
PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE – SECOND SCHEME - 14/EQ/0277



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Mr Rich Bevan
XXXXXX
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Date: 19/02/2015

Dear Mr. Bevan

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (as amended)
PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY

At: HILLSIDE,9 FOUNTAIN DRIVE, LONDON, SE19 1UP
Proposal: Demolition of existing 2 storey dwelling and erection of 7 x 4 bedroom 4 storey houses with associated car parking, bin and bicycle storage and landscaped gardens (Use Class C3)

I write in connection with the pre-application enquiry received on 9th December 2014.

Summary

Planning permission was granted for 5 dwellings on the site under ref 12-AP-2619, but this permission has not yet been implemented. This pre-application enquiry encompasses a larger site area whereby the applicant has acquired the woodland to the south. This land to the south only adds 'land area' to the application site and does not add any function to the dwellings. This proposal for 7 dwellings is not considered acceptable and as discussed below, the number of dwellings proposed would reduce the openness of the site and the surrounding area and may not be acceptable.

The gap between the two groups of terraced houses is now between 5.5-6m. This gap is reduced and would require the removal of a tree within the central part of the site. The front is being used up for vehicular access and parking and with the increased number of houses

on the site would make this a cramped form of development. The reduction in the gap between the two terraces of houses and the loss of the tree would also reduce the sense of openness of the site.

The revised scheme is not considered acceptable due to the additional amount of tree loss and given the need for more extensive excavation which is likely to further endanger trees shown as retained, as well as those protected by a TPO.

The relationship of the development with the existing neighbouring buildings has somewhat improved by increasing the separation distances, but this has meant pushing the buildings further forward onto the street on Fountain Drive, thus impacting on the streetscene. This is a further indication of overdevelopment of the site.

The topography of the site is such that the garages would essentially be on the 'ground level' with the pedestrian and the road and as such would be visible from the street. You have submitted indicative tracking diagrams, but more accurate and detailed drawings are required at formal application stage.

Background

Previous planning permission for 5 dwellings on the application site was granted under ref 12-AP-2619 (dated 18.12.12). Subsequently, a pre-application (under our ref 13-EQ-0169) was submitted by the same applicant to develop the site for an additional dwelling (giving a total of 6). This current pre-application enquiry is to provide 2 more dwellings to bring a total of 7 x four bedroom houses. The site is suitable for residential development and is not on land that is designated for any other use and is therefore acceptable in land use terms.

The site approved under permission 12-AP-2619 had a site area of approximately 0.17Ha. This site had contained two parts, 9 Fountain Drive (known as Hillside) which comprises a dwelling and garden, and a vacant plot which adjoins this to the north and which would have originally formed part of the garden to 11 Sydenham Hill which adjoins to the east.

The applicant has purchased some non utilised land along the south boundary and the site area has therefore increased from 0.17Ha to 0.29Ha. This is an area overgrown with mainly self seeded tree growth; there is a retaining wall, possibly the ruins of a previous structure. However, this adjacent woodland is known to be a remnant of the formerly extensive ancient Great North Wood noted for its biodiversity and heritage value.

Density

I consider that there are 8 No. habitable rooms (which includes the Media room and Study area) in total for each dwelling. Using the new site area of 0.29Ha, this equates to approximately 193HR/Ha. Strategic policy 5 of the Core Strategy permits a density range of between 200-300HR/Ha in the suburban density zone. Whilst the proposed density falls slightly short of the specified range, the site banks up steeply towards Sydenham Hill which results in a more limited area for development. The density is considered appropriate for the site context. Nevertheless, this does also depend on the design of the scheme when considering whether overdevelopment would occur. A number of local residents had objected to the density of the scheme in the previous application 12-AP-2619 and the addition of another dwelling on this site would need to be sensitive to the local character.

Whilst you have increased the site area, it is clear that the southern part of the site is to be retained as an 'open woodland' that you have designated as 'communal amenity space' for the future residents. The new acquired land to the south would be maintained with much of the ground vegetation removed, cleared and maintenance given to the existing trees.

Acquiring additional land is acceptable in principle, but it is clear that this land to the south only adds 'land area' to the application site and does not add any function to the dwellings. Large 4 bedroom family sized houses generally require private amenity space to be provided and the Southwark's Residential Design Standards SPD 2011 does not stipulate the provision of communal amenity space. In any case, the communal space appears to be accessed via a rear communal path, located behind the private gardens of the proposed houses. There is a question as to how practical and useable this communal space would be. There is no indication as to who would maintain this piece of land to the south. Accordingly, Officers consider that the 'real density' of the site should be calculated using the previous application site boundary and site area, which would be increased. As discussed below, the number of dwellings proposed would reduce the openness of the site and the surrounding area and may not be acceptable.

Layout of the buildings

The scheme is in a stepped profile with two sets of terraced houses and separated with a gap through the site. The terrace is split with 3 houses to the north and 4 houses to the south. The proposal to add two additional dwellings on the site has meant reducing the gap between the two sets of terraced dwellings. The gap between the two groups is now between 5.5-6m. This gap is reduced and would require the removal of a tree within the central part of the site. Furthermore, the building line is now set further forward towards the road. Whilst the building line appear appropriate generally, the front is being used up for vehicular access and parking and with the increased number of houses on the site would make this a cramped form of development. The reduction in the gap between the two terraces of houses and the loss of the tree would also reduce the sense of openness of the site.

The proposed site plan 019-025 Rev E shows the distances between the rear of the dwellings to the rear boundary, but I note that this is not the depth of the rear private gardens.

Quality of accommodation

The room sizes and unit sizes appear to meet the minimum standards set out in the Residential Design Standards SPD and adequate private garden areas are provided. Each dwelling would have adequate outlook and would not result in any overlooking into each other or adjoining sites.

Detailed design

Concerns from local residents were previously raised in the planning application 12-AP-2619. It was considered by local residents that the proposed houses owing to their number, height, scale and massing, detailed design would be out of character with the area. Officers considered however, that the contemporary response was acceptable given the mixed character of the area. The addition of two dwellings could have the potential to impact on the streetscene. The design follows the extant scheme and the height and scale is also similar. Given the odd number of units proposed, there is no symmetry. Whilst the height and scale and contemporary design is acceptable in principle, I consider the number of units proposed on this plot width to be unacceptable as it would appear relatively cramped when seen in its context. As explained above, the gap between the two terraces is now reduced and coupled with the number of units would reduce the openness of this area.

The approved scheme had proposed timber cladding and it is now proposed to clad the buildings with clay tiles. There is no objection in principle to this, but a condition requiring this to be treated would be recommended if such a scheme is approved.

Impact on Dulwich Wood Conservation Area

The Dulwich Wood Conservation Area is approximately 80m to the north west of the site and given this separation distance it is not considered that its setting would be affected.

Impact on trees

The site currently has a woodland character. An arboricultural impacts assessment and survey identify a number of trees that have been removed as part of the previously consented scheme and show a further amount that require removal in order to facilitate the amended proposal for additional houses.

Together with neighbouring properties, the site is characterised by its well treed setting. The adjacent woodland is known to be a remnant of the formerly extensive ancient Great North Wood noted for its biodiversity and heritage value.

Any development would require extensive excavation into the hillside and this has already been considered as part of the previous scheme whereby special tree protection measures are needed to ensure any retained trees are not damaged. Incursion into the root protection areas from the driveway is especially sensitive and includes root pruning for category B trees Oak T16 & Lime T20. The Lime is of especial significance given its size and contribution to the streetscene.

The revised scheme would further endanger the retention of tree T20 such that the report recommends consideration for its removal. Four additional trees require removal: Hollies T6 & T7, Sycamore T18 (all category C) and Yew T23 (category B). A further 8 trees are also identified which are directly impacted and which require greater levels of protection. This includes A category Beech tree T39 on adjacent land which is protected by a TPO ref 73.

In total, the proposed development results in the loss of 625cm of stem girth which would require replacement in response to the London Plan policy such that there is no net loss of canopy over. Given the site constraints and available space it is unlikely that this amount or number of replacement tree planting is attainable.

It is understood from the Council's own Arboricultural Officer that the site is to be assessed for a provisional TPO.

The revised scheme is therefore not considered acceptable due to the additional amount of tree loss and given the need for more extensive excavation which is likely to further endanger trees shown as retained, as well as those protected by a TPO.

Impact on neighbouring properties

The greatest impact of the development is on the nearest neighbouring property No. 11 Fountain Drive, which is a property comprising garage space at ground floor level with a bungalow above. The extant scheme has its northernmost house approximately 11m from the neighbouring property (4m from the common boundary) and it was positioned at an oblique angle because the proposed houses would be set slightly further back than No.11. It was considered that the separation distance would be sufficient to ensure that no significant loss of light or outlook would occur. It is recognised that this scheme would now move the

houses further forward to the front and the northernmost house is now only 2m from the boundary of No. 11.

The applicant has shown that using the 25 degree 'rule of thumb' from the centre of the lowest habitable room facing the development, the proposed development falls outside of the 25 degree from horizontal datum and therefore unlikely to have a significant effect on daylight and sunlight on No. 11. No windows are shown in the side elevation of the northernmost house and therefore no privacy issues raised.

The other neighbouring properties (37-Wavel Place and 9 Sydenham Hill) are located to the south east and east of the site respectively. The current proposed scheme now adds the 7th dwelling within an additional piece of acquired land to the south and therefore would be closer to these neighbouring properties. The separation distance for the consented scheme was at least 22m between the rear of Wavel Place and the most southernmost house at least 28m from 9 Sydenham Hill. The proposed scheme would be closer to these properties. Due to the elevated position of these properties the distances shown on plan may be misleading and it was previously noted under the pre-application 13-EQ-0169 that there would need to be a topographical survey and further sections through the site are provided. The submitted plans indicate that there are areas where there is now a greater distance between the neighbouring buildings and the proposed building, but there are also points where these are now closer. The relationship of the development with the existing neighbouring buildings has somewhat improved by increasing the separation distances, but this has meant pushing the buildings further forward onto the street on Fountain Drive, thus impacting on the streetscene. This is a further indication of overdevelopment of the site.

The impact of the development on the neighbouring properties to the north/north east of the application site would not be affected by the additional dwelling.

Landscaping

The Lower ground floor plan indicates that the bike and refuse stores would be at the front of the property facing the road. Your Design and Access Statement indicates that these would be within the walls of the entrance area and would have a sliding slatted screen system. These however, would immediately adjoin the pedestrian footpath and I am cautious about how this would appear on the streetscene as well as the implications on pedestrian movement. The bike stores are also of vertical stacking design and these are not normally accepted.

Transport issues

It is unlikely that the two additional family dwellings on this site would significantly increase the level of trips. No impact on the local highway network is envisaged.

Car parking

Concerns were previously raised under the consented scheme by neighbours and the Transport Planning Team that there would be insufficient provision and may result in cars parking on-street. Officers had noted that the use of maximum standards is a measure to encourage people to use alternative modes of transport other than the private cars and providing less parking is one way of achieving this. This proposal to provide 7 dwellings may raise concerns over the level of parking. The submitted plans indicate 7 No. spaces (one space for each dwelling) and this may be considered acceptable. These spaces are all within a garage, which would be on the lower ground level within the front garden area. This

would reduce the potential to have substantial amount of hardstanding, but it is not clear how this would appear from the street. The topography of the site is such that the garages would essentially be on the 'ground level' with the pedestrian and the road and as such would be visible from the street.

You have submitted indicative tracking diagrams, but more accurate and detailed drawings are required at formal application stage.

Sustainability

The proposed houses would need to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes (CfSH) Level 4, which is required by the Council's Strategic Policy 13 of the Core Strategy. The applicant has not indicated whether a Level 4 would be achieved, but Officers note that the previous permission was for a scheme that would achieve a Level 5, which would exceed the Council's target of level 4 and this would be welcomed for the 7 dwellings.

Ecology

An ecological survey was undertaken and a report submitted with the original application. The report concluded that the primary features of ecological value are the mature trees to the north of the site, the majority of which are to be retained and that the proposal would not have a significant impact upon the ecological or biodiversity value of the site. The bat survey submitted with the original application confirmed that the building was highly unlikely to support roosting bats. This current proposed development would take an area of the land to the south of the site and whilst the applicant has indicated the potential ecological enhancements, it is also required to demonstrate that there would not be a significant impact upon the ecological or biodiversity value of the site.

S106 and CIL

The development for 6 dwellings falls below the threshold that would trigger s106 financial contributions.

The Mayor has brought in a charge that will be paid by most new developments, the Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The levy will be calculated according to the amount of additional floor space a new development will produce. Please therefore ensure that any forthcoming planning application includes details of the amount of floor space, on the requisite form. The amount to be paid is calculated when planning permission is granted and it is paid when development starts.

Please also bear in mind that the Southwark CIL is likely to come into effect this year.

Conclusion

The proposed development is considered acceptable in land use terms, but the number of units proposed on the site is considered to create a cramped form of development. This would reduce the sense of openness in this local context. There would be the removal of significant trees and this is not considered acceptable as it would affect the woodland character of the area. The cycle and refuse stores need to be sensitively designed. This advice is given to assist you but is not a decision of the Council. Further issues may arise following a formal planning application, where a site visit and public consultation and consultation with statutory consultees would be undertaken.

Yours sincerely

Rob Bristow
Major Applications Group Manager