Strategic planning application stage 1 referral


The proposal

Demolition of former youth club and nightclub buildings, removal of disused crane, and erection of two buildings from 4 to 11-storeys to provide 74 residential units; 197 sq.m. of restaurant/cafe floorspace; 23 parking spaces; 136 cycle spaces; creation of vehicle access from Odessa Street; construction of a new section of Thames Path; and associated landscaping.

The applicant

The applicant is Hollybrook and the architect is Panter Hudspith.

Strategic issues summary

Principle of development: The youth club facilities have been reprovided, and, on the basis that this site is now surplus to local social infrastructure requirements, the proposed high density residential-led redevelopment of this underused Opportunity Area site is strongly supported (paragraph 14 to 15).

Housing: The proposed high quality, high density, housing provision is broadly supported. However, the 32% provision of affordable housing requires rigorous independent review (paragraphs 16 to 24).

Urban design: The architectural approach for this prominent riverside building is supported (paragraphs 25 to 28).

Sustainable development: Whilst the approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation is broadly supported, clarifications are sought on the energy strategy (paragraphs 30 to 31)

Transport: Whilst the scheme is generally acceptable in strategic transport terms, a number of clarifications and commitments are sought in line with the London Plan (paragraphs 32 to 39).

Recommendation

That Southwark Council be advised that whilst the scheme is broadly supported in strategic planning terms, the application does not fully comply with the London Plan for the reasons set out in paragraph 44 of this report. The resolution of those issues could, nevertheless, lead to the application becoming compliant with the London Plan.
Context

1. On 14 July 2016 the Mayor of London received notice from Southwark Council of a planning application of potential strategic importance to develop the above site for the above uses. The associated planning application documents were received from the applicant’s planning agent on 27 July 2016. Under the provisions of The Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor has until 7 September 2016 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 1.(a) of the Schedule to the Order 2008: “Development which comprises or includes the erection of a building… more than 25 metres high and is adjacent to the River Thames”.

3. Once Southwark 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 former Odessa Street Youth Club site occupies an area known as Commercial Pier Wharf, located on the eastern side of the Rotherhithe Peninsula. This part of the Peninsula is urban in character, and sits in the wider context of Canada Water – which the London Plan identifies as an Opportunity Area with significant potential for regeneration and intensification focused on the transport interchanges and district shopping centre. Southwark Council has adopted the Canada Water Area Action Plan (CWAAP) to help shape this growth, and that plan identifies this site as within the wider fringes of the Opportunity Area. Furthermore, since the CWAAP was adopted, the area became designated as a Mayoral Housing Zone in March 2016.

6. This site itself is 0.3 hectares in area, and is bounded by Odessa Street to the west and Commercial Pier Wharf to the north; the River Thames and Thames Path to the east; and a residential block (Custom Reach House) to the south. The eastern boundary (the Thames River) is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

7. Part of the site was occupied by the Odessa Street Youth Club, which was located within a single storey building facing on to Odessa Street. The former club facilities included a basketball court to the rear (which is now disused, and has suffered from graffiti and fly tipping). With the support of Southwark Council the youth facilities at this site have been relocated to the nearby Docklands Settlement site on Salter Road, and the former facilities at this site are now redundant and unoccupied. East of the former youth club is an area of riverside public realm – which is dominated by a derelict twentieth century wharf crane. The river frontage at the south of the site is occupied by a disused nightclub building, and this building prevents the riverside continuation of the Thames Path at this part of the Peninsula. The site does not fall within a Conservation Area, and none of the existing buildings or structures at the plot are Listed Buildings.

8. In terms of transport connectivity, Lower Road (part of the Strategic Road Network) is about 500 metres away, whilst the nearest part of the Transport for London Road Network is the A200 Rotherhithe Road (approximately 1.5 kilometres away). Bus routes 381 and C10 stop 350 metres from the site on Salter Road. Overall the site records a very low Public Transport Access.
Level (PTAL) of one(b), on a scale from one(a) to six(b) – where six(b) denotes the most assessable locations in the capital. However, it is noted that the PTAL methodology has not taken into account Surrey Quays London Overground station or Canada Water Underground and Overground station (because these lie just outside a 1 kilometre radius from the site). Thames Clipper river services (accessible from Greenland Pier, 600 metres away) are also excluded from the PTAL assessment due to premium fares. Nevertheless, the presence of these other prominent public transport services leads to a perception of public transport access that is likely to be considerably higher than the PTAL score.

Details of the proposal

9 Full planning permission is being sought for two residential buildings which together are proposed to provide 74 homes (55 market units and 19 affordable homes – equivalent to 32% affordable by habitable room). The scheme also includes improved public realm – including a riverside cafe and Thames Path improvements.

Case history

10 There is no strategic case history at this site.

Strategic planning issues and relevant policies and guidance

11 The relevant strategic issues and corresponding policies are as follows:

- Opportunity Area London Plan;
- Social infrastructure London Plan;
- Housing London Plan; Housing SPG; Housing Strategy; Shaping Neighbourhoods: Play and Informal Recreation SPG; Shaping Neighbourhoods: Character and Context SPG;
- Affordable housing London Plan; Housing SPG; draft Interim Housing SPG; Housing Strategy;
- Density London Plan; Housing SPG;
- Urban design London Plan; Shaping Neighbourhoods: Character and Context SPG; Housing SPG; Shaping Neighbourhoods: Play and Informal Recreation SPG;
- Inclusive access London Plan; Accessible London: achieving an inclusive environment SPG;
- Sustainable development 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; Mayor’s Ambient Noise Strategy;
- Transport and parking London Plan; the Mayor’s Transport Strategy;
- Crossrail London Plan; and, Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy.

12 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 2011 Southwark Core Strategy and Policies Map; the 2015 Canada Water Area Action Plan; the saved policies of the 2007 Southwark Plan; and, the 2016 London Plan (Consolidated with Alterations since 2011).

13 The following are also relevant material considerations: National Planning Policy Framework, Technical Guide to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance; and New Southwark Plan (2015 Preferred Options draft).
**Principle of development**

14 London Plan Policy 2.13 identifies the Canada Water Opportunity Area as having indicative capacity for 3,300 new homes, and 2,000 jobs. This area has also been designated as a Mayoral Housing Zone. The CWAAP is the local policy vehicle for shaping this growth, and allocates this site for residential development, subject to the appropriate replacement youth facilities.

15 London Plan Policy 3.16 seeks to protect and enhance social infrastructure, and resists the loss of such in areas of defined need. In this case it is noted that the youth club which formally existed at this site has already been relocated to the Rotherhithe Centre at 400 Salter Road. Operated by Dockland Settlements, this centre offers an improved building specification with a greater range of sporting and other youth facilities, and has ensured that there would be no net loss of social infrastructure. This is supported, and on the basis that Southwark Council is satisfied that this site is now surplus to the requirement for additional social infrastructure for this area, the proposed high density residential-led redevelopment of this underused Opportunity Area site is strongly supported in strategic planning terms.

**Housing**

16 This site forms part of the Canada Water Housing Zone, which is an area prioritised for accelerated housing delivery with GLA funding support. The applicant proposes to provide 74 new homes at this site – which represents an uplift of 49 units over the allocation within the CWAAP. Having regard to the assessment of the other strategic issues in this case (including matters of residential density, urban design and transport) the exceedance of the Local Plan housing target for this site is strongly supported in accordance with London Plan Policy 3.3 (increasing housing supply).

17 An affordable housing offer has been made as set out below. The applicant has not established a partnership with a Registered Provider, but is undertaking discussions with Southwark Council – who, it is understood, is interested in acquiring the affordable rent units. This scheme is not currently earmarked for Mayor’s affordable housing funding, although it is potentially eligible. Table 1 below sets out the proposed residential schedule.

<table>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Four-bedroom</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1**: Proposed residential schedule.

**Affordable housing**

18 London Plan Policy 3.12 seeks to secure the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing when negotiating on mixed use schemes, whilst the Southwark Core Strategy establishes a borough-wide affordable housing target of 35% (minimum).

19 In this case the applicant is proposing an affordable housing provision of 32% (on a habitable room basis). The affordable provision is proposed to comprise entirely affordable rent
tenure. Whilst the applicant was originally developing a conventional split tenure offer, Southwark Council encouraged it to adopt a single tenure approach in response to local need and priorities.

20 In line with the principles of London Plan Policy 3.12, the scheme is currently undergoing an independent viability review on behalf of Southwark Council. That review is ongoing at the time of writing this report, however, it is understood that the provision of the 32% affordable housing offer (predicated on 100% affordable rent tenure) has a greater viability impact than providing a policy compliant (minimum) 35% offer at a conventional affordable rent/intermediate tenure split. Further to this, it noted that the applicant’s own viability assessment indicates that the scheme is in a modest deficit. Notwithstanding this, all key appraisal inputs will be robustly scrutinised as part of the independent review, including: benchmark land value; developer profit margin (relative to scheme risk); build costs; and, sales values. GLA officers will update the Mayor of the conclusions of the viability review (and of subsequent affordable housing discussions/negotiations) at the decision making stage.

Residential mix, standards, play space and density

21 Table 1 above demonstrates that the scheme would provide a good range of unit types from one to four-bedroom dwellings. This is supported in line with London Plan Policy 3.8 (housing choice). In particular, it is noted that the affordable rented component of the housing mix would achieve a 47% provision of family sized units. This is strongly supported in line with London Plan Policy 3.11 (which emphasises the strategic priority for family sized affordable housing).

22 All dwellings will meet or exceed the minimum space standards established by London Plan Policy 3.5 (Table 3.3) and 10% of dwellings would be wheelchair accessible/adaptable. This is supported, and the Council will use planning conditions to secure Building Regulations standards M4(2) and M4(3) as per London Plan Policy 3.8.

23 With respect to children’s play space, the scheme provides 263 sq.m. of playable space within the development, with a dedicated 90 sq.m. communal garden. In addition, the proposed dwelling typologies would benefit from either: private gardens; roof terraces; or generous balconies. Collectively this ensures that the provision of on-site play space for children under five years old would exceed that required by the Mayor’s Play and Informal Recreation SPG. Notwithstanding this, the overall provision of on-site children’s plays space would fall short by 96 sq.m. It is, nevertheless, noted that open space in the area (including Russia Dock Woodland, 600 metres to the northwest) has significant potential to support the recreation requirements of older children within the development. Accordingly, the proposed shortfall does not raise an objection. The Council should, nevertheless, consider whether an additional open space contribution is appropriate in this instance.

24 Given the characteristics of the site (refer to paragraphs 5 to 8), a high quality, high density mixed use development is appropriate in this location. As a starting point, in view of the low PTAL, the London Plan density matrix (Table 3.2 in support of Policy 3.4) would suggest a residential density of between 150 to 250 habitable rooms per hectare. Further to this, the CWAAP suggests a density of 200 to 350 habitable rooms per hectare. The proposal is 857 habitable rooms per hectare. Whilst this significantly exceeds the range identified by the London Plan and CWAAP, having had regard to the characteristics of this Opportunity Area site and it’s setting (discussed above); the proposed residential quality; and, the design response to context (refer below) the proposed density is acceptable.
Urban design

25 The scheme comprises two residential blocks (Block A and Block B). Block A (4 to 6-storeys) accommodates the affordable housing, and fronts Odessa Street. This block provides maisonettes on the lower and upper floor levels, with standard flats at the levels in-between. Block B (5 to 11-storeys) faces on to the riverfront, and provides restaurant/cafe space at the ground floor, with residential flats above.

26 Block B would provide a strong and active frontage to the riverside, and the stepped arrangement of the massing of both blocks works well to respond to the low to mid-rise character of Odessa Street (to the west) and Wyatt Close (to the north). This is supported in line with London Plan Policy 7.4. This stepped design, in conjunction with the angled orientation of dwellings, also works successfully to: avoid north facing units; maximise dual aspect units; generate terraces for private amenity space; and maximise river views. Having regard to this, and the proposed dwelling sizes and unit to core ratios, it is clear that the scheme would achieve a very high standard of residential quality in accordance with London Plan Policy 3.5.

27 The submitted drawings and local views assessment demonstrate that the proposed massing and facade treatment of the scheme would help to create a robust and subtly distinctive building. The use of brick as the primary facing material is supported and the architectural response accords with London Plan Policy 7.6.

28 In terms of public realm, the ground floor cafe and landscaping strategy would significantly enhance this section of the riverside. Moreover, the removal of the former nightclub building (and opening up of space at the southeast of the plot) would allow for the long-awaited southern continuation of riverside Thames Path, past Odessa Wharf, and connecting with the existing route adjacent to Helsinki Square. This is strongly supported in line with London Plan Policy 7.27. The applicant also proposes to provide some locally produced public art to recall the presence of the derelict crane which currently occupies this part of the riverside. It is understood that, where feasible, the art would be manufactured from the metal of the existing crane. Noting that (whilst in a derelict state) the crane has become something of a local landmark, this proposal is welcomed as a means of supporting local distinctiveness in line with London Plan policies 3.7 and 7.4.

Inclusive access

29 The applicant has set out its approach to access and inclusion within the design and access statement. GLA officers support the commitment to ensure equal and convenient access to the dwellings and riverside cafe, and note that the layout of the ground floor and its relationship with the public realm ensures that this would be achieved. The building entrances are legible and uncluttered and the internal floorplans are spacious and well laid out. It is also noted that parking provision within the basement of the scheme would allow for a 1:1 provision of on-site Blue Badge spaces for accessible dwellings. This is supported and the application accords with London Plan Policy 7.2.

Sustainable development

Energy strategy

30 For the purposes of assessing applications against the carbon dioxide savings target within London Plan Policy 5.2, the Mayor applies a target 35% reduction beyond Part L 2013 of Building Regulations. In accordance with the principles of Policy 5.2 the applicant has submitted an energy statement, setting out how the development proposes to reduce carbon dioxide
emissions. In summary the proposed strategy comprises: energy efficiency measures (comprising a range of passive design features and demand reduction measures); a site-wide network driven by gas fired combined heat and power plant; and renewable technologies (photovoltaic panels). Based on the submitted assumptions the scheme would achieve a 37% reduction in carbon dioxide. This is strongly supported in principle, however, GLA officers are seeking a number of detailed clarifications – particularly with respect to avoiding overheating; site-wide networking; and savings through renewable technologies.

**Climate change mitigation**

31 The scheme includes various areas of soft landscaping and plating as part of private/semi-private amenity terraces and gardens and public realm proposals. This will jointly help to support urban greening and the sustainable drainage characteristics of the site. These measures, in conjunction with an attenuation tank, would ensure that the scheme would achieve a 50% reduction in surface water runoff. This is supported in line with London Plan policies 5.10 and 5.13 and the Council will secure the details of these climate change adaptation measures by way of planning condition.

**Transport**

**Site access**

32 Pedestrian access to the development would be provided off Odessa Street, and from the Thames Path. Cyclist and vehicular access to the car park on the lower ground floor would be via a ramp from Odessa Street. Cycle access could also be achieved via the Thames Path. This is supported.

**Car and cycle parking**

33 A provision of 23 car parking spaces and 136 long stay cycle spaces is proposed for the 74 dwellings. This level of provision complies with the London Plan. The provision of eight Blue Badge spaces is supported, as is the provision of 20% active and 20% passive electric vehicle charging points in line with London Plan Policy 6.13.

34 Six short stay cycle parking spaces are proposed for visitors to the riverside cafe. This is supported, however, TfL seeks clarification of cycling facilities for staff (which should include two dedicated parking spaces and lockers/showers/changing facilities). Once finalised, the proposed car and cycle parking (and related facilities) will be secured by way of planning condition.

**Trip generation and impact on public transport network**

35 Whilst the trip generation calculations are otherwise acceptable, the transport assessment does not provide details of the impact of the development on bus services (both from ‘main mode’ passengers and residents using buses to get to the nearest stations). The transport assessment should be updated accordingly to enable an assessment of whether Section 106 contributions towards bus service enhancements are necessary.

36 TfL has also recommended that the applicant undertakes a pedestrian audit of routes to local bus stops. Any improvements identified as necessary should be secured through the Section 106 agreement. Given the likely importance of cycling as a mode of transport, a similar assessment should be made of cycle routes serving the site.
Deliveries, servicing and construction

37 Servicing is proposed to be undertaken on-site within a dedicated loading bay. However the bay will only be able to accommodate vans up to two metres in height. Therefore, a delivery and servicing plan (to be secured by condition) should set out the intended on-street arrangements for larger vehicles, as well as management of the proposed loading bay.

38 A construction logistics plan (CLP) should also be secured by condition. In particular, this will need to ensure that construction traffic is managed appropriately without impacting on nearby residents, as well as minimising the transport impact of the construction phase. TfL guidance on CLPs is available at: https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/freight. Given the proximity of the Thames consideration should be given to use of the river during construction in line with London Plan Policy 6.14.

Travel planning

39 Given the site’s low PTAL it is important that the travel plan sets out targets to increase walking and cycling. The applicant should also consider measures to encourage the use of the Thames Clipper from the neighbouring Greenland Pier. The subsequent detailed travel plan, should be secured, funded and monitored through the Section 106 agreement.

Mayoral community infrastructure levy

40 In accordance with London Plan Policy 8.3 the Mayoral community infrastructure levy (CIL) came into effect on 1 April 2012. All new development that creates 100 sq.m. or more additional floorspace is liable to pay the Mayoral CIL. The levy is charged at £35 per square metre of additional floor space in the London Borough of Southwark. Further details are available at: www.london.gov.uk/publication/mayoral-community-infrastructure-levy.

Local planning authority’s position

41 Southwark Council supports the scheme in principle, and is expected to formally consider the application at a planning committee meeting at the end of September 2016.

Legal considerations

42 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

43 There are no financial considerations at this stage.
Conclusion

London Plan policies on Opportunity Area, housing, urban design, inclusive access, sustainable development and transport are relevant to this application. Whilst the scheme is broadly supported in strategic planning terms, and application does not yet fully comply with the London Plan, as set out below:

- **Principle of development**: The youth club facilities have been reprovided, and, on the basis that this site is now surplus to local social infrastructure requirements, the proposed high density residential-led redevelopment of this underused Opportunity Area site is strongly supported in accordance with London Plan policies 2.13, 3.3 and 3.16.

- **Housing**: The proposed high quality, high density housing provision is broadly supported in line with London Plan Policy 3.3. Nevertheless, the proposed provision of affordable housing (32% by habitable room) requires rigorous independent review in line with London Plan Policy 3.12.

- **Urban design**: The proposed design of this prominent riverside development is supported in line with London Plan policies 3.5, 3.7, 7.4, 7.6 and 7.27.

- **Inclusive access**: The proposed approach to access and inclusion is supported in accordance with London Plan Policy 7.2.

- **Sustainable development**: Following clarifications on the energy strategy the Council will secure the associated energy and climate change adaptation measures by way of planning condition in accordance with London Plan polices 5.2, 5.10 and 5.13.

- **Transport**: Whilst the scheme is generally acceptable in strategic transport terms, issues with respect to: access; cycle parking; trip generation and impact on public transport network; deliveries, servicing and construction; and travel planning should be addressed in line with London Plan policies 6.3, 6.9, 6.10, 6.13 and 6.14.

The resolution of the outstanding issues above could lead to the application becoming compliant with the London Plan.

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