

29 January 2018

Vauxhall Bus Station

in the London Borough of Lambeth

planning application no. 17/04741/FUL

Strategic planning application stage II 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 the existing bus station and erection of a 3-storey building at the northern end for bus-related operational use with part retail at ground floor level; a single storey building at the southern end for passenger facilities and servicing; a canopy structure; freestanding bus shelters; and alterations to existing vent and lift shafts.

The applicant

The applicant is **Transport for London** and the architect is **5th Studio**.

Key dates

Stage I Report: 20 November 2017

Committee Meeting: 19 December 2017

Strategic issues

Principle of development: The proposal is a key part of the transformational scheme to remove the Vauxhall Cross gyratory. The bus station proposals are strongly supported in line with London Plan and draft London Plan policies and the Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea Opportunity Area Planning Framework. The applicant has demonstrated that if an over-site development is viable, the timetable for any proposal brought forward to optimise the site's potential would result in a new planning application prior to implementation of the current proposals, with no risk of abortive construction works.

Urban design, inclusive design, and transport: The proposals are of a high design quality and provide a much improved bus station with better facilities, including inclusive access measures, which will better meet the projected increase in passenger numbers. The approach to integrate the bus station with the adjacent Vauxhall Island site proposals are supported. A full maintenance strategy has been secured by condition.

The Council's decision

In this instance, Lambeth Council has resolved to grant permission, subject to conditions and agreement of a section 106 agreement.

Recommendation

That Lambeth Council be advised that the Mayor is content for it to determine the case itself, subject to any action that the Secretary of State may take, and does not therefore wish to direct refusal or direct that he is to be the local planning authority.

Context

1 On 10 October 2017, the Mayor of London received documents from Lambeth Council notifying him of a planning application of potential strategic importance to develop the above site for the above uses. The application is referable under Category 2C(f) of the Schedule to the Order 2008, “*development to provide a bus or coach station*”.

2 On 20 November 2017, the Mayor considered planning report D&P/4435/01, and subsequently advised Lambeth Council that the application did not comply with the London Plan, for the reasons set out in paragraph 25 of the above-mentioned report.

3 A copy of the above-mentioned report is attached. The essentials of the case with regard to the proposal, the site, case history, strategic planning issues and relevant policies and guidance are as set out therein, unless otherwise stated in this report. Since then, further information has been provided in response to the Mayor’s concerns (see below). On 19 December 2017, Lambeth Council decided that it was minded to grant permission, subject to conditions, and on 16 January 2018 it advised the Mayor of this decision. Under the provisions of Article 5 of the Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008, the Mayor may allow the draft decision to proceed unchanged, direct Lambeth Council under Article 6 to refuse the application, or issue a direction to the Council under Article 7 that he is to act as the Local Planning Authority for the purposes of determining the application. The Mayor has until 29 January 2018 to notify the Council of his decision and to issue any direction.

4 The decision on this case, and the reasons will be made available on the GLA’s website www.london.gov.uk.

Consultation stage issues summary

5 At consultation stage, Lambeth Council was advised that the application did not comply with the London Plan for the reasons set out below; however, the possible remedies could address these deficiencies:

- **Opportunity Areas:** The proposal would contribute to the objectives of the Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea Opportunity Area Planning Framework and is supported. Further information must be provided on over-site development opportunities.
- **Urban design, inclusive design, and transport:** The proposals are of a high design quality and provide a much-improved bus station with better facilities, including the latest Transport for London inclusive access measures, which will better meet the challenges of the projected increase in passenger numbers. The applicant must provide further information to confirm how the proposals will be fully integrated with those for the Vauxhall Island site to deliver a comprehensive solution, prior to referral of the application at Stage II. The success of the scheme will be dependent on a rigorous maintenance strategy, which should be secured by the Council.

Strategic planning policy and guidance update

6 On 1 December 2017, the Mayor published his draft London Plan for public consultation.

Update

7 Since consultation stage GLA officers have engaged in joint discussions with the applicant, the Council and TfL officers with a view to addressing the above matters. Furthermore, as part of

Lambeth Council's draft decision on the case, various planning conditions have been proposed to address the above concerns and ensure that the development is acceptable in planning terms.

Principle of development

8 The proposal is a key part of the transformational scheme to remove the Vauxhall Cross gyratory, which includes returning the one-way system to two-way roads, significantly improving pedestrian and cycling facilities, and creating new public spaces. At consultation stage, the proposals were strongly supported in line with London Plan Policy 2.13; the Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea (VNEB) Opportunity Area Planning Framework (OAPF, 2012); and London Plan transport Policies 6.1, 6.2 and 6.4 which seek to enhance strategic interchanges and London's transport connectivity and improve public transport capacity. The proposal also responds positively to, and is supported by, draft London Plan Policies T1, T3 and T4, as well as T2 'Healthy Streets'.

9 Whilst it does not form part of this application, the applicant is investigating the feasibility of potential over-site development in order to optimise the site in accordance with Policy GG2 of the draft London Plan. The applicant has demonstrated that if an over-site development is viable, the timetable for any over-site development proposals would result in a new planning application prior to implementation of the current proposals, with no risk of abortive construction works. This approach is supported.

Urban design, inclusive design, and transport

10 At consultation stage, the limitations of the existing bus station were recognised, as was the need to demolish it in order to operate with the proposed new road layout as a result of the gyratory removal. To the south of the proposed bus station canopy, an access road is proposed linking Wandsworth Road to the bus station, meaning that the canopy cannot extend further south. Consequently, freestanding bus stops are proposed on either side of the neighbouring 'Vauxhall Island' development site. At consultation stage, it was noted that the applicant was working closely with the applicant for the Vauxhall Island site to agree a design solution to ensure that these two proposals are fully integrated. A planning application for the Island Site has now been submitted, which shows illustrative designs demonstrating how the bus stops can be integrated with the proposed Vauxhall Island site buildings. The locations of the bus stops have been agreed between both applicants. Discussions are ongoing on the detailed design of the stops, with the intention to reach agreement prior to the determination of the Island Site application. It is envisaged that an amendment to the Vauxhall Island site application incorporating the agreed bus stop design will be submitted by the Vauxhall Island site applicant, and the bus stops would then be delivered as part of that scheme. This approach is supported.

11 At consultation stage, it was noted that the success of the bus station scheme will be dependent on a rigorous maintenance strategy. A full maintenance strategy has therefore been secured by condition, to be submitted and approved prior to the operation of the bus station.

12 In summary, the proposals will result in significant benefits and are of a high design quality; providing a much-improved bus station with better facilities, including the latest inclusive access measures; a new public square and improved public realm; and able to meet the challenges of the projected increase in passenger numbers. The proposals respond positively to the design and transport policies of the London Plan and the draft London Plan, and are strongly supported.

Response to consultation

13 Lambeth Council publicised the application by site and press notices, and letters were sent to 1,308 neighbouring properties. A total of 69 objections were received, with 19 representations in support. Grounds for objection included:

- Existing bus station is attractive and of high architectural quality.
- Harm to the appearance and character of the local area.
- Existing bus station meets the needs of users.
- Demolition would be a waste of resources.
- Proposed design is not of high quality.
- Does not provide a continuous canopy and weather protection.
- Longer walking distances between stops.
- Increased bus journey times.
- Disruption from demolition and construction.
- Inadequate consultation.

14 The following statutory bodies commented as follows:

- **Environment Agency:** No objection, subject to conditions and informatives, which have been applied.
- **Historic England:** No objection, subject to conditions and informatives, which have been applied.
- **Wandsworth Council:** Objection, based on introduction of a carriageway across the bus station; inadequate cycle parking; greater journey times for some bus routes; increased pedestrian discomfort in the AM peak; greater journey times for some cycle routes; disruption to all transport modes during construction; lack of charging infrastructure for buses; and possible traffic delays to neighbouring roads.

15 A number of Wandsworth Council's objections relate specifically to the removal of the gyratory, rather than this proposal. The Council objected to the introduction of the bus access road to the north of the Vauxhall Island site, which passengers would need to cross to interchange between certain stops. However, this road minimises the impact of the proposals on bus journey times, and provides resilience to the operation of the bus station should other routes become blocked. The proposals also allow for the removal of the existing road between the bus/Underground stations and the train station at the north end of the site, which provides considerable benefits in terms of an improved passenger interchange, and creation of a new public square. It is accepted that the new bus access road is necessary and provides benefits. Lambeth Council officers also assessed and supported this arrangement.

16 Wandsworth Council also considered cycle parking close to the bus station to be inadequate; however, 148 additional cycle parking spaces and 52 additional cycle hire spaces will be provided in the surrounding streets as part of the gyratory proposals. Considering the demand for existing cycle parking in the area and expected levels of demand, this comprises an acceptable provision. The design of the cycle parking provision will be further considered during the detailed design, which is welcomed.

17 Wandsworth Council stated that any delays to bus journey times must be offset by other significant benefits brought about by the proposals. It is accepted that some routes will be delayed, but this is expected to be limited to a maximum of 3 minutes, and is largely a result of the new road layout. Furthermore, some bus routes will experience reduced journey times where they will no longer be routed around 3 sides of the gyratory. The proposals also deliver

significant benefits in the form of much improved public realm, bus station facilities, and improved interchange between train and bus/Underground. These benefits outweigh the limited journey time delays to some routes.

18 Wandsworth Council also stated that the proposals would result in overcrowding during the morning peak, particularly at pedestrian crossings. The pedestrian modelling undertaken for the new bus station reflects the significant increase in the number of pedestrians arising from the level of development in the surrounding area, as well as the new bus station layout becoming a more attractive pathway for pedestrians. The modelling demonstrates that with the proposed bus station design, overcrowding is limited to peak times in limited areas, which is considered acceptable.

19 Wandsworth Council also objected to the disruption arising from demolition and construction. It is accepted that some disruption is inevitable; however, this arises largely from the gyratory removal; any disruption will be managed and minimised; and the benefits arising from the proposals are considerable. Phasing of the proposals and a temporary bus stop scheme have also been secured by condition, which will also help to minimise disruption.

20 Having considered the responses to public consultation, Lambeth Council has proposed various planning conditions in response to the issues raised. Having had regard to these, GLA officers are satisfied that the statutory and non-statutory responses to the public consultation process do not raise any material planning issues of strategic importance that have not already been considered in this report, or consultation stage report D&P/4435/01.

Section 106 agreement

21 The necessary mitigation for the proposed development can be adequately secured by planning condition, and consequently no planning obligations are required.

Article 7: Direction that the Mayor is to be the local planning authority

22 Under Article 7 of the Order, the Mayor could take over this application provided the policy tests set out in that Article are met. In this instance, the Council has resolved to grant permission with conditions, which satisfactorily addresses the matters raised at consultation stage, therefore there is no sound planning reason for the Mayor to take over this application.

Legal considerations

23 Under the arrangements set out in Article 5 of the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008, the Mayor has the power under Article 6 to direct the local planning authority to refuse permission for a planning application referred to him under Article 4 of the Order. He also has the power to issue a direction under Article 7 that he is to act as the local planning authority for the purpose of determining the application. The Mayor may also leave the decision to the local authority. In directing refusal, the Mayor must have regard to the matters set out in Article 6(2) of the Order, including the principal purposes of the Greater London Authority, the effect on health and sustainable development, national policies and international obligations, regional planning guidance, and the use of the River Thames. The Mayor may direct refusal if he considers that to grant permission would be contrary to good strategic planning in Greater London. If he decides to direct refusal, the Mayor must set out his reasons, and the local planning authority must issue these with the refusal notice. If the Mayor decides to direct that he is to be the local planning authority, he must have regard to the matters set out in Article 7(3) and set out his reasons in the direction.

Financial considerations

24 Should the Mayor direct refusal, he would be the principal party at any subsequent appeal hearing or public inquiry. National Planning Practice Guidance emphasises that parties usually pay their own expenses arising from an appeal.

25 Following an inquiry caused by a direction to refuse, costs may be awarded against the Mayor if he has either directed refusal unreasonably; handled a referral from a planning authority unreasonably; or behaved unreasonably during the appeal. A major factor in deciding whether the Mayor has acted unreasonably will be the extent to which he has taken account of established planning policy.

26 Should the Mayor take over the application he would be responsible for holding a representation hearing and negotiating any planning obligation. He would also be responsible for determining any reserved matters applications (unless he directs the Council to do so) and determining any approval of details (unless the Council agrees to do so).

Conclusion

27 The strategic issues raised at consultation stage regarding the principle of development, urban design, inclusive design, and transport have been appropriately addressed, and conditions secured, and as such, the application complies with the London Plan and the draft London Plan and there are no sound reasons for the Mayor to intervene in this particular case.

for further information, contact GLA Planning Unit (Development & Projects Team):

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