

Planning Aid in Action: The Crest Academy

Background

The Crest Academy in Neasden, Brent, North West London provides secondary education for boys and girls. Many residents of the area had lived for a long time in relatively close proximity to the school.

The complex was dated and no longer met modern educational needs, so redevelopment proposals emerged for consultation in early 2011. These showed that the local authority intended to maintain the operation of the school on its current site while redeveloping the open space and playing fields within the school site to provide new accommodation.

Following the completion of the new accommodation, students would transfer to the new buildings and the outdated buildings would then be demolished to be replaced by new open spaces and sports facilities.

The local residents' principal concern was that because the school site was a long, narrow rectangle, the relocation of the school buildings would place new multi-storey buildings too close to their homes. While the existing three and four storey buildings were generally visible only from upper floors of nearby homes, the new five storey structures would be in closer proximity to many homes.

Planning Aid's support included:-

PAL met with residents and heard their concerns about the planning application. During the discussions PAL made clear which of the resident's concerns were valid planning matters and how these comments could be relayed to the Council.

Residents were encouraged to maintain their 'action group' as the main co-ordinating body for the submission of representations, but that individuals could also submit their own comments that reflected their individual concerns whether they supported the proposal or were submitting objections.

Residents were also briefed on how they could seek advice from their local councillors and how best to present their concerns to the planning committee meeting in due course.

What was the outcome of the project?

The residents felt better informed in relation to the planning process and what constituted material considerations in planning terms, but remained disappointed that the Council did not seemingly treat their concerns with the respect they felt they warranted.