

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED COMMUNITY CENTRE

SITE OF FORMER DEPOT AND THE NORTH LANE (EAST) CAR PARK,
NORTH LANE, TEDDINGTON, TW11 0HJ



FRONT ELEVATION (WEST FACADE)



SIDE ELEVATION (SOUTH FACADE)



REAR ELEVATION (EAST FACADE)



SIDE ELEVATION (NORTH FACADE)

April 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

We were asked by local residents living close to the two sites owned by the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames that are subject to proposals by the Council, to assist them in connection with the Council's ongoing engagement exercise to provide objective assessments of the current proposals for:

- a community centre to replace the existing Elleray Hall on the site of the former Council depot and the North Lane (East) car park; and
- a residential development of affordable housing on the site of Elleray Hall.

The assessment below responds to appropriate questions about various aspects of the development.

The residents want to emphasise that they support proposals for development of the right scale and type in the right location. They also support, in principle, initiatives taken by the Council to improve facilities for the community across the Borough.

2. IMPORTANT NOTES

The Site is adjoined by 10 residential properties as follows:

Elleray Road (7): Nos, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24 and 26
North Lane (3): Nos.17, 19 and 21

The Site faces 4 residential properties, as follows:

Middle Lane: Nos.21, 23, 25 and 27

The 'Local Plan' referred to is the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Local Plan 2018.

3. ASSESSMENT

Does the hall:

a. Provide properly for the diverse needs identified by Richmond?

The proposed centre provides a large hall plus 4 smaller specialist and activity rooms. Alongside a café, the proposed facility should cater for a wide range of users.

However, we have concerns about the proposal when assessed against what the Local Plan has to say about community facilities. The extracts from **Policy LP 28: Social and Community Infrastructure** and two paragraphs from the Local Plan highlight the importance of locations that are accessible to all, and emphasises the appropriateness of community facilities being located within the Borough's main centres. All-round accessibility does not only mean that proposed facilities must comply with the Disability Discrimination Act but that they can be

accessed by a wide variety of transport modes. We have highlighted salient points of the Council's approach with the use of bold text.

New social and community infrastructure

A. Proposals for new or extensions to existing social and community infrastructure will be supported where:

1. **it provides for an identified need;**
2. is of a high quality and inclusive design **providing access for all;** and
3. where practicable is provided in multi-use, flexible and adaptable buildings or co-located with other social infrastructure uses which increases public access.

Access for all is important including for the young, old and disabled. The appropriate level of accessibility to the public will depend on the nature of the scheme and its catchment. The types of larger facilities in multi-use buildings that will be visited regularly and by a greater number of people should be located in the borough's centres or areas of good public transport accessibility. Smaller facilities serving a more local catchment should be accessible by walking or cycling. The Council will encourage high quality and sustainable design of social infrastructure including measures to improve its actual, and perception of, accessibility. [8.1.7]

Access to local community facilities, services, shops and meeting places such as community centres and local pubs is important in facilitating social interaction and general community wellbeing and happiness. The Local Plan will ensure that there continues to be a good balance of uses in the borough's centres and that there are sufficient opportunities for shopping and other local services that meet the needs of communities. In order to ensure all residents have continued access to local shops and services, the Council will seek to protect such facilities, including not just those within the main centres but also in local and neighbourhood centres and parades of local importance as well as those in more isolated locations, where they are especially important to elderly or less mobile shoppers, those with young children and those without access to cars. [3.1.27]

The reality of the subject site is that its location is far from optimal. It

is in a location that is characterised by:

- ❖ A 'moderate' Public Transport Accessibility Level (3, where 1 is 'very poor' and 6b is 'excellent');
- ❖ Narrow pavements connecting it with Broad Street, a principal throughfare in Teddington Town Centre;
- ❖ It being at the junction of two busy roads, opposite the two entrances to the North Lane (West) car park and which is known locally as 'the Tesco Metro car park'. The Tesco Metro store is one of the busiest shops in the town centre; and
- ❖ It being surrounded on three sides by a total of 14 houses.

b. Comply in all material respects with Richmond's planning policy requirements, for example quality and quantity of amenity space, bin and bike storage?

Policy LP 28 (Social and Community Infrastructure)

A. The Council will work with service providers and developers to ensure the adequate provision of community services and facilities, especially in areas where there is an identified need or shortage.

New social and community infrastructure

B. Proposals for new or extensions to existing social and community infrastructure will be supported where:

1. it provides for an identified need;

The proposal is to replace an existing well-established facility originally built in 1911 that is of a poor quality and is in need of refurbishment. The need for a new or refurbished facility has, therefore, been identified by the local authority.

2. is of a high quality and inclusive design providing access for all; and

The proposed design looks to be of a high quality historically-respectful contemporary style that utilises the prevailing stock brick with red banding and of a form that is clearly influenced by the surrounding context. The building provides a lift and accessible toilet and baby change facilities, as would be expected.

3. where practicable is provided in multi-use, flexible and adaptable buildings or co-located with other social infrastructure uses which increases public access

The hall can be split into 3 smaller spaces and the activity and specialist rooms would allow for a variety of users simultaneously.

c. Pose any potential harm to the amenity of neighbours?

The proposed development backs onto 10 properties in total. These comprise 7 terraced houses on Elleray Road (Nos.14-26) plus 3 properties on North Lane (Nos.17-21). This is the same number of houses that back onto the current Elleray Hall site. Additionally, the proposal site faces onto 4 properties on Middle Lane, (Nos.21-27).

It will, therefore, affect the amenity of more residents than the existing facility, but in different ways and potentially in a more pronounced way as Elleray Hall in recent years has been used exclusively by older people. For the majority of these potentially affected, impacts could relate to those of a potentially overbearing development, reduction in privacy and increased noise and disturbance. For those in the four Middle Lane properties, although their existing outlook in that direction is poor, at least it is quite open, whereas with the plans proposed, they would look onto a wall of windows. There are also concerns about their being overlooked from first floor windows on the south facade.

It will be essential that any community use on this site be controlled by conditions attached to the grant of planning permission if issued that specify hours of use, require the approval of submitted details about measures to control and mitigate noise and other factors to protect the amenity of residents.

d. Provide satisfactory access for users of the hall, emergency and refuse vehicles and the emergency services?

The site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level of 3, this indicates a 'moderate' level of local public transport provision. (PTAL is based on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 6b (excellent)).

The Local Plan sets out car parking standards for public halls at Appendix 3. 1 space per 10 persons is required. The scheme as presented features 2 public spaces, a car cub space, a disabled space and a staff space. If all spaces were included in the calculation, this would assume the hall could accommodate 50 people. In reality, the community facility could accommodate more. The provision of only 2 public spaces represents a significant shortfall in ordinary circumstances. The area suffers from high levels of parking stress which would aggravate the potential consequences of this shortfall.

It is also relevant that the existing community facility benefits from a larger car park (capable of accommodating 6-8 cars) than that which is proposed (2 visitor parking spaces). The North Lane (East) car park has 24 spaces, with 10 of them given over to season ticket holders. It is reasonable to pose the question: where will those displaced from the North Lane (East) car park and those unable to park at the new community facility park their cars?

Given that this is acknowledged as an area of parking stress (CPZ designated and proposed) it is likely that this parking stress will be aggravated on a regular basis when events are on at the proposed community centre, compounded by visitors to the proposed housing development. A particularly unsustainable manifestation of the unmet demand for parking spaces will be drivers driving around surrounding roads looking for an available parking space.

Whilst it would be ideal that everyone travelled by public transport, walked or cycled, this will not always be practical particularly for families with children in tow or mothers with young babies. This lack of provision may reduce the attractiveness of the venue to potential users.

The cycle racks should be positioned in a more prominent position. Those in the present location would be hidden away behind the minibus parking space. This could affect the potential for sustainable travel to the venue adversely if people are concerned about the security of their bicycles.

No electric charging points are illustrated.

No bin store provision is illustrated on the proposed drawings.

4. CONCLUSIONS

We understand and support the provision of community facilities in appropriate locations. However, there are too many shortcomings with what is proposed for this site. Furthermore, local residents have made us aware of the existence of numerous such facilities locally that are underused and actively seeking additional users. Making effective use of land is an important tenet of planning policy.