MIDLAND CRESCENT, FINCHLEY ROAD

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Prepared for Stadium Capital Holdings by

QUATRO

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MIDLAND CRESCENT

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1. Background

As part of its commitment to entering a dialogue with local residents, Stadium Capital Holdings has been discussing proposals for the Midland Crescent site on Finchley Road with the local community and its representatives for a number of years.

2. Initial Consultations – 2009/2010

In late 2009/early 2010, Stadium had consultation meetings with the following;

- Virginia Berridge and Mark Hutton of West Hampstead Action for Transport (WHAT)
- West Hampstead Local Interest Group
- Bill Granger, Finchley Road Community Forum
- Rosemont Trust and Rosemont and Lithos Road Traders and Residents Association.

The initial proposals in 2009/10 were for a hotel-led redevelopment of the site, including retail uses on the Finchley Road frontage with restaurant/community uses on the lower floors. A feature of this initial proposal was the retention of a 'wildlife area' along the space between the railway tracks by raising the buildings on 'stilts'. The proposed building was nine storeys in height when viewed from the north of the site.

2.1. Meeting with Virginia Berridge and Mark Hutton of West Hampstead Action for Transport (WHAT) on Monday 5th October 2009

The main points from the meeting were;

- They were pleased to have been consulted prior to the proposals being finalised
- They believe that the existing planning consent is boring and uninspiring
- They see the site as an opportunity to provide for more housing in the area, including affordable housing
- Height is not a major issue and they consider that the site would be appropriate for a tall building (we did not discuss what 'tall' would mean)
- The development should be car-free
- The idea of using the rear of the site as an ecological area was welcomed and they suggested that the site might be managed by a local ecology group, rather than the Council who they say would not have the money to manage the area.
- If not residential, then offices would be an alternative given the site's very good public transport links

- The ground floor should be retail
- They like the idea of a crescent–effect to create a public area
- The idea of a cafe/restaurant on the old station platform and linked to the ecological area was welcomed.

2.2. Meeting with members of the West Hampstead Local Interest Group on Monday 12th October.

There were five members of the group present and they made the following points;

- The current state of the site is an eyesore, particularly when viewed along the railway line from West Hampstead
- They accept that building as far back as the 02 centre is sensible, with the rear as an ecological area
- They are very keen on the reintroduction of the crescent as part of the design of the ground floor area to create a piazza with planting
- They would like some elements of /references to the original design incorporated, too.
- They suggest that the new building should be no higher than the one for which planning permission has been granted
- A mix of housing (private and affordable) would be their preferred use, with offices second
- The ground floor should be retail – but no pubs/bars of which there too many at present
- The basement area would make a good location for small businesses
- The design of the rear of the building is very important because of the view along the tracks from West Hampstead
- They would prefer a traditional 'Old Dutch' style of Finchley Road, but understand that it will probably be modern. They don't like the O2 or Holiday Inn Express designs.
- There was very little support for the idea of a cafe in a rebuilt station waiting room on the platform as they thought that it would not attract trade or be difficult to access.

2.3. Meeting with Bill Granger, Finchley Road Community Forum, on 19th October 2009.

Bill Granger made the following points.

- His main concern is to see a development that "enhances the Finchley Road area and improves the town centre's amenities". He has lived in the area for 40 years and has seen a gradual decline which he cannot understand given the wealthy demographic profile of local residents.
- He liked the idea of the reinstatement of the crescent with an animated public piazza
- He welcomed the arcade suggestion leading from the entrance down to the platform below
- He would like to see the ground floor used for retail rather than A3 but was relaxed about the crescent area having cafes.

- He welcomed the ground floor ‘arcade’ concept as this would create a development with a ‘village’ feel and create an ‘oasis’ along the busy, traffic dominated Finchley Road
- He was not keen on a hotel on the upper floors, partly because the Holiday Inn Express opposite has set a poor precedent in design terms. Also, he wonders where taxis/unloading would take place.
- Housing (car-free) is his favoured option but would be willing to consider to student accommodation
- We discussed height but he would not say how high he would be prepared to see a new development – this could be a difficulty depending on how high we want to go.
- It would be good if our plans could include an enhancement of the bare concrete elevation to the bridge wall just south of the site
- The current crossing from the O2 centre to the site is not easy for pedestrians because of the light phasing and an improvement here would be of benefit

2.4. Points made by the Rosemont Association and Rosemont and Lithos Road Traders and Residents Association in a letter following the meeting on 11th February 2010.

- Throughout the area surrounding the O2 Centre there is limited parking, as Finchley Road is an A road, and the bus lanes and bus stops cause further restrictions. The residential streets, particularly Rosemont Road, already suffer from insufficient parking spaces for residents, and could not handle any extra demand for parking.
- The area also suffers from less demand for cafes and restaurants than the current supply. The result is that restaurants are frequently going out of business and being replaced by new restaurants that soon go out of business. This is even the case in the O2 Centre.
- Building along the railway embankment, especially if the development is to be 9 storeys high, will lower the landscape value. Currently O2 Centre shoppers enjoy a view of the Rosemont Embankment woodland, and the Rosemont Mews residents enjoy a more open urban view beyond the woodland.
- Finally, there is the potential for increased risks to the woodland. Currently some youths are finding access to the woodland from the railway line, and using the woodland for drinking and vandalism. This would no doubt increase considerably if the development grants easier access to the railway line.

3. Further Consultations – 2012

Following further discussions with Network Rail on the restrictions they would apply to the development of the land between the railway tracks, Stadium revised their proposals to reflect the practical issues involved. The revised proposals for the site are now for a student housing-led development, together with a 'cultural/employment hub' on the lower floor which has an entrance on the Finchley Road frontage. In addition, the building height has been lowered, partly as the removal of the earlier necessity to preserve a 'wildlife area' in the area between the railway tracks.

Stadium has discussed this revised proposal with;

- Councillors Keith Moffatt, John Bryan and Gill Russo-Gill, West Hampstead Ward Councillors
- Bill Granger – Arkwright Mansions Residents Association
- Dr. Mayer Hillman - Netherhall Neighbourhood Association
- Virginia Berridge and Mark Hutton - West Hampstead Action for Transport (WHAT)
- Natcho Laco, Frognal Court Residents Association, Finchley Road
- In addition, efforts were made to arrange meetings with the Rosemont Association and Rosemont and Lithos Road Traders and Residents Association

3.1. Meeting with Councillors Keith Moffatt, John Bryan and Gill Russo-Gill, West Hampstead Ward Councillors – 29th October 2012

The main points raised were;

- Why is there a need for more student accommodation in the area?
- Why cannot the land be used for residential development?
- There is a need for employment-led projects to complement and support existing facilities. The idea of a 'cultural hub' on the lower floor was supported.
- The design of the proposed building was considered to be an important consideration, particularly from the north for residents of Rosemount Road and on the Finchley Road frontage.
- The potential for a taller element on the corner of Finchley Road was considered something that should be considered further.
- There was support to improve the appearance of the bare concrete bridge frontage to Finchley Road through a creative design and use of materials

3.2. Meeting with Bill Granger, Arkwright Mansions Residents Association and Dr. Mayer Hillman, Netherhall Neighbourhood Association – 29th October 2012

The main points raised were;

- Why is there a need for more student accommodation in the area?
- Why cannot the land be used for residential development?

- The potential for a taller element on the corner of Finchley Road was considered something that should be considered further.
- The idea of a ‘cultural hub’ on the lower floor was supported as a way of complementing existing arts facilities in the area.
- The sustainability of the proposed building was considered to be of prime importance and the inclusion of photovoltaic units was supported.
- There was support to improve the appearance of the bare concrete bridge frontage to Finchley Road through a creative design and use of materials

3.3. Meeting with Virginia Berridge and Mark Hutton of West Hampstead Action for Transport (WHAT) on 9th November 2012

The main points raised were;

- Why is there a need for more student accommodation in the area?
- Why cannot the land be used for residential development?
- The potential for a taller element on the corner of Finchley Road was considered something that should be considered further.
- The idea of a ‘cultural hub’ on the lower floor was supported.
- The design of the proposed building was considered to be an important consideration, particularly from the north for residents of Rosemount Road.
- The colour of the materials was also considered important and there was support for terracotta and cream.

3.4. Discussion with Natcho Laco, Chair of Frognal Court Residents’ Association

The main points raised;

- Concerned about construction noise and vibration
- Concerned about the loss of the current view across Finchley Road
- Concerned about the impact of lighting from the proposed new building on Frognal Court residents

4. Conclusion

The revised proposals for the Midland Crescent site respond to the issues raised during the public consultation by;

- A reduction in the height of the proposed building between the railway tracks
- The inclusion of ‘cultural hub’ that will provide interest and vitality, as well as helping to create new jobs and complement existing facilities in the area
- Creating a lively Finchley Road frontage to replace the existing ‘dead’ street frontage
- Improving the appearance of the bare concrete bridge frontage to Finchley Road through a creative design and use of materials