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Brendan Versluys Camden Council Date: 2 March 2023

Our Ref: M22/PJ081.04

Your Ref: 2022/4791/P

By email only: brendan.versluys@camden.gov.uk

Dear Brendan

RE: DEMOLITION OF THE EXISTING HOUSE AND CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW HOUSE. 4 OAK HILL PARK LONDON CAMDEN NW3 7LG REASONED JUSTIFICATION FOR DEMOLITION

This response is prepared in support of planning application 2022/4791/P relating to "*Demolition of the existing house and construction of a new house*." It seeks to demonstrate the rationale for proceeding with a replacement dwelling approach as opposed to retention and extension/alteration of the property as proposed through initial pre-application discussions with the council. It follows our previous conversation and seeks to address the additional matters that we discussed which were not previously addressed in the earlier response.

It is to be read in conjunction with the other supporting statements for the application, particularly the Whole Life Carbon Assessment report prepared by JAW Sustainability. This report seeks to primarily address compliance of the proposals with Local Plan policy CC1 'Climate Change Mitigation'. The relevant parts of the policy are set out below:

"The Council will require all development to minimise the effects of climate change and encourage all developments to meet the highest feasible environmental standards that are financially viable during construction and occupation.

We will:

a. promote zero carbon development and require all development to reduce carbon dioxide emissions through following the steps in the energy hierarchy;

b. require all major development to demonstrate how London Plan targets for carbon dioxide emissions have been met;

c. ensure that the location of development and mix of land uses minimise the need to travel by car and help to support decentralised energy networks;

d. support and encourage sensitive energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings;

e. require all proposals that involve substantial demolition to demonstrate that it is not possible to retain and improve the existing building; and

f. expect all developments to optimise resource efficiency."

This must also be read in conjunction with the Council's 'Energy efficiency and adaption' guidance that provides further clarification on the policy requirements. This states at paragraph 9.7 that

"This approach is justified through Local Plan policy CC1 which requires all proposals that involve substantial demolition to demonstrate that it is not possible to retain and improve the existing building. Paragraph 8.17 of the Local Plan states this should be justified in terms of optimisation of resources and energy use. As such a Whole Life Carbon assessment will be expected for all applications proposing substantial demolition."

The Whole Life Carbon is addressed elsewhere such that this report only considers the alternative of why retention of the existing building and refurbishment is neither viable nor practical.

The wider planning statement and Design and Access Statement explain in detail the approach to the design of the new building, and this is not therefore repeated in this assessment in detail.

Building exterior

The external cladding of the building has reached its end of life to the point that it comes away in your hand when seeking to inspect what lies beneath the exterior surface. Were the building to be retained the entire exterior would therefore need to be reclad to make it weathertight and until the entire exterior is stripped there is further unknown impacts on the substructure to the cladding. This is reflective of the age of the building not through any lack of ongoing maintenance of the building.

The existing flat roof to the property is also requiring complete replacement to address structural deficiencies with it, which would bring with it the need to raise the overall height due to the additional insulation required as well as upstands if the roof were to be designed to support the provision of a green roof to enhance biodiversity.





Thermal Performance

The present building, as noted in the supporting pre-demolition report, was most recently renovated between 1970 and 1980 and is therefore in need of significant upgrades to bring it close to modern regulations regarding insulation, thermal performance etc. Even with all of the requisite upgrades the existing property will still be worse performing than a modern purpose-built replacement dwelling as proposed.

Sustainability

The proposed replacement dwelling would be constructed using Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) as a means of reducing building waste and reducing embodied carbon emissions, as well as delivering a faster form of construction than traditional methods. This is important in this location due to the impacts that longer term refurbishment of the existing property would have on immediate neighbours.

Subsidence

The existing property suffers at present with water runoff from neighbouring properties such that parts of the existing dwelling are suffering with subsidence. The solution proposed as part of the replacement dwelling is to tank sections of the rear wall to appropriately address the water runoff from the neighbouring properties. This is not a viable or practical solution with retention of the present building due to the costs associated with the underpinning of the current building along with the need for access to introduce tanking as present mitigation for future impacts.

The demolition of the building enables these measures to be introduced in situ as part of the construction process thereby ensuring a more efficient long-term solution to the present issues.

In the alternative, were parts of the original building or slab to be retained as part of redevelopment process due to the present subsidence issue there are likely to be issues relating to connections between old and new structures creating complexities with warranties and therefore future re-sale potential in due course.

Were the slab itself to be the only element of the existing structure to be retained, notwithstanding the subsidence issue, there is also likely to be 'heave' as a direct result of the removal of the walls that provide the weight to the slab. This will further impact the integrity of the slab. The only way to address would be through significant reinforcement of the existing structure with underpinning etc, which is not a feasible option when considering all of the impacts that would arise from just retaining an existing slab.

MEP/Services

Following more detailed assessment of the property post the original pre-application submission it has also become apparent that all of the existing MEP/Utility infrastructure within the property needs an overhaul to be brought up to modern building regulations standards. The current infrastructure is now dated and has reached the end of life when considering the need for additional connections as per the proposed new layout (for example all bedrooms to be provided with en-suite facilities).



Due to the age of the building, there are no service ducts/trunking within the walls or ceilings to make upgrading easier, meaning that if seeking to upgrade all of the existing infrastructure the existing ceilings would need to be removed as well as significant works to the walls to provide new cabling routes, further compromising the integrity of the building.



In addition, the current building is served by air conditioning plant throughout which will also need replacing with new equipment to provide the appropriate conditions internally that cannot otherwise be secured with the present fenestration. As discussed elsewhere on other matters, the use of air conditioning would be contrary to the requirements of policy CC2 and therefore were the building to be

retained in any manner the external walls would need to be significantly altered with new openings for enlarged fenestration such that the integrity of the structure would be further compromised.



Layout

The applicants have an extended family which regularly come together living under the same roof to include the current children as well as other grown up children who return to spend time with the family. The intention for this application is to create the primary family dwelling for the applicant and it is important therefore that the internal layout and accommodation is well suited to the modern living requirements of such larger families.

The present layout of the property is more fragmented and does not lend itself as well to flexible living when compared to the proposals for the replacement dwelling. Current issues with the layout include the following:

- Inefficient layout resulting in significant wasted floor area for circulation internally;
- Wasted space to the rear of the dwelling with the present configuration;



• Poorly accessible storage areas and service rooms;



- A single en-suite provision for the master bedroom, which has a dressing room that is only accessible through it; and
- Poor quality natural lighting to certain areas of the property at present



The proposed replacement dwelling includes 2 dedicated home office spaces at ground floor designed to accommodate the flexible home working arrangements that are more commonplace now in the post COVID environment (the present single office does not function as well for home working for multiple family members). Equally at first floor level the bedrooms are provided with en-suite bathroom facilities to provide for greater independence for the applicants' children as they grow up.

The improved internal layout for the building is shown on plans P(4) 10 and P(4) 11, however comparison layouts between the existing and proposed are also set out below:









Security

The final matter affecting the decision whether to refurbish or redevelop the property relates to the security needs for the applicant. The present property has inherent problems associated with providing the desired security levels expressed for the applicant due to the rear 'alley' area lacking any real visibility at ground floor level and only limited visibility at first floor, together with the blind internal areas due to the layout. The proposed replacement dwelling provides improved general visibility around the perimeter of the building as well as considerable internal layout improvements to provide greater comfort/security within the building due to the lack of blind spots with corridor arrangements.

Conclusion

Whilst the existing building could be refurbished to improve its thermal performance as well as internal alterations and/or extensions to accommodate the modern day-to-day living requirements for enlarged family life this will all come at additional cost and time, yet still resulting in a less well-performing building than the proposed replacement dwelling. The building (both the built structure and infrastructure) have therefore reached the end of its useful life and is not suitable for repurposing as part of a replacement dwelling. Retention of any parts of the building have been considered in detail as part of the further design process that took place post the initial pre-application discussions, which is why the original aim to retain parts of the existing dwelling as part of the redevelopment is no longer an option here.

By contrast, the proposed replacement dwelling affords the best standards of modern living, thermal efficiency and design and can be delivered via MMC to speed up the delivery programme to provide the primary new family accommodation for the applicant, whilst minimising disturbance to neighbours than through a comprehensive refurbishment programme for current dwelling.

When read in connection with the supporting Whole Life Carbon Assessment it is therefore considered that the application meets the full requirements of policy CC1 of the local plan and the supporting planning guidance.

Yours sincerely

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