

Technical note

Project:	The Russell and Strathmore Schools, Richmond	To:	Simon Wright
Subject:	Additional Very Special Circumstances Arguments	From:	Vicky Evans
Date:	2 Mar 2015	cc:	

This technical note has been produced to respond to the request from Development Control, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, made by email on the 12th February 2015 for additional information required to justify the proposed development on Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) in terms of Very Special Circumstances (VSC). The request required the following additional information to consider the proposed development against VSC:

Educational need and benefits: *Would you update the Planning Statement to acknowledge the Council's latest School Place Planning Strategy*

Size: *Any proposed development and building elements that are over and above existing structures will need to be fully justified. To date, insufficient evidence has been submitted to confirm that the proposed new building only takes up the minimum size required for the new school to accommodate the various needs and the increase in pupil numbers. It is recommended that the applicant submits a further statement to demonstrate that the proposal only takes up the minimum size required for the new school complex to operate. There should be no features that are not essential to the functioning of a school.*

Dual Use and wider public benefits: *To date, insufficient evidence has been submitted to demonstrate any proposed community use.*

The following information is submitted in response to this request for additional information:

Educational need

The Planning Statement has been updated at paragraphs 4.60 – 4.62 to acknowledge the Council's School Place Planning Strategy 2015-2024, as follows:

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames' School Place Planning Strategy 2015-2024 outlines the Council's strategy to meet the basic need for school places within the Borough.

An update and review of the Strategy went to Cabinet on 14 January 2015 which made a number of recommended actions for providing sufficiency and diversity of primary, secondary and maintained nursery school places until 2024.

The Local Authority have a statutory duty to provide sufficient places and more places will be required to meet the longer term forecast demand.

Strathmore and Russell Specific information

- It was agreed by Cabinet on 18 July 2013, in its role as local decision maker, to approve the statutory proposals for the Strathmore School expansion. This included the identification of the Russell School site for expansion to provide growth in primary SEN school numbers.
- The Russell School project includes for an additional 4 classes as a shared form of entry. This equates to an increase from 247 to 330 pupils (1FE = 210 pupils, plus 4 classes = further 120 pupils).
- The Russell School nursery is to **remain** at 26 full time equivalents.
- The integrated portion of the Strathmore School is for up to 24 pupils.

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The Strathmore School Proposal agreed by Cabinet on 18 July 2013 following a period of informal and formal consultation states:

“3.2 Strathmore School currently provides for 50 children aged 7 – 19 years old with severe and complex learning difficulties. It is proposed that the school will provide for 96 children aged 4 – 19 years old with severe and complex learning difficulties.

The new provision will be a multi-site school across three different locations and will:

- Redevelop the provision of Strathmore School at The Russell School and St Richard Reynolds Catholic College in Twickenham for Reception, Key Stages 1 and 2 (children aged 5 to 11 years).
- Redevelop the provision of Strathmore School at Grey Court School and St Richard Reynolds Catholic College for Key Stages 3, 4 and post-16 (young people aged 11 to 19 years).
- Develop fit for purpose specialist teaching facilities co-located on three mainstream school sites to offer a richer curriculum, through:
 - Access to specialist curriculum environments;
 - Enhanced opportunities for inclusive learning;
 - Facilities to increase independent living skills and provide respite care;
 - Enhanced therapeutic spaces;
 - Improved sensory environments;
 - A bespoke hydrotherapy pool;
 - Larger hall spaces;
 - Improved sports facilities and changing rooms;
 - Specialist teaching rooms;
 - Increased access to specialist staff and professionals; and
 - Improved access for all mainstream pupils, as well as children with additional needs.”

“3.3The outcomes from the formal consultation resulted in significant support for the proposal. The responses to the two main questions – namely do you agree or disagree with the proposal to invest further in SEN in Richmond schools, and do you agree or disagree with the proposal to move Strathmore School to a multi-site school – both resulted in more than 50% of respondents indicating their agreement.”

“3.4 The demand and need for places at Strathmore has risen significantly over the last 3 years. This is evidenced by the growing numbers below:

- September 2010: 28 pupils
- September 2011: 34 pupils
- September 2012: 45 pupils
- September 2013: 56 pupils”

“3.6 There are 10 reasons why these changes were proposed. These are:

- 1) Strathmore School buildings are not fit for purpose for children with severe learning difficulties and disabilities.
- 2) Strathmore School is oversubscribed and the number of children who need such specialist provision is increasing.
- 3) Increasing places at Strathmore School will also mean that more Richmond Borough children can be educated within the local community, rather than having to go to expensive specialist out-of-borough provision; and therefore have significantly reduced travel times. The savings made from not having to use specialist out of borough placements can also be invested back into children’s education.

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- 4) Funding to extensively rebuild Strathmore School on its current site is not available in the current financial climate and there is no indication that this will change in the medium to long term.
- 5) As there are approved building programmes at Grey Court School and the St Richard Reynolds Catholic College site in Twickenham, there is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to maximise on these developments to deliver new, fit for purpose SEN facilities at minimal cost.
- 6) Parents of children with severe learning difficulties will have more choice of enhanced, specialist learning environments, with in-borough options on both sides of the River Thames.
- 7) The Russell Primary School is in need of redevelopment: its buildings, including the heating and electrical systems, are old and in need of significant improvement.
- 8) The Russell has one of the largest outside playing areas of any one form entry primary school in the borough, based on the size of the school roll. Selling a small piece of land means it will continue to enjoy extensive outdoor space with the added benefit of having a purpose built, state-of-the-art, primary school building.
- 9) The Russell has valuable experience of integrating children with severe learning difficulties into mainstream classrooms with their current Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 specialist provision.
- 10) The inclusion of Strathmore School pupils at mainstream sites will be positive for all children and young people. Inclusion will only happen where it is a positive experience for the Strathmore School pupils and the mainstream pupils and is agreed by both head teachers."

Updated School Place Planning Strategy considered by Cabinet on 14 January 2015, anticipates a further 2 forms of entry will be required in the Ham, Petersham and Richmond Riverside area by 2017-2018. It also now recommends that the Russell Primary School be expanded to 2FE from September 2017. (Meadlands Primary is to be considered as the potential location for the second form of entry required, pending feasibility study.)

The approved School Place Planning Strategy 2015-24 states:

- "5. Whilst these (*three free schools*) new schools will meet some of the basic need for school places and will be very welcome within the local family of schools, more places will be required to meet longer-term forecast demand, particularly in the primary phase. This report therefore: analyses demand for additional primary places within each of the 10 school place planning areas that the Council uses for its pupil forecasts; considers how that demand could be met; and considers whether and when further secondary phase places will be required." Page 1.
- "7. The Mayor's London Infrastructure Plan estimates that, as London's population rises to 11 million and beyond, 600 new schools and colleges will be needed in the Capital by 2050. London Councils' 'Do the Maths 2014' report, on the number of school places that will be required across London, predicts that between 2012/2013 and 2017/2018 there will have been a 23% increase in the state-funded school population within the borough, the fifth highest in London as a whole, 15-17% in the primary phase and 24.5%+ in the secondary phase. The Office of National Statistics is predicting that the overall population within the borough will by 2024 increase by 15%, from the current 189,000 to 218,000, with the school age population increasing from 46,000 to 55,000 during that period." Page 2.
- "8. The Council's Core Strategy, adopted in 2009, set a target for an additional 2,700 net new homes to be provided over a 10 year period between April 2007 and March 2017, equating to 270 per year, and a further 150-330 homes per year over the 10 years from March 2017. Since the adoption of the Core Strategy, the London Plan 2011 reduced the borough's housing target to 2,450 net new homes for the 2011-2021 period, equating to 245 per year. However, the population projections outlined in paragraph 7 above suggest that London's population is growing faster than was previously forecast, and the borough's new target will therefore be 3,150 homes for the 2015-2025 period, equating to 315 per year. There are few comparatively large-scale housing developments, i.e. with more than 100 units, planned or likely to happen within the borough in that period, so it is probable that the target would primarily be achieved through more disparately distributed small-scale developments, the pupil yield from which will be more difficult to plan for in terms of additional school places." Page 2.
- "10. The 10 school place planning areas, co-terminous with electoral ward boundaries." Page 3.

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“20. Area 10: Ham, Petersham and Richmond Riverside

Current provision

School(s)	Current capacity	Comments and scope for expansion
Meadlands Primary	1FE	Has room for expansion
St Richard’s Church of England	1FE	Has room for expansion
The Russell Primary	1FE	Has room for expansion
Total capacity	3FE	

Likely demand

There is a need for two more forms of entry within this area by 2017 or 2018, due to birth-rate increases and approved, planned and probable medium- to large-scale housing developments at the Star and Garter (80 units), Latchmere House (115 units), Cassel Hospital and Ham Close.

Options

As all three existing schools appear to have the room for expansion, subject to satisfying the Section 77 guidance regarding outdoor play space, there is a good range of possibilities within this area.

Recommendation

Expanding two schools in this area will be essential: The Russell (in 2017) and then Meadlands as and when required.” Page 12.

“21. The need and preferred options for more places, plus actions arising, are tabulated below:

Area	Need (Form of Entry) by term			Options	Actions	Timescales	Estimated cost to the Council
	Short	Med	Long				
10	1	2	2	Expansion of The Russell	9. Undertake feasibility study and consult	Autumn 2015 – spring 2016	£2.5m
				Expansion of Meadlands	10. Undertake feasibility study and consult	Spring/summer 2015, for Sep 2017 opening	£4m

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Size

The new school building for the Russell Primary School and Strathmore School was designed in accordance with EFA (Education Funding Agency) area guidance, BB 103, formerly the EFA baseline design guidance. This outlines the minimum spaces and associated areas a school should provide in order to facilitate the core functions it requires to successfully deliver the curriculum. BB103 supersedes the original area guidance of BB99 and recommends reduced minimum internal and external areas. The Russell Primary School areas have been based on this guidance.

When considering the whole school site, the existing six Russell Primary School buildings are located in different positions over a large site which creates a number of management issues for staff. The majority of these buildings are in a poor state of repair. To attempt to utilise existing buildings in the expansion of the school and to co-locate Strathmore School provision was deemed inefficient when compared to a full school re-build.

The Russell Primary School needs to remain in occupation during the construction. Consideration was given to providing temporary classrooms during this period, however, the cost to provide these would mean a large portion of the budget would effectively be wasted on the hire of temporary classrooms. The decision was therefore taken to locate the building in a position which meant the existing accommodation could still be used during the construction of the new school.

The Russell Primary accommodation incorporates a first floor within the roof structure (minimising the height) in order to reduce the footprint of the building. This will enable sufficient playing field, and hard play space, which is also subject to guidance, for the schools (following the demolition of the existing buildings).

In comparison, considering the entire Russell Primary School site, the existing six buildings (including both the junior and the infant blocks) have a total gross internal area of 2140m². The proposed new building will have a gross internal area of 2577 m². This represents an increase of 20% in total gross internal area of the proposed building over the existing buildings.

In summary for only a 20% increase in the size of the building the proposed development provides accommodation for a further 4 classes for the Russell Primary (an additional 120 pupils) and accommodation for 24 Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Strathmore School pupils. This has been accomplished by providing only the minimum spaces and areas required.

Please note that the infant building, adjacent demountable building and nursery block are not within Metropolitan open Land (MOL), the reference to this and the respective calculation is identified within the Section 5.8 of the Planning Statement.

Community Use

The Russell Primary School – existing use

The current community use of the school buildings is listed below and will continue in the replacement school building. These activities are all outside of school hours:

- Petersham Nurseries use The Russell School car park (off Petersham Road) for customer parking.
 - When: Weekly - every Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays;
 - Time: from 11.45 to 17.15.
- Perform Drama Group use The Russell School KS2 hall for their regular drama classes.
 - When: Weekly - every Sunday;
 - Time: from 9.00 to 12.30pm.
- Week long holiday bookings are generally managed through the year during the school's holiday periods.
 - When: February half term; Easter holidays and summer holidays;
 - Time: usually from 9.00 to 12.30pm.

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- Russell Primary School manages an allotment club on site with the help of the local community. In addition to community access to growing areas, the allotment produce is used as part of the school curriculum. This arrangement is to be continued and enhanced in the proposed landscaped areas;
- Perform use the school's facilities for teaching drama, dance, acting and singing classes for 4-12 year olds across the school holidays throughout the academic year;
 - When: Every October half term, February half term, Easter holidays, May half term and summer holidays;
 - Time: 10 to 12.00pm.
- Perform also use the school's facilities for weekly workshops for 4-7 year olds during the school term on Sundays;
 - When: Sundays;
 - Time: 09.30 to 11.00am
- The school is used a polling station for the local community, both local and national;
 - When: Local and national elections
 - Time: All day
- The KS1 hall is hired at a low rate in comparison to neighbouring halls to parents and local residents for events and parties;
- The KS1 hall is also used by the Police Liaison Group and other public groups at no charge;
- The school car park used sometimes by St Peter's Church, for additional function parking.
 - When: Occasional use
 - Time: Average of twice a term

Strathmore Special School – existing use

The current community use of the school's building is listed below and will continue in the existing school (until the completion of the third link project) or will continue in the re-provided new school building. These activities are both within and outside of school hours:

- Richmond Upon Thames College learning support department use the school's facilities. Have committed to do more, if the space and facilities allow.
 - When: Weekly - Friday mornings,
 - Time: from 09.30am to 12.00pm.
- Evening yoga class is taught in the hall space by an external company.
 - When: Once a week,
 - Time: 2 hours.
- Makaton Signing training People come from across London and Surrey to attend these.
 - When: Weekly - Thursday evenings,
 - Time: Courses last for 18 or 24 hours (6 x 3 hours or 8 x 3 hours);
- Richmond Mencap and Richmond NAS (National Autistic Society) use Strathmore School for holiday play-schemes in summer and spring holiday periods.
 - When: February half term; Easter holidays and summer holidays.
 - Time: 09.30 to 15.00, over 1 week and 4 weeks during the summer holiday.
- Occasional lettings to parents for parties at weekends (halls, external spaces kitchen and toilets).
 - When: Saturdays and/or Sundays,
 - Time: 2 – 3 hours
- Children from the Russell School Disney Class access areas of Strathmore School regularly.
 - When: Weekly,
 - Time: Ranges from 30 mins to 2 hours depending on curriculum opportunities.
- Children from the Vineyard Primary School occasionally access Strathmore School facilities. The Vineyard School have committed to accessing the school more, if the space, facilities and curriculum opportunities allowed.
 - When: Occasional use
 - Time: Average of twice a term.
- Richmond Family Voice hold occasional information events for families of children with special educational needs (SEN) and not specifically children from Strathmore.
 - When: Occasional use
 - Time: About twice a year

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- Therapists from Hounslow and Richmond Community Healthcare Trust occasionally hold meetings and/or trainings session at Strathmore School.
 - When: Occasional use
 - Time: About twice a year

Russell and Strathmore Schools - proposed use

The scope for more community use once the new school is built will be greatly increased as the main hall will be situated at the front of the school (facing Petersham Road) and will include access to the kitchenette and toilet and changing areas (which can be securely opened up without having to open the whole building).

The schools have indicated that their increased external facilities will also attract more community groups to use the facilities.

The facilities will be shared between the schools, as Strathmore School also have numerous users of their current building which will transfer over once complete.

Strathmore School would like to extend its expertise both within and outside of school hours to all children with SEN attending other local schools (as well as the Russell Primary School), who will be encouraged to use some of the facilities and specialist spaces (for example the sensory room). As Strathmore is limited to only 24 pupils the availability of the specialist spaces will increase. (It currently has one sensory room providing for 60 pupils). There has been previous interest shown in using the school facilities, including sensory room, however its availability has prevented there being more access.

Below is a list of all the initial areas, specialist spaces and facilities that the school intend to open up for community use, inside, if possible, and outside of school hours:

Strathmore School:

- Sensory room
- Soft play room
- Hygiene room, with adjacent laundry area
- Kitchenette
- Meeting room
- Secure accessible play area
- Classrooms could be made available on request

Russell School

- Early Years Foundation Stage classrooms and associated secure play area
- SEN group room/flexible meeting/training space
- External play area including multi-use games area (playground)
- Allotment area
- Habitat area
- Classrooms could be made available on request

Shared school areas:

- Small hall, with track hoist and kitchenette
- Main hall, with folding partition to small hall
- Music room
- Technology (multi-curricular-use) room
- Library
- Parking spaces
- External areas including playing fields.

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In addition to the existing community partners both schools have, the types of agencies and groups that they will invite to use the school's new building and whole site including grounds to provide for families and deliver holiday scheme are:

- Russell and Strathmore parents – who are further interested in using the school's facilities at weekends (for children's parties) because the areas in the new school will be much closer and easier to access.
- Mencap and Richmond NAS
- Richmond Council for Voluntary Services (RCVS) – who can also promote our availability for other groups whose remit is to support children with SEN and their families, for example Contact A Family.
- Petersham Nurseries
- Three Wings Trust
- Crofters Club (for children with SEN)
- The Woodville Centre
- Not for profit organisations such as Pictologue and 21&Co – who have both expressed interest in using the schools as a location for events aimed at families of children with special needs who live in the area.
- Ham and Petersham Association (HPA)
- Ham United group (HUG)
- Petersham Horticultural Society
- Sudbrook Nursery
- The German School
- Richmond Golf Club, and
- Petersham Open Gardens Weekend

There is scope for additional community use once the construction of the new school is complete as the main hall will be situated at the front of the school (facing Petersham Road) and will include access to the kitchen and toilet and changing areas. This new layout will allow these areas to be securely opened up without having to open the whole building. The school have indicated that their increased external facilities will also attract more community groups to use the facilities. The facilities will be shared between the schools, as Strathmore School also have numerous users of their current building which will transfer over once complete.

The school have indicated that their increased external facilities will also attract more community groups to use the facilities, such as the Petersham Horticultural Society for their annual show and the Petersham Open Garden Day for use of the car park.

In addition to the above, the land on which the infant block and adjacent demountable building is sited is now shown within the site boundary; this building is to be demolished and the area landscaped to become a mix of grass and hard surfaced open space and playing area. Part of this area may be further developed in the future to be a non-floodlit Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) which could then also be used for community use when not in school use (i.e. evenings, weekends and school holiday periods).