

Planning and Regeneration
Manchester City Council
Town Hall Extension
Manchester
M60 2LA

FAO Robert Griffin

Ref: 098-006
Date: 06 April 2023
Via the Planning Portal (ref. PP-11955938)

Dear Sir or Madam,

Xaverian College, Manchester, M14 5RB

Application for temporary consent for additional mobile classrooms and demolition of two garages and boundary wall

On behalf of our client, Xaverian College, this letter accompanies a planning application submitted to Manchester City Council via the Planning Portal for temporary consent to site mobile classrooms within an area of the St Edward's Church site, which sits adjacent to the existing Xaverian college campus. The permission looks to cover a three-year period from 7 August 2023 until 7 August 2028. The application also seeks planning permission for the demolition of two garages and part of the boundary wall between St Edwards Church and Xaverian College.

The application comprises the following documents:

- Application form and relevant fee
- This cover letter
- Location plan
- Existing site plan
- Existing boundary treatment plan
- Proposed demolition plan
- Proposed site plan
- Proposed GA plans
- Proposed GA elevations
- Design and access statement
- Justification statement (inc. within DAS)

- Heritage statement (inc. within cover letter)
- Site survey
- GPR and utilities survey
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Preliminary bat roost assessment (to be submitted separately)

Proposed development

The proposed development comprises the construction of two temporary units (Use Class F1), placed one on top of each other to form a two-storey block. Each unit will house five classrooms, providing a total of ten additional classrooms and ancillary toilet facilities.

At ground floor there are five general classrooms, a female WC block and an ambulant WC. The first floor includes five general teaching classrooms, a male WC block and a staff WC. There is one stair core within the building and an additional external staircase provided to first floor level at the opposite end of the building.

The cabins will be clad with goosewing grey (10-A-05) and merlin grey (18-B-25) colour steel cladding. The cabins will utilise index roof finish, and aluminium double glazed window systems. The accessible ramp leading into the building will be covered in a vented ply skirt painted in merlin grey (18-B-25).

The submitted plans identify the location of the proposed temporary classrooms to be sited on an area that is currently owned by the Diocese of Salford and occupied by the St Edward's R.C. Church, Parish Hall, Presbytery, and associated parking and garages.

Permission was granted through appeal in 2021 for the demolition of the parish hall element (ref. 126736/FO/2020) and is due to be implemented in April 2023 after which the site will become available for the temporary classrooms which will sit broadly on the parish hall's existing footprint.

Four trees will be removed to facilitate the development (T9, T15, T24, T25) which are all category C trees as identified in the submitted arboricultural impact assessment and can be replaced elsewhere within the college campus.

To facilitate the development, this application also proposes the demolition of two existing derelict garages, both to the east of the application site. The garages are in a poor state of repair.

Pedestrian access to the college campus will be created through this partial demolition of the boundary wall between the St Edward's site and Xaverian College. Removing a

portion of the existing brick wall will enable students and staff to access teaching facilities safely and in a timely matter within the campus secure line.

The entire Xaverian College campus and application site is situated within the Victoria Park Conservation Area, which was designated in 1972.

Further detail can be found within the submitted plans and Design and Access Statement.

Rationale

The college currently hosts 2,915 students with intake from 140 secondary schools across Greater Manchester, and in September 2022 it reached operational capacity. RCU data, which is based on ONS figures, predicts a steady increase in numbers over the coming years, with an upper limit population of 3,605 by the 2030/31 academic year. With this predicted influx in student numbers there is already an increased pressure on existing infrastructure, including the demand for more general teaching classroom space.

To meet the college's urgent need for additional teaching accommodation, a separate application is due to be submitted for the demolition of the college's existing Sunbury Building and the subsequent construction of a new science building in its place.

As the school is already oversubscribed, there is no capacity to accommodate students elsewhere within the school during the science building's construction period. As such, the proposed temporary classrooms will enable uninterrupted teaching through the construction work, minimising the impact on pupil life. Once erected, the Sunbury Building's existing Religious Education teaching and college operations will be moved into the temporary units. This will allow for the demolition of the Sunbury Building and in its place, the construction of the new Science Building (full planning application to be submitted in May 2023).

Once built, the existing science department will be moved from the Xavier Building into the new Science Building. The Religious Education teaching and college operations will then be relocated from the temporary classrooms into the newly available space in the Xavier Building.

The units need to be erected over the summer in time for the start of the next academic year commencing 29 August 2023. To allow for tender, preparation and set-up time, this application is seeking consent from 7 August 2023. There is a tight programme in place for tender and implementation, and so there will not be time to

discharge any pre-commencement conditions. We therefore ask that this is dealt with prior to a decision being issued.

The proposed demolition works are required to allow for safe access between the college campus and the application site.

Pre-application engagement has been had with the Diocese of Salford where no issues were raised. The Diocese's letter of support has been submitted separately.

Relevant planning policy

The statutory Development Plan in this case comprises the Manchester Core Strategy (July 2012) and the saved policies of the Manchester Unitary Development Plan (UDP, 1995). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) are material considerations of significant weight. Other policies and supplementary planning documents (SPDs) which are relevant are also material considerations.

Core Strategy Policy CC9 refers to design and heritage. It states that 'development in Manchester City Centre should preserve or enhance the heritage assets that have been identified, including listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled ancient monuments.' It goes on to explain in 8.53 that the City's Conservation Areas are intrinsic to Manchester's identity and sense of place. Development plans that are not contextually responsive should not be supported by the Council.

Core Strategy Policy EN1 outlines the considerations developers are expected to make for the city's heritage assets. It defines eleven-character areas in Manchester. The 'Southern Character Area' is one of these, which is characterised by its historic district centres, one of these being Rusholme. Development is required to retain this identity. Additionally, it is stated that '*opportunities for good design to enhance the overall image of the city should be fully realised.*'

Core Strategy Policy EN3 sets out that '*the council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its district centres.*'

Saved UDP Policy DC18.1 advises that careful consideration will be given to applications within Conservation Areas. Proposals must look to preserve and enhance the character of an area's assets. This includes:

- a. 'The relationship of new structures to neighbouring buildings and spaces;*
- b. the effect of major changes to the appearance of existing buildings;*

- c. the desirability of retaining existing features, such as boundary walls, gardens, trees, (including street trees);*
- d. the effect of signs and advertisements;*
- e. any further guidance on specific areas which has been approved by the Council'.*

NPPF Paragraph 38 confirms that *'local planning authorities should approach decision making on proposed development in a positive and creative way', working proactively with applicants to secure development that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.'*

NPPF Paragraph 95 highlights the importance of the provision of school places, noting that:

'It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

- a) give **great weight** to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and*
- b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted' (our emphasis)*

Paragraph 194 sets out national policy for heritage assets. It emphasizes that the local planning authority should require an applicant to *'describe the significance of any heritage asset affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'.*

Paragraph 195 obliges local authorities to *'identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal'.*

The scale of impact of proposed developments is considered in Paragraph 202: *'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a*

heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use’.

Paragraph 207 advises that not all elements of a Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance.

Heritage assessment

The application site sits within The Victoria Park Conservation Area, which was designated in 1972. Historically, the area was a private estate encompassing numerous large houses on spacious plots. Currently, relatively few of these 1840s villas remain, as many have been demolished or repurposed. The area continues to be predominantly residential, alongside a church, a mosque, and Xaverian College.

The Victoria Park Conservation Area Appraisal highlights that there will be variations in the quality of each development within the Conservation Area, and that special attention will be paid to the preservation and enhancement of the character or appearance of the area.

The appraisal also understands that changes to the area will take place as pressure for development increases. It is said that where possible, such changes should be harmonious with the character area.

The NPPF requires that planning applications affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by a reasoned justification. This should enable the Local Planning Authority to assess the likely impact of the proposals on the significance of the heritage asset and its setting. The level of detail should be no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact on the significance.

The key views into and out of the conservation area are identified as the large villas set within spacious plots, with wide, gently undulating curved roads, with the majority of boundary treatments consisting of brick walls, with large gates and gate pillars.

In this case, the proposed temporary classrooms will be situated behind the St Edward’s church building and encompassed by boundary walls to the north and east, and employment units to the west. The view of the temporary classrooms will be very limited from Thurloe Street and Crescent Range. The side of the cabins will be visible at the end of Walmer Street East, which ends at the disused gates to the parish hall. Therefore, the impact on key views into and out of the conservation area or the ability to appreciate it will be minimal and result in less than significant harm to the conservation area.

The existing boundary wall and garages do not contribute to the significance of the conservation area and hold no value in heritage terms. Both these elements are situated within private land and are hidden from public view. The garages are in a poor state of repair and detract from the appearance of the school campus. As such, their proposed demolition will not have any impact on the significance of the conservation area.

In accordance with NPPF paragraph 202 *'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use'*.

The key public benefit of the scheme is that it will facilitate the construction of the new Science Building and provide a continuity in education for existing students, which will address a clear and identified need for additional classroom space and capacity at the school, to which *'great weight'* should be awarded in accordance with the NPPF.

The proposed development should therefore be considered acceptable in heritage terms.

Planning assessment

The primary benefit of the development is the facilitation of the Sunbury Building demolition and subsequent construction of the new science building. The proposed temporary classrooms will enable uninterrupted teaching through the construction work, minimising the impact on pupil life and better distributing resources.

The overall aim of this is to improve teaching capability and meet the critical and identified need for additional teaching space.

The proposal will have a minimal impact on the Victoria Park Conservation Area, and in line with Policy CC9, EN1, and EN3, will preserve the conservation area as a heritage asset.

The proposal is therefore supported by national and local planning policy and the need to create, expand and alter schools is supported by paragraph 95 of the NPPF and should be afforded *'great weight'*.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, the proposed development is in accordance with national and local policy and accords with Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and should therefore be permitted unless material

considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out that development proposals which accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.

As such, we would therefore be grateful for the Council's full support and for permission to be granted to enable the temporary units to be ordered and constructed over Summer 2023 in time for the 29 August 2023 academic year start date.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

pp. A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gillian Worden'.

Gillian Worden

cc: Xaverian College

enc: As above