

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING PANEL  
HELD ON TUESDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2011**

**COUNCILLORS**

**PRESENT** Martin Prescott, Andreas Constantinides, Anne-Marie Pearce and Toby Simon

**ABSENT** Kate Anolue

**OFFICERS:** Andy Higham (Planning Decisions Manager), Richard Laws (Planning Case Officer), Mike Hoyland (Senior Transport Planner) and Bob Ayton (Schools Organisation & Development) Jane Creer (Secretary)

**Also Attending:** Applicant / Agent Representatives:  
London & Quadrant Housing Trust / Savills  
Paul Jess; Tina Khakee; Peter Harris; Simon Baxter; Michael Lawson; Tim Quick, Stuart Miller  
MPs:  
David Burrowes  
Greater London Authority:  
Joanne McCartney  
Ward Councillors:  
Councillor Michael Lavender (LB Enfield)  
Councillor Joanna Tambourides (LB Barnet)  
Councillor Robert Rams (LB Barnet)  
And approximately 285 members of the public / interested parties

**1  
OPENING**

Councillor Martin Prescott (Panel Chairman) welcomed all attendees to the Planning Panel meeting and introduced the Panel Members, the applicant and agents, and the officers from the Council's Planning Department. He explained that the purpose of this meeting was to listen to the proposals and to attendees' comments and questions and that he would try to give the opportunity to speak for everyone who wanted to.

**2  
OFFICERS' SUMMARY OF THE PLANNING ISSUES**

Andy Higham (Planning Decisions Manager) advised that this Planning Panel meeting was being held as part of the consultation process in relation to the application for the redevelopment of the former Cat Hill campus. The purpose of a Planning Panel was not to determine the application. A decision on the application would be made by the full Planning Committee at a later date, yet to be confirmed. This Planning Panel would give local residents and interested

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parties the opportunity to raise questions directly with the applicant and agents, and the Panel would listen to all comments raised. Notes of the Planning Panel meeting would be attached to the report to Planning Committee and the Panel members would feed back their observations. The Planning Department would also continue to receive comments.

Some clear issues had already emerged through consultation responses received, as set out on the agenda paper. The main issues included traffic generation; vehicle movements; parking provision; height of buildings; visual impact; impact on residential amenity; loss of outlook; loss of trees and woodland; impact on ecology; impact on local infrastructure and schools; and impact on drainage. These were all material planning considerations and would be taken into account. This application must be considered on its merits and determined on those.

### 3

#### **PRESENTATION BY THE APPLICANT / AGENT**

Simon Baxter (Senior Land and Development Manager, London & Quadrant Housing Trust) introduced the representatives of the applicant and agents and gave a presentation with slide illustrations including the following points:

- a. London & Quadrant Housing Trust were one of the leading house builders in London. They built for private sale and shared ownership. Past and current schemes showed the quality of building and they had won several national awards.
- b. Michael Lawson (Arboriculturalist) advised how the site and its surroundings had been approached. The site contained trees, buildings and level changes set within a strong boundary of established woodland. There were numerous amenity trees and some high quality specimen oaks.
- c. The final Tree Preservation Order had now been confirmed. It would be difficult for a lot of core campus trees to be retained. However the strong boundaries were key and gave the site a great sense of enclosure. There would be a 25-year management plan for the woodland committed to by the applicant. There were many old and dangerous trees, and sycamore regeneration, which needed managing. The architects had worked around the trees and natural environment.
- d. The preliminary ecology work had identified the requirement for surveys in relation to bats, and great crested newts. There was no doubt that great crested newts existed in the environment and had been found on the site previously, however this Spring had been exceptionally dry and despite extensive surveying, newts were not actively present in the pond at the time of the survey. Improvements to the pond would ensure its retention as a potential breeding ground for the great crested newt population. Qualified ecologists were on site in May, August and September and confirmed that bats were definitely using this site for foraging, but no bat roosts were identified in any of the trees or buildings. In the case of great crested newts

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and bats, a precautionary approach would be taken, and an assumption made that the newts were present.

e. Tim Quick (Director, Formation Architects) set out the design issues. Buildings on the site had grown up over the years and were all now vacant since the university had moved away. The highest of the previous buildings was The Chimney. The two current entrances were given as the appointed access points. The design would follow the natural form, with the landform being re-graded to return to the original natural bowl shape, and the buildings following the curves.

f. There would be traditional family terraced housing with gardens, and pedestrian routes through. The scheme also included apartments in five separate buildings of five and six storeys, which again followed the land contours. Computer generated images had been produced showing views of the housing.

g. Landscaping work was planned between the apartment buildings, and additional tree planting. The pathways through would include a fitness trail. Children's play areas would also be provided.

## 4

### QUESTIONS BY PANEL MEMBERS

a. The Chairman first invited Kim Coleman on behalf of the Campaign for Cat Hill to put forward her initial observations. She highlighted particular concerns in relation to the flood risk assessment, the methodology used, and that Vernon Crescent gardens already suffered with flooding and this would be likely to get worse.

b. In response to Councillor Pearce's query regarding the 25-year woodland management plan, it was confirmed that this would be paid for by the developer.

c. Councillor Pearce highlighted that the area already had a shortage of health service provision and school places and asked whether the developers had had any dialogue with health experts regarding their proposals. It was confirmed that the applicant had contacted the Primary Care Trust before making the application, and that four GP practices and five dentists within one mile of the site had confirmed they were taking new patients.

d. Councillor Constantinides asked about how the impact on surrounding roads and Cat Hill roundabout, and local parking had been assessed. The applicant advised they had appointed independent traffic experts, NLM Consultants, to produce the assessment. Surveys had been carried out in accordance with Transport for London guidelines under London-wide agreed methods for surveys. The surveys had shown that the development would lead to a less than one percent increase in traffic from the previous site use. In relation to parking, there was one space for each dwelling plus an allowance for guest/visitor parking which amounted to 15% above the required parking

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provision. The Chairman clarified that the Council had its own Traffic and Transportation and other specialist officers who would check and challenge all the information put forward in the application.

e. Councillor Constantinides made further queries regarding the protected species of bats and great crested newts. The applicant advised that surveys were carried out to national standards, that there had been multiple surveys of bats, and that local records had been consulted, and that ecologists had prepared a range of mitigation strategies which would be put forward to the Council for approval and conditioning. Natural England had also provided a response and method statement to act as if great crested newts were present.

f. In response to Councillor Simon's query, it was advised that the bats crossing the site were thought to emanate from the residential area to the north and north west, from private residences.

g. Councillor Simon asked about the engineering methods which would be used to mitigate the flood risk to properties below the site. Stuart Miller (London & Quadrant Construction Director) advised that the development gave the opportunity to engineer a solution and ensure that there was capacity not just to drain water off, but to use aqua cells underground and a hydro-brake to slow down the amount of water that runs off at any one time. Roofs would be designed to minimise run off, and make best use of water on site. There was more hard standing in the current site than in this proposal where the residences would have gardens.

h. Councillor Simon asked about the numbers likely to be coming on and off site in peak periods, and how this compared to previous use. It was advised that tests predicted the traffic coming on and off site and the predicted figure was an increase of approximately one percent. The tests accorded with Transport for London and other best guidance. There was ongoing dialogue with Council Traffic and Transportation officers, and junction capacity was still being tested.

## 5

### QUESTIONS BY WARD COUNCILLORS, MPS AND GLA MEMBER

a. Councillor Michael Lavender (Cockfosters Ward Councillor) questioned the appropriateness of the design in the local area, and whether there was a need for apartments of five and six storeys in height, and at such a high density in what was a currently desirable area. Semi-detached housing would be more in keeping with the character of the area. He also had concerns that residents would have more than one car per dwelling and that the computer generated images gave a false indication of what the development would look like.

It was advised that the density of any development site was governed by a hierarchy of plans, chiefly the London Plan and the borough's Local Development Framework, and in this case the proposed development was well within the guidelines of these plans. The applicant did not accept that terraced housing was bad housing.

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b. David Burrowes, MP for Enfield Southgate, advised that a significant number of constituents had contacted him to express concerns about this application. The key concerns related to its size and scale, impact on the area and local environment, and that it was over-intensive and unsustainable development. He was concerned about the loss of veteran oaks and the valuable wildlife area and what would be acceptable replacement. He also asked about accommodation of the natural environmental form, and about analysis of the impact on local schools and infrastructure.

The applicant advised that new trees needed to be planted to plan for future generations and they would double the replacement, Loss of two of the three veteran trees in the main campus footprint was inevitable. It was confirmed that the design had been worked on in liaison with Council officers and there had been removal of some footways and re-alignment of buildings away from certain trees.

c. Joanne McCartney, London Assembly Member for Enfield and Haringey, had also received numerous comments from residents, and raised particular concerns that local schools were already over-subscribed and whether the likely number of children had been assessed and agreements drawn up.

It was advised that any planning permission would be subject to a Section 106 legal agreement in arrangement with the Council in relation to the number of school places which would be generated, and mitigation of the impact.

d. London Borough of Barnet Councillors Joanna Tambourides and Robert Rams highlighted the high density, and insufficient parking provision and subsequent impact on Barnet borough roads as key concerns.

The applicants clarified that the level of parking provision was driven by the London Plan and Enfield's Local Development Framework, and that the provision being made exceeded the requirements. Councillor Simon (Vice-Chairman, Planning Committee) advised that decision making had to operate within the planning guidance issued by the government, and that the London Plan set maximum parking provision levels. Councillor Prescott added that if the application complied with local, regional and national guidelines, such issues were not acceptable reasons for refusal of planning permission.

## 6

### **OPEN SESSION - QUESTIONS AND VIEWS FROM THE FLOOR**

The Chairman invited attendees to put forward their comments and questions.

The comments and questions and responses received are grouped into themes below.

#### 6.1 Buildings / Design / Density

a. Attendees asked about the height of the apartment blocks.

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It was advised that the highest would be 18 metres (59 feet) tall. On the university campus The Chimney was 1.6 metres (5 feet) lower than the highest apartment building would be.

b. Attendees expressed that the applicant had provided no artists impression of the tower blocks. Comparison with a narrow building like The Chimney was not relevant to a bulky apartment block. Also, trees would not provide a year-round screening.

c. Attendees were concerned that tower blocks in particular were not in keeping with the surrounding area. The Chairman confirmed that this was a material issue which would be considered by the Planning Committee. The applicant responded that locally there was not a dominant architectural style.

d. Attendees highlighted that London & Quadrant's literature showed schemes in Lambeth, Hackney and Newham, and that such buildings would not blend in with the Cockfosters area.

e. Attendees questioned the location of the tallest blocks on the highest point of the site where they would have greatest visual impact.

f. An attendee had concerns about provision of pedestrian walkways between the buildings, that they may become locations for anti-social behaviour.

g. An attendee was concerned that a children's playground was to be placed next to a pond.

### 6.2 Traffic and Parking

a. Attendees raised concerns that each household would be likely to have more than one car and that parking provision would not be sufficient within the development and there would be overspill on-street parking in nearby roads.

### 6.3 Affordable Housing

a. Attendees asked about the amount of affordable housing, and expressed concerns about where likely tenants would be from and how the accommodation would be allocated.

It was advised that of the proposed dwellings, there would be 188 for private sale; 30 for shared ownership; 30 for a first time buyer 'rent to buy' scheme, and 24 affordable rental accommodation.

b. An attendee highlighted experiences from other residential developments with social housing, that a minority of tenants could be disruptive to an entire estate.

### 6.4 Infrastructure

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a. An attendee asked whether the developers were aware that two GPs within a mile of the development had retired in the last few weeks. It was also reported that it was already difficult to make appointments at the local medical centre.

b. A representative of New Barnet Community Association questioned the developers' figures and their assessment of the impact of the proposal on local health service providers and schools from the high numbers of residents, particularly children, moving there. Section 106 contributions should also be applicable to Barnet.

Planning Officers confirmed that London Borough of Barnet had made a formal response in relation to the application, and that if permission was granted, Barnet could receive a contribution in respect of impact.

c. An attendee highlighted difficulties currently seeking a job in Barnet and was concerned about where new residents would find employment. It was advised that this was not a material planning consideration and therefore could not be taken into account by Planning Committee in making a decision.

d. An attendee reported concerns about potential future calls on Police resources to deal with anti-social behaviour at such a development.

### 6.5 Environment / Wildlife / Trees

a. An attendee raised that 67 big trees were to be felled, 11 of which were over a metre in diameter, and it would not be appropriate to plant saplings to replace mature trees.

The applicant advised that the central campus was very difficult to defend in terms of trees and in that area 63 trees would be felled which were a mixture of large and small trees. Seven trees would be felled in the block D woods. Two large veteran trees would be felled in Wood 2, and an area of scrub would be cleared to facilitate regeneration of the pond.

b. A neighbouring resident queried the mapping of trees in the application document. Planning officers advised that they were aware of the plans referred to and how trees had been plotted and were following up this matter.

c. Attendees stated that there was a known tree where long eared bats were roosting on the site. Additionally, three types of bats had been identified in the area by the London Wildlife Trust and it would be difficult to preserve them, and the development would impact on the bats' flight lines.

d. Attendees stated that great crested newts were breeding in the pond, and recommended that the London Wildlife Trust Barnet Group be consulted for advice.

Planning officers advised that Natural England were a statutory consultee; they had responded and their points would be taken forward with the

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developer. The applicant confirmed that surveys had been carried out in accordance with Natural England guidelines.

e. In response to an attendee's query in respect of safeguarding funding for the 25-year woodland management plan, the applicant would look into setting up a mechanism to ringfence and protect this money.

f. An attendee raised concerns about soil contamination; that the applicant's examination covered only certain contaminants in certain places and that their solutions would be inadequate and the water and soil would be hazardous to future residents. He asked for further information whether asbestos, mercury and arsenic in particular were present.

The applicant confirmed that a contamination report had been written by a qualified expert and stated that significant remediation was not required on the site.

### 6.6 Flooding / Drainage

a. Attendees highlighted that local residents already experienced flooding problems in Vernon Crescent / Mansfield Avenue and had concerns about future potential property damage.

Planning officers confirmed that specialist advice had been sought from expert officers and the Environment Agency who had been consulted and had raised objections on a number of issues which the developers were looking into.

b. An attendee had concerns that foundations for the tower blocks would affect the water table.

### 6.7 Planning Panel Meeting Arrangements

a. In response to concerns regarding the size of venue, and that some people had been unable to come into the meeting, the Chairman acknowledged that the original meeting venue on 11 October was not suitable, but that he had approved this venue, and the Planning Panel would gather information from all attendees while realising that many comments and questions were largely similar. There were sufficient representatives in attendance, including the campaign organisers, to make all views known and the councillors would listen to all comments. If residents had queries specific to their home they should direct them to Council Planning Department officers.

### 6.8 Other

a. An attendee expressed that the site had established educational use and should be retained for that use to provide a legacy for local children.

b. Attendees were concerned that a number of the most affected streets were in Barnet and much of the impact would be felt in Barnet rather than Enfield.

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It was confirmed that the entire development site fell within the London Borough of Enfield. Enfield Council was the local planning authority and Enfield Planning Department had received the plans and would assess and produce a report for Committee decision. The locality as a whole would be taken into account, and a number of properties in Barnet had been included in the public consultation. London Borough of Barnet had been consulted, and had objected to the development on a number of grounds.

### 7

#### CLOSE OF MEETING

7.1 The Chairman first invited Kim Coleman on behalf of the Campaign for Cat Hill to sum up the key concerns, which were listed as:

- The campus should be retained for educational use.
- The proposed development did not reflect the character of the existing area in scale and size.
- The flats on the main road frontage would be visually intrusive.
- Density would be too high.
- The buildings would be bland and uninteresting.
- Section 106 contributions must be used in the immediate vicinity.
- The increase in local population would put a strain on health service provision and facilities for the elderly and children, and there would be a rise in crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Insufficient parking availability.
- Protection of great crested newts and of bats.
- Flood risk assessment and concerns that flooding would worsen.
- Loss of established trees.
- Ground contamination and asbestos removal concerns.

7.2 The Chairman invited the applicant to respond and sum up their case:

- Any asbestos removal in the educational buildings would be subject to a removal statement to be agreed by the Health and Safety Executive. Asbestos removal and contamination information was available on the Enfield Council website ([www.enfield.gov.uk](http://www.enfield.gov.uk)) with all the application details.
- The scheme was within density and parking guidelines set out by the London Plan. It was acknowledged they may not meet public expectations, but that they were in conformity with required standards.
- The applicants and agents had welcomed this opportunity to listen to people's concerns directly.

7.3 The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the Planning Panel and contributing their comments, which would inform the Planning officers' report to Planning Committee.