

Item No. 30/3	Classification OPEN	Decision Level PLANNING COMMITTEE	Date 04.03.2003
From DEVELOPMENT & BUILDING CONTROL MANAGER		Title of Report DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
Proposal (03-AP-0045) Permanent retention of existing travellers site including provision of amenity facilities, remodelling of site and environmental improvements		Address Springtide Close, Staffordshire Street, SE15 Ward Peckham	

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the above application which is for Committee consideration due to the number of objections received and because this is a Council's Own Development.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Grant planning permission

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The land was acquired by the Council under compulsory purchase order in September 1975. For a temporary period of 9 months in 1978, planning permission was granted for use as a travellers' site. The site then remained empty for 10 years and was re-opened in October 1989 as a travellers site. This was as a result of a decision to evict an unauthorised emcampment at Kirkwood Road. Nine pitches were provided on the site at this stage. It was agreed that the Staffordshire Street site would be allowed on a temporary basis, until such time as a decision was taken to upgrade it to an official site.
- 3.2 In March 1993 the Policy and Performance Review Committee agreed that this site should be closed when the new permanent site at Brideale Close opened in August 1993. However, in October 1993 following a review of travellers needs it was agreed by the Strategic and Corporate Services Committee that the Staffordshire Street site should become an official temporary site for a period of up to 5 years. Planning permission was granted on 14 February 1994 for a five year period. As with Burnhill Close, Leo Street the site has existed since that time without planning permission.
- 3.3 Previously the site at Staffordshire Street has not been eligible for DoE funding as there were fewer than 15 pitches and therefore the Housing Department have not sought to make the site permanent. However, this has changed more recently and funding is now available for sites with fewer than 15 pitches. If the Housing Department are not successful in their bid for funding, the Council's Executive Committee has agreed to include an allocation of up to £1m within the Council's capital programme for improvements to the sites if planning permisison is granted to make them permanent.
- 3.4 Springtide Close has an area of 0.36 acres and is divided into five pitches with individual pitch size of approximately 170 square metres. Each pitch has its own amenity block with a toilet, kitchen and bathroom. Each pitch also contain mobile vans of varying sizes. There are two entrances to the site from Staffordshire Street. The applicant has indicated that the population on the site is significantly lower than it used to be due to the departure of one large family.

- 3.5 The site is located near to Peckham High Street and is therefore accessible to transport, schools and shopping. To the north and west of the site are terrace houses approved in 1997, to the east is a Police Station and to the south are shops and flats facing Peckham High Street.

4. FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

Main Issues

- 4.1 The main issues in this case are the need for retention of the site, the standard of accommodation created for the occupants of the site, the proposals impact on the streetscene and the impact the permanent retention of the site will have on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

Planning Policy

- 4.2 Southwark Unitary Development Plan 1995 [UDP]:
Policy E.2.3: Aesthetic Control - complies, the refurbishments to the buildings will improve the overall appearance of the site.
Policy E.2.4: Access and Facilities for People with Disabilities - complies, the new amenity blocks have been designed to lifetime homes standards and will allow for disabled access which is lacking in the existing amenity blocks.
Policy E.3.1: Protection of Amenity - complies, the proposal will not result in any undue loss of light, outlook or privacy and is appropriate in this mixed use area.
Policy H.2.1: Rehabilitation and Improvement of Housing - complies, will improve an existing travellers site.
Policy H.4.3: Travellers - complies, the site is provided with basic services and is well located to transportation, shops and schools.

Draft Southwark Plan [agreed for Deposit November 2002]:

- Policy 3.2: Protection of Amenity - complies, the proposal is acceptable in this mixed character area.
Policy 4.7 - Specific Housing Needs - complies, will retain and upgrade an existing travellers site.
Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Residential Design Standards' para. 8.3 - complies, the application will result in health and safety improvements to the temporary travellers site.

Consultations

- 4.3 Site Notice: 23.1.03 (exp.13.2.03) Press Notice: No

Consultees:

Metropolitan Police, Peckham Police Station, 177 Peckham High Street, London, SE15
Individual Tuition Centre, Meeting House Lane, Peckham, London, SE15
The Acorn Surgery, 136 Meeting House Lane, Peckham, London, SE15
The Peckham Settlement, 44 to 50 Goldsmith Road, Peckham, London, SE15
Nell Gwynn Nursery School, 44 to 50 Goldsmith Road, Peckham, London, SE15
Acorn Neighbouring Housing Office, Meeting House Lane, Peckham, London, SE15
5 to 45 (odds) Staffordshire Street, Peckham, London, SE15 5TJ
24 to 62 (evens) Staffordshire Street, Peckham, London, SE15 5TJ
169, 171, 173, 175 Peckham High Street, Peckham, London, SE15
Housekeepers Crown Mansions, 1-7 Staffordshire Street, SE15 5TW
1 to 5 (incl.) Springtide Close, Staffordshire Street, SE15 5TR

Replies from:

29 Staffordshire Street, London, SE15 - For the past four years the residents of Staffordshire Street have been subject to physical and verbal harassment from residents of Springtide Close. There are constantly problems with rubbish, dogs and cars parked either in resident's bays of Staffordshire Street or in the street blocking the road. Permanence will only aggravate those issues. Understood that the Council were looking to close the site as 'it is unsuitable for housing such a large group of people' (Southwark Council, June 1999).

Neighbouring Manager - As the landlord for this site I am strongly in favour of permanent retention as a permanent site. The temporary nature of this site adds a destabilising effect on a community that would benefit from more stable links in particular in supporting the families in educating their children. Strongly support the works to the amenity facilities which will improve health and safety on the site and improve fire safety, will assist the Council in complying with current Building Regulations, will permit the Council to address the needs of elderly and disabled members of the travelling community, will enable the Council to improve energy efficiency and reduce CO2 emissions. In addition, strongly support the environmental improvements which will support the Council's aim to improve the general outlook of Peckham.

Traffic Group - no objections

Public Protection, Pollution Control - no objections

Public Protection, Residential Team - The site needs to meet the standards of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 Model Standards (this includes fire precautions). There needs to be a door between the kitchen and the WC and bathroom. Wash hand basins also need to be provided.

5 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Need for Permanent Retention

- 5.1 There are 76 gypsy and traveller households within Southwark who are accommodated either on official travellers sites or within public housing. Of these 42 have pitches on one of the 4 official sites within Southwark. There are two permanent sites within Southwark providing 31 pitches, one at Ilderton Road and the other at Brideale Close. The two temporary sites at Springtide Close, Staffordshire Street and Burnhill Close, Leo Street provide a further 11 pitches.
- 5.2 The families living on the temporary site at Springtide Close, Staffordshire Street are long standing residents of Southwark who have existed on the site since it was first approved as a temporary site. Planning permission was obtained in February 1994 and the site was developed as a temporary site, with hardstandings, amenity huts and electricity supply. While the site is quite small and contains a limited number of pitches it provides much needed traveller accommodation. The site is well located to transportation, schools and shopping which is supported by policy H.4.3 'Travellers'. Housing have not been able to locate suitable alternative sites and for this reason recent independent reports (Needs of the Traveller Community in Southwark, 2000 and the Starfish Report, 2001) have recommended that all existing travellers sites be retained, refurbished and made permanent. There is a clear need in housing terms to upgrade this site and make it permanent, which is supported in principle by Local Plan policies and central government guidance.
- 5.3 Standard of Accommodation
The existing amenity huts on the site are unacceptable having regard to current day thermal efficiency and accessibility needs. The existing amenity huts which have a floor area of 20 square metres contain a kitchen, bathroom and WC. It is proposed to improve these facilities by demolition and reconstruction, increasing the size of the amenity block to 27 square metres. The new amenity blocks will be to lifetime home standards allowing for disabled access. It is considered that remodelling of the site and the provision of new

amenity blocks will considerably improve the standard of accommodation for occupants of the site which is supported by Policy H.2.1 'Rehabilitation and Improvement of Housing' of the Southwark UDP.

5.4 Impact on Streetscene and Locality

The proposed improvements will not significantly alter the layout and design of the site and therefore the proposal will have little impact on the streetscene. There is an existing 1.8-2.0 metre high palisade fence surrounding the site which is also to be retained.

5.5 Impact on Neighbour's Amenity

One objection has raised concerns about anti-social behaviour associated with the occupants of this site. While this may cause problems from time to time it is not a material planning consideration and is not an issue that can be controlled under planning legislation. In general, domestic disturbances are a matter for the police and not the Council. However, the Acorn Neighbourhood Housing Office have investigated complaints in the past and any future complaints would need to be managed by the Neighbourhood Housing Office.

The new amenity huts although slightly larger than the existing buildings will not have a negative impact on the light, outlook or privacy of neighbouring properties and are therefore considered acceptable with respect to policy E.3.1 'Protection of Amenity' of the Southwark UDP.

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The remodelling of the site and the provision of new amenity buildings will be to lifetime homes standards meeting the needs of disabled occupants. The permanent retention of the site will also provide much needed travellers accommodation within the Borough.

7. LOCAL AGENDA 21 [Sustainable Development] IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The proposal will make use of existing urban land and create more energy efficient buildings within the site.

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