

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:		01/11/2007	
		N/A		Consultation Expiry Date:		N/A	
Officer				Application Number(s)			
Bethany Arbery				2007/4390/P			
Application Address				Drawing Numbers			
Victoria Transport Interchange Development Site Victoria Street, Buckingham Palace Road, Bressenden Place, Allington Street and Terminus Place				Refer to draft decision notice.			
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature				
Proposal(s)							
Observations to City of Westminster: Demolition of all buildings on site with the exception of Victoria Palace Theatre, Duke of York PH and Little Ben Clock and redevelopment of the site to provide new transport facilities, public spaces and pedestrian routes and mixed use development comprising offices (Class B1), retail (Classes A1-A5), residential (811 units) (Class C3), art gallery (Class D1) and cinema (Class D2).							
Recommendation(s):		No Objection					
Application Type:		Request for Observations to Adjoining Borough					
Conditions or Reasons for Refusal:		Refer to Draft Decision Notice					
Informatives:							
Consultations							
Adjoining Occupiers:		No. notified	00	No. of responses	00	No. of objections	00
				No. electronic	00		
Summary of consultation responses:		No consultations undertaken.					
CAAC/Local groups comments:		No consultations undertaken.					

Site Description

The application site is a significant area of land located north of Victoria Station. The site is bounded to the west by Buckingham Palace Road, to the north by Bressenden Place and to the east by Wilton Road/Victoria Street. The site is located within the City of Westminster, it is not an area that the Council has designated a conservation area, but there are a number of grade II listed buildings located within the site. The site is a significant distance from the boundary with the London Borough of Camden, which extends from Cambridge Circus westwards to Charterhouse Street and northwards along Charing Cross Road.

Relevant History

No relevant planning history

Relevant policies

Set out below are the UDP policies that the proposals have primarily been assessed against. However, it should be noted that recommendations are based on assessment of the proposals against the development plan taken as a whole together with other material considerations.

London Borough of Camden Unitary Development Plan (2006)

S1-17 – Strategic policies

B9 - Views

T2 – Capacity of transport provision

T5 – Transport Interchanges

Camden Planning Guidance (2006)

Assessment

It is estimated by 115 million people pass through Victoria mainline station each year. The mainline station needs to be upgraded to deal with this volume of passengers, public funding has already been secured for these works which are due to commence in 2009. The transport connections from this transport hub are considered to be equally in need of improvement. The current underground facilities are inadequate to cope with the number of existing and the predicted increase in passengers. Bus and taxi facilities also require attention. The location of the bus station immediately outside the entrance to the station also provides a significant physical barrier to the land to the north.

The land located to the north of the station falls under the ownership of land securities and Transport for London. Together they have developed joint proposals for this part of London which seek to address growing transportation needs and simultaneously provide a substantial sized commercial and residential development in Victoria.

In summary the proposal includes the demolition of all buildings within the site with the exception of the Victoria Palace Theatre, Duke of York public house and the Little Ben Clock and comprehensive redevelopment of the site to provide new transport facilities above and below ground, public spaces and pedestrian routes and a new mixed use development providing:

- 146,760 sqm of offices (Class B1);
- 36,233 sqm of retail, including the retained Duke of York PH (Class A1-A5);
- 6,298 sqm of flexible office/retail (Class B1/A1-A5)
- 1,331 sqm of art gallery/cinema space (Class D1/D2)
- 5,265 sqm of the retained Victoria Palace Theatre (Sui Generis use)
- 77,234 sqm of residential floorspace to provide up to 811 units (Class C3).

(Figures taken from Planning Statement by Moseley & Webb dated August 2007)

The scheme centres around the provision of 8 new buildings, ranging from 3 to 40 storey's in height. Buildings 2 and 7a are 40 and 39 Storey's in height respectively and seek to be 'landmarks within the development. Buildings 2 and 4 are to be located immediately in front of Victoria Station and provide a mix of residential, retail, office space and a 2-screen cinema. Building 4 will also provide access to a newly enlarged ticket area. Building 5 is to have retail on the lower floors and office accommodation above. Building 6 is similarly a mix of retail and offices, the basement of this building provides the loading area to all the buildings on the north side of Victoria Street. The buildings to the south of Victoria Street all have their own individual enclosed street level loading bays. Building 8 will replace the existing Portland House and will provide office and retail accommodation. Buildings 7A, b and c which provide retail and residential all enclose the retained theatre and pub. Two new areas of public open space are to be created within the development and improved pedestrian linkages created across the site and the surrounding area. The Central Square will be formed north of Victoria Street and Station Place on the site of the former bus station creates space south of Victoria Street.

The proposed development includes directing a significant amount of private sector funding towards transport improvements. The Victoria Transport Interchange project will provide funds for enlargement of the district and circle line ticket areas, both north and south of Victoria Street, these will also connect to the below ground retail. The district and circle line platforms will be widened to alleviate overcrowding and step free access will be provided between the street and platforms. The bus stops outside Victoria Station are to be relocated onto Vauxhall Bridge Road, Victoria Street, Buckingham Palace Road and Wilton Road, those allowing the formation of a new area of public open space. New taxi ranks would also be provided on Wilton Road and Buckingham Palace Road. The proposal includes the provision of new cycle lanes and cycle parking racks around Victoria.

In addition to the significant transport benefits to the scheme the applicant claims that the proposal will create 10,000 new jobs, a new retail hub for London and provide significant improvements to tourism. They also feel that the provision of 800 flats will assist in addressing housing demand within London.

The London Borough of Camden has been consulted on this application as an adjoining borough. Whilst the site is not located adjacent to the boundary with Camden it is a development of strategic importance in terms of transport and includes a number of tall buildings which may affect strategic views from the Borough. The proposal also raises implications for Camden in terms of land use. It is considered that all other aspects of the proposal do not directly affect Camden and should be assessed by the City of Westminster under their own Unitary Development Plan policies.

Land Use

The proposed development includes the provision of a significant amount of new retail floorspace (an increase from 15,288 to 36,233). This will support the significant growth in residents and workers within the area which would come about as a result of the proposed scheme. It will also provide facilities for the improved transport interchange and also existing residents, workers and visitors to the area.

At least 20,945 sqm of retail is to be added across Class A1-A5. It is not known how this is to be subdivided, but one assumes that flexibility is intended. The Gerald Eve Retail Impact Assessment is said to take the 'worst case scenario' in which all the floorspace is A1. A further 6,298 sqm is proposed as flexible office/retail floorspace, bring the maximum potential of Class A1 addition in the area to 27,243sqm, this is roughly equivalent to the amount of additional Class A1 floorspace which is anticipated at Kings Cross. The submitted information indicates that the area is located within Westminster's designated Central Activities Zone, which is the equivalent to Tottenham Court Road in London Borough of Camden. As such, it is considered to be an appropriate location for retail expansion, although the scale of expansion would clearly significantly increase the areas attraction as a shopping destination. The applicant states that only 2.54% of trade would be drawn from the West End. It is not readily apparent where the remainder would be drawn from, but it is suggested that up to 2016 there is 121,700 sqm of comparison need in the wider West End – including Victoria - in any event.

Given the intervening opportunities (most notably the West End) it is most unlikely that any trade would be diverted from Camden Town Centres to Victoria. It is considered that the introduction of this new retail space would not impact upon the town centres and retail function of Camden which has an established customer base and would be unlikely to compete with any new retail offered in Victoria. The London Borough of Camden does not raise any objection to this aspect of the proposal

The redevelopment scheme is to provide 811 additional residential units. All of these units are market housing. The proposal includes the provision of no on-site or off-site affordable housing; neither is a financial contribution being offered towards the provision of affordable housing elsewhere within Westminster. The applicant has justified this lack of provision on the basis that a significant financial contribution £110,000 is being made towards transport infrastructure improvements and that is twice the amount that Westminster would seek as an off-site affordable housing contribution under Policy H4 of their Unitary Development Plan (2007).

Clearly, there is a trade-off to be made between different planning benefits; however, it is hard not to see this as missed opportunity to make at least some contribution to meeting affordable housing needs within Central London. It is noted that the Mayor took a very different approach in considering development proposals for the Camden Underground site, where he indicated that affordable housing was expected in addition to costly transport infrastructure.

Whilst it is regrettable that affordable housing is not being provided, no objection is to be raised by the London Borough of Camden on this basis. It is felt that the provision, or in this case, non-provision of affordable housing is a matter for the City of Westminster to consider against national guidance and its own Unitary Development Plan policies. However, an informative should be added to the decision notice to highlight Camden's concern about the lack of provision of affordable housing.

Transportation

The sheer scale of this development will result in a significant increase in travel demand and so will have a significant impact on the local transport system. The applicant has submitted a transport assessment which covers all the criteria listed in Transport for London's '*Transport Assessment Best Practice – Guidance Document (2006)*'.

The London Borough of Camden's Highway's Department have given consideration to the Transport Assessment submitted. They are in agreement with the applicant that the present state of the existing Victoria Interchange is that of inefficiency, congestion and confusion for users. This is a result of the bus station and underground station operating at full capacity with poor road/pedestrian layout. It is considered that the proposed Victoria Transport Interchange Development in conjunction with the Victoria Station upgrade (which is to be funded by TfL and is due to begin in 2009) will improve the present situation considerably and will enhance operational efficiency, increase the capacity of each transport mode and will improve road user safety for this entire area. As a result, user travel benefits will be maximised and the surrounding environment of this area will be greatly improved.

Improvements to the underground system at Victoria which is linked to Camden via the Victoria and Circle line

are welcomed. The proposed changes to the road layout, bus station and local taxi ranks are likely to have an impact on the local road network, but given the distance of the site from Camden are unlikely to have any significant effect on Camden. The provision of new cycle lanes and cycle parking within Westminster is welcomed.

Strategic Views

It is necessary for the London Borough of Camden to consider the impact of that the proposed development would have on protected strategic views that originate in Camden. The Council seeks to preserve and enhance the qualities of panoramic views across London which originate in Camden, while also managing views towards St Paul's Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster in line with recently published London Plan Supplementary guidance 'London View Management Framework'. The proposed development is situated adjacent to and not within the viewing corridor or lateral assessment area and is not considered to unduly impact on the panorama as a whole.

In addition regard should be had to whether the proposal would harm important local views, these include views into or out of any Conservation Areas and also views from Hampstead Heath and Primrose Hill. The view which would be interrupted by the proposed development would be considered as an important local view. Policy B9B part (e) states that the Council would not grant planning permission for development that it considers causes harm to views from Hampstead Heath and Primrose Hill. The extent to which the proposed development at Victoria would 'harm' views from Camden's open spaces is not considered to be of sufficient degree to warrant opposition to the scheme.

Recommendation: No Objection