

Smaller project to replace £36m rebuilding works branded 'unsympathetic' and 'featureless'

Rising costs see schools' plans shelved

PLANS for major rebuilding works at two secondary schools and to create a new sixth form centre have been redrawn after costs rocketed.

Parliament Hill and William Ellis schools and their combined La Swap sixth form college had won planning permission three years ago to build new classrooms and a sports hall, costing £36.2million.

by DAN CARRIER

But, with work yet to start, they have been forced to go back to the drawing board due to what has been described as "exceptional high inflation rates in the construction industry".

The overhaul at the schools also hit a hurdle when architects discovered a Thames Water storm drain on land ear-

marked for a new block.

The extra engineering work needed on the site at Parliament Hill School helped put the cost beyond Camden's budget.

Councillors will now rule on fresh plans for a smaller project at a meeting this evening (Thursday).

"The tender prices were significantly over the approved budget," said paperwork filed at the

Town Hall, in relation to the previous plans being scrapped.

The *New Journal* has learned redesigning the scheme alone has cost a further £700,000 in fees.

Despite being reduced in size, the new project has also faced objections.

The Dartmouth Park conservation area advisory committee says a new sports hall is "unsympathetic" – and that plans to

have a green wall in the La Swap building might not survive, leaving an unsightly mess.

The Lissenden Gardens Tenants Association, meanwhile, call the designs for the new sports hall "featureless, stark and excessively bulky".

A Town Hall spokesman said: "This project remains the top priority for the CIP

schools programme. However, in order to deliver best value for money and maintain our commitment to invest in other secondary schools, it was decided to make changes.

"In 2016, the tender prices for the building increased significantly. Our design had always taken account of the requirement to build over a sewer on the site. How-

ever, we learnt this would require more extensive foundation work than we had planned for.

"Since the original scheme was approved, the National Curriculum has changed significantly and school budgets are under pressure.

"This has required a new school design, which can best accommodate future changes in teaching."