

# Leyton Orient Football Club

in the London Borough of Waltham Forest

planning application no. 03/0107

**Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended); Greater London Authority Act 1999; Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000 – strategic planning application stage 1 referral**

**Demolition of north terrace and west stand. Erection of all-seater stands, with space for football related community and commercial uses. Erection of 4 (5&7 storey) residential towers to provide 139 one and two bedroom flats including 36 units of affordable housing. Erection of new 5 level all-seater east stand as subsequent phase of development. Provision of parking.**

## Context

1 On 18 February 2003 Waltham Forest Council consulted the Mayor of London on a proposal to develop the above site for the above uses. Under the provisions of the Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000 the Mayor has the same opportunity as other statutory consultees to comment on the proposal. This report sets out information for the Mayor's use in deciding what comments to make.

2 The application is referable under Category 1C of the Schedule of the Order 2000: *"Development which comprises or includes the erection of a building in respect of which one or more of the following conditions is met - ... (c) the building is more than 30 metres high and outside the City of London."*

3 If Waltham Forest Council subsequently decides that it is minded to grant planning permission, it must first allow the Mayor an opportunity to decide whether to direct the Council to refuse permission.

4 The Mayor of London's comments on this case will be made available on the GLA website [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk).

## Site description

5 The site is located in a predominantly residential area. The Brisbane Road football ground, home of Leyton Orient Football Club for more than 65 years, comprises a full size football pitch with three all-seater stands and a standing terrace. The standing terrace and west stand are both in a poor state of repair. The east stand, housing club administration and changing facilities is in better condition, although still earmarked for demolition at a later stage.

A new south stand has been erected that meets the requirements of a contemporary league football club with improved pitch views, spectator facilities and satisfactory exit/entry areas.

## Details of the proposal

6 It is proposed to demolish the existing northern terrace and west stand and replace these with new, all-seater stands with improved seating, spectators facilities and access areas. The ancillary football uses such as club administration, club shop and changing rooms will be relocated from the east to the new west stand. The new west stand will also include tenable office space and function areas, but not residential uses. It will be approximately 7-8 storeys high at its highest point. The new northern stand will be approximately four storeys in height and similar to the new southern stand opened in 1999. Access to the rear of this stand and bus parking will be provided to the rear of this stand.

7 Four residential towers are proposed to be located on each of the four corners of the ground. These will vary in height between five and seven storeys and will contain 139 flats, 36 of which will be affordable housing (28%). Undercroft car parking for each of the four towers will be located at road level.

## Case history

8 A new southern stand was approved and erected in 1998/99.

## Strategic planning issues and relevant policies and guidance

9 The relevant issues and corresponding policies are as follows:

- Mix of uses *draft London Plan, PPG1*
- Affordable housing *draft London Plan; Three Dragons Report; PPG3*
- Density *draft London Plan; PPG3*
- Urban design *draft London Plan: PPG1*
- Transport *draft London Plan; the Mayor's Transport Strategy; PPG13*
- Parking *draft London Plan; the Mayor's Transport Strategy; PPG13*
- Access/equal opportunities *draft London Plan*
- Sustainable development *draft London Plan: PPG3; PPG13*
- Tourism/Leisure *draft London Plan; PPG21*

## Development Plan

10. For the purposes of Section 54(A) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), the development plan is the adopted Waltham Forest Council UDP dated 1996.

## Mix of uses

11. The site has no specific use designation under the Waltham Forest UDP. However, Schedule 5 of the Waltham Forest UDP review (2002) identifies the site as a major opportunity site for the purpose of providing mixed-use development. This is supported by Policy HSG3 of the UDP (first review) which states "In accordance with strategic guidance the Council will ensure new housing schemes including mixed use schemes with an element of housing are well designed and make a significant contribution to promoting urban renaissance and quality of life".

12. PPG 1 requires councils to make effective use of land within urban areas by allocating the maximum amount of housing to previously developed sites. It recognises the merits of mixed-use development, particularly that with an acceptable amount of affordable housing. It also encourages local authorities to promote and retain mixed uses in areas highly accessible by means of transport other than the private car, and in areas of major new development.

13. The draft London Plan supports mixed-use development as a means to achieving housing targets for boroughs. Policy 4B.3 requires the potential of individual sites to be maximised: *“The Mayor will and boroughs should ensure development proposals achieve the highest possible intensity of use compatible with local context, the design principles in Policy 4B.1 and with public transport capacity. Residential development should conform with the density ranges set out in Table 4B.1. The Mayor will refuse permission for strategic referrals that under-use the potential of sites.”*

14. As with most lower division football clubs, considerable financial pressure is being placed on Leyton Orient Football Club’s increasingly limited resources. To sustain the club and increase revenue over an extended period of time, a mix of uses is proposed on the football stadium site. The proposal presents a different approach to mixed-use development. As far as can be ascertained, the proposal to include residential towers adjacent to a league football ground is unique in this country. Notwithstanding this, the rationale behind this proposal appears to be sound in terms of planning policy and the day-to-day operations of the football club.

15. As with most football stadiums, the use of Brisbane Road is intermittent, being used only about twenty times a year for home games. Whilst this does not necessarily automatically justify the mixed use of the site given its sport/leisure focus, the addition of residential towers to the four corners of the site makes better use of the potential of this site, while providing housing, including affordable housing, and protecting the principle use of the site as an important sport/leisure facility for local residents. Indeed, the overall development, including new stands, provides additional community facilities in the form of an expanded community sports programme, potential occupation by the Walthamstow, Leyton and Leytonstone NHS Primary Care Trust and potential involvement with the University of East London Human Movement Faculty. This mix of uses introduces 24 hour occupation across the breadth of the site, instead of only on match days and the small administration team present during business hours.

16. The provision of a mixed use development on this site is a position supported by RPG3, RPG9 and PPG3. The practicalities of the site with good links to good public transport, as well as policy and discussion in the draft London Plan support the principle of mixed-use development. However, this should be assessed with regard to corresponding policies aimed at providing good urban design, provision of affordable housing and appropriate high quality townscape impact.

## **Affordable housing**

17. The draft London Plan states that an affordable housing element or financial contribution is appropriate in all proposals containing a housing element. This has been further elaborated upon in the Homes for a World City Report, and Affordable Housing in London (Three Dragons) report, demonstrating that 35% is a realistic target in boroughs such as Waltham Forest in order to meet strategic housing needs. The proposal is for 139 units, 28% of which are designated for affordable housing. Whilst this does not meet the 35% requirement outlined in the draft London Plan, it exceeds the Waltham Forest UDP (1996) requirement of 25%.

18. In justification of the shortfall, the club has provided information pertaining to other benefits emanating from this scheme. Whilst it is acknowledged that the primary impetus for the

development is the long-term survival of Leyton Orient Football Club as a business entity, the very fact that it is the local football club places it in a special category in the affections of the local residents. The relationship between the football club and local residents is, by all independent accounts, very good (for example: as mentioned below, the Mayor's London Access Forum recently examined the scheme with a generally positive response to the club's existing and proposed relationship with local access and disabled groups). Leyton Orient is recognised as a leader in recognising home grown talent through its Youth Development Scheme and currently provides free accommodation and support for the Leyton Orient Community Sports Programme, a registered sports charity. The new stands will provide an enlarged area for the administration and operation of this programme.

19. The Leyton Orient Sports Programme manages the Sports Club Orient (SCORE) Project This is one of the first attempts nationally to bring to life the Social Exclusion Unit's Policy Action Team 10 Report on how sport and the arts can contribute to crime reduction, health awareness, educational attainment and employability. In respect of this project, it is proposed to upgrade existing football, tennis and other sporting facilities, including the erection of an indoor sports/community centre opposite Leyton Orient Football ground, on Oliver Road.

20. As noted above, the social regeneration benefits flowing on from this development proposal are further supported by interest from the local NHS Primary Care Trust which currently negotiating tenancy in the west stand of the club, and the Stadium and Major Projects Team of the Metropolitan Police, which in general supports the proposals due to their regenerative benefits, including crime reduction.

21. In policy terms it is noted that the shortfall is 7% with respect to the draft London Plan, and 13% with respect to the Waltham Forest UDP first review 2002. It does however exceed the Waltham Forest requirement of 25% in the adopted UDP (1996) and Circular 6/98. The community benefits of this scheme are such that the shortfall in affordable housing may be considered acceptable.

## **Design**

22. In urban design terms it is a good use of the site capacity. The residential apartments are will add to the vitality of the area out of match days. The new community will also support and benefit from the other proposed uses.

23. The apartments and new stands will improve the surrounding environment, the scale and massing is no more imposing than if the redevelopment was a single use stadium.

24. The integration of the affordable with private sale housing would be more desirable in urban design and planning terms.

## **Public Transport/ Strategic Road Network Issues**

25. The application has been considered by Transport *for* London (TfL) which makes the following observations.

26. The site is well served by public transport and scores a PTAL rating of 4. Leyton underground station is a 10 minute walk and Leyton Midland Road mainline station is approximately 15 minutes away on foot. Leyton High Road, which runs close to the football ground, is served by numerous bus routes providing frequent connections to Walthamstow, Stratford, Chingford and Leyton town centres.

27. Additionally, a new sporting/community development to be constructed opposite the football ground will part-fund a new bus service along Oliver Road, running to Leyton underground station. Commencing in spring 2004, this service should run three times per hour, and thus will prove only marginally beneficial to football ground visitors.

28. The provision of 65 car-parking spaces for 139 homes is commended, a ratio of 0.47:1. However, the allocation of all of the spaces for the private homes, with none allotted for the on-site affordable housing, needs to be reviewed in order to achieve a proportion of car parking for the affordable units. Although car parking within football stadia ought to be assessed on an individual basis, the draft London Plan states that parking should be minimised and consideration given to implementing a controlled parking zone (CPZ) around the site. Following a recent rejection of a proposed CPZ around the site, LB Waltham Forest is currently undertaking a borough-wide analysis of parking.

29. Footpath widening between Oliver Road and the West Stand of the ground is welcomed. Given the large number of trips made to the site on match days, similar improvements to footpaths would also be welcome along routes to Leyton underground station and/or Leyton Midland Road station, yet none are currently proposed.

30. There is no description of cycle parking provision on-site. There should always be enough space for that demanded, but TfL would recommend provision for a minimum of one space per ten staff and one per twenty peak visitors for the commercial and community uses. For the new housing developments, a minimum of one cycle space per unit ought to be provided, as set out in the London Cycle Network design manual, thus a total of 139 spaces.

**Sustainable development**<sup>31</sup>. This is an accessible site, located with easy access by a range of public transport, and close to other uses. It should be used to minimise trip generation, and maximise access by groups without access to vehicles. To this end the proposal is a significant opportunity to provide a mixed-use sustainable development and therefore is in accordance with Government planning guidance in PPG1 and the Urban White Paper "Our Towns and Cities: the future – towards an Urban Renaissance". The proposal is also in accordance with the Mayor's draft London Plan, in this regard.

## **Access and equal opportunities**

32. In respect of the surrounding environmental conditions and infrastructure, this is an accessible out-of-town centre site that rightly accommodates affordable housing that addresses social exclusion and housing need. Discussion above addresses issues relating to affordable housing.

33. The draft London Plan includes a requirement for developers to consider the needs of disabled people in the design of any scheme. The Mayor's London Access Forum has been consulted with respect to this scheme and is generally supportive. It is recommended that local access groups be consulted with a view to providing suitable access and housing for disabled persons within the development.

## **Local planning authority's position**

34. Waltham Forest Council officers anticipate presenting a report to local members in late May.

## Legal considerations

35. Under the arrangements set out in article 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000 the Mayor has an opportunity to make representations to Waltham Forest Council at this stage. If the Council subsequently resolves to grant planning permission, it must allow the Mayor an opportunity to decide whether to direct it to refuse planning permission. There is no obligation at this present stage for the Mayor to indicate his intentions regarding a possible direction, and no such decision should be inferred from the Mayor's comments unless specifically stated.

## Financial considerations

36. There are no financial considerations at this stage.

## Conclusion

37. The proposal presents a unique approach to maximising the potential of what can be considered an under-utilised football stadium, whilst retaining the primary focus on the ongoing operations of Leyton Orient Football Club. The proposal broadly complies with the requirements of the draft London Plan with the only point of issue being a shortfall in affordable housing. However, this shortfall may be acceptable given the ensuing community benefits flowing from the redevelopment of this stadium. On balance, the proposal is in the interests of good strategic planning in London.

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