

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING PANEL
HELD ON THURSDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2009**

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT Alan Barker, Andreas Constantinides, Jonas Hall, Chris Joannides, Dino Lemonides, Henry Pipe and Toby Simon

OFFICERS: Julian Jackson (Head of Development Control), Andy Higham (Area Planning Manager) and Steve Jaggard (Transportation Planning) Jane Creer (Secretary) and Ann Redondo (Secretary)

Also Attending: Applicant / Agent Representatives:
David Byrne (Principal, Southgate College)
Mary Power (Savills PLC – Planning Consultants)
Stephen Blowers (Dyer - Architects)
Tanya Ring (Dyer - Architects)
Tim Smith (Structa – Transport Consultants)
Ward Councillors:
Councillor Robert Hayward (Southgate Ward Councillor)
Councillor Edward Smith (Southgate Ward Councillor)
Councillor Terence Smith (Southgate Ward Councillor)
Member of Parliament:
David Burrowes MP (Enfield Southgate Constituency)
And approximately 100 members of the public

**1112
OPENING**

The Chairman welcomed all attendees to the Planning Panel meeting. He explained that the purpose of this meeting was a fact-finding exercise for the Planning Committee, seven representatives of which were here tonight. The Panel Members, the applicant and agents, and the officers from the Council's Planning Department introduced themselves.

**1113
OFFICER'S SUMMARY OF THE PLANNING ISSUES**

Julian Jackson, Head of Development Control, clarified that the purpose of a Planning Panel meeting was not to determine the application. A decision on the application would be made by the full Planning Committee at a later date. This Planning Panel would give local residents and interested parties the opportunity to raise questions directly with the applicant and agents. Planning Panel meetings were held in relation to complex major planning applications in the borough, and the Council welcomed attendees' feedback on the process and appreciated it if people could take the time to fill in a short evaluation form and hand it to officers at the end of the meeting.

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PRESENTATION BY THE APPLICANT / AGENT

3.1 David Byrne, Southgate College Principal, advised that the current accommodation was holding back the college. The buildings were inefficient for a modern learning environment, not just for 16-19 year-olds but also for older students and evening class participants. The college also needed to be able to compete. Plans had been drawn up with a design team and he believed they had proposed a scheme that worked.

3.2 Further details were provided by Stephen Blowers, the main design architect, illustrated by projected plans and drawings, including:

- It would be important to build the new campus while keeping the old campus running, so it would be done in phases, with a restricted amount of demolition at the beginning.
- The college was looking to take ownership of the land occupied currently by the public library. During construction, the library facilities could be moved temporarily. A replacement public library was included in the scheme, but if the Council found alternative accommodation for a library in Southgate, that element would be removed.
- The college wanted a greater presence in the High Street and ability for the public to enter and to access the hair and beauty salons and the restaurant.
- Phase 1 would be a building next to the Post Office with a public library on the ground floor. This would be completed before the construction of the rest of the college.
- The main tall block in the college would be retained but clad with more modern materials and made more sustainable.
- Public consultation had taken place in December 2008 and concerns raised had been picked up and changes made to the scheme. The block nearest the High Street cottages had been reduced in height and the building line had been moved so as to be in line with the cottages.
- English Heritage had also made similar comments and the mass and height of the buildings close to the cottages had been amended to soften the college appearance at that location.
- Access was a key issue. The aim was to facilitate a dispersal strategy to remove the pressure at the junctions. Advice from highway consultants was that there was plenty of capacity, but the applicant wanted a solution that would work for everybody so a number of options were being looked at.
- The majority of staff arrived at the college between 7.00 to 9.00 am and they could be permitted to enter via Ashfield Parade during those hours.
- Three options relating to access would be included in the application put to the Planning Committee to allow them to decide which was best.
- Green space within the college was proposed to be increased from 1900 m² to 1975 m² plus an 800 m² public square and there would be greenery from the High Street to the front doors.

3.3 In summary, David Byrne reported that the present college buildings were very costly to maintain and needed to be more sustainable and to offer full disabled access. The college wanted to be more successful and to be a major

contributor to the local and wider London economy, and to make a significant difference to all of their learners.

1115

QUESTIONS BY PANEL MEMBERS

4.1 Councillor Pipe asked about the relationship between the proposed development and the houses and listed buildings in High Street, and how it would be ensured that visual intrusion would be kept to a minimum.

Stephen Blowers advised that the library block would be brought back to the building line of the cottages, and at 2 storeys would not be much higher than the cottages. Also, once the trees were mature they would add to the frontage.

4.2 Councillor Constantinides asked about the adequacy of solutions to manage traffic movements and about sufficient car parking for staff.

Tim Smith confirmed that the college currently provided 272 car parking spaces and it was proposed to reduce the number of spaces, which would reduce the total traffic generated by the site. The college was preparing a travel plan to make itself more sustainable and that would also reduce the numbers travelling by car. The college redevelopment would not generate more traffic but the cars would be dispersed through more entrances.

4.3 Councillor Hall asked about timescales for the construction and what reassurance could be given to local residents about resulting disruption.

Mary Power clarified that the scheme would be done in phases and would be fully complete in 2013. During the construction, the college must stay open and teach normally. It was unavoidable there would be some impact, but the Council would impose strict conditions to limit hours when construction work would be allowed, and agree a construction methodology plan. The college wanted to maintain a good working relationship with the local community and would ensure there were contact points for people to raise any concerns directly with them.

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QUESTIONS BY WARD COUNCILLORS AND MPS

5.1 Councillor E Smith commented on the local consensus that Southgate College had not always been considered a good neighbour in the past and asked if this development would improve the behaviour or calibre of students likely to come to the college in the future.

David Byrne responded that a great deal of good work went on in the college, and particularly since he had become the new Principal he and his management team had made efforts to meet individuals with concerns and would continue to do so. He believed that Southgate College students had not always felt welcomed in the local area, and that there was little for students

within the college at the moment. This development would raise standards of accommodation and by improving the internal environment students would be kept engaged throughout the day. Entry requirements would be on a par with other beacon colleges. Students causing anti-social behaviour were dealt with, and in some cases expelled. He also wanted to work with other authorities, including Ashmole School and the local police, to agree a Southgate plan.

5.2 Councillor R Hayward read a statement from David Burrowes, MP for Enfield Southgate, who sent his apologies for late arrival at the meeting. The MP had been contacted by a number of constituents about the application. He did support the principle of redevelopment; however there was a need to be sensitive to nearby properties. New buildings should be appropriate in size, and in keeping with the character of Southgate. He was pleased that revisions had been made to the plans in recognition of many of the concerns raised.

5.3 Councillor R Hayward commented that he hoped that the Planning Committee would take the decision that Blagdens Lane should not be used as an access to the college. He also wished to raise concerns that the car parking provision would be inadequate, that students would be coming in from outside Enfield, that students gathered to smoke in Blagdens Lane and the surrounding area, disappointment that a public library was proposed within the college rather than in Chase Side, and worries that it would take a long time for the site to look good and mature trees should be put in at the beginning.

David Byrne stated that since his arrival in January, residents would have seen a dedicated officer patrolling and a decrease in numbers of students loitering in the area. Littering was not purely linked to Southgate College students and he wanted to meet with local businesses etc to come up with wider litter plans. He would also be happy to meet with anyone concerned about anti-social behaviour, and he had forums ongoing with residents. Car parking provision was being deliberately reduced and he was looking at charging policies and introducing a cycling policy. He explained that the funding methodology was capping student recruitment and there would be only moderate increases in student numbers; no more than a 2% increase year on year. He would pass the comments regarding the trees back to the design team.

1117

OPEN SESSION - QUESTIONS AND VIEWS FROM THE FLOOR

6.1 The Chairman invited attendees to put forward their comments and questions, but these should please be kept to planning issues. Andy Higham explained that issues material to the consideration of the planning application included: intensification of use, impact on the amenities of neighbouring homes and setting of listed buildings, access and traffic issues, etc.

The comments and questions and responses received are grouped into themes below.

6.2 Size and Scale and Appearance of the Development

- a. A number of residents supported the principle of redevelopment of the college, but questioned the scale and height of buildings, particularly the proposed 4 and 6-storey blocks. It was also understood that English Heritage had concerns about the looming nature of the development.
- b. Mary Power confirmed that the front block would not be as high as first proposed, as a compromise on the High Street. The rear building behind the listed cottages was no nearer to them than present buildings. The proposals were considered the most appropriate and efficient use of the site. If an alternative location was found for the public library there may be an opportunity to look at reducing the scale of the buildings to the rear of the site.
- c. A resident of Burleigh Gardens and member of the Southgate Community Anchor Group raised concerns about the aesthetics and looming scale of the proposed development. He wished the buildings could be more attractive to look at, and more cutting edge architecturally.
- d. Stephen Blowers responded that this was an outline application only at this stage, regarding general layout and massing, and the team were still developing the architecture detail, materials, etc.
- e. A resident of a listed building next to Southgate College felt that the proposed development would have a massive effect. The front 2-storey building would also have plant machinery on the roof and would be quite imposing and close, while the rear buildings would be increased in mass and height so that his cottage would feel surrounded. This was not the right form of redevelopment and the design should be more sympathetic to Southgate.
- f. A resident highlighted that the college was close to two Conservation Areas and to a number of listed buildings. She felt the proposed buildings would be overbearing and would overlook private gardens and houses, and would not be in keeping with the area. She also had concerns about how the front part would be kept secure at night and possibilities that young people could gather there after dark and make the area feel unsafe for people coming back from the Tube station in the evening.
- g. Mary Power reiterated that new buildings would be no closer to residents than currently, though they would be higher. The existing 6-storey building would remain and it was considered that proposed developments would have no greater impact.
- h. David Byrne welcomed the open space provision in front of the college and wanted to work with the local community to make the best use of it. It was also in the college's interest to protect its own estate. Behind the green space would be a lockable gate, which would be sympathetic to the street scene, and the college would be shut down at the close of business and at weekends. There would be a smart card system for the car park as well as a

gated frontage and these strategies would be employed for Ashfield Parade as well.

6.3 Traffic and Access Arrangements

- a. A resident of Burleigh Parade raised concerns about any increase in traffic to a proposed entrance in Ashfield Parade, as this was a very narrow road with a narrow pavement and garages to the side. Other residents added that the traffic issues there were worsening and the Council should look at the overall situation and make improvements. Attendees also believed that if the roundabout and Chase Side were improved for traffic there would not be congestion problems around the college.
- b. Tim Smith confirmed that the college currently used Ashfield Parade as an exit, and a number of access options were being considered.
- c. Residents were concerned that Blagdens Lane also had very narrow pavements.
- d. Tim Smith advised that a Blagdens Lane entrance was being considered as a vehicular access only, not pedestrian.
- e. A resident of Blagdens Lane pointed out that there were residential flats opposite the proposed entrance and had concerns that the college was being increased in scale yet parking was being reduced. There was restricted parking around Blagdens Lane and people would use the forecourt of the flats to park illegally in residents' spaces.
- f. Tim Smith responded that the college was looking to promote public transport, cycling and car sharing, and that there would be no student parking on the campus. They were also looking at alternatives of using High Street and Ashfield Parade to enter the site.

6.4 Alternative Suggestions for Redevelopment

- a. Residents asked why the college could not rather build over the car park at the rear of the site. A number of attendees asserted that it was feasible to build over a Tube line and would be worth the cost.
- b. Mary Power advised that the presence of the London Underground lines restricted the depth of foundations in that area and that safety legislation must not be infringed. There was also a need to consider proximity to residents' boundaries on the Barnet side.
- c. Stephen Blowers confirmed that their structural engineers advised a restriction to no more than 2-storey buildings above the Tube line. Such building would also be so expensive that it would not be allowed by the funding body, the Learning and Skills Council. There was also a phasing explanation why they were not proposing building on the car park, and it was

important to have a front-facing element to the development to make the college more integrated in the town and welcoming to the public.

- d. Residents suggested using the Minchenden site for car parking.
- e. Mary Power stated that it was the ethos of the application to ensure that the college could sustain itself on one site, and would eventually dispose of the Minchenden site to achieve value. It would be important to introduce sustainable transport choices and seek to reduce car use, in line with national and local policy.

6.5 Public Library

- a. Councillor E Smith expressed his concerns at the proposal to incorporate the public library within the new development. Council policy was to build new libraries in shopping centres and main streets, and the Council had made a commitment that the public library would be moved to Chase Side subject to finding suitable premises.
- b. Mary Power clarified that the present college contract bound them to accommodate an alternative facility to ensure the public library was not lost to the local community, and if a new library site was found, the college proposals would be amended.
- c. Residents also raised concerns that the public library would be demolished first, and how long it would be closed.

6.6 Cost

- a. A resident asked what was the budget for the project, and where the money was coming from.
- b. David Byrne advised that procedures were set out in very strict terms by the Learning and Skills Council. Money had to be borrowed under current government guidelines and the college would be expected to realise any assets that could contribute to the scheme. The bulk of the money would come from the taxpayer via the Learning and Skills Council, which would decide on the scheme and allocate funds. It was not possible to give an exact cost but the outline estimate was around £80 million. The college was required to undertake a cost plan to be verified by the Learning and Skills Council and national committee.
- c. A resident commented that the scheme seemed to involve a lot of money and work for a relatively small increase in student numbers.
- d. David Byrne emphasised the importance of quality not quantity, plus the rules would not permit the college to grow in a major way. They wanted to improve the resources for their learners, and to improve the street scene.

6.7 Students

- a. A resident pointed out that, according to the Office of National Statistics, from 2010 to 2020 there was expected to be a decline in the size of the student age group.
- b. David Byrne advised that Southgate College belonged to the 14-19 strategy partnership within Enfield, which planned cross-borough provision and courses, and they wanted to excel in the training offered and to attract students from around Enfield.
- c. A resident of Blagdens Close commented that students were often hanging around surrounding streets in the mornings, and pavements were congested. She felt the main objective should be a student campus to provide amenities for them, and questioned the need for an interface with residents, who would prefer the car park in front and buildings at the back. Other attendees also felt that bringing the college buildings to the front would increase congestion by students who could be intimidating in large groups.
- d. David Byrne responded that vocational training was fundamental to the college's work and it was important to give students a realistic working environment. Students had contributed to discussions about what they wanted to see in the redevelopment for future generations and would have a chance to be involved in building their own environment. The majority of students did not smoke, and they were concerned about sustainability. There would be a smoking area within the college site and a better and more comfortable environment inside for all the students.
- e. Stephen Blowers confirmed that there would be green external space before the college entrance and some way back from the pavement. There would also be an atrium at the central heart of the college as an interactive environment for the students, incorporating a refectory and internet cafes so he did not believe there would be congestion on the pavements.

6.8 Legal Issues

- a. A resident of Blagdens Close commented that she had been in correspondence with Council Planning officers a number of years ago in relation to 'White Ladies' in Blagdens Lane and recalled a clause stating that Southgate College could not be entered from Blagdens Lane. She also recalled the difficulties faced by residents during the construction of new flats in Blagdens Close.
- b. Andy Higham agreed to look at the permissions and conditions and any legal agreements. He was aware of construction access concerns. He would take into account all objections on file.

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CLOSE OF MEETING

PLANNING PANEL - 26.2.2009

7.1 The Chairman reminded attendees that the consultation period for this application ran until 6/3/09 and comments should be sent to the Council Planning Department, Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield, EN1 3XE or email address: Development.control@enfield.gov.uk.

7.2 Andy Higham confirmed that all who wrote in would be notified of the Planning Committee date and any consultation on revised access proposals.

7.3 The Chairman thanked David Byrne for his offer to meet with anyone concerned about behaviour of students on or off campus.

7.4 The Chairman thanked everyone for their comments and questions: these would be fed back into the system. It was likely that the application would be determined at the Planning Committee meeting scheduled for 30/4/09, 7.30 pm at Enfield Civic Centre.