

# GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

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**Our ref:** PDU/1264KH09  
**Your ref:** P082526  
**Date:** 29 October 2009

**Kevin Henson**  
Major Applications Team  
Public Protection & Development Management  
Islington Council  
PO Box 3333  
222 Upper Street  
London N1 1YA

Dear Mr Henson

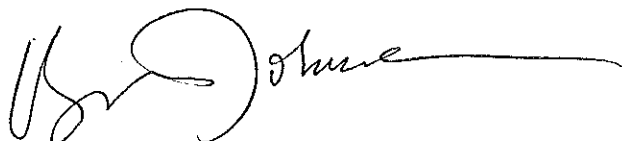
**Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended); Greater London Authority Acts 1999 and 2007; Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008  
Bowlers Community Nursery 81 & 83-85 Crouch Hill  
Local Authority Reference: P02526**

I refer to your letter of 21 October 2009 informing me that Islington Council is minded to grant planning permission for the above planning application. I refer you also to the notice that was issued on 21 October 2009 under the provisions of article 5(1)(b)(i) of the above Order.

Having now considered a report on this case (reference PDU/1264/02 copy enclosed), I am content to allow Islington Council to determine the case itself, subject to any action that the Secretary of State may take, and do not therefore wish to direct refusal.

The application represents EIA development for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999. I have taken the environmental information made available to date into consideration in formulating my decision.

Yours sincerely



**Boris Johnson**  
Mayor of London

cc Jeanette Arnold, London Assembly Constituency Member  
Jenny Jones, Chair of London Assembly Planning and Housing Committee  
Ian McNally & John Pierce, GoL  
Colin Lovell, TfL  
Javiera Maturana, LDA



# Crouch Hill Nursery (relocation of Ashmount School)

in the London Borough of Islington

planning application no. P082526

## Strategic planning application stage II referral (new powers)

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended); Greater London Authority Acts 1999 and 2007; Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008

## The proposal

Demolition of nursery and community recreation facilities in western part of the site, refurbishment of Cape youth facility, construction of a new primary school and nursery building, relocation and upgrade of games area and re-routing of internal access road to southern edge of site. The proposal constitutes a departure from the development plan.

## The applicant

The applicant is **Islington Council Children's Services**, and the architect is **Penoyre and Prasad**.

## Strategic issues

The principle of the redevelopment of the site to provide a new school is in the interest of good strategic planning in London. Further clarification has been provided on **alternative sites** and the options for **refurbishing and redeveloping the existing site, urban design, climate change** and **transport**. On the basis of this information the application is consistent with London Plan policy.

## Recommendation

That Islington Council be advised that the Mayor is content for it to determine the case itself, subject to any action that the Secretary of State may take, and does not therefore wish to direct refusal or direct that he is to be the local planning authority.

## Context

1 On 15 January 2009 the Mayor of London received documents from Islington Council notifying him of a planning application of potential strategic importance to develop the above site for the above uses. This was referred to the Mayor under Category 3D and 3E of the Schedule to the Order 2008:

- *“Development on land allocated as Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land in the development plan...and would involve the construction of a building with a floorspace of more than 1,000 square metres or a material change in the use of such a building”*
- *“Development which does not accord with one or more provisions of the development plan in force in the area in which the application site is situated, and comprises more than 2,500 sq.m. of floorspace falling within Category D1”*

2 On 25 February 2009 the Mayor considered planning report PDU/1264/01, and subsequently advised Islington Council that the application did not comply with the London Plan, for the reasons set out in paragraph 38 of the above-mentioned report; but that the possible remedies set out in paragraph 39 of that report could address these deficiencies.

3 A copy of the above-mentioned report is attached. The essentials of the case with regard to the proposal, the site, case history, strategic planning issues and relevant policies and guidance are as set out therein, unless otherwise stated in this report. Since then, the application has been revised in response to the Mayor’s concerns (see below). On 13 October 2009 Islington Council decided that it was minded to grant planning and on 20 October 2009 it advised the Mayor of this decision. Under the provisions of Article 5 of the Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor may allow the draft decision to proceed unchanged, direct Islington Council under Article 6 to refuse the application. The Mayor has until 1 November 2009 to notify the Council of his decision and to issue any direction.

4 The environmental information for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 has been taken into account in the consideration of this case.

5 The decision on this case, and the reasons will be made available on the GLA’s website [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk).

## **Update**

### **Metropolitan Open Land**

6 At stage one the applicant was informed further work is needed with regard to the availability of alternative sites. The Mayor would need to be convinced that the applicant has demonstrated that there are no feasible alternative sites available within Islington Borough that would not involve building on Metropolitan Open Land and that Islington Council cannot be persuaded of the merits of allowing comprehensive redevelopment that may compromise the architectural integrity of the existing building, but allow the school to stay at the Ashmount Site.

7 Since then the applicant has submitted a report on the alternative sites for the Ashmount School, which considers 28 sites including the existing Ashmount School site, and the proposed site. The report concludes that the proposed site is the only suitable site within the designated catchment areas and within 20 minutes walk of the existing school, has the physical capacity to accommodate the new school, is realistically available for redevelopment and is previously developed land. Following the submission of this information GLA officers accepted Islington Council’s view that the existing building cannot be refurbished or redeveloped and given the requirements of the new school that the proposed site is the only available site. GLA officers then wrote to Islington Council informing it that GLA officer’s opinion is that the proposal complies with policy 3D.10 of the London Plan, but that this is expressed without prejudice to the Mayor’s formal consideration of the application.

8 After which the Ashmount Site Action Group wrote to the Mayor informing him that the information on which the GLA officer's opinion was based, is incorrect. In particular, it believes Islington Council has not demonstrated that the existing site is not suitable for redevelopment as:

- The Purcell Miller Tritton report concludes that redevelopment of the existing site is possible.
- The brief for the alternatives site study is worded to assume refurbishment or redevelopment of the existing site is not an option.

9 Following receipt of this letter GLA officers contacted Islington Council's education department for clarification on the points raised above.

10 The Purcell Miller Tritton report does conclude that redevelopment of the existing site is physically possible. However, it also states that the proposal to refurbish the existing school would not resolve the problems that make the school an unsatisfactory educational environment. Such as managing pupil movement, security, toilet provision, inclusive access, emergency service access, out of hours facilities and sufficient play provision.

11 Islington Council's education department maintain that the existing school buildings cannot be refurbished to an adequate level to bring the school up to the required standard. Also Islington Council's education department, on the advice of Islington Council conservation officers and English Heritage, cannot be persuaded of the merits of allowing comprehensive redevelopment that may compromise the architectural integrity of the existing building. Islington Council is therefore adamant that refurbishment or redevelopment of the existing site is not possible.

12 The alternative sites report also confirms that there are no other alternative sites for the relocation of the Ashmount School.

13 As such GLA officers are satisfied the Crouch Hill Nursery is the only suitable site for the new school and that the proposal complies with 3D.10 of the London Plan.

### **Urban design**

14 At stage one the application the applicant was asked to confirm its commitment to closing the pedestrian route along the western boundary of the scheme and provide details of how this route is to be made secure in the event that it is not re-routed through the centre of the site.

15 The applicant submitted a letter, which states that the path is a well-used public right of way and cannot be closed off. The applicant has stressed that if the new proposed pathway through the school results in the decline in the use of the existing path than the closure of the existing path will be re-evaluated. Until that time the applicant is proposing to increase security along the existing path using security cameras, additional lighting and regular management of the vegetation. It is acknowledged that the existing path is well used and that the new path though the school site will be longer and less direct.

16 Islington Council has included a condition to ensure a security strategy for the school buildings and out-door spaces is submitted. Provided the management of the path is secured and subsequently maintained through this strategy, the proposal by the applicant is considered to be the best option for the site. As such, the proposal complies with policy 4B.6 of the London Plan.

## **Climate change mitigation**

17 As part of the Mayor's previous representation the applicant was asked to submit further information regarding the biomass boiler to ensure the proposal complies with London Plan policy.

18 The applicant has since submitted an updated energy strategy explaining how the building emissions rate relates to Building Regulations. Further details of the planned energy efficiency measures, e.g. u-values, has also been provided in the modelling sheets appended to the supplementary energy report. Calculations relating to the carbon intensity of heat from combined heat and power plant relative to alternative heat sources has been provided, thus providing further information on how the carbon savings from combined heat and power plant and the biomass boiler will be operated together has been provided. As such the proposal complies with the London Plan energy policies.

## **Climate change adaptation**

19 At stage one the applicant was asked to commit to specific sustainable drainage measures in line with the hierarchy set out in policy 4A.14 of the London Plan.

20 The applicant has submitted a water strategy, which proposes the use of water efficient technologies and a rainwater harvesting system to service approximately 43% of the school's toilets. Islington Council has attached conditions to secure these and other climate change adaptation measures. As such the proposal complies with London Plan policies on climate change adaptation.

## **Transport for London's comments**

21 At stage one TfL welcomed the walking audit but wanted to see a commitment to implement any necessary improvements to footways. The inclusion of a sum for improvements within the Section 106 Heads of Terms is therefore welcomed. At stage 1 TfL also requested submission of a draft travel plan. This has now been provided and there is a requirement as part of the Section 106 Agreement to submit a full school travel plan and community access travel plan. A parking management plan, delivery and servicing plan and construction management plan will also be secured by condition. Cycle parking and storage will be provided in accordance with TfL standards.

22 As a result of these provisions there are no outstanding transport issues.

## **Other comments**

23 CABE state it is unable to comment on the application.

24 English Heritage (Archaeology) confirm any requirement for pre- or post-determination archaeological assessment of the site in respect to the current application could be waived.

25 The Metropolitan Police adviser states he is unable to support the proposal due to the unsuitability of the location for a school. However, in the event that this is the only alternative site he is committed to working with the applicant to ensure the development is robust and well secured.

26 Haringey Council has no objection to the proposal subject to the provision of a green travel plan and management and maintenance plan developed with local stakeholders, including Haringey Council.

27 The Environment Agency raise no objection to the proposal subject to the inclusion of proposed conditions.

28 Natural England raise concern over the potential of the proposal to adversely affect the site of metropolitan importance and other valuable habits. It therefore recommended that the mitigation and enhancement measures set out in the supporting documents be fully implemented.

29 The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority subject to further details on the sprinkler system, operation of the vehicular gates and access to perimeters of the school do not raise any objection.

30 Islington Council received 28 objection letters. The objections relate to:

- Loss of Metropolitan Open Land
- Security of new school site
- Refurbishment would be cheaper
- Location of the new school is less accessible
- Net loss of playground area
- Community centre should be reinstated
- Incorrect site boundary
- Parkland Walk is not inaccessible or insecure
- New school will be smaller
- Existing school site is safer
- Objection to conversion of existing school to residential
- There are other alternative sites than the proposed
- Damage to trees on new site

31 Islington Council received 27 individual letters of support; these are included in Islington Council's committee report. Islington Council also received identical letters of support from 157 residents in the beginning of October. Reason for support are listed below:

- Better access to safe and maintained parkland
- Brings under used and uncared for Parkland Walk into community use
- Better education facilities
- More economical than refurbishment
- New carbon zero building
- Brings together important services for young people

32 The Mayor of London has also received ten letters of objection and one letter of support. The objections relate to the same issues as those raised with Islington Council detailed above.

33 As well as objection letters the Mayor has received letters from the Ashmount Site Action Group and the Friends of the Parkland Walk relating to the accuracy of the information submitted by Islington Council as part of the application. In particular:

- The red-line boundary of the site is inaccurate
- Islington Council has not demonstrated that the existing site is not suitable for redevelopment as the Purcell Miller Tritton report concludes that redevelopment of the existing site is possible and the brief for the alternatives site study is worded to assume refurbishment or redevelopment of the existing site is not an option

## **Response to consultation**

34 The issues relating to Islington Council's evidence to justify the loss of Metropolitan Open Land, exceptional circumstances and the options for the refurbishment and redevelopment of the existing school site are covered in the beginning sections of this and the previous report. With regard to the accuracy of the red-line boundary on the application drawings, the application site includes part of the Parkland Walk as the application includes improvements to the proposed Parkland Walk. It does not indicate its de-designation from Metropolitan Open Land.

35 Issues relating to the size, location and security of the proposed school and tree protection are not strategic planning matters and the suitability of the proposal for educational needs has been assessed by Islington Council.

36 This application does not include the existing school site. Comments relating to the existing school site being developed for housing are not relevant to this application.

## **Legal considerations**

37 Under the arrangements set out in Article 5 of the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor has the power under Article 6 to direct the local planning authority to refuse permission for a planning application referred to him under Article 4 of the Order. The Mayor may also leave the decision to the local authority. In directing refusal the Mayor must have regard to the matters set out in Article 6(2) of the Order, including the principal purposes of the Greater London Authority, the effect on health and sustainable development, national policies and international obligations, regional planning guidance, and the use of the River Thames. The Mayor may direct refusal if he considers that to grant permission would be contrary to good strategic planning in Greater London. If he decides to direct refusal, the Mayor must set out his reasons, and the local planning authority must issue these with the refusal notice. The Mayor must also have regard to the guidance set out in GOL circular 1/2008 when deciding whether or not to issue a direction under Articles 6.

## **Financial considerations**

38 Should the Mayor direct refusal; he would be the principal party at any subsequent appeal hearing or public inquiry. Government guidance in Circular 03/2009 (*Costs Awards in Appeals and Other Planning Proceedings*) emphasises that parties usually pay their own expenses arising from an appeal.

39 Following an inquiry caused by a direction to refuse, costs may be awarded against the Mayor if he has either directed refusal unreasonably; handled a referral from a planning authority unreasonably; or behaved unreasonably during the appeal. A major factor in deciding whether the Mayor has acted unreasonably will be the extent to which he has taken account of established planning policy.

## **Conclusion**

40 The principle of the redevelopment of the site to provide a new school is in the interest of good strategic planning in London. Further clarification has been provided on alternative sites and the options for refurbishing and redeveloping the existing site, urban design, climate change and transport. On the basis of this information the application is consistent with London Plan policy.



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for further information, contact Planning Decisions Unit:

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# Crouch Hill Nursery (relocation of Ashmount School), Islington

in the London Borough of Islington

planning application no. P082526

## Strategic planning application stage 1 referral (new powers)

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended); Greater London Authority Acts 1999 and 2007; Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008

## The proposal

Demolition of nursery and community recreation facilities in western part of the site, refurbishment of Cape youth facility, construction of a new primary school and nursery building, relocation and upgrade of games area and re-routing of internal access road to southern edge of site. The proposal constitutes a departure from the development plan.

## The applicant

The applicant is **Islington Council Childrens Services**, and the architect is **Penoyre and Prasad**

## Strategic issues

The application site is in **Metropolitan Open Land**. Further work is required to satisfy the Mayor that there are no alternative sites available. The proposals are London Plan compliant in terms of **education, strategic views biodiversity** impact and transport although some further work on this is still required. Further work is also required in relation to **urban design, climate change**.

## Recommendation

That Islington Council be advised that the application does not comply with the London Plan, for the reasons set out in paragraph 38 of this report; but that the possible remedies set out in paragraph 39 of this report could address these deficiencies. The application does not need to be referred back to the Mayor if Islington Council resolve to refuse permission, but it must be referred back if it is resolved to grant permission.

## Context

1 On 15 January 2009 the Mayor of London received documents from Islington Council notifying him of a planning application of potential strategic importance to develop the above site for the above uses. Under the provisions of The Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor has until 26 February 2009 to provide the Council with a statement setting out whether he considers that the application complies with the London Plan, and his reasons for

taking that view. The Mayor may also provide other comments. This report sets out information for the Mayor's use in deciding what decision to make.

2 The application is referable under Categories 3D and 3G of the Schedule to the Order 2008:

- "Development on land allocated as Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land in the development plan...and would involve the construction of a building with a floorspace of more than 1,000 square metres or a material change in the use of such a building"
- "Development which does not accord with one or more provisions of the development plan in force in the area in which the application site is situated, and occupies more than 0.5 hectares"

3 Once Islington Council has resolved to determine the application, it is required to refer it back to the Mayor for his decision, as to whether to direct refusal; or allow the Council to determine it itself, unless otherwise advised. In this instance if Islington Council resolves to refuse permission it need not refer the application back to the Mayor.

4 The environmental information for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 has been taken into account in the consideration of this case.

5 The Mayor of London's statement on this case will be made available on the GLA website [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk).

## **Site description**

6 The current Ashmount school site, is at the junction of Ashmount Road and Hornsey Lane in the north of London borough of Islington. It comprises 0.8 hectares and forms part of the Whitehall Park Conservation Area. The school is a Grade A locally listed building.

7 The proposed development site at Crouch Hill is approximately 0.65 km to the east of the existing school and comprises a narrow triangular parcel of land designated as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and as a Nature Conservation Site of Metropolitan Importance. It is occupied by a number of individual buildings including a community centre, 'Bowlers Nursery', a bowling green and associated clubhouse. The total existing building footprint is 1305 sq.m., i.e. 13% site coverage. The site is in the St. Paul's strategic viewing corridor and includes the Parkway, a continuous green chain pathway leading to Finsbury park in the east and Alexander Palace to the west. The site is bounded by housing on all other sides.

8 The closest part of the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) is Archway Road to the west. The site has a PTAL of 3 (in a range of 1 to 6 where 6 is excellent). The nearest rail station is approximately 0.5 km from the site at Crouch Hill providing limited services on the London Overground route from Barking to Gospel Oak. There are no other national rail or Underground services within walking distance. However, the site is well served by buses with stops for a number of routes located within walking distance on Crouch Hill and Crouch End Hill.

## **Details of the proposal**

9 The applicant proposes to demolish the existing community centre and nursery at the Crouch Hill site, and consolidate these uses, along with a new school in the south eastern portion of the site. The new school will be housed within a new timber clad building of between three and four storeys, located on the site of the current community centre. The associated play area will be situated between the school building and the western boundary of the site. The school will have a

living roof as well as two roof terraces. One of these will have a netball court, whereas the other will be used as an outdoor teaching space. Community facilities will be provided within the same building.

10 The new accommodation for Bowler's nursery will be located within a single story extension to the south of the school building. This building will have access to private recreation space behind the school. This is separated from the school's recreation space by landscaping. The Bowler's nursery extension will have a green roof, which is also designed to be used as semi-private recreation space.

11 The CAPE youth project is currently housed within an old three-storey, brick building that was ancillary to the use of nearby disused railway tracks. A new ecology centre will be housed within a steel framed box, cantilevered off the north and west sides of the existing building. This will be clad in timber and glass to respond to the woodland context and allow views of the wider site. Additional windows are to be added to the original building, as well as a mezzanine level between the second floor and the roof, and a new roof terrace.

12 The CAPE building will also serve as the energy centre for the whole site, incorporating the CHP unit, biomass boiler and biomass store. It is envisaged that this will also allow it to fulfil an educational function, in tandem to the ecology centre. In order to maximise the reduction in carbon dioxide savings that can be achieved, it is proposed that the energy centre be connected to the Coleman Mansions residential apartment blocks to the south of the site.

13 An existing footbridge in the north western portion of the site is to be renovated and converted into a nature watch "hide", whilst still functioning as a link between the site and the residential area to the north.

14 In addition to the removal of the existing Bowlers nursery building, the existing multi use games area (MUGU) will be upgraded and moved to the west. This will open up the centre of the site for public use. The landscaping plan utilises this as a central circulation space, through which new routes through the park will pass, to improve pedestrian permeability and open up the site to the surrounding area. The existing access road is to be moved from the centre of the site to the southern edge. This is to provide more controlled vehicular access to the school and to enable the majority of the site to be vehicle free.

## Case history

15 There is no strategic case history for this site

## Strategic planning issues and relevant policies and guidance

16 The relevant issues and corresponding policies are as follows:

- Education *London Plan*
- Metropolitan Open Land *London Plan; PPG2*
- Strategic views *London Plan; London View management Framework*
- Urban design *London Plan; PPS1*
- Access *London Plan; PPS1; Accessible London: achieving an inclusive environment SPG; Planning and Access for Disabled People: a good practice guide (ODPM)*
- Climate change *London Plan; Sustainable design and construction SPG*
- Biodiversity *London Plan; the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy; PPS9*
- Transport *London Plan; the Mayor's Transport Strategy; PPG13*

17 For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the development plan in force for the area is the 2002 Islington Unitary Development Plan and the London Plan (Consolidated with Alterations since 2004).

18 The Islington LDF Core Strategy is also a relevant material consideration, having been consulted on at Issues and Options Stage.

## **Education**

19 The London Plan seeks to support and maintain high quality educational opportunities and life choices for London's children. London Plan policy 3A.24 specifically relates to the provision of education facilities. Borough Councils need to provide a criteria based approach to the provision of new facilities and the expansion of existing facilities, taking into account:

- The need for new facilities.
- The potential for expansion of existing provision.
- Safe and convenient access by pedestrians, cyclists and by public transport users
- Other policies within the London Plan, including the protection of Metropolitan Open Land and other open space.

20 Ashmount Primary School is a 2-form entry Primary School with a Nursery, located on Hornsey Lane, Islington. The building was designed and built between 1954 and 1957 by Henry Thomas Cadbury-Brown. The development consists of three linked buildings (Junior, Infant and Halls blocks), on a high, sloping site, and is considered a significant example of the Modern Movement. The combination of attention to detail and creation of a sheer "membrane" curtain wall, gave an intellectual quality to the school design that set it apart from other school buildings of the period. English Heritage has not listed the building however, Islington Council locally lists it.

21 Islington Council Children's Services Department have reviewed the suitability of the building as modern school accommodation and concluded that there are significant concerns over health and safety, as well as the buildings current suitability as an educational building. Purcell Miller Triton (PMT) LLP were subsequently commissioned to evaluate the options available. Three reports were submitted as part of the application:

- Existing building assessment
- Facade study
- Education study

These documents reviewed the existing accommodation for architectural merit and suitability as a school. They also examined options that would allow the school to remain at this site, whilst complying with current education standards. Options considered ranged from demolition and replacement, comprehensive refurbishment and a more restrained refurbishment. It was concluded that:

- The current building provides a poor quality educational environment and change is needed.
- Any application involving demolition of the school was likely to be strongly resisted, with a significant risk of being refused by Islington Council.

- Significant improvements can only be made through comprehensive reconfiguration and refurbishment, however, this would involve partial demolition and works that would significantly alter the architecture of the building. This was therefore likely to meet similar opposition to demolition and therefore run a similar risk of refusal.

22 English Heritage have written to the applicant to confirm their view that they would strongly resist any attempt to demolish the school and instead would strongly support its repair and reuse.

23 Following these reports, Islington Education Department commissioned Baron and Smith, specialist education architects, to appraise the conclusions of the PMT report in order to provide a more robust assessment of what could be achieved at the current site. This report concluded that without making significant compromises (such as disruption to classes during the estimated 2-3 year construction period and Building Control accepting corridor and stair widths which do not meet current building regulations) the current building could not be adapted to provide a working environment that is suitable for a 21st Century Primary Education for the next thirty years.

24 The reports conclude that there are possible refurbishment/ redevelopment options available, but that these will involve a compromise to the original architecture and will still leave significant deficiencies for the school to address in areas such as managing pupil movement, security, IT provision, toilet provision, inclusive access, emergency service access, out of hours facilities and sufficient play provision.

25 Islington Council Education Department have therefore decided that there is no option but to seek an alternative site within the school catchment area to develop a new build school. Whilst this argument is recognised the issue of the future use of the existing site has not been resolved. It is considered likely that the site will come forward for redevelopment in the near future and that this will likely result in the demolition or significant modification of the school building in order to make it fit for an alternative use. In light of this, consideration should be given by Islington Council to demolition of the school now as part of a comprehensive redevelopment that allows Ashmount School to remain at this location.

26 In light of likely objections from the heritage and conservation lobby, reluctance on behalf of Islington Council to pursue options that involve demolition or significant redevelopment of the school buildings, and the documentation provided in support of the application, the rationale for relocation can be understood. It is regrettable, however, that the existing site could not be redeveloped to allow the school to remain at its established location. As such, in providing a new school, the applicant seeks to support and maintain high quality educational opportunities and life choices for London's children, in line with London Plan policy 3A.24.

## **Loss of Metropolitan Open Land**

27 Chapter 3 of the London Plan is concerned with, amongst other things, open space. Policy 3D.8 (Realising the value of open space and green infrastructure) states that *"The Mayor will work with strategic partners to protect and promote London's network of open spaces, to realise the current and potential value of open space to communities."* In addition, London Plan policy 3D.10 (Metropolitan Open Land) also requires that *"The Mayor will and boroughs should maintain the protection of Metropolitan Open Land from inappropriate development."*

28 The London Plan states that the protection of London's MOL should be maintained and points out that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development on MOL, and such development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The London Plan also makes clear that London's growth should be sustainable and not encroach on London's own

green spaces (page three, paragraph xi). The reference to “*inappropriate development*” flows directly from PPG2, which sets out the Government’s policy towards Green Belts, but which equally applies to the protection of MOL. London Plan policy 3D.10 states that there is a presumption against inappropriate development of MOL and that it is afforded the same level of protection as the Green Belt.

29 On 9 July 2008 the Mayor published Planning for a better London. This document is intended to outline the Mayor’s ‘direction of travel’ and amongst other things sets out his planning priorities. Page 28 of Planning for a better London states that one of these priorities is to “*make sure the planning system protects and enhances open spaces*”.

30 The site at Crouch Hill contains 25,730 sq.m. of Metropolitan Open Land at present. The proposal results in no increase in overall built footprint; rather there will be a reduction from 1,300 sq.m to 1,164 sq.m (10.5% reduction), albeit the proposal will result in the relocation of new buildings into what is currently open space. Furthermore, the redistribution of buildings allows for the site to be more open in character and link to an adjoining open space of 2,170 sq.m. to the south of the site. This is not designated as Metropolitan Open Land , but is open space with the potential to link up and provide a resultant area of open space of 27,900 sq.m. in total.

31 The applicant has attempted to explain the very special circumstances that need to be taken into consideration. These include:

- There is a pressing need for new school buildings to replace inadequate existing buildings at the current site.
- No redevelopment is possible on the current site.
- The site is already partially developed and substantial buildings have existed for some time.
- The proposals will relocate existing footprint within the site, there being no material increase.
- There is no net loss of open land and the proportion is expected to increase.
- The new buildings are positive in terms of the reduced impact on the wider area of open land and to the improved pedestrian permeability and accessibility of the site connectivity
- The new layout is designed to reduce visual impact on MOL.

Given there is a reduction in built footprint and having regard for there being no net loss of open land and no loss to the openness of the site and the circumstances identified above, the applicant may potentially demonstrate that very special circumstances exist which, in this case, may considered acceptable.

32 In order for this argument to be accepted, however, the Mayor would need to be convinced that the applicant has demonstrated that there are no feasible alternative sites available within Islington Borough that would not involve building on Metropolitan Open Land, and that Islington Council can not be persuaded of the merits of allowing comprehensive redevelopment that may compromise the architectural integrity of the existing building, but allow the school to stay at the Ashmount site.

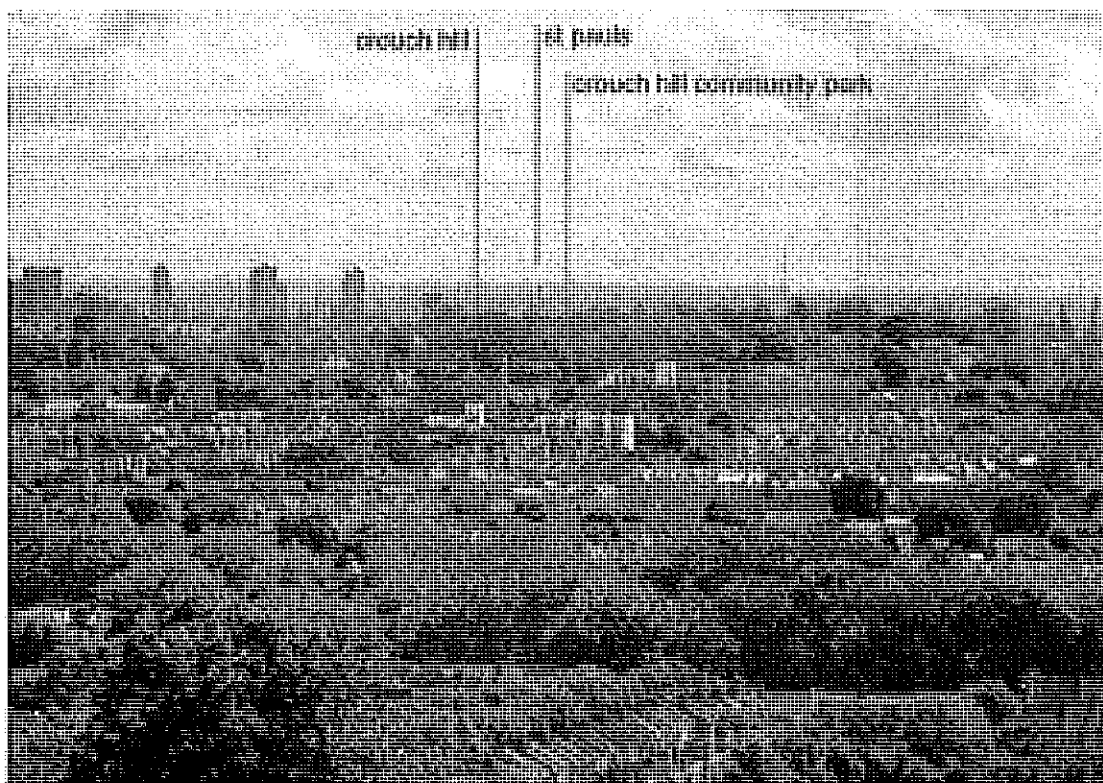
33 A brief report has been provided in an attempt to demonstrate that all possible alternatives have been comprehensively assessed, but it is minimal in detail and thus not considered conclusive. Further discussions are required with Islington Council and the applicant in order to satisfy the Mayor that very special circumstances exist that would allow this proposal to be built on Metropolitan Open Land.



## Strategic views

### Assessment point 1A.2- St. Pauls from Alexander Palace

34 The view from the viewing terrace at Alexandra Palace, approaching from the northeastern car park, is managed by geometric definition. The strategically important landmark in this view is St. Paul's Cathedral. It is the only designated view that the peristyle of the cathedral is visible, owing to a dip in the ridge in the middle ground. Other visible buildings in the view include the city cluster of tall buildings.



**Figure 1:** Impact of proposals on significant view from LVMF Assessment Point 1A.2 *Source: Design and Access Statement*

35 The landmark viewing corridor is symmetrical about the dome, since the western towers of the cathedral are not fully visible. The whole of the landmark is set against the backdrop of hills, making it less visible than in other views. There are lateral assessment areas on either side of the landmark viewing corridor.

36 The CAPE building lies within the landmark viewing corridor and is no taller than the existing tree canopy. The Ashmount school building will lie within the eastern lateral assessment area and at four storeys, is also lower than the tree canopy. The applicant contends that although the proposals fall within the geometric protection cone, the proposals are well below the threshold plane of 52.1 metres above ordinance datum. This is accepted; therefore the proposed development is not harmful to this view.

## Urban Design

37 Good design is central to all the objectives of the London Plan and specifically promoted by the policies of Chapter 4B. At application stage the applicant is expected to produce a design and access statement for the proposed scheme. This, together with any other design related studies,

should clearly demonstrate that the design of the scheme meets the requirements of these policies in order for it to be acceptable to the Mayor.

38 The strategy to provide a vehicle free environment across most of the site, by moving the main access road away from the centre of the site is supported, as is the reconfiguring of pedestrian access to provide new routes across the site and bring visitors through the main central space. Key to this is the repositioning of Bowlers Nursery and its integration into the consolidated building area in the south-western part of the site. This involves a substantial amount of what is currently private open space to be returned to public use. This enables a layout which is logical and facilitates better movement and permeability through the 'heart' and across the site, and as such is supported.

39 The proposed layout of the school responds well to the site constraints and the functional requirements of the school. The nursery and school building are consolidated onto the same part of the site, with the nursery being located at basement level, below a green roof immediately south of the school. This allows a significant reduction in built footprint, which is welcomed.

40 The teaching blocks and facilities are located such as to allow easy interchange between different functional areas and the nursery, if necessary. Those areas which, are likely to be available for community access are logically located to the public frontage of the school and arranged in such a way as to easily facilitate the change between private and public use as hours dictate, without compromising the security of the school. The overall scale, massing and materials used in the scheme has been designed to reduce the impact on the locality. The buildings are no greater than four storeys, which is beneficial in giving the scheme a human scale, appropriate to its function. The architecture of the buildings and the proposed materials palette should be appropriate for the function and setting of the school. The landscaping proposals appear well considered as part of the overall scheme and seem suitably tailored to the functional requirements of the different areas of the school.

41 The existing path along the boundary with the properties of Hornsey Rise Gardens remains a concern as it is unclear how this is to be addressed. Given the insecure nature of this route, it is considered optimal that this be diverted through the heart of the site as suggested at pre-application. This would increase security of the route and draw pedestrians into the heart of the scheme and towards the community facilities. These measures would also enhance the security of the shared boundary between the school and the dwellings to the west.

42 Some of the supporting documents suggest that this route will be retained whereas the landscape proposals document suggests that this will be closed. Should this route remain open, the route will continue to feel unsafe for the public to use, particularly after dark given that the applicant has legitimate reasons for building a security fence backing onto the route. The applicant has explained that they have attempted to close this route but encountered problems as it is a public right of way and consultation has shown this to be a well used one. In the event that the route remains in use following completion of the scheme, alternative measures such as the employment of a caretaker, closed circuit television cameras and cutting back of vegetation to improve natural surveillance are being considered to address the issue of security along this border. The applicant should confirm their commitment to closing this route and provide details of how this route is to be made secure in the event that it is not re-routed through the centre of the site. This should be carried out before the Mayor sees this application again and details should be secured by condition.

## **Access**

43 The aim of London Plan Policy 4B.5 and the Accessible London SPG is that proposals aim for the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion (not just the minimum) and that the design process has from the outset considered how everyone, including disabled and deaf people, older people, children and young people, will be able to use the places and spaces that are proposed. A design and access statement has been submitted that explains the design thinking behind the application and demonstrates how the principles of inclusive design, including the specific needs of disabled people have been integrated into the proposed development. The applicant should demonstrate a commitment to providing equal access to all, ensuring gradients across the site are as level as possible and entrances that do not discriminate.

44 The site is naturally undulating and steep in places, representing a challenging environment for wheelchair users and the mobility impaired. Additional handrails and ramps have been proposed in addition to new routes that generally improve access to the wider site and the parkland walk. This will improve access to all of the new facilities and to all but the steepest areas of the park representing a significantly improved the level of accessibility from the current situation.

45 No general drop-off or parking will be allowed on site, but disabled drop-off to Ashmount and Bowlers will be permitted along the shared surface route from Crouch Hill and two disabled parking spaces are to be provided for staff. The proposals for Ashmount school also involve a ramp at the main entrance, with a gradient of 1:21. Whilst it is acknowledged that there are challenging constraints to this site, and such ramps will be Buildings Regulations compliant, they are still quite steep and it is felt that if level access can not be achieved, the aim should be the most gentle gradient possible particularly given that they will be used by children. The Mayor would welcome any attempt to achieve as gentle a gradient as is reasonably possible and thus further improve accessibility of this facility for all.

## **Climate change mitigation**

46 The proposal includes an innovative proposal to link the heat network from the new development to nearby blocks of social housing This will maximise carbon dioxide savings and is therefore strongly supported. There are, however, further details required in order to assess whether the scheme complies with London Plan climate change mitigation policy.

47 The applicant has used building regulation approved software for the baseline modelling, IES, and taken into account all energy uses. The baseline emissions for the Ashmount school and CAPE building are 139 tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum. It is not clear how much the energy efficiency measures alone will reduce the carbon emissions, as the final materials have not as yet been chosen.

48 The applicant should explain how the modelling results of the new buildings, the Building Emission Rate, relates to the building regulations requirements, the Target Emission Rate, which should be available from the modelling already undertaken. In addition to this, they should provide further details of the specific energy efficiency measures proposed, eg air tightness level, U-values etc.

49 The applicant proposes a single energy centre to supply one sitewide heat network, which is welcomed. The applicant is encouraged to explore the possibility to connect the changing facilities, between the CAPE building and the Ashmount school to this network.

50 The carbon dioxide savings relating to the proposed gas fired combined heat and power (CHP) unit (rated at 150 kilowatts electricity and 230 kW thermal) are not sufficiently set out but are estimated to be approximately deliver 10% emission savings once energy efficiency savings have been taken into account. This development is slightly unusual because of the

export of low carbon heat to existing buildings not within the development. Overall savings due to the CHP are approximately 40 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per annum for the whole development.

51 The applicant proposes to install a 500kW biomass boiler. The savings due to the biomass boiler are potentially about 26 tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum for the new development (a contribution to reduction emissions by 20%) and 120 tonnes per annum for the whole system. From the heat profiles provided the proposed biomass boiler appears large, and may have difficulties in relation to modulating down according to demand. The applicant should explain how the biomass boiler is proposed to be run together with the CHP unit, as well as making clear how the biomass boiler will be able to modulate down according to demand in order to be operated at optimum efficiency over a year. In addition to this the applicant should seek detailed advice on air quality implications from Islington Borough air quality officers.

52 Overall, sufficient information has been provided to understand the proposals, and although the proposals are welcomed in general there are minor issues to be addressed and additional information required before the application can be considered fully acceptable. GLA officers would welcome the opportunity to engage with the applicant in an effort to resolve this and ensure that the scheme achieves an optimal solution in London Plan climate change mitigation terms.

## **Climate change adaptation**

53 The London Plan promotes five principles in London Plan policy 4A.9 to promote and support the most effective adaptation to climate change. These are to minimise overheating and contribution to heat island effects, minimise solar gain in summer, contributing to flood risk reductions, including applying sustainable drainage principles, minimising water use and protecting and enhancing green infrastructure. Specific policies cover overheating, living roofs and living walls.

### Living roofs and walls (Policy 4A.11)

24 The policy expects living roofs and walls to be incorporated where feasible. The applicant advises that in addition to Bowler's nursery, the school and CAPE building are to have living roofs and this is welcomed as they should help attenuate water, reduce heat gain, improve appearance and enhance the biodiversity of the scheme. In addition to this, the area above Bowler's nursery will also be useable as amenity space. A planning condition should be used to secure the provision and details of the living roofs.

### Sustainable drainage (Policy 4A.14)

25 In terms of sustainable drainage the Mayor will, and boroughs should, seek to ensure that surface run-off is managed as close to its sources possible in line with the drainage hierarchy, set out in London Plan policy 4A.14. The applicant has considered the use of rainwater attenuation measures and rainwater harvesting as part of a strategy to limit discharge in to the local sewer network. The applicant should commit to specific measures before the Mayor sees this application again, in order that judgement can be made as to whether the application complies with London Plan policy 4A.14.

## **Biodiversity**

26 This redevelopment scheme is adjacent to and would have an impact on a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), as identified through the adopted procedures for London. This is the Parkland Walk Metropolitan SINC and statutory Local Nature Reserve.

27 The applicant has submitted a comprehensive Ecological Impact Assessment to support their application. To summarise, there would be some minor habitat loss within Parkland Walk. There would also be a degree of disturbance to the SINC during construction, albeit temporary. Within the application site itself, the only biodiversity impact of any significance would be the loss of trees, including two semi-mature oaks. London Plan Policy 3D.14 requires boroughs to avoid adverse impact on the nature conservation value of SINC, or if that is not possible, to minimise such impact and seek mitigation of any residual impacts.

28 28 The proposed habitat loss within Parkland Walk is related to the relocation and enhancement of access facilities within that site. As the site is primarily designated for its exemplary role in providing public access to nature, this impact may be viewed as somewhat justified. Furthermore, the detailed design of the enhanced access has sought to minimise the impact on biodiversity and compensatory landscaping is proposed to further mitigate this.

29 The loss of the trees within the application site is regrettable. However it is being kept to a minimum, and all mature trees are retained. Considerable habitat creation is proposed to enhance the ecological function of landscaping within the redevelopment.

30 The considerable effort being made to mitigate the biodiversity impact associated with this application is welcome. The various and detailed proposals for impact mitigation and habitat creation as recommended in the Ecological Impact Assessment should be secured by condition.

## **Transport for London's comments**

31 On the basis of the submitted Transport Assessment, there is not expected to be a significant impact on either the TLRN or the Strategic Road Network (SRN). However, the transport consultant has not used the recognised PTAL methodology and so their calculation of the site's PTAL has been overstated.

32 The proposal includes one controlled vehicular access from Crouch Hill and a main pedestrian access from Warltersville Road with secondary access points off Hillrise Road and Hornsey Rise Gardens. Allowance within the site has been made for two disabled parking spaces, pick up and drop off for the nursery and site servicing and deliveries. There will be no general parking within the site. This approach is supported. The commitment to a delivery and servicing plan and construction logistics plan within the Transport Assessment is welcomed.

33 TfL welcomes the inclusion of a walking audit but it is disappointing that there is no commitment to making the identified improvements. Where footway width falls below guidance on 'Inclusive Mobility' and where maintenance issues have been identified, measures and timescales to bring these up to standard should be set out. TfL welcomes the commitment to provide cycle parking in accordance with the borough's minimum standards and TfL guidelines. However, there is no indication of where these would be located. They should be close to building entrances and desire lines, secure and covered for weather protection in accordance with best practice

34 Ashmount School has an approved School Travel Plan for the existing site and there is an intention to prepare a draft plan for the new site in advance of the school's planned opening in

September 2011. However, given the baseline data and information already available about the proposed relocation, a draft plan should be prepared in support of the current planning application. This would give greater confidence that arrangements to support sustainable travel will be designed into the new school and its operations. The draft plan should include specific timescales for the submission of a full School Travel Plan following occupation of the new school site. A full baseline survey soon after occupation should inform the full plan. Targets for the existing site should be adapted to the new location, the roles and responsibilities of the management team should be set out and a clear communications plan to promote sustainable transport options during relocation should be included. Measures will also be needed to manage parking demand and ensure that this is not displaced to surrounding areas given that there will be no parking on the new site and a Controlled Parking Zone on surrounding streets.

### **Local planning authority's position**

35 As yet unknown.

### **Legal considerations**

36 Under the arrangements set out in Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor is required to provide the local planning authority with a statement setting out whether he considers that the application complies with the London Plan, and his reasons for taking that view. Unless notified otherwise by the Mayor, the Council must consult the Mayor again under Article 5 of the Order if it subsequently resolves to make a draft decision on the application, in order that the Mayor may decide whether to allow the draft decision to proceed unchanged or direct the Council under Article 6 of the Order to refuse the application. There is no obligation at this present stage for the Mayor to indicate his intentions regarding a possible direction, and no such decision should be inferred from the Mayor's statement and comments.

### **Financial considerations**

37 There are no financial considerations at this stage.

### **Conclusion**

38 London Plan policies on education, Metropolitan Open Land, strategic views, urban design, access and inclusive design, climate change, biodiversity and transport are relevant to this application. The application complies with some of these policies but not with others, for the following reasons:

- Education- The application complies with London Plan education policy 3A.24.
- Metropolitan Open Land: Further information is required before it can be said that the applicant has demonstrated the very special circumstances by which the Mayor may consider this development to be acceptable, as per London Plan policy 3D.10.
- Strategic views: The applicant has demonstrated that the scheme would have no negative impact on strategic views. The application complies with London Plan policy 4B.16 on strategic views and with guidance set out in the London Views Management Framework.
- Urban design: The design is generally well resolved and laid out and is generally welcomed. Despite this, further work is needed in order to comply with London Plan design policy 4B.6.

- Access and inclusive design: The application complies with London Plan policy on access and inclusive design.
- Climate change: The scheme seeks to minimise carbon dioxide emissions and incorporates a number of measures that are supported in strategic terms. Further work is needed in order to demonstrate compliance with London Plan policy 4A.6.
- Transport: The application is mainly compliant with the London Plan transport policy although the application will need to be supported by a draft Travel Plan which includes details of measures identified as part of the walking audit, in line with London Plan policy 3C.3.

39 The following changes might, however, remedy the above-mentioned deficiencies, and could possibly lead to the application becoming compliant with the London Plan:

- Metropolitan Open Land: Further work is needed with regard to the availability of alternative sites, as outlined in paragraphs 32 and 33, in line with London Plan policy 3D.10.
- Urban design: The applicant should confirm their commitment to closing the pedestrian route along the western boundary of the scheme and provide details of how this route is to be made secure in the event that it is not re-routed through the centre of the site.
- Climate change mitigation: In order to judge whether the application complies with London Plan policies 4A.6 and 4A.7, further information is required regarding the biomass boiler. Specifically the applicant should show how it will modulate to achieve optimum efficiency and how it will work in tandem with the CHP unit.
- Climate change adaptation: The applicant should commit to specific sustainable drainage measures in line with the hierarchy set out in London Plan policy 4A.14.
- Transport: Submission of a draft Travel Plan to accompany the application.

40 Notwithstanding changes that would ensure compliance with the London Plan, the application could be improved by giving further consideration to the lessening of gradients, as outlined in paragraph 45. The Mayor would also welcome a commitment to providing the proposed cycle parking in a secure, covered location.

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