

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE PRE-APPLICATION

MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2023

- Councillors Present:** Cllr Steve Race in the Chair.
Cllr Michael Desmond, Cllr Clare Joseph, Cllr Jon Narcross, Cllr Clare Potter, Cllr Jessica Webb (Vice-Chair) and Cllr Sarah Young.
- Apologies:** Cllr Michael Levy and Cllr Ifraax Samatar.
Cllr Ali Sadek.
- Absent:**
- Officers in Attendance:** Nick Bovaird, Deputy Team Leader, Major Projects
Rob Brew, Major Applications Team Leader
Natalie Broughton, Assistant Director Planning and Building Control
Graham Callam, Growth Team Manager
Wendy Dennis, Civil Litigation Lawyer (observing)
Adam Dyer, Principal Conservation and Design Officer
Jessica Feeny, Governance Officer (online)
Mario Kahrman, ICT Officer (online)
Peter Kelly, Principal Urban Design Officer
Louise Prew, Major Projects Planner
Christine Stephenson, Legal Officer
Gareth Sykes, Governance Services Officer.

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Levy and Cllr Samatar.

2 Declarations of Interest - Members to declare as appropriate

- 2.1 Councillor Young had declared an interest in relation to item 5, however, as no decision was being made at the meeting, she did not have to recuse herself.

3 To consider any proposal/questions referred to the sub-committee by the Council's Monitoring Officer

- 3.1 None.

4 Minutes of the previous meeting

- 4.1 There were no Pre-application meeting minutes requiring approval at the meeting.

5 Phases 5-8 inclusive of Woodberry Down Estate, N4

- 5.1 The designated Planning Officer introduced the proposals. They were for a future planning application for a residential-led mixed-use redevelopment of Phases five to eight (inclusive) of Woodberry down Estate, N4 together with associated landscaping, public realm, servicing and other development, with all matters other than access to be reserved.
- 5.2 Martin Kiefer, representing Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands (LDS), addressed the Sub-Committee by outlining the current proposals for phases five to eight of the Woodberry Down Estate and other related matters.
- 5.3 During the course of submissions and a discussion of the proposal, the following points were noted:
- Replying to a question on the rationale behind the increase in density, the applicants explained that compared to 2014 there was now a more challenging environment. There had also been a significant shift in 2020. They were now seeking to provide more homes as house prices steadily increase along with the cost of building those homes at a significantly higher rate and there was still a commitment to providing 41.7% of affordable homes on site, which would be funded through private delivery
 - Responding to a question about the tenure breakdown of the 41.7% figure, between shared ownership and social housing, the applicant replied that 57% would be shared ownership and 43% social rented. The number of social rented homes would be up to 574 across phases five to eight. In total there would be 1220 homes across the entire master plan;
 - Replying to a question about the number of Council Homes on the estate prior to regeneration, the designated Planning Officer responded that they did not have that figure immediately to hand. The applicant added that they would be over providing the floorspace from what was there. Compared to 2009 the applicant explained that they were now providing more family units;
 - Responding to a question about whether all residents would have access to all facilities and what type of heating system would be in place on site for each unit, the applicant replied that in terms of access they took a tenure blind approach. Some details were still to be determined in relation to where tenures would be located but they could see no reason why all residents would not have access to all facilities. There would be a mix of public open space and communal space, the latter being shared by the residents of the block rather than residents of the estate as a whole. There had been a significant uplift in the public space in phase five to eight proposals. The heating system proposed had changed from the original pre-application stages which envisaged a gas-led system under phase three. This had now changed under phase four to a system being fed by Air Source Heat Pumps;
 - Responding to a question about tall buildings and the wind tunnel effect, the applicant replied that in terms of mitigating the effect various studies had been commissioned with detailed and full wind tunnel testing to predict the wind results. Early studies had shown

that there were passive to active wind conditions on the estate apart from a few locations where edges were exposed. It was recognised that the testing did not for example take into the placement of trees on site which break up the airflow. Generally with the master plan those proposed taller buildings would be set among shorter buildings so lower on the ground the latter would assist with the down flow coming off the buildings and capturing the wind and then distributed at roof level on the short buildings rather than on the ground. The applicant added that conditions covering this issue would be included as part of any future planning application;

- Replying to a further question disputing the wind analysis undertaken, the applicant responded that when they had undertaken a detailed study, as part of phase four, it was noted that on the wind tunnel effect there were safety exceeded. The phase four development did address some of these issues but there would still be windy conditions but there was slight improvement and this reflected lived in experience on the estate therefore when tests were undertaken they were not producing different results than what was expected;
- Responding to a question about whether the proposals before the Sub-Committee showed a narrowing of Seven Sisters Road after Transport for London's (TfL) plans to narrow it, the applicant replied that they were aware of TfL's plans and they had to deliver what was within their control. The applicant had to consider how the buildings interact with the street so they were making sure that they had significant setbacks and appropriate trees. The applicant was currently working with TfL to try to deliver those proposals going forward and finances had already been committed as part of the development. However, in the applicant's view the first most critical step was the crossings on Seven Sisters Road;
- The applicant confirmed that the proposals before the Sub-Committee would allow for trees to be included at street on Seven Sisters Road. The exact quantity of trees on the road was still being discussed with the applicants' landscape designers to ensure any trees had sufficient space to grow trees that were required. Currently all phases had a four metre setback from the pavement. Any future delivery of Seven Sisters Road would lead to future enhancement of wider pavements and the cycle lane on the north side as well;
- Responding to a question about the existing Edwardian housing on Woodberry Grove, the applicant replied that in the 2014 Master Plan, in phase six, those house would remain and be incorporated into the design;
- Replying to a question about deck access for units, the applicant responded that it would be possible, however, they felt that generally deck access housing was less efficient and if it was to proposed may result in a fall in the overall number of housing units to be delivered;
- Some of the Sub-Committee members raised concerns from residents occupying the previous phases of the estate that the corridors adjoining the blocks were too long and did not add to a communal atmosphere. It was accepted by the Sub-Committee

members that this initial stage details were still to be provided, however they emphasised the need in any future proposals an improvement in the communal aspects of the design as well as some consideration given to how much Council housing was going to be provided;

- Responding to a question about car parking and the existing residents, the applicant replied that those returning residents would be able to retain their car parking permits as part of the underlying agreement of the estate. Phase five was envisaged to be the final phase where existing residents were to be relocated, which increased the requirement for parking as part of that phase. The project would adhere to the Council's policy of a car free development except for those returning residents;
- Sub-Committee members raised concerns about the apparent gap between the concerns of the Planning Service of the proposals and what the applicant was currently envisaging, for example in relation to the height of the towers and issues around overbearing;
- Responding to a question about whether all the proposed units would be dual aspect, the applicant replied that the Master Plan was seeking to deliver wider open spaces on the estate, and while the scale of the buildings and the gaps between had increased the applicant were taking steps that daylight levels in the buildings were to a good standard. However, at this stage of the proposals the applicant could not confirm that they would not be able to review the details of the interior of the units but the analysis of the façade to ensure sunlight hitting that façade and the apartment behind it would achieve all the standards to ensure they were good places to live in. Dual aspect was one of the key issues that had changed since 2014 and the applicant envisaged as getting as close as they could to high levels of dual aspect but it would not always be possible;
- Replying to a further question about the impact of wind on the estate, as a result of tall buildings creating a wind tunnel effect on Seven Sisters Road, the applicant replied that from their analysis had not shown to be a current problem along the road however it was recognised that more detailed testing was required. A full wind tunnel test would be undertaken prior to application but it did require outright massing when more detail on the application comes forward;
- Responding to a question on retrofitting, the applicant replied that they had looked into the issue as part of phases four and five and it had proved difficult because of the nature of the existing buildings on the estate which was very poor;
- Replying to a question about the commercial Strategy and proposals for the centre of the estate, members queried if there would be included an increase in amenities, namely a General Practitioners Surgery, the applicant replied that they were not proposing a classic town centre design. They highlighted that since 2014 shopping patterns had changed with the focus of retail opportunities on phase three and four of the estate where there was a lot of footfall. There was already built (or in the process of being built) significant area of commercial and retail space. So with the next phases the applicant was only proposing to provide up to

950 square metres of community floorspace. They added on the issue of a GP surgery, that they already made payments as part of a S106 agreement towards healthcare facilities and there would be other contributions (e.g. Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL));

- The Chair of the Committee raised concerns that phases five and eight would only look at the development of housing and there was no scope for any additional amenities. While it was acknowledged that shopping patterns had changed since 2014, and it was noted that funding was being provided through a Mayoral CIL, there was nowhere provided in phases five to eight to locate a healthcare facility. The applicant agreed to undertake a social infrastructure assessment but at the moment they had not seen any adverse impacts. They had been asked to provide a healthcare facility in phase two but the National Health Service did not respond to the offer. They highlighted in the details for phase five that under those proposals a local resident would be within five minutes walking distance of a convenience store along Sevens Sisters Road to the north and it was highlighted that there was not a lot of footfall along that area. They also highlighted that under phase eight there would result in shorter walking distances to amenities on Manor House and a six minute walk to a large branch of Sainsburys on Green Lanes. The applicant wanted to avoid the installation of facilities that would not be utilised and instead create a thriving heart to the community in the centre of the scheme ;
- Responding to a question about phase five, specifically about the density and a sense that it would lead to a cramped feel, the applicant replied that this phase would see the largest uplift in height on the estate compared to the 2014 masterplan. However, the applicant's opinion was that while the heights were an uplift when looking at their scale and how they sat on the townscape they sat very comfortably on the reservoir edge. In discussion with the Council's Planning Service the applicant had put forward a proposal for the height of the taller building in the south-east adjacent to the reservoir to take it down to bring it in line with the stepping of the other buildings. Generally the applicant was seeking to push the height towards the north of the phase where it has less impact on the green spaces. It was also noted that the green spaces included as part of phase five were also seen generally as a more positive engagement with the buildings on the estate;
- Replying to a further question about changes in the proposals, moving away from height at the centre of the estate to now more dissipated areas of height, the applicant responded that in terms of the impact on the development and look of the estate, it had always being envisaged for tall buildings to be on corners of the entry points into the green spaces. The one exception was phase seven where one building was moved back towards the north where there was less townscape and microclimate impact. The applicant was mindful of how the tall buildings sat within the wider townscape. The applicant had taken a lead from a recent study on the height of buildings in the borough and this had been reflected in the proposals with the movement of certain buildings;

- Replying to a question about the Master Plan, the designated Planning Officer responded that in terms of changes between the 2014 and current plans the officer recognised that the density had increased and there remained concerns about the height in general. The open spaces were also larger because larger open spaces needed to be provided as the development proposes more people than in the previous masterplan;
- Committee members raised concerns about the amenity impact of phases five to eight, specifically the impact on existing healthcare facilities in the area. They stressed to the applicant the need to contact the Council Officer with responsibility for local GP surgery provision and that it needed to be resolved in advance of the construction of phases five to eight of the estate;
- The applicant confirmed that they would speak to the local John Scott Health Centre about the likely amenity impact of phases five to eight on their ability to provide medical services in the future;
- Responding to a question about phase five and a disagreement between the Council and the applicant over the categorisation of a lime tree, the applicant replied that they had categorised it as a category B tree which had been confirmed by their arboriculturalist recently. The applicant stated that if the tree were to be retained this would result in the loss of 150 proposed homes;
- The Sub-Committee asked the applicant to take into account in the next stages of the planning process those Committee Members' concerns over the noticeable increase in height of the proposed buildings and a sense that it was leading to greater sense of enclosure and overbearing;
- The designated Planning Officer confirmed that the commercial strategy was to be discussed with the Planning Service as part of the pre-application process.

At the conclusion of this agenda item there was a five minute break.

6 Land Known As Bishopsgate Goods Yard

- 6.1 The designated Planning Officer briefly introduced a proposal relating to the reserved matters for Plot 1 of the Bishopsgate Goodsyrd development. Plot 1 would be an office building on the northern boundary of the site. The building would cross the Borough boundary, with the western part in London Borough of Hackney (LBH) and the eastern part in London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH).
- 6.2 Jonathan Clarke, representing Gensler, addressed the Sub-Committee outlining proposals made under s96a of the Town and Country Planning Act 2005 (as amended) for non-material amendments to planning permission 2014/2425.

The designated Planning Officer stated that following publication of the meeting papers options under consideration had been narrowed down to one, a higher plinth. Since the height of the plinth was now within the parameters of the design code, the Sub-Committee was now only considering what had been outlined with the minimum and maximum parameters e.g. curved corners, and the lobby space inside near to the TfL infrastructure.

The Sub-Committee noted that they were not considering any proposals related to plot two.

The Sub-Committee briefly examined an architectural model in the Council Chamber.

6.4 During the course of submissions and a discussion of the proposal, the following points were noted:

- Responding to a question about the TfL box, the applicant replied that it was unclear as to why the design code had specified the approved maximum parameter. It was understood that there was a previous architectural model with the minimum and maximum parameters set around that model and that was locked in around the TfL box. It was noted that there was a two metre offset from TfL that had to be respected with access and safety and the applicant could build around it that could be temporary which require some screening elements to be removed once every year and once every five years for maintenance;
- Replying to a question about how much affordable office space would be offered, the designated Planning Officer responded that currently that detail was not yet available. The applicant added that 7.5% of the area would be discounted 60% in the LBH (approximately 3000 square metres);
- The Sub-Committee noted that under the proposals that the majority of the office space was in the LBH and the housing was in the LBTH;
- Responding to the question about whether there was a need for all the proposed office space, in light changes in working habits i.e. more working from home and less time spent in the office, the designated Planning Officer replied that that the site was in a priority office area and would deliver a lot office space to meet a need as identified in the local plan.

In light of the Sub-Committee members now having to consider fewer aspects of the proposal going forward, the Sub-Committee was satisfied that the future application should not come back to the Committee. It would instead be decided by delegated authority.

END OF MEETING

Duration of the meeting: 6.30pm - 8.33pm

Date of next meeting: 6 December 2023 (Planning Sub-Committee meeting)

Councillor Steve Race
Chair of the Planning Sub-Committee

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