existing tarmac entrance, which is not much lower than the verge where the trunk is. I understand that to comply with current highway codes the access would not only need to be widened but there may need to be level changes where the entrance ties into Maidstone Road, as well as excavation for kerbing.

I would resist the loss of this tree and would want clarity on the extent of necessary highways works before supporting a full application.”

Contributions

The community centre will be a community building with a pre school/nursery (40 children) and a café to serve the community of Paddock Wood. The 3 large housing sites developers in Paddock Wood have all contributed (in part) to the cost of this proposed building. Other major development in Paddock Wood will also contribute to the cost of this building. Therefore it is not envisaged that this application will be subject to any monetary contributions.

Timeframe and Programme

You have advised that is intended that the target date for submitting the application is December 2020.

Documents to submit with the application

The list of Documents provided by email, as set out below are acceptable and will aid the assessment of this planning application:

- Application Form & Certificates
- Planning Statement
- Transport Assessment
- Parking/ Servicing Details (Combined with TA)
- Statement of Community Involvement
- S106 heads of terms as necessary (NOT ANTICIPATED)
- Open Space Assessment (incorporated within Planning Statement)
- Site Location Plan (Scale 1:1250 or 1:2500)
- Site Layout/ Block Plan (Scale 1:500 or 1:200)
- Existing and Proposed Elevations (Scale 1:50 or 1:100)
- Existing and Proposed Floor Plans (Scale 1:50 or 1:100)
- Existing and Proposed Roof Plans (Scale 1:50 or 1:100)
- Existing and Proposed Site Sections including finished floor and site levels (Scale 1:50 or 1:100)
- Design and Access Statement
- Site Visuals
- Photographs/ photomontages of the site (likely within DAS)
- Refuse Disposal Details (likely within DAS)
- Sustainable Design and Construction Assessment
- Biodiversity/ Ecology Reports/ Statements
- Landscaping Plans
- Tree Survey
- Contaminated Land Investigation
- Drainage Details
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Utilities Statement
- Lighting Assessment
- Renewable Energy Assessment
- Ventilation/ Extraction Details
- Noise Impact Assessment

Conclusion

With regard to design, the external appearance and form of the building is acceptable.

With regard to the general layout of the scheme within the site, this was discussed in some detail and this is considered acceptable subject to the views of Sport England, and the Highway Authority as mentioned above.

In terms of the relationship with the surrounding area, this is considered acceptable for the reasons given in the planning and design statements submitted.

In terms of the amenity impact of the development, the building and associated uses are not likely to impact on the area, as the site is used as a sports field at present with hard standings, a tennis court and a public carpark, with very minimal intervention to the field. The existing tennis courts are to be relocated for the reasons given in the planning and design statements submitted.

In terms of highways issues, separate Pre Application advice can be obtained from KCC Highways. This is advised, as set out above, although it is noted that you have sought independent highways advice in this instance.

In terms of landscaping, the proposal is acceptable, subject to the advice from the Landscape and Biodiversity Officer stated above. The Tree Officer comments have also been set out above, which need to be addressed in the application.

Overall, the general principle of a community centre is acceptable, as outlined in the comprehensive supporting documents submitted.

I hope you have found this advice helpful. Please be aware that any advice given by Council Officers for pre-application enquiries does not indicate a formal decision by the Local Planning Authority. Any views or opinions are given in good faith, and to the best of ability, without prejudice to the formal consideration of any planning application.

Any pre-application advice provided will be carefully considered in reaching a decision or recommendation on any subsequent application; subject to the proviso that circumstances and information may change or come to light that could alter that position. It should be noted that the weight given to pre-application advice notes may decline over time.

The final decision on any subsequent application that you may make can only be taken after the Local Planning Authority has consulted local people, statutory consultees and any other interested parties.

Yours faithfully

Jennifer Begeman
Principal Planning Officer

