

240 Seven Sisters Road, Finsbury Park

in the London Borough of Islington

planning application no. P2017/3429/FUL

Strategic planning application stage 1 referral

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended); Greater London Authority Acts 1999 and 2007; Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008.

The proposal

Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment of site to provide a 10-storey building to accommodate a 228-bedroom hotel with associated landscaping, cycle spaces and refuse/servicing arrangements. The application also details a ground floor restaurant and a basement level music venue.

The applicant

The applicant is **Tide Construction Ltd** and the architect is **TP Bennett**

Strategic issues summary

Principle of development: The proposed redevelopment of this town centre site for a hotel with commercial and cultural components is acceptable in strategic planning terms (paragraphs 15 to 16).

Mix of uses: The loss of A Class uses is acceptable and the proposed new mix of uses (including a music venue) is supported. However, the applicant must maintain an ongoing dialogue with existing occupiers in order to facilitate their timely and successful relocation. It must also be demonstrated that the proposed music venue would be suitably soundproofed in order to avoid the potential for future noise complaints (paragraphs 15 to 16).

Urban design: The proposed design is generally supported, however, further attention should be given to the proposed blank north-eastern elevation (paragraphs 17 to 18).

Sustainable development: The applicant must provide further details on the proposed energy strategy and sustainable drainage proposals to demonstrate London Plan compliance (paragraphs 24 to 26).

Transport: The applicant is required to address transport issues with respect to: cycle parking access, design and quantum, clarify drop-off/pick-up facilities, further consider the public realm, investigate off-carriageway servicing, re-assess the construction, delivery and servicing strategies and undertaker revisions the trip generation and associated revision of the travel plan (paragraphs 27 to 28).

Recommendation

That Islington Council be advised that while the scheme is generally acceptable in strategic planning terms it does not comply with the London Plan for the reasons set out in paragraph 34 of this report. The application does not need to be referred back to the Mayor if the Council resolves to refuse permission, but it must be referred back if the Council resolves to grant.

Context

1 On 6 October 2017 the Mayor of London received documents from Islington 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 must 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 the following Categories of the Schedule to the Order 2008:

- 3 E . (a) *“which does not accord with one or more provisions of the development plan in force in the area in which the application site is situated; and*
- 3 E . (b) *comprises or includes the provision of more than 2,500 square metres of floorspace for a use falling within any of the following classes in the Use Classes Order—” (ix) class C1 (hotels)*

3 In this case Islington Council considers the application to be a departure from the local plan due to the loss of the A1 floor space.

4 Once Islington 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 or allow the Council to determine it itself, unless otherwise advised. In this instance if the Council resolves to refuse permission it need not refer the application back to the Mayor.

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

Site description

6 The site is located within the Finsbury Park District Centre at the junction between Isledon Road and Seven Sisters Road, directly south of Finsbury Park. A Network Rail viaduct and lines abut the eastern boundary of the plot. The site is not located in a conservation area however there are a number of locally Listed and Locally Listed Buildings in the vicinity, including the former Rainbow Theatre (Grade II), which is situated approximately 80m southwest of the site.

7 The site previously accommodated a 3-storey locally listed Victorian music and nightclub venue. However, this building was demolished in 2015. Today the site is largely vacant, with the exception of 3 small commercial units to the north-western boundary of the site.

8 The context of this town centre site is mixed. Within the immediate vicinity of the site there is a combination of commercial, residential and leisure/cultural uses. To the southwest is a 7-storey student accommodation block. To the northeast are two small retail units which adjoin the site and the mainline railway viaduct wraps round the site to enclose the eastern boundary.

9 The site benefits from a PTAL rating of 6b with Finsbury Park Station approximately 60 metres northeast of the site which provides access to the Victoria Line, Piccadilly Line, the Overground and National Rail services. The site is also served by several bus routes along Seven Sisters Road.

Details of the proposal

10 Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment of the site to provide a 10-storey building to accommodate a 228-bedroom hotel with associated landscaping, cycle spaces, refuse/service arrangements. The application also proposes ground floor retail and a basement level music venue.

Case history

11 There is no strategic case history associated with this site.

Strategic planning issues and relevant policies and guidance

12 The relevant issues and corresponding policies are as follows:

- Town centre uses *London Plan; Town Centres SPG*
- Visitor Infrastructure *London Plan;*
- Urban design *London Plan; Shaping Neighbourhoods: Character and Context 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*
- Transport and Parking *London Plan; the Draft Mayor's Transport Strategy;*
- Crossrail *London Plan; Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy;*
- 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*

13 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 Islington Core Strategy, the 2013 Development Management Policies, the 2013 Site allocations, and the 2016 London Plan (Consolidated with Alterations since 2011).

14 The following are also relevant material considerations:

- The National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance.

Principle of development

15 London Plan Policy 4.5 seeks to support the visitor economy as well as the needs of businesses and leisure visitors to the capital. This policy highlights a strategic demand for new visitor bedrooms in London and identifies appropriate locations for the provision of hotels, noting that outside the Central Activities Zone hotel development should be focused in town centres and Opportunity Areas. Officers observe that whilst this site falls outside the Central Activities Zone it is located within a highly accessible town centre and thus its location is acceptable in strategic planning terms.

16 The proposed D2 unit at basement level which is proposed to be an independently operated music venue is supported in strategic planning terms. The music venue speaks positively to the history of the site and the borough of Islington more broadly as a cultural space. In this regard, the GLA would like to discuss potential operators of the unit with both Islington Council and the Applicant.

Mix of uses

17 The proposed development would include demolition of three commercial units fronting Seven Sisters Road. The units to be demolished are currently occupied by an A1 (small shop) and two A5 (hot food takeaway) uses. GLA officers are of the view that the proposed loss of these uses would not generate any strategic concern in terms of harm to the vitality of Finsbury Park town centre. However, the applicant is strongly encouraged to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the existing occupiers, in order to facilitate the timely and successful relocation of small businesses currently on the site.

18 It is noted that the application includes a proposed music venue in the basement of the hotel. This is strongly supported, however, the applicant and the Council should ensure that the venue would be suitably soundproofed in order to avoid the potential for future noise complaints. Further to this, GLA officers would welcome the opportunity to work with the applicant and the Council in order to explore a range of potential occupiers for this space. Officers note that the GLA's Culture Team have made contact with the Agent for the scheme to assist in sourcing an appropriate operator for the music venue.

Urban design

19 The proposed development would occupy a prominent site at the junction of Seven Sisters Road and Isledon Road, in close proximity to Finsbury Park Station. The building is proposed to comprise 10-storeys and would form a shortened 'T' in shape with a principal elevation fronting Seven Sisters Road. The main hotel entrance will be located on Seven Sisters Road at the junction with Isledon Road with the restaurant entrance also provided at this frontage. The generous ground floor glazing which would front Seven Sisters Road would provide an active and attractive frontage onto this street. The restaurant and hotel entrance would offer a significantly improved degree of activity to a site, which is presently largely enclosed by hoardings. With respect to the architectural approach, the applicant is advancing a scheme which proposes a simple treatment for the building with the use of traditional brick and stone for the central body of the structure with a light weight glass curtain wall to the upper two recessed storeys and glazing to the ground floor.

20 However, whilst the colour palette, materials and landscaping are broadly supported, officers note that the proposal presents a blank and featureless elevation when viewed from the Finsbury Park railway platform and further in linear views from northeast of Seven Sisters Road. It is accepted that the railway line and platform represent design constraints but officers consider that efforts should be taken to improve the appearance and activation of this elevation.

21 In terms of scale, officers note that various buildings of a similar height have recently been consented in the vicinity, and are satisfied that the proposed 10-storeys is acceptable in this context (within a town centre and adjacent to Finsbury Park Station).

22 It is noted that the Listed former Rainbow Theatre (Grade II), lies approximately 80m southwest of the site. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the statutory duties for dealing with heritage assets in planning decisions. In relation to Listed Buildings, the Act states that all planning decisions should *“have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”*. In this case, having regard to the submitted plans and visualisations, and the characteristics of the urban setting, officers are satisfied that the proposal would not cause harm to the setting of the former Rainbow Theatre (Grade II). The application therefore complies with London Plan Policy 7.8.

Inclusive design

23 The scheme is acceptable in terms of inclusive design with the design and access statement indicating that the scheme would meet the 10% provision of wheelchair accessible rooms required by London Plan Policy 4.5. The submitted plans demonstrate that the internal layouts and circulation spaces are sufficiently generous, and officers are satisfied that the application complies with London Plan Policy 7.2.

Sustainable development

24 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, a range of passive design features and demand reduction measures are proposed to reduce the carbon 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 low energy lighting and thermal bridging analysis. Officers note the detailed technical feedback has been forwarded to both Islington Council and application Agent.

25 Officers have made requests for further investigation and information with respect to: carbon emissions and BRUKL sheets for each stage of the energy hierarchy, the overheating analysis, cooling demand evidence, site-wide network confirmation with a single energy centre and CHP details. The applicant and LPA have been provided with detailed comments in this regard, to which the applicant must respond. The Council should ensure that the energy strategy proposals once updated are secured by way of planning condition/obligation as appropriate. The Applicant proposes the inclusion of green roofs totalling 390 square meters. There will be two areas of green roofing, within the roof space created by the set-back of the upper two storeys (90 square meters) and on the roof of the upper two storeys (300 square meters). This is considered a positive component of the proposal in accordance with London Plan Policy 5.11.

26 However, whilst it is noted that the proposed green roofs will support sustainable rainwater attenuation at the site, the applicant should confirm the details of the wider sustainable urban drainage strategy for the scheme. This should secure a reduction in surface water runoff in response to London Plan Policy 5:13 and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPG, and the Council should secure the associated details by way of planning condition.

Transport

27 The transport assessment submitted as part of the application documentation states *“Servicing, deliveries, loading/unloading, taxi and passenger pickups/drop offs would all take place on-street”*. There have been no details submitted which demonstrate how the site will be

serviced in the above fashion without prejudicing road or pedestrian safety. In cases where a site has a PTAL of 4-6 it is advised that on-site provision should be limited to operational needs, parking for disabled people and that required for taxis, coaches and deliveries/servicing. It is generally advised that there should be one coach space per 50 hotel rooms. The application currently falls outside of this advice, and the applicant is currently engaged in detailed discussions with TfL.

28 In summary, the applicant is required to undertake: revisions to cycle parking access, design and quantum, clarify drop-off/pick-up facilities, further consider the public realm including tree planting, investigate off-carriageway servicing, re-assess the construction, delivery and servicing strategies and undertake revisions to the trip generation and associated revision of the travel plan.

Community Infrastructure Levy

29 The Mayor of London introduced a community infrastructure levy (CIL) on 1 April 2012. The proposed development is in the London Borough of Islington, where the charging rate is £50 per square metre of floorspace.

Local planning authority's position

30 Islington Council is currently assessing the application, and is still to identify a target committee date.

Legal considerations

31 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. 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

32 There are no financial considerations at this stage.

Conclusion

33 London Plan policies on visitor infrastructure, mix of uses urban design, inclusive access, sustainable development and transport are relevant to this application. Having regard to these policies the application complies with some of these policies but not with others as per the schedule below:

- **Principle of development:** Noting the town centre location and the sites excellent transport links, the proposed hotel use is supported in line with London Plan Policy 4.5.

- **Mix of uses:** The proposed mix of uses (including a basement music venue) is supported. The loss of A Class uses at the site would not prejudice the vitality or offer of the wider town centre, however, the applicant is strongly encouraged to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the existing occupiers, in order to facilitate the timely and successful relocation of small businesses from the site. The applicant must also demonstrate that the proposed music venue would be suitably soundproofed in order to avoid the potential for future noise complaints.
- **Urban design:** The proposed design is generally supported; however further attention should be given to the proposed blank elevation to the northeast of the plot in order to achieve full compliance with London Plan Policy 7.1.
- **Inclusive access:** The proposed approach to access and inclusion complies with London Plan policies 4.5 and 7.2.
- **Sustainable development:** The applicant must provide further details on the proposed energy strategy and sustainable drainage proposals in order to demonstrate compliance with London Plan Policies 5.2 and 5.13.
- **Transport:** The applicant is required to address issues associated with: cycle parking access, design and quantum, clarify drop-off/pick-up facilities, further consider the public realm including tree planting, investigate off-carriageway servicing, re-assess the construction, delivery and servicing strategies and undertaker revisions the trip generation and associated revision of the travel plan.

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