

London Borough of Barnet
Planning and Development Forum

Barnet College

Wednesday 8 November 2006

On Wednesday 8 November 2006 a public forum was held at Barnet College, Wood Street, to discuss proposals for the long term future of the site. Present at the Forum were representatives from Barnet Council's Planning Service, Barnet College and a presentation was given by Perkins Ogden, Architects.

These notes are not intended to be a verbatim transcript of what was said at this public meeting. The notes are a summary of the main issues discussed and have been prepared on a non-attributable basis.

All views expressed at the Forum were made freely by the people concerned, in their capacity as institutional representatives (eg agents of property developers) or as private individuals.

Any comments made by Barnet Council's officers relating to this site, which had not at the time been the subject of a planning application, did not constitute a formal response or decision of the Council with regards to future planning consents. Any views or opinions expressed were given in good faith, and without prejudice to the consideration of any planning application, which would be subject to formal public consultation and would ultimately be decided by the Council based on all relevant planning law and guidelines. Nothing in these notes should be regarded as constituting Barnet Council policy. These Forum notes will be placed on the Barnet Council's website

The comments raised by the attendees at this Forum and summarised in these notes will be taken into account by the Council prior to issue of a formal planning brief for the site.

The panel of representatives were:

Barnet Council Officers

Stewart Murray	Head of Planning and Environmental Protection
Nicola Capelli	Principal Planner, Major Projects
Jon Finney	Principal Planner, Urban Design & Heritage
Neil Lees	Assistant Chief Engineer, Transport and Highways

Barnet Councillors

Councillor Melvin Cohen	Cabinet Member for Planning & Environmental Protection
Councillor Fiona Bulmer	Ward Councillor Underhill Ward + Cabinet Member for Children Services

Barnet College

Marilyn Hawkins Principal

Others

Paul Person Perkins Ogden, Architects
 Louise Morton GVA Grimley

Chairman’s Opening Remarks

The Chairman, Mr Stewart Murray, Head of Planning and Environmental Protection, by way of introduction welcomed everyone who had attended. He said that these Planning and Development Forums were an exciting innovation in Barnet and allowed the local community to become involved in discussing proposed development sites and planning-related issues at an early stage. The Council wanted to involve local people at the ‘ideas and vision’ stage of major planning issues to hear the community’s views. He went onto explain that Barnet College had some changes they wanted to share with the community and considered that this was a good platform for the community to raise issues which concerned them at an early stage and which the College could take into consideration when preparing their proposals.

The purpose of the forum was intended as a venue where the Council’s professional staff, a representative of the College and the local community could exchange information and views about the site and above all it was a forum for communication before any further development is considered. This forum would assist the Council in preparing the planning brief which will be the subject of formal public consultations, before it was submitted to the Executive Cabinet for ratification as formal Council policy and supplementary planning guidance.

At the end of the presentation it was explained that members of the public will be given an opportunity to ask specific questions or raise issues on what has been said during the course of this forum. Attendees will also be given questionnaires which you can complete and give back to the officers on duty. All comments will be noted and the College and Council will take these into account. It was explained, however, that if people would like to receive a copy of the formal minutes of this meeting the Council can send these and they will also be published on the Council’s website.

The display material around the room is effectively the same as that which was shown at the public exhibition in Tudor Hall a few weeks ago.

The Chairman further explained that the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was formally adopted by the Council in May 2006 and that any planning brief would have to comply with the planning policies laid down in the UDP. The Council also has to take into account when making decisions on major developments the policies laid down by the Mayor of London, GLA and Government Office for London. Further information on the UDP will be published on the Council's website. The Council has also published the Three Strands Strategy which protects Barnet's suburbs.

Barnet College is one of the borough's local strategic partners to take forward the Sustainable Community Strategy. This document sets out the overarching policy framework in which the Council, College and other partners have to work within. Proposals for development affect communities and people.

The chairman said that the forum was to be conducted according to some defined rules:

1. The Council's professional officers would provide a brief introduction and introduce planning issues and policies.
2. The architects for the College proposals would present their plans and would then be open to questions from members of the public present.
3. Members of the public would be allowed to make comments and ask specific questions and issues on the proposals.
4. Councillors present could ask questions and make points as well as answer questions from the public.
5. The chairman would then sum up the discussions before the close.

The chairman then welcomed Marilyn Hawkins to give her overview of Barnet College strategy.

Barnet College

Marilyn Hawkins said that the College had over 30,000 enrolments which was spread over 5 sites in the borough. It was identified as an ideal location in a recent Learners Survey.

Marilyn Hawkins outlined the history of the redevelopment proposal and the need for an 'in principle' approval by Carnet Council in order to secure Learning and Skills Council approved funding by the end of January 2007.

The College gives huge regard to the views of the community and people living in the area and this means that we can have more open areas for students. When preparing our proposals consideration will be given to the conservation area at the front of the site. The College is very pleased that the Council is supporting the principles of the scheme to improve education facilities and the pace of things as we have got funding. But there is a timescale to meet in order to obtain the funding. The College feels that it would be making a significant contribution to Chipping Barnet town centre.

Marilyn Hawkins then introduced Paul Pearson from Perkins Ogden, Architects.

Perkins Ogden, Architects for Barnet College

Mr Person explained that his firm specialised in educational buildings. He went on to say that Wood Street site was an historical one but it was not in education terms an efficient one. There were 10 blocks built in the 1960s and 1970s and the College has over the years tried to modernise these blocks and make them more efficient. However, they have outlived their purpose and are unattractive buildings. It is proposed that the new development will provide an environmental sound building which will cut running costs.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) provides the funding for the college. After consideration of a number of options the College will aim to focus on one preferred scheme as shown on the exhibition boards. The College would aim to keep and protect areas of archaeological interest, listed buildings, TPOs, Tudor Hall and Sub Station within the scheme. However, building on the lower half of the site would not be practical, as the area would be needed for decanting, as the College would also need to retain a presence on the site while the new scheme is being developed, as it cannot afford to close down during building works. The College wish to incorporate an open space area called 'College Square' which will be a place where college students and residents of Chipping Barnet can interface with one another. College Square will be a community facility.

Before any development can take place the College will try to identify problems which would affect local residents while building works are taking place and the various planning issues that will arise. These hopefully will be addressed and will smooth the way for the development of the scheme that residents were happy with.

There will be car parking spaces similar to what there is at the moment. There will be a much reduced area of vehicular access in via Fitzjohn Avenue. Barnet College and the Council will put into effect the opening and closing times of the scheme so that residents are not disrupted unduly.

The timescale being aimed for is that in the Spring of 2007 a detailed planning application will be submitted which hopefully will be determined by the Council in the Summer of 2007. Subject to approval this will allow construction to start in 2008 and completed in 2010.

Local Residents and Speakers from the floor – Questions asked:

1. Is it intended to move the Mulberry Tree? It should stay and not be dug up. The site boundary is incorrect on the plan.

A. This was covered in the Q & A circulated. The College has taken cuttings from the Mulberry Tree which it is hoped can be cultivated elsewhere on the College site. It is also hoped that the old mulberry trees wood can be used to create a sculpture to celebrate its life and the joy it has brought to many people.
2. Orchard Road – How many houses will be built there? How will the final numbers be agreed? Unlikely to be more than single figures – envisaged there to be one family houses.

A. These are likely to be under ten in number family houses.
3. Any chance of screening and planting trees to give a green buffer zone?

A. Consideration will be given to screening and planting of trees when detailed planning applications are submitted.
4. What is the size of buildings and square footage of the existing college?

A. Landscaping will be included as part of the planning application.
5. Does the College propose to landscape around the car park to the south east to make it less of an impact on the scenery?

A. Houses are likely to have their own parking in accordance with the borough's parking standards.
6. Will the houses being built have their own car drives and/or parking facility?

A. Houses are likely to have their own parking in accordance with the borough's parking standards.
7. The proposals are a vast improvement on the last set of plans put forward. But is the College proposing 3 years of development work which will cause loss of car parking spaces in the surrounding areas? Will the Council control the roads to and from the site and put some type of road management in operation and will all of this be part of the planning brief?

A. *All these issues will be considered as part of the planning brief and eventual planning application. A Construction Management Plan will be agreed as part of the planning application which will cover issues such as hours of operation, wheel washing etc.*

8. Can you ensure the new houses will have their own car parking facilities?

A. *As questions 6 above.*

9. How can the Council ensure that the surrounding streets will be kept free from constructions traffic?

A. *This will be dealt with in the Construction Management Plan*

10. If it is being considered that an application will be made in May 2007 how does that work in terms of consultation? If this is the timescale then the Council will consult during November and report back formally to Cabinet who will then decide on the consultation process.

A. *The planning brief will be out for public consultation from mid November to mid December and will be reported to the January Cabinet Meeting for approval.*

11. What is proposed for Tudor Hall (Listed historic building) as the relationship between Tudor Hall and the College is very important? Will the scheme continue the relationship between Tudor Hall and the College.

A. *A satisfactory resolution of this relationship will be an important consideration for both the planning brief and the eventual planning application.*

12. How do you envisage improving the public spaces as at the moment it works very well?

A. *Successful public spaces will be a key aim of the planning process.*

13. What is the value of the passageway through the building with 24 hours access?

A. *Marilyn Hawkins commented that the existing layout had 17 entrances which was a problem for college security.*

14. We have got beautiful gardens at the moment so why does it have to change?

A. *As 12 above.*

15. Fitzjohn Avenue will obviously be used for delivery and we already have a problem with delivery lorries at the moment, so what is going to happen when the development starts until it is finished?
- A.** *The Construction Management Plan will deal with this issue.*
16. The pub on the corner owns the land and only a narrow bit is owned by Barnet College, how does this affect car parking and site access?
- A.** *Will need to include the public house in discussions about access as part of the pre-application work for the college planning application.*
17. It seems that a share of College land is being sacrificed for housing, is there no-one that can be approached so that College land does not have to be used for housing?
- A.** *Marilyn Hawkins explained that the funding body is insisting on a financial contribution. This is an enormous shift from the previous proposals which included a much greater amount of housing.*
18. What will be the impact of the building on our High Street?
- A.** *Will be considered through the planning process. The relationship between the open space and the built up street-scene is one of the major Urban Design issues to be resolved along with the break up of the mass of the building to the south abutting the residential areas.*
19. Residents want to be kept informed and would like notification of all exhibitions and consultations. Some residents around the College did not receive notification of tonight's forum.
- A.** *Apologies. Consultation will cover a wider area in future.*
20. Why was not more residents invited to this forum? The Council should ensure that an even wider area of residents should be consulted.
- A.** *As 19 above.*
21. Who is going to ensure that contractors vehicles do not block our drives?
- A.** *Will need to deal with through the Construction Management Plan*
22. How are the houses going to get out of their drives? Will access be on Elm Road which is a residential street?
- A.** *As above. Access will be as existing in the current proposals*

23. Will there be a nominated liaison officer from the Council?
- A.** *Yes. A named officer will be given at the next stage.*
24. Will the contractors be issued with a time limit for working?
- A.** *Hours of operation is a standard planning condition for proposals such as this.*

Representatives from the Metropolitan Police were present and asked the following questions:

25. The Police are worried about the public footpath running through the site cutting it in half. What chance is there of rerouting this footpath?
- A.** *Marilyn Hawkins explained that there are certain rights surrounding the footpath and therefore it cannot be just done away with.*
26. With increased students on the new site have you taken into account the amount of student traffic there will be on the High Street?
- A.** *Increased numbers of students should be good for local businesses.*

Councillor Fiona Bulmer – Ward Councillor for Underhill and Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

Councillor Bulmer felt that the College has made huge progress on the scheme over the last nine months. She said she was very pleased that Barnet College has secured funding for the scheme. Barnet College has got a timeframe within which to work and in order to secure the funding they have to keep within this timeframe.

From listening to the views of local residents tonight it seems that one of the biggest issues is that of construction traffic while the development is going on. Also how this will affect the traffic at the junction of Wood Street and High Street.

Councillor Bulmer considered that all were hoping that the new development will become a landmark and that the design of the building will reflect this and it will become part of the community. She would like to see a design of high quality.

There will be issues around security and it was important to make sure that any open spaces do not encourage ASBO and special attention should be paid to open spaces in the design of the scheme.

The Council will continue to ensure that residents are kept fully informed as to what is going on and that proper notification of meetings, consultations and exhibitions will be made.

Key points and concerns raised by local residents noted by the chairman and to be fully considered by Barnet College, the Council and be part of the Planning Brief.

- Mulberry tree, concerns about protection
- Parking for new houses and access to houses, as separate from the new college
- Gardens at the back and how they are going to be used by the public.
- Construction traffic and access – a need to have very tight traffic plans in place before construction starts.
- Height of college buildings – issues around design and sustainability.
- Security issues and public right of way through the site.
- Access for vehicles, development site and next to The Avenue pub
- Selling off College land for housing
- Consultation – ensure that as many people affected receive notification of the plans and future events

The chairman then closed the meeting stating that this is just the start of the process of consultation and the Council will be writing to all those interested and affected local residents in the next few weeks informing them of the next steps in the process. This would include formal consultation on the draft Planning Brief once the Council’s Cabinet Members had agreed to issue.

Meeting finished at 8.25 pm

Timescales and Next Steps

The College must deliver a new campus by September 2010 to ensure that learners, currently housed in the leased NLBP building, are not displaced. In order to achieve this, the following timetable is being progressed following public consultation:-

December 2006	Consideration of consultation responses by Cabinet
15 January 2007	Approval of Development Brief by Cabinet
May 2007	Planning application submitted for new College development
August 2008	College construction commencement
April 2010	College construction complete
September 2010	New College opens

For more information please contact:

Major Projects Team
7th Floor Barnet House
1255 High Road
Whetstone
N20 0EJ

Tel: 020 8359 4104

Email: planning.enquiry@barnet.gov.uk