Land to the South of Ringers Road, Bromley
in the London Borough of Bromley

planning application no. DC/12/03088/FULL1

Strategic planning application stage 1 referral (new powers)

The proposal
Erection of an 11-storey and 9 storey building comprising 148 flats (48 one-beds and 100 two-beds), 460 sq.m. commercial unit (Class A3/A4), 77 car parking spaces, cycle parking, refuse and recycling stores, ancillary works including plant and equipment on ground floor and roof, together with vehicular access to Ravensbourne Road and Ringers Road and associated landscaping.

The applicant
The applicant is Crest Nicholson and the architect is HGP Architects.

Strategic issues
The principle of redeveloping this vacant site for residential-led mixed-use development is acceptable in strategic policy terms. The main concerns are the proposed design and the approach to inclusive design and climate change.

Recommendation
That Bromley Council be advised that the application does not comply with the London Plan, for the reasons set out in this report; but that the possible remedies set out in paragraph 71 of this report could address these deficiencies.

Context
1. On 7 November 2012 the Mayor of London received documents from Bromley Council notifying him of a planning application of potential strategic importance to develop the above site for the above uses. Under the provisions of The Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor has until to provide the Council with a statement setting out whether he considers that the application complies with the London Plan, and his reasons for taking that view. The Mayor may also provide other comments. This report sets out information for the Mayor’s use in deciding what decision to make.

2. The application is referable under Category 1C of the Schedule to the Order 2008:
1C: “Development which comprises or includes the erection of a building of (c) more than 30 metres high and is outside the City of London.”

3 Once Bromley Council has resolved to determine the application, it is required to refer it back to the Mayor for his decision as to whether to direct refusal; take it over for his own determination; or allow the Council to determine it itself.

4 The Mayor of London’s statement on this case will be made available on the GLA website www.london.gov.uk.

Site description

5 The 0.45 hectare site is located in Bromley Town Centre, to the west of the town centre in an area recognised by the Bromley Town Centre AAP as an opportunity site.

6 The site has a significant frontage onto Ringers Road, which has a steep gradient, sloping away from the High Street to the west and down to low-rise residential development to the east. The site is bound by retail/commercial development to the east, which front onto Bromley High Street; and Ringers Road to the north, which has retail and residential on the opposite side on the road. On the western boundary of the site is a NHS renal dialysis unit. A Quaker church and a row of semi-detached houses are also located to the west of the site. The site includes an access road with and entrance on Ravensbourne Road, to the south of the site.

7 The site has been cleared and is currently empty. It was however, previously occupied by a department store.

8 The site is situated around 600 metres from the A21 Kentish Way which forms part of the TfL road network. The site is very well positioned for public transport, being within 300 metres of Bromley South national rail station and around 800 metres from Bromley North national rail station, both of which provide train services between Central London and Kent. There are also 18 bus routes situated within walking of the distance of the site, with the closest stops being located around 100 metres from the proposed development, on the High Street. As such, the site records a public transport accessibility level (PTAL) of 6a on a scale of 1-6 where 6 is classed as excellent.

Details of the proposal

9 The applicant is seeking full planning permission for the erection of an 11 storey and nine-storey building comprising 148 flats (48 one-beds and 100 two-beds), and a 460 sq.m. commercial unit (Class A3/ A4).

10 The applicant is also proposing 77 car parking spaces and cycle parking in the basement of the building and landscaped areas around the site, together with vehicular access to Ravensbourne Road and Ringers Road and pedestrian access through the site.

Case history

11 In February 2005 the previous Mayor considered an application (PDU/ 1159/ 01) for the demolition of a covered footbridge over Ringers Road and redevelopment of the site comprising one seven-storey and two nine-storey blocks containing a total of 204 studio, one, two and three bedroom residential units with 30 car parking spaces on the same site. The case was withdrawn and not referred back to the previous Mayor.
In 2006 the applicant submitted an application (06/01528) for the redevelopment comprising a ten-storey and an eight-storey blocks containing a total of 163 one, two and three bedroom residential units with 80 car parking space, which was approved by Bromley Council in January 2007. Later in 2007 the applicant submitted a similar application (07/03632) for 160 units and 83 car parking spaces, which was also approved by Bromley Council. Neither application was referred to the Mayor. Permission 07/03632 remains extant.

Strategic planning issues and relevant policies and guidance

The relevant issues and corresponding policies are as follows:

- **Mix of uses**
  - London Plan
- **Housing**
  - London Plan; Housing SPG; Housing Strategy; draft Revised Housing Strategy; Providing for Children and Young People’s Play and Informal Recreation SPG; draft Providing for Children and Young People’s Play and Informal Recreation SPG;
- **Affordable housing**
  - London Plan; Housing SPG; draft Affordable Housing SPG; Housing Strategy; draft Revised Housing Strategy
- **Density**
  - London Plan; Housing SPG; Interim Housing SPG; draft Housing SPG
- **Tall buildings/ views**
  - London Plan, Revised View Management Framework SPG
- **Urban design**
  - London Plan;
- **Inclusive design**
  - London Plan; Accessible London: achieving an inclusive environment SPG; Planning and Access for Disabled People: a good practice guide (ODPM)
- **Transport**
  - London Plan; the Mayor’s Transport Strategy;
- **Climate change**
  - London Plan; Sustainable Design and Construction SPG; Mayor’s Climate Change Adaptation Strategy; Mayor’s Climate Change Mitigation and Energy Strategy; Mayor’s Water Strategy

For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the development plan in force for the area is the 2006 Bromley Unitary Development Plan and the 2011 London Plan.

The National Planning Policy Framework and Technical Guide to the National Planning Policy Framework, the Bromley Core Strategy (Issues stage), the Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) and the draft Revised Early Minor Alteration to the London Plan are also relevant material considerations.

Principle of development and the Bromley Town Centre APP

As discussed above, there is an extant permission (07/03632) for a ten-storey block and the eight-storey block comprising 160 units and 83 car parking spaces, which was approved by Bromley Council in 2007.

Since the extant permission was granted, Bromley Council has adopted the Bromley Town Centre AAP. The AAP identifies the site as part of a larger opportunity site (site G) which is located to the west of Bromley High Street. The AAP Policy OSG aspires to deliver 20,000 sq.m. of additional retail floorspace, 5,000 sq.m. of A3 floorspace, up to 2,000 sq.m. of community and health facilities, and around 1180 new residential units in this area. It also states that detailed
development should accord with a master plan which has been prepared and adopted by the Council.

18 The Council has produced an indicative plan which sets out that higher density development is expected on the High Street with medium density behind, scaling down to integrate with the existing low density housing. One of the main principles of the master plan is the creation of a secondary street running parallel with the High Street, which would form a spine linking the different phases of development in the opportunity area and also deliver new pedestrian connections. The Council wishes to encourage a new department store and comprehensive mixed use retail-led development, which include social infrastructure. It recognises that development of the site is likely to be phased but states that each phase should integrate well with not only each other but with the town as a whole in terms of design, character and materials used.

19 In response to the AAP, the applicant states that it has introduced a commercial unit to increase activity on Ringers Road and incorporated a pedestrian route through the site to accommodate the secondary street envisaged as part of AAP masterplan.

20 Given the strategic need for additional housing in London and, in light of the extant permission and the changes made to the scheme, the principle of the development is acceptable in strategic policy terms.

Affordable housing

21 Bromley Council has set an overall borough affordable housing target of 35% in its UDP with a 70:30 split between social and intermediate housing. The London Plan seeks a 60:30 split between affordable rent and intermediate accommodation.

22 The applicant is proposing 40 affordable units (29% by habitable room), which would be 100% intermediate (shared ownership). The extant permission provided 53 affordable units (35% by habitable room) but the applicant states this provision is not viable in the current market and given the highly accessible town centre, the site is ideally located for young professionals requiring intermediate housing.

23 The affordable housing mix does not accord with the London Plan Policy and whilst it is understood that the site is a good location for intermediate housing, in line with London Plan Policy 3.9, the applicant should seek to provide some affordable rent units on site to encourage a more mixed and balanced community and to help address the need for social housing in London.

24 To ensure the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing is being delivered, the applicant should submit a financial appraisal of the scheme which the Council should have independently assessed and share the assessment with GLA officers. Further discussion between the applicant, the Council and GLA officers will be required at this stage regarding the housing offer.

Housing Mix

25 The unit mix put forward by the applicant is 48 one-beds and 100 two-beds. The applicant put forward a justification for this approach stating that there is significant demand for smaller units in this central location and an abundance of family housing in the area.
26 Officers accept that this highly accessible town centre location is appropriate for a significant proportion of smaller units but the applicant should seek to provide some family-sized affordable housing, in line with Policy 3.8.

Density

27 London Plan Policy 3.4 ‘Optimising housing potential’ seeks to optimise housing density, having regard to local context, design principles and public transport accessibility. The density matrix (table 3.2 of the London Plan) indicates that the appropriate density for a centrally located site with a PTAL of between 4 and 6 should be between 650 and 1100 hr/ per hectare or between 140 and 405 units per hectare.

28 The applicant has calculated the density of the proposed scheme to be 884 habitable rooms per hectare. The density is therefore within the density range set out in the London Plan and, provided that the residential quality is of a highest standard, is acceptable.

Children’s playspace

29 Using the methodology within the Mayor's supplementary planning guidance Shaping Neighbourhoods: Play and Informal Recreation SPG (2012) officers have calculated the anticipated child yield (based on the proposed housing mix) to be eleven children, of which seven are expected to be under five. In line with the SPG, the applicant should provide 110 sq.m. of children’s play space, which as a minimum, 70 sq.m. should be provided on site in the form of ‘doorstop’ play space.

30 The applicant has not provided any information on it’s play strategy and is required to address this. Through the use of innovative play equipment, lighting, water and sound, it is possible to exceed the minimum requirements for play through the dual use of the public realm, and this approach is encouraged. Further information is required to ensure the application complies with London Plan Policy.

Tall buildings/ urban design

31 The applicant is proposing an eleven-storey block and a ten-storey block. Both elements are therefore one-storey higher than what was proposed as part of the extant permission.

32 A highly accessible town centre location is, in principle, an appropriate location for more dense and, in some instances taller development. The proposal is taller than the overall height of existing buildings in the area and will have a potentially significant visual impact on the wider area, including Bromley High Street. The AAP recognises that there is a potential for taller buildings in the opportunity area, subject to environmental and design considerations.

33 For a tall building in this location to be considered acceptable, the proposal should be of outstanding design quality in its architecture, layout and residential quality. However, the proposal is uninspiring and unimaginative and fails to enhance the town centre built form. Given the prominent location of the building, its visibility from Bromley High Street and the fact that it is within an area which is envisaged for comprehensive redevelopment, the applicant should revise the architecture to create a more distinctive and attractive building, with high quality materials and detailing.

34 In response to the AAP the architects have illustrated how the proposal might fit in with this through creating a new route through the site and a new public space and this is welcomed. However, the configuration of built form and public space will make it challenging to provide good
quality frontage on to both Ringers Road and the proposed space as the ground floor of the
building face both sides, making it hard to accommodate plant rooms, refuse storage and other
back of house uses without impacting on the quality of the public realm.

35 There is also concern with the residential aspects of the development with a number of
north facing single aspect units being proposed and ground floor units facing the public realm not
having their own front entrances, both key aspirations set out in the London Housing Design
Guide. There is also concern that whilst the scheme provides a good number of vertical circulation
cores, these areas are all connected, creating long corridors. The London Housing Design Guide
advises no more that eight units should share the same communal space, to ensure that
households have a strong sense of ownership over the space and reduces potential security issues.
To address this, the applicant should relocate the internal core within the western block so that it
is accessible from Ringers Road. This will increase activity on the street and reduce the number
single aspect north facing units.

36 The applicant has stated that all the units comply with the London Plan space standards. A
schedule of accommodation setting out the floorspace of each apartment to demonstrate this
would be welcomed.

Inclusive design

37 There are significant concerns in terms of inclusive design and the layout and design of this
site. Whilst it is recognised that Ringers Road has a significant gradient, none of the entrance
points provide level access into either the site or buildings as is normally expected.

38 Level access is always preferable to ramped and stepped access, and wherever possible
reliance on stepped and ramped solutions should be avoided. The concern being that ramps and
steps do not represent the most convenient arrangements as required by Policy 7.1 and it creates
separate routes for those who require level access and those who do not.

39 To satisfy London Plan Policy, and inclusive design principles, the applicant should
minimise the number of steps and ramps incorporated into this scheme. Where possible level
access should be created in through entrances, and entrance points to the site. This may involve
varying floor levels or moving entrance points to allow level access from the sloping Ringers Road.

40 The main entrance point from Ringers Road is a major concern. Tapering steps should be
avoided. The intermediate landing to the steps is ramped, and step landings should be flat and
level. The landing area outside the external lift at lower level is sloped and should be level. A
significant flight of steps then has to be overcome. People who require level access then have to
use an external platform lift, then encounter a ramp (it is not understood why this ramp is
necessary when a lift overcomes the main change in level) to get to the upper podium level.

41 The use of external platform lifts is not considered an inclusive design approach in a new
development. Inclusive access should be incorporated into the scheme from the outset rather than
addressed later. Relying on a platform lift to provide level access up to the public podium deck is a
concern as platform lifts can be unreliable, meaning the podium deck would not be accessible for
many users, plus using a lift segregates people out immediately, as soon as they have entered the
site.

42 The ‘public podium deck’ does not appear to be particularly welcoming to the public given
the significant level change, steps and lift up to it. To make the development more inclusive the
applicants should explore the option of lowering the podium, therefore minimising any level
change which needs to be overcome, and hopefully removing the need for an external lifting device

43 All external steps and ramps which are not avoidable should be designed in accordance with the latest design guidance i.e. British Standard BS8300:2009 + A1:2010.

44 The number of disabled persons parking bays appears to be acceptable, however the hatched transference zone should be located to the rear of the bays not to the front- some of the markings therefore need altering.

45 The application does not comply with London Plan policy 7.1. The applicant should re-visit the external arrangements and levels around this site and take a more inclusive approach. Building and site entrances should provide level access from street levels (this may involve altering floor levels) and ramps and steps should be correctly designed and kept to an absolute minimum.

Climate Change

Energy efficiency standards

46 A range of passive design features and demand reduction measures are proposed to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions of the proposed development. Both air permeability and heat loss parameters will be improved beyond the minimum backstop values required by building regulations. Other features include mechanical ventilation and low energy lighting. The applicant should state how the demand for cooling will be minimised.

47 The development is estimated to achieve a reduction of 26 tonnes per annum (14%) in regulated carbon dioxide emissions compared to a 2010 Building Regulations compliant development, as shown in the table below.

District heating

48 The applicant has carried out an investigation and there are no existing or planned district heating networks within the vicinity of the proposed development. However, the proposed development is within the Bromley Town Centre cluster area for a district heating network (this is described in The Heat Mapping Study – London Borough of Bromley report dated 29 March 2012).

49 Therefore, a communal site heat network that can be connected to a future wider district-heating network should be proposed for the development. The applicant is not proposing to install a site heat network and is proposing the use of individual boilers in each dwelling to provide heating and hot water. This is not compliant with London Plan Policy 5.6.

50 The applicant should reconsider the approach particularly with reference to the estimated heat losses from pipework and overheating of common areas and confirm that all apartments and non-domestic building uses will be connected to a site heat network. A drawing showing the route of the heat network linking all buildings on the site should be provided.

51 The site heat network should be supplied from a single energy centre. Further information on the floor area and location of the energy centre should be provided.

52 The applicant should provide a commitment to ensuring that the development is designed to allow future connection to a district heating network should one become available.
**Combined Heat and Power**

53 The applicant has investigated the feasibility of CHP. However, due to the nature of the heat load, CHP is not proposed. This is accepted in this instance.

**Renewable energy technologies**

54 The applicant has investigated the feasibility of a range of renewable energy technologies and is proposing to install 48 kWp of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roofs of the development. A drawing showing the proposed installation(s) should be provided.

55 A reduction in regulated carbon dioxide emissions of 21 tonnes per annum (13%) will be achieved through this third element of the energy hierarchy (see table below).

**Summary**

56 Based on the energy assessment submitted at Stage I, the table below shows the residual carbon dioxide emissions after each stage of the energy hierarchy and the carbon dioxide emission reductions at each stage of the energy hierarchy.

Table: carbon dioxide emission reductions from application of the energy hierarchy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total residual regulated CO\textsubscript{2} emissions (tonnes per annum)</th>
<th>Regulated CO\textsubscript{2} emissions reductions (tonnes per annum)</th>
<th>(per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline i.e. 2010 Building Regulations</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Efficiency</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHP</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewable energy</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57 A reduction of 47 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year in regulated emissions compared to a 2010 Building Regulations compliant development is expected, equivalent to an overall saving of 25%.

58 Whilst the carbon dioxide savings meet the targets set within Policy 5.2 of the London Plan, the applicant is required to install a site heat network with a single energy centre designed to allow future connection to a district heating network. A drawing showing the proposed photovoltaic panels should be provided.

**Transport**

59 Due to the varied and comprehensive public transport provision, the development is unlikely to impact significantly on public transport capacity.

60 Car parking for the residential element equates to 0.52 spaces per unit (77 spaces). Whilst the applicant is encouraged to reduce the provision further, given the highly accessible nature of the site, it is acknowledged that the proposed level of parking is within the maximum London Plan
standards and therefore acceptable in policy terms. The level of car trip generation predicted is unlikely to impact unacceptably on the TfL road network.

61 The level of cycle parking exceeds that required by the London Plan and the provision of 100% passive provision for electric vehicles charging infrastructure (with funding for conversion of 20% on demand, to be secured in the s106 agreement) is supported as a pragmatic approach to the provision of electric vehicle parking for flats.

62 The provision, implementation and monitoring of an agreed Travel Plan should be secured through the Section 106 agreement and/or condition of any planning approval.

63 The opposite side of Ringers Road is utilised for bus standing associated with seasonal park and ride and is due to be used for about two years as a replacement facility during the redevelopment of another town centre site. Subsequently there may be an operational requirement for continued use of the stand in addition to the Christmas period. The development should not compromise the use of this bus standing, either now or in the future. To this end, any planning permission should contain an informative that highlights the proximity of the bus standing of which potential property buyers and occupiers should be aware.

64 In conclusion, the proposal accords with London Plan transport policy.

**Community Infrastructure Levy**

65 The Mayor has introduced a London-wide Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to help implement the London Plan, particularly policies 6.5 and 8.3. The Mayoral CIL formally came into effect on 1 April 2012, and it will be paid on commencement of most new development in Greater London that was granted planning permission on or after that date. The Mayor’s CIL will contribute towards the funding of Crossrail.

66 The Mayor has arranged boroughs into three charging bands. The rate for Bromley is £35 per sq.m. The required CIL should be confirmed by the applicant and council once the components of the development or phase thereof have themselves been finalised. See the 2010 regulations: [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2010/9780111492390/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2010/9780111492390/contents) as amended by the 2011 regulations: [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/987/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/987/made)

67 London borough councils are also able to introduce CIL charges which are payable in addition to the Mayor’s CIL. Bromley Council has yet to adopt a scheme. See the council’s website for more details.

**Local planning authority’s position**

68 Bromley Council’s position is as yet unknown.

**Legal considerations**

69 Under the arrangements set out in Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor is required to provide the local planning authority with a statement setting out whether he considers that the application complies with the London Plan, and his reasons for taking that view. Unless notified otherwise by the Mayor, the Council must consult the Mayor again under Article 5 of the Order if it subsequently resolves to make a draft decision on the application, in order that the Mayor may decide whether to allow the draft decision to proceed unchanged, or direct the Council under Article 6 of the Order to refuse the application, or issue a direction under Article 7 of the Order that he is to act as the local planning authority for the
purpose of determining the application and any connected application. 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 statement and comments.

Financial considerations

70 There are no financial considerations at this stage.

Conclusion

71 London Plan policies on housing, design, inclusive design, climate change and transport are relevant to this application. The application does not comply with some of these policies and not with others for the following reasons:

- **Principle of development:** Given the strategic need for additional housing in London and, in light of the extant permission and the changes made to the scheme, the principle of the development is acceptable in strategic policy terms.

- **Housing:** The application does not accord with London Plan housing policy. The applicant should seek to provide some affordable rent units on site and some family-sized affordable housing. The applicant should submit a financial appraisal of the scheme which the Council should have independently assessed.

- **Density:** The density is within the density range set out in the London Plan and, provided that the residential quality is of a highest standard, is acceptable.

- **Children’s playspace:** Further information is required to ensure the application complies with London Plan Policy. In line with the SPG, the applicant should provide 110 sq.m. of children’s play space.

- **Design/Tall buildings:** Further changes are required to ensure the application complies with London Plan design policy. The applicant should revise the proposal to address the concerns raised regarding the architecture, the layout and public realm and the residential quality.

- **Inclusive design:** The application does not comply with London Plan policy 7.1. The applicant should re-visit the external arrangements and levels around this site, take a more inclusive approach. Building and site entrances should provide level access from street levels (this may involve altering floor levels) and ramps and steps should be correctly designed and kept to an absolute minimum.

- **Climate change:** Whilst the carbon dioxide savings meet the targets set within Policy 5.2 of the London Plan, the applicant is required to install a site heat network with a single energy centre designed to allow future connection to a district heating network to comply with London Plan Policy. A drawing showing the proposed photovoltaic panels should be provided.

- **Transport:** The proposal accords with London Plan transport policy.

72 Whilst the application is generally acceptable in strategic planning terms, on balance, the application does not comply with the London Plan. However, the resolution of the above matter could lead to the application becoming compliant with the London Plan.
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