

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING PANEL
HELD ON THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2020**

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT

Mahmut Aksanoglu, Chris Bond, Ahmet Hasan, Michael Rye OBE and Jim Steven

OFFICERS:

Andy Higham (Head of Development Management), Kevin Tohill (Strategic Development Manager) and Evie Learman (Principal Planning Officer) Jane Creer (Secretary)

Also Attending:

Applicant / Agent representatives:
Viewpoint Estates – Applicant
Simply Planning – Agent

Southgate Ward Councillors: Cllr Charith Gunawardena,
Cllr Stephanos Ioannou, Cllr Derek Levy

Approximately 120 members of the public / interested parties

1

OPENING / WELCOME

1. Councillor Aksanoglu as Chair welcomed all attendees and introduced the Panel members.
2. The purpose of the meeting was to receive a briefing on the proposals for Southgate Office Village, to provide local residents and other interested parties the opportunity to ask questions about the application, and for the applicants, officers and Panel members to listen to the reactions and comments. These views, and all the written representations made, would be taken into account when the application was determined by the Planning Committee (committee meeting hopefully to take place in March).
3. This panel was an important part of the consultation process. Notes would be taken and they would be attached to the officers' report when the application came before the Planning Committee.
4. Officers from Enfield Council's Planning Department were present, as well as representatives of the applicants and agents.

2

OFFICERS' SUMMARY OF THE PLANNING PROCESS / ISSUES

Andy Higham (Enfield Council Head of Development Management) introduced the officers present and highlighted the following points:

1. This was not a decision-making meeting. A decision on the application would be made by the full Planning Committee. This meeting was part of

PLANNING PANEL - 23.1.2020

the consultation process and the notes of this meeting would be appended to the report to Planning Committee so that all Members were aware of the comments and views put forward.

2. The application was for demolition of existing office buildings and erection of a mixed use office and residential scheme ranging from 2 to 17 storeys with a business café dual use, with associated access, basement car and cycle parking and energy centre, and landscaping and ancillary works.
3. When assessing an application the Planning Authority had to consider it against the policy framework.
4. For this application, the key planning issues to consider included:
 - The principle of the quantum of development and mix of uses.
 - The rationale for the proposed height of the development.
 - The visual impact of the development on the wider area.
 - The viability of the scheme and its ability to support affordable housing and re-provide employment floorspace.
 - The relationship of the development to the adjacent Southgate district centre and neighbouring residential / commercial properties.
 - The potential effect of the development on the free flow and safety of vehicles using adjoining highways, parking and traffic generation.
 - The potential effect of the development on the setting and appearance of the Southgate Circus Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings and heritage assets.
 - The architectural and design quality of the proposed buildings.
 - The mix of residential housing and the level of affordable housing proposed.
5. The purpose of this meeting was to hear everyone's concerns, and to inform the Planning Committee.

3

PRESENTATION BY THE APPLICANT / AGENT

Holly Mitchell, planning consultant, led the presentation and set out the proposals as follows:

1. The site was on the edge of Southgate centre and had excellent transport links and was close to shops. Housing development should be maximised on brownfield sites. There was a large demand for housing and supply was not keeping up. Enfield had not kept pace with its housing delivery target of 1246 homes per year – its current provision was 530 homes per year so this needed to double. In particular there was a huge need for affordable housing.
2. It was acknowledged there was mixed public opinion about the proposal, and concern about the height. There was also acknowledged support from the communities who would welcome affordable housing provision.

PLANNING PANEL - 23.1.2020

3. The application was supported by a full suite of technical documents. These showed there were no overly negative impacts.
4. The site currently had planning approval for 82 residential homes and associated parking via conversion of the existing office village. This accommodation would not be the best quality and therefore this new scheme was explored to develop the site. It was a town centre site, close to retail property and spreading rapidly to residential. This scheme would retain mixed use, with commercial at the ground floor and residential above. It would be well connected and there would be improved permeability between the roads. The massing would be to the south of the site, and to the north it would step down.
5. In respect of the design, it was noted that Southgate had some remarkable architecture, including the Underground station. Use of materials in a contemporary way had been explored, and the stepping down of the buildings, and the colours.
6. A scheme was proposed in May 2019 to provide 200 homes and associated commercial space. Feedback was then received from Enfield Council and the public and developed for further resubmission in September 2019, with an increased quantum of affordable housing (now 35%) and reduced commercial space.
7. An objection was made from Historic England in respect of the impact of the tallest building from Grovelands Park, so the proposed height was reduced by 4m, and Historic England removed their objection at that point.
8. There had also been a reduction in the basement plan, and the amount of parking. In respect of the ground floor, the operators were keen for more flexible work space to make it a vibrant destination for people to work locally. With regard to the residential accommodation, there had been a rigorous design process including the Greater London Authority (GLA). The accommodation would be high quality and most dwellings would be dual aspect, in line with the London Plan.
9. Computer generated images were shown in illustration, including the view from the station, and of the new public connection between the two roads.
10. It was noted there were two levels of planning across London and that this application would be submitted to Enfield Council as the local planning authority and then to the GLA who had given strategic planning advice and supported the principle. Any harm would be less than substantial and would be outweighed by the benefits. The Police, Fire Brigade, Traffic and Transportation Department, and Transport for London had no objections. The Enfield independent design panel supported the quantum of development proposed. The public benefits would include the delivery of 67 new affordable homes, 149 new homes, office space to support the town, and a new pedestrian route and access across to the Marks and Spencer store. The scheme would also deliver a contribution of £820k for

schools, GP surgery provision, etc. There would also be new jobs in construction.

11. The envisaged timeline was for determination by Planning Committee in late February / early March, then back to the GLA as it was a large scale application. If consent was granted, it was hoped to start work in the summer of 2020, with construction complete 2 years after that.
12. In conclusion, London has a housing crisis and this proposal would provide a number of new homes and affordable homes; and a new business centre and jobs. It was supported by the strategic planning authority. Additionally, there would be a contribution for local facilities in the community.

4

QUESTIONS BY PANEL MEMBERS

NOTED the following questions and observations from Members of the Panel.

1. Q. It was questioned what was the next highest building in Southgate, relationship to the immediate area, and how the proposal picked up on designs in the existing architecture of Southgate? It would be important that points of detail should be subject to approval, such as unsightly lift over-runs. There was also no reference to communal aerials.
A. It was acknowledged that the proposed development was a step change in height in Southgate and would be taller than anything else in Southgate town centre at the moment. However, South Point House was 7 storeys and Hobart Court was 10 storeys (residents interjected that Hobart Court was 5 storeys rather than 10).
It was not only Southgate which was having to consider high rise development in a town centre: this was happening all over London. It was likely that all brownfield sites would need to be developed, and then greenfield sites considered as well. It was important to consider the scheme's economics and impacts. Such town centres were well served by public transport. The GLA was pushing for housing need to be met. Building design was subjective and that people would disagree with the design was respected. Originally, red brick had been considered for the scheme, but this was felt to merge into the roof profile too much. Grey brick was chosen so it would stand apart. The design panel had not supported the proposal to use red brick but had been very complimentary about the revisions to the scheme.
There were no lift over-runs, but there were design features to break up the massing and the profile so the scheme was not one dark mass that merged into the skyline.
There should not be individual aerials. It was confirmed that a standard condition would be attached to any planning approval that there must be a communal system.
2. Q. Noting the position of the development on top of a hill, it was queried whether there had been testing around wind turbulence, over-shadowing, effect on local residents' tv signals, and reflected glare?

A. The proposals had been fully wind tested. There had been a full daylight, sunlight and overshadowing survey. TfL requirements in respect of glare would be met. It was acknowledged there had been no work in respect of tv interference.

5

OPEN SESSION - QUESTIONS AND VIEWS FROM THE FLOOR

NOTED the following questions and comments from attendees.

1. Residents of Hillside Grove had concerns about the appearance from their rear gardens and the impact of the development on them, particularly on their privacy due to overlooking. From the new development there would be views directly into their kitchens and bedrooms. There would also be loss of daylight and sunlight, and problems of artificial light at night. They urged councillors to make a site visit to 41/47 Hillside Grove see the impact for themselves.

Response: The Head of Development Management advised that a member site visit would be arranged as part of the process, and the contact would be Kevin Tohill (Strategic Development Manager).

2. A resident highlighted the reaction of many attendees to the computer generated images and the strong negative feelings. The blocks high on the hill would be very visible. There was not a good record in Enfield of respect for surroundings in previous planning decisions. There was 2 storey artisan housing and school buildings next to this site. The development would be visible from Grovelands Park despite the illustrations shown which included the full tree canopy.
3. An attendee, and patient of the local mental health trust, raised that the mental health of people in the area should be taken into account when assessing this planning proposal. It had caused anxiety and there was emotional impact over what would be a massive change that would alter the face of Southgate forever.
4. On behalf of Southgate District Civic Trust, it was raised that the Government's national design guide had been launched last year, but these proposals did not meet its requirements. This important application should be considered carefully: it would be the most significant change to Southgate since the extension of the Piccadilly Line. Good design basic principles had not been followed. This design was contentious and did not relate to the site and its wider context. It did not respect the area's history or culture and would have a negative impact on the locality in its scale, form and appearance. The opportunity for a well-designed building, sensitive to the site, had been ignored. This development could be anywhere in the UK: it did not relate specifically to this site. It would not be valued as tomorrow's heritage. There would be an environmental impact, and the loss of light had not been resolved. It had not been shown how the shadow was going to fall and the impact on those further down the hill, or

the winter sunlight. The local community had been excluded from the design process. The developers were purely interested in the creation of income from the development. The proposal should be refused for poor design. There would be benefits, but these would be limited and not for the local community. He questioned the £820k contribution and how much would be Community Infrastructure Levy and how much Section 106, commenting that CIL was likely to go to supporting Meridian Water and not to the local area.

Response: In respect of overshadowing, privacy and overlooking the distance requirement in policy was 21m and in parts of London was 18m. The applicants had undertaken a full light report: all the work had been done and there was a plan of overshadowing. Daylight and sunlight had been assessed under BRE guidance and national guidelines in relation to reductions and retained daylight values in properties. There were recommended retained values in urban settings and the calculations throughout the area indicated that all properties would be BRE compliant. In Hillside Grove in accordance with the national guidelines of 18%, the daylight reductions would be no more than 17% and would not be noticeable. There would be no additional impact.

The view from Grovelands Park had been verified, including in winter. The proposed height had been reduced by 4m and where the top could previously have been seen from the park it now would not. English Heritage had withdrawn its objection on the basis of that work.

It was accepted that opinions on design were subjective, but the GLA agreed this was a well-designed scheme, and it was about provision of homes that were needed. It would be a Council decision where any CIL money was used, but the developer would pay the contribution they were asked to make.

5. On behalf of Civic Voice, it was advised they had organised an independently facilitated community view workshop regarding the proposals as there was concern there had not been adequate consultation or discussion given the importance of the site. An independent survey had shown that 45% of local residents had not known about the proposed development beforehand. 100 people attended the workshop. Developers should engage with local communities, but it was felt this had not happened in this case. The overwhelming view was that this would be overdevelopment, and that any proposal should retain Southgate's village feel and be in proportionate scale, and sensitive to the listed station. A height of 6 to 8 storeys would be more acceptable. Grant of this application would set an unwelcome precedent in the area. The proposal had little architectural merit and would be seen from miles around. The traffic assessment was considered unrealistic: there would be exacerbation of existing traffic congestion problems. Local GP services and schools would not cope with the increased population. The workshop findings had been shared with Enfield Council, and had been included in their 2019 annual

review shared with 250 civic societies across England and with the Government Minister.

6. On behalf of Enfield's Conservation Advisory Group, there was concern this was a developer-led proposal, and that changes to the borough should be set rather by Enfield Council. The Council had not yet concluded its new Local Plan: that document would lead on to defining which areas of the borough were suitable for accommodation of more people and for high rise development. As an attendee at the Enfield design panel, he disputed the appraisal of the proposal was as comfortable as made to appear in the applicant's presentation.

Response: The developer did undertake public consultation, however it was acknowledged that the right image had not been used on the front of documents. It was not a statutory requirement for the applicants to be at this meeting, but they had come to answer the residents' questions. They had to take into account the views of a lot of people, including in respect of economics, politics, and statutory consultees. Any proposal in London had to achieve viability and to deliver affordable housing that was required. This was the right sort of area to develop housing: such sites with low parking and close to public transport had to be brought forward. The Underground station must have also looked incongruous in Southgate at the time of its construction. It was acknowledged the general consensus was that the development would be too tall, but it could not be made viable at a lower level and deliver the housing requirements of the London Plan.

The local traffic situation would not be exacerbated. The current 140 parking spaces would be reduced to 23, which would be a positive change. There would be a reduction in traffic movements from the site as a result.

7. An attendee raised that the aesthetics and colour of the development were a great concern to residents, and they would like to see a proper coloured model to be able to make an assessment. Previous development, such as The Grange in High Street were cited as unsuitably coloured.
8. Concerns were expressed that once planning permission was obtained, the site would be flipped to a developer for financial gain.
9. A parent asked for more consideration of the children at the local toddler group who could be affected by fumes and traffic from the development.
10. A commuter questioned the effect on the viability of the Underground station which was already under pressure and getting busier every year.

Response: The GLA toolkit indicated 417 people would be housed in the development, with 63 children. This would not have a noticeable effect on the Underground. Transport for London did not have objections to the scheme.

PLANNING PANEL - 23.1.2020

11. The evidence base for tall buildings was questioned. Other sites in High Street and Chase Road had been identified as inappropriate for higher development so why should this site be appropriate.
12. The description as 'affordable housing' was seen as deceptive as it would be out of the reach of many local people.
13. It was questioned whether other major developments in the area had been taken into account, including at Cat Hill, Cockfosters Station, and East Barnet gas site. All these would affect the traffic, schools, etc.

Response: The impact on local services had been discussed with the Local Authority. Certain schools were more popular than others, but the Council did not have a shortage of school places in the borough.

14. The 17 storey tower had been focused on, but the heights of the second and third buildings were also queried.

Response: The three buildings were 8, 13 and 17 storeys.

15. An attendee remarked that the Underground station had made the area, but this development would destroy it, and he would like to know what was the developers' profit.
16. It was questioned whether the borough did in fact have a shortfall in housing, as there was an understanding it had a 5 year land supply. It was also questioned why planners felt that Southgate needed a new landmark.

Response: The Head of Development Management confirmed that the Council was required to demonstrate a 5 year land supply, but it was still not meeting targets, and that this was a live issue. He clarified the control able to be exercised by planners and highlighted the policy frameworks and the need for balance, and the challenges faced, particularly the targets for delivery of more housing.

17. Though residents' parking was minimal, it was raised that there would still be deliveries by road to the commercial and residential parts, which should be taken into account by the Highways Team. Traffic queues were a regular problem on Chase Road, and gridlock was likely.
18. Further comments were received that the development would be too dominant and too high, and out of character for Southgate, and that a precedent would be set if permission was granted. Also that the proposal was ugly and would be widely visible from the surrounding area.

6 QUESTIONS BY WARD COUNCILLORS

NOTED the following statements and questions from Southgate Ward Councillors.

PLANNING PANEL - 23.1.2020

1. Councillor Derek Levy advised that he had been gathering representations made by constituents in respect of this application, and listening to their views. He emphasized that Southgate residents should benefit from any planning gain if planning permission was granted: as much CIL money as possible should be redeployed in Southgate ward.
2. Councillor Stephanos Ioannou advised that he had attended the public consultation but had considered it not a true representation of the proposal. The affordable housing issue was not a relevant argument to be made by the developers. The office village commercial estate was an asset to the area and offices were an important part of the locality. He understood the environmental targets and wish to reduce car parking spaces, but future residents could have cars and would park elsewhere. He understood there had been Fire Brigade objections originally. There were potential safeguarding issues around overlooking the school playground. The developers should show compassion for the character of Southgate.
3. Councillor Charith Gunawardena highlighted the median income of local households and that the deposits for this housing would be out of reach for most. There would be no homes available at social rents. There would be an influx of people from outside who would not contribute to the local economy. He questioned how many people locally would really benefit from this development.

Officer Responses:

It would be ensured that the proportion of affordable housing was met and that developer contributions went towards local needs. These issues would be covered within the officers' report to the Planning Committee.

Objections to the application were currently being collated and would be set out in the report. They were not visible on the online portal due to GDPR restrictions on data in the public domain.

Current rules allowed change from office to residential use under permitted development, by-passing Local Authority controls.

In respect of overlooking and safeguarding, there were many examples of schools in urban areas which were part of mixed development. There was no protected space as such, but the aim was to achieve a good balance.

Developer Responses:

There had been a full viability assessment, and the developer had to prove they were offering the maximum amount of affordable housing. A viable maximum had been offered at the beginning, and more affordable housing now being offered showed them at a loss.

PLANNING PANEL - 23.1.2020

There was a need for employment and there were also offices in this scheme. A scheme under permitted development to change the existing building to residential would result in a loss of all offices on site.

The viewpoint of the current office occupiers was being taken into consideration. A community was being built up to enable alternative office accommodation to be offered until they could move back into the new development if they wished to do so. If a permitted development scheme went ahead instead the alternative office offer would be lost.

The aim was to try to offer housing and jobs and to support the town centre. More details were available to read online.

7

CLOSE OF MEETING

NOTED the closing points, including:

1. The Chair thanked everyone for attending and contributing to the meeting. He hoped everyone had found it informative, and thanked residents for putting forward their views.
2. Notes taken at this meeting would be attached to the agenda when the application was presented to the Planning Committee for decision.
3. There was a deputation procedure whereby residents and involved parties could request to speak at the Planning Committee meeting. Ward councillors would also be entitled to speak on their behalf. For more details contact Democratic Services Team democracy@enfield.gov.uk or telephone 020 8132 1211.
4. Full details of the application were available to view and download from the Council's website (Application Ref. 19/01941/FUL)
https://planningandbuildingcontrol.enfield.gov.uk/online-applications/?_ga=2.11282544.598533514.1580123248-464521226.1539091048