

## 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. James Wallace-Dunlop

**Address:** 140 Upper Richmond Road West East Sheen London SW14 8DS

### Comments

**Type of comment:** Support the proposal

**Comment:** This is a beautiful and historic building that deserves to come back to life, and will enhance the neighbourhood by so doing. The site also has some rather undistinguished post WW2 structures, whose replacement by something more modern and higher quality would only help the built environment.

If the building is not to be left to decay, a suitable use needs to be found. The logical options are

- (a) A school (as it has been since 1857)
- (b) Offices, or
- (c) A grand country house (as it had been in various incarnations 1664 – 1845)

People no longer live in such grand houses, so (c) seems unrealistic.

The option of turning it into offices could work. It would likely bring the biggest footfall to the area with, potentially, one employee per 80 Sqft of useable floor space. And it would require a lot of re-development. Although Kneller Hall is 'only' grade II listed, and so there is an openness to internal modifications, maintaining the use as a school is likely to maximise retention of existing historic interior features, as well as minimising the construction work/traffic associated with the re-vivification of the site.

Use as a school also brings jobs to the area, and increases educational capacity at a time when the growth in the UK population seems set to continue, and thus the need for capacity in schools grows too.

I have read the many submissions about traffic, but fear that they take an unrealistic baseline when considering 'what will be the impact of the Kneller Hall School?'. It is true that the Royal Military School of Music has moved to Portsmouth, and so the Kneller Hall site has been quiet for a few years. But making comparisons with the near-zero traffic caused by a mothballed site is not reasonable. This is a vast and impressive historic building, and it was built to accommodate large

numbers of people. As well as the historic building we have some less historic 1950s structures that the military used to increase the useable space on the site so that more people could use it. The only fair starting point from the point of view of the traffic is “How much traffic would be created by the full use of the existing site?”. If we start with that baseline, rather than the false comparator of a derelict site, then the impact of using the site to educate children looks very attractive indeed.

The Royal Military School of Music had an almost entirely adult cohort of students: there may have been a few cadets from time to time, but, in essence, it was a school for adults. If the site were re-opened as a school for adults, we could expect a very high proportion of those attending to drive to the school. As a school for children, going from 11 to 18 only a very small proportion of pupils would be legally old enough to drive. >85% of them would be too young to drive on public roads. And, although 15% would be old enough to have a provisional licence, very few indeed would have the full car licence needed to drive themselves to school (for Londoners the average age of passing their driving test is about 25 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/5547/dsa-ia0031112a.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5547/dsa-ia0031112a.pdf) ), and of those very rare few with such a licence, only a handful (if that) could be expected to choose it: cost and practicality both mitigate against 17year olds doing so.

Please find a way to approve this progress. By all means fine tune the details of traffic management, but please see the overall project as a positive one