

**The Russell School, Petersham Road,
TW10 7AH, London
in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
planning application no. 14/5076/FUL**

Strategic planning application stage 1 referral

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended); Greater London Authority Acts 1999 and 2007; Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008.

The proposal

Redevelopment, expansion and co-location of existing Russell and Strathmore Schools onto a single site in purpose built facilities with associated car parking and landscaping.

The applicant

The applicant is **London Borough of Richmond upon Thames**. The agent and architect is **Atkins**.

Strategic issues

The proposed schools expansion is supported in principle. Outstanding strategic issues with regards to the **principle of development** and **urban design** should, nevertheless, be resolved before the application is referred back to the Mayor.

Recommendation

That Richmond Council be advised that while the application is generally acceptable in strategic planning terms the application does not comply with the London Plan, for the reasons set out in paragraph 41 of this report; but that the possible remedies set out in the same paragraph could address these deficiencies. The application does not need to be referred back to the Mayor if the Council resolves to refuse permission, but it must be referred back if the Council resolves to grant permission.

Context

1 On 25 March 2014 the Mayor of London received documents from Richmond Council notifying him of a planning application of potential strategic importance to develop the above site for the above uses. Under the provisions of The Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor has until 30 April 2015 to provide the Council with a statement setting out whether he considers that the application complies with the London Plan, and his reasons for taking that view. The Mayor may also provide other comments. This report sets out information for the Mayor's use in deciding what decision to make.

2 The application is referable under Category 3D of the Schedule to the Order 2008:

Category 3D

1. Development —

(a) on land allocated as Green belt or Metropolitan Open Land in the development plan, in proposals for such a plan, or in proposals for the alteration or replacement of such a plan; and
(b) which would involve the construction of a building with a floorspace of more than 1,000 square metres or a material change in the use of such a building.

3 Once Richmond Council has resolved to determine the application, it is required to refer it back to the Mayor for his decision, as to whether to direct refusal or allow the Council to determine it itself, unless otherwise advised. In this instance if the Council resolves to refuse permission it need not refer the application back to the Mayor.

4 The Mayor of London's statement on this case will be made available on the GLA website www.london.gov.uk.

Site description

5 The application site is located in Petersham in a predominantly residential area on Petersham Road. To the north of the site are a German language school, residential properties, and the River Thames further to the north. To the west of the site are the grounds of Ham Polo Club. To the south and east of the site lie residential properties which abut Petersham Park and Richmond Park.

6 The existing Russell School, its nursery and auxiliary buildings are located on the application site (see red boundary in figure 1 below). The Russell School is a one form entry (FE) primary school which opened in 1980 and currently has 239 pupils plus 26 nursery school children together with 44 staff. To the west of the site, on land within the same ownership (see blue boundary below), is Strathmore School which is a community special school for pupils aged 7 to 19 with severe and complex learning difficulties, with a total of 57 pupils and 35 staff members.

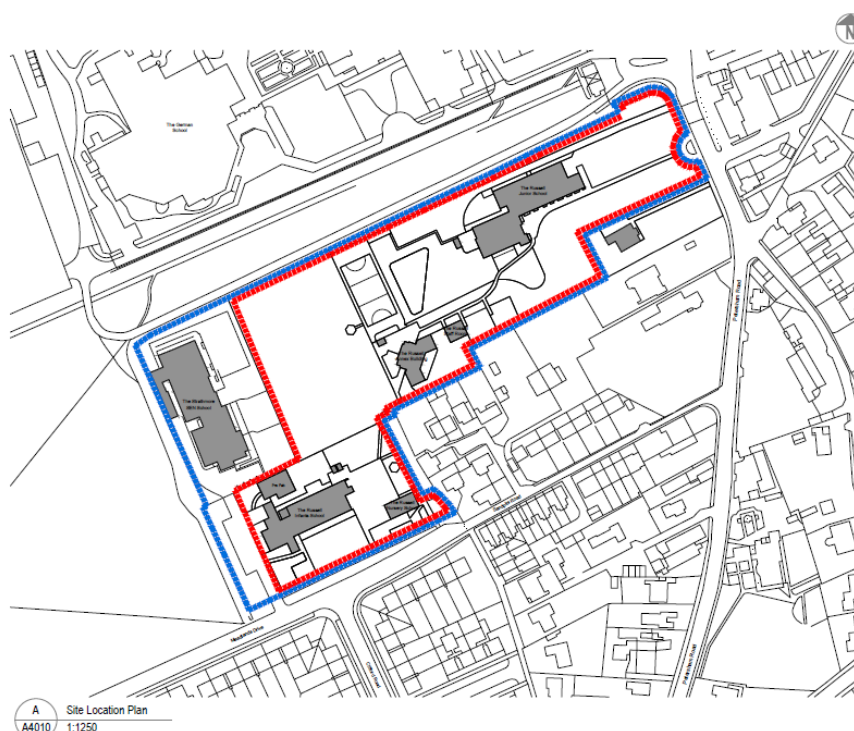


Figure 1: Site boundary

7 Richmond Council's Proposals Map identifies the application site as Metropolitan Open Land. Strathmore School and part of the Russell School are outside the MOL.

8 The main front entrance of the Russell School is from Petersham Road with a secondary entrance from Meadlands Drive at the rear, from which the majority of pupils arrive. Pupils from the Strathmore School access it from Meadlands Drive.

9 The application site is almost 2 kilometres from the nearest Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) - A316 The Avenue. It is over 1 kilometre from the nearest Strategic Road Network (SRN) - A305 Richmond Road. The site is served by two bus routes (371 and 65) but is over 2 kilometres from the nearest London Underground, London Rail and National Rail services at Richmond station. Hence, the site has a PTAL (public transport accessibility level) of 2, on a scale of 1-6 where 1 is lowest.

Details of the proposal

10 The proposed development comprises the expansion and consolidation of the current Russell Primary School from its current one form entry (FE) system to a one FE plus an additional four classes under a shared form entry provision, while the nursery is retained as existing. Part of the existing Strathmore School with specialist educational needs (SEN) provision would co-locate with the Russell Primary School in a new purpose built facility.

11 It is proposed that the capacity of the existing Russell School will increase from 247 to 330 pupils; the Russell School nursery will remain the same at 26 full time equivalents; and the integrated portion of the Strathmore School will be for up to 24 pupils (57 pupils were initially part of the school but places will be redistributed to three Strathmore School sites co-located on mainstream schools, including the Russell School). The proposed number of pupils on site will be 380 (322 pupils use the schools at present). This represents an increase of 58 pupils.

12 The operations of the schools will be maintained during the build period. It is therefore proposed that the purpose built school is constructed first so that the existing schools and nursery can remain in use. Following the move to the new school the existing Russell School together with the nursery building will be demolished. The existing Strathmore School will also be demolished and the land sold.

Case history

13 The case has no strategic planning history.

Strategic planning issues and relevant policies and guidance

14 The relevant issues and corresponding policies are as follows:

- Education *London Plan; Draft Social Infrastructure SPG*
- Green space *London Plan;*
- Urban design *London Plan; Accessible London: Achieving an Inclusive Environment SPG and Character and Context SPG*
- Transport *London Plan; the Mayor's Transport Strategy.*

15 For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the development plan in force for the area is Richmond Council's Core Strategy (2009) and Proposals Map, Saved Unitary Development Plan (2005), Richmond Council's Development Management Plan (2011), and the 2015 London Plan (Consolidated with alterations since 2011).

16 The National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance are also relevant material considerations.

Principle of development - Education facility on Metropolitan Open Land

17 London Plan Policy 3.18 supports developments which enhance education and skills provision, including new build, expansion of existing or change of use to educational purposes. It also supports colocation of schools and the multiple use of education facilities for community use. Whereas, London Plan Policy 7.17 accords protection to London’s Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and resists inappropriate development, except in very special circumstances.

18 As mentioned in paragraph 7 above, the application site is on Metropolitan Open Land. Policy DM OS2 of the Council’s Development Management Plan protects MOL and encourages its retention, whilst recognising that there may be exceptional cases where inappropriate development may be acceptable. At the national level the NPPF accords the same protection to MOL as land within Green Belt land and regards the construction of new buildings in MOL as inappropriate, unless very special circumstances that outweigh the harm to the MOL are demonstrated and provided the openness of the MOL is preserved.

19 In the present case, the potential loss of MOL would be as follows:

	Whole site	In MOL only	Outside designated MOL
Existing gross external area (<i>to be demolished</i>) - <i>includes ground floor only</i>	2330.7m ²	1288.4m ²	1042.3m ²
Proposed gross external area) - <i>includes ground floor only</i>	2041m ²	2041m ² (752.6 or 58.4 % increase)	0 m ²

Source: Richmond Council

20 The above table indicates that the net additional building gross external area within MOL would be 752.6m², equivalent to a percentage increase of 58.4%.

21 The applicant has sought to demonstrate very special circumstances to justify the redevelopment of the schools on MOL. By proposing to redevelop the site, the applicant proposes to improve and extend the education provision on-site to respond to the educational needs in the borough. It also proposes to continue the community uses of the existing school buildings and to open up more specialist spaces and facilities for community use as part of the re-provided new school facility.

22 The need to expand the Russell School is recognised and supported, and given the existing school’s location, it is accepted that to maintain education provision on-site it may be inevitable to build on MOL.

23 However, the increased development would have a harmful impact on openness. This would be off-set by the demolition of existing buildings, including the Russell infant school and nursery. The removal of the buildings and creation of a new community open space (which could be designated as MOL through a future local plan review) should be secured by the Council.

24 The applicant is encouraged to submit a community use plan which demonstrates the extent of the proposed community uses in a form that can be secured by the Council to ensure delivery.

25 Given the increased demand for school spaces across London and the education and community benefits the proposal will bring in the borough, the proposal is acceptable, subject to the maximum amount of land being returned as MOL and community uses being secured.

Urban design

26 The proposals aim to consolidate existing buildings into a part one/part two story school building positioned towards the centre of the site. This will result in improved efficiency both in terms of quantum of built footprint and a concentration of school facilities while continuing to utilise the existing access route into the school. While the spatial constraints of the site mean that alternative locations for the school building are likely to be limited, the applicant should provide further information to enable officers to understand how the preferred location was arrived at in the context of the need to protect the openness of surrounding MOL. A views analysis should also be submitted to include key comparison views across the MOL that demonstrate the degree of impact on openness that the proposals will have in relation to the existing school buildings.

27 The design and access statement demonstrates how the design of the building has evolved through a holistic design approach resulting in a high quality of teaching spaces designed to enable natural ventilation and daylight, informed by baseline BB99/BB102 guidance which is welcomed. The simple and refined architectural response to the site is also supported and provides a clear public facing frontage/sense of arrival into the campus, with pitched roofs providing a distinctive building appearance while mediating the extent of massing in relation to the open nature of the MOL.

28 The Council is encouraged to secure key details including facing materials, rooflines and window reveals to ensure the highest quality of architecture is built through.

Transport

Car parking

29 An additional eight car parking spaces, bringing the total to 35 spaces, are proposed. Five mini bus spaces are also proposed. TfL requests that spaces are identified and reserved for blue badge parking in accordance with London Plan Policy 6.13.

Cycle parking

30 The proposed 90 cycle parking spaces exceed the London Plan standards. This is welcomed by TfL and the application is considered to comply with London Plan Policy 6.9.

Travel plan

31 The existing school travel plan will need to be updated to reflect the co-location of the existing schools on a single purpose built site. Commitment to updating, monitoring and funding the travel plan and associated measures should be secured as part of any permission.

32 A delivery and servicing plan (DSP), setting out measures to safely manage and minimise the impact of delivery and servicing movements to, from and within the site should also be secured.

33 TfL also requests that a construction logistics plan (CLP) is secured. This should aim to manage and minimise the impact of the construction period on the transport network including ensuring safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

34 In partnership with the construction industry, TfL has developed a Standard for Construction Logistics, to reduce risks to vulnerable road users of construction vehicles. The Standard seeks to promote improved driving practices and use of safer vehicles. A commitment from the applicant and their primary contractors to demand a higher level of safety should form a key part of the CLP. Signing up to the Standard, as well as the Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS, or equivalent), helps in part to achieve this. Please see: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/info-for/freight/safety-and-the-environment/managing-risks-wrrr>. TfL will request that the applicant and their contractors sign up to this standard.

35 TfL wishes to ensure that construction vehicles are fitted with cycle specific safety equipment, including side-bars, blind spot mirrors and detection equipment to reduce the risk of collisions on the Capital's roads. For any conflict points identified on the delivery routes associated with the site in its construction and operational state, traffic and pedestrian management measures and cycle specific safety equipment should be considered and the detail provided through the CLP and DSP.

Summary

36 Based on the net impact of the proposal, TfL does not consider that this application raises any strategic transport issues. TfL recommends that a travel plan, delivery and servicing plan and construction logistics plan are secured as part of any permission. Disabled parking within the site should also be identified.

Local planning authority's position

37 It is understood that Council's officers are generally supportive of the application.

Legal considerations

38 Under the arrangements set out in Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor is required to provide the local planning authority with a statement setting out whether he considers that the application complies with the London Plan, and his reasons for taking that view. Unless notified otherwise by the Mayor, the Council must consult the Mayor again under Article 5 of the Order if it subsequently resolves to make a draft decision on the application, in order that the Mayor may decide whether to allow the draft decision to proceed unchanged, or direct the Council under Article 6 of the Order to refuse the application, or issue a direction under Article 7 of the Order that he is to act as the local planning authority for the purpose of determining the application and any connected application.

39 There is no obligation at this present stage for the Mayor to indicate his intentions regarding a possible direction, and no such decision should be inferred from the Mayor's statement and comments.

Financial considerations

40 There are no financial considerations at this stage.

Conclusion

41 London Plan policies on the principle of development, urban design and transport are relevant to this application. Whilst the application is supported in principle, further information should be provided to clarify some of the planning issues raised in this report. Further discussion is therefore required regarding the following issues:

- **Principle of development:** The principle of a school expansion is supported in strategic terms, subject to the maximum amount of land being returned as MOL and community uses being secured.
- **Urban design:** The applicant should provide further information to enable officers to understand how the preferred location was arrived at in the context of the need to protect the openness of surrounding MOL. A views analysis should also be submitted to include key comparison views across the MOL that demonstrate the degree of impact on openness that the proposals will have in relation to the existing school buildings.
- **Transport:** This application raises any strategic transport issues. However, TfL recommends that a travel plan, delivery and servicing plan and construction logistics plan are secured as part of any permission. Disabled parking within the site should also be identified.

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