

Comment on a planning application

Application Details

Application: 22/3004/FUL

Address: Kneller Hall Royal Military School Of Music Kneller Road Twickenham TW2 7DU

Proposal: The demolition of existing modern buildings on the site and the conversion of and extensions to Kneller Hall and other ancillary buildings associated with the former royal military music school to a day school (Use Class F1), together with the construction of associated new purpose-built buildings including teaching space, indoor sports facilities, sporting pavilion and forest school building. Alterations to the existing playing fields, to include an all weather pitch with fencing, flood lighting to existing tennis courts, sustainability measures and re-turfing. Provision of a new access from Whitton Dene, and other ancillary works including parking areas, hard and soft landscaping, lighting, access alterations and energy centre. Internal and external alterations to Kneller Hall and the curtilage listed buildings to facilitate the day school use, including demolition and rebuilding of single storey extension to the west wing of Kneller Hall, extension to the Band Practice Hall and re-opening of Whitton Dene site entrance.

Comments Made By

Name: Mr. Neil Wilton

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Comments

Type of comment: Object to the proposal

Comment: 'Kneller Park' and public site access

In the agreed SPD for the Kneller Hall site the provision of 'Kneller Park' MOL was integral. The current proposal will not deliver such a space. The fact that this proposal is at such great variance from the Council's agreed SPD for this site is a key consideration.

The SPD anticipated the creation of a major new park and wildlife area with unfettered public access. The significant increase in public open space in this SPD was an integral balancing element against increases in residential housing, foreshadowed elsewhere in the Local Plan. Failure to achieve this increase in public open space at the Kneller Hall site destroys the balance of the entire Local Plan. It increases the probability that completion of the residential housing developments in the Local Plan will overload the existing open spaces.

Approval of this proposal would deprive the public of open space accessible by all on an unfettered basis. The application deliberately downplays the significance of this loss by:

- its misleading presentation of existing open space in this area
- its claim of widespread community support for the constrained public access which the proposal offers. I have not been consulted on this. What evidence is there for this claim?

There are currently no formal links between Kneller Hall and the surrounding green spaces thus opening this up will create an arrival point rather than a walk through and could encourage lingering within the site boundary" reveals a very narrow and short-term focus. There are currently no formal links because, exactly as the developer stated previously, Kneller Hall has always been a restricted site. But it does not have to remain this way for perpetuity. The ecology corridor could be opened up at its western side either through the listed entrance off Whitton Dene or from a new entrance at the end of the listed wall at Amberside Close. Its eastern side could be linked with the adjacent, hitherto inaccessible wooded area and a pathway extended through to link with Spray Lane. Opening up these entrances would also ensure that the security fencing would not "impact upon the school's use of this area for outside learning". The area would be just around the corner from the school's listed Whitton Dene entrance. Students at many of the Borough's schools are obliged to travel much further than this to access outside learning.

Approval of the current proposal would leave the ecology corridor as very much a secondary interest to the core business of the site, that of the private school. The corridor would be much less likely to benefit from prioritisation of investment and expertise. It could even be a victim of wilful neglect, as depressed ecological value would strengthen the business case

for extending the school into the area and increasing the school's fee income. The current proposal offers no long-term protection from development. If the Council approves this application, we would like a condition of approval to be prohibition of further construction or development within the ecology corridor.

There is no proposal for rainwater harvesting and no proposed re-use of grey water on the site as part of an overall SUD's strategy. While these factors are apparently not deemed to be 'material planning considerations', we believe that they represent a significant lost opportunity to improve the ecological footprint of the development.

In our view, any scheme for the Kneller Hall site needs to respect the provisions of the SPD, and provide considerable and guaranteed long-term community and environmental benefits for all residents of the local area, regardless of their income.