

May 2015

# Town Planning Statement

Centre Heights, 137 Finchley Road, London

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# 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 This Town Planning Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application by Anaspel Ltd for the extension and refurbishment of Centre Heights, 137 Finchley Road, and the redevelopment of its rear multi-storey car parking the London Borough of Camden (LBC). The application follows pre-application consultation with LBC Officers, and with existing and local community.

## DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

- 1.2 The application seeks full planning permission for:

*“Demolition of multi-storey car park and erection of two to five storey mews development at the rear of Centre Heights to create 11 no. residential units (8 no. 2 bed and 3 no. 3 bed) together with hard and soft landscaping; improvements to rear courtyard including hard landscaping, refuse and recycling facilities and cycle parking; two storey extension with third storey set back to the main Centre Heights building to create 5 no. residential units (3 bed) with roof gardens; relocation of 7 no. telecommunications antennae at roof level; and single storey rear extension to existing retail units to create at additional 130 sqm retail floorspace.”*

## ACCOMPANYING REPORTS

- 1.3 This statement describes the application proposals in more detail and assesses them against the relevant planning policy framework. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying specialist reports which have been prepared in support of the application. These reports include the following:

- Design and Access Statement, prepared by Levitt Bernstein Architects;
- Statement of Community Involvement, prepared by Local Dialogue;
- Land Contamination Assessment, prepared by GB Card and Partners;
- Noise Assessment, prepared by KP Acoustics;
- Air Quality Assessment, prepared by Phlorum;
- Daylight and Sunlight Assessment, prepared by Anderson Wilde & Harris;
- Draft Construction Management Plan, prepared by Anderson Wilde & Harris;

- Transport Statement, prepared by TTP Consulting;
- Sustainability and Energy Statement, prepared by Synergy;
- Sustainable Urban Drainage System Proposal, prepared by Synergy;
- Tree Survey and Impact Assessment, prepared by Landmark Trees; and
- Financial Viability Appraisal, prepared by Savills (submitted confidentially under separate cover).

#### **STRUCTURE OF THE STATEMENT**

1.4 This statement is broken down into the following chapters:

- 1) Introduction (this section);
- 2) Site and Surroundings;
- 3) Background;
- 4) The Proposed Development;
- 5) Planning Policy Context;
- 6) Planning Considerations; and
- 8) Summary and Conclusions.

1.5 The appendices referred to within the text are contained at the end of the statement.

## 2. Site and Surroundings

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- 2.1 Centre Heights is located on Finchley Road in the London Borough of Camden. It is a twelve storey tower, dating from the early 1960's; the basement and ground floors provide retail use, the next five floors (1 to 5) are being converted to a residential use and the top five storeys (6 to 10) accommodate residential units with balconies. Floors 1 to 5, and 6 to 10 are separated by a service floor. The site has an area of 0.235 ha.



Figure 1: View of Centre Heights from Finchley Road

- 2.2 The retail units front onto Finchley Road at street level and are occupied by various high street retail tenants.
- 2.3 To the rear of the main twelve storey tower is a three storey car park (see Figure 2 below), accessed from the south via Belsize Road. The site slopes downwards from Finchley Road to the rear.



Figure 2: View of rear multi-storey car park

2.4 The site is bound:

- To the south by Station House, a seven storey building under residential conversion, and Swiss Terrace, a nine storey residential building;
- To the west by Hickee House, a seven storey residential building;
- To the north by Campden House, a seven storey residential building, and Harrold House, a four storey building comprising of ground floor retail and three storey residential above; and
- To the east by Finchley Road.



Figure 3: View of Campden House & Hickee House from Centre Heights

- 2.5 The immediately surrounding area is densely developed, consisting of a mix of uses including residential, office, and retail floorspace.
- 2.6 Centre Heights is not listed statutorily or locally and the site is not located within a Conservation Area.
- 2.7 The Belsize Park Conservation Area is located approximately 120m to the east of Centre Heights, the Fitzjohns Netherhall Conservation is located approximately 140m to the north of Centre Heights and the South Hampstead Conservation Area is located approximately 250m to the west of Centre Heights.
- 2.8 The Northways Corner designated open space is located approximately 50 metres to the east of Centre Heights, across Finchley Road.
- 2.9 Centre Heights itself is located within the Finchley Road / Swiss Cottage Town Centre. Finchley Road, to which Centre Heights fronts and along which the town centre extends, is characterised by a range of ground floor retail uses above which are varying heights of residential accommodation.

- 2.10 Beyond Centre Heights, to the west, is an area dominated by residential land uses. Belsize Road to the west is characterised by three-storey terraced dwellings and detached family dwellings, whilst Dobson Close to the south accommodates four-storey residential units.
- 2.11 The site has an excellent Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) rating of 6a (where 1 relates to the least accessible sites, and 6b relates to the most accessible sites), owing to easy access to public transport services, with a number of stations within walking distance of the site. Swiss Cottage Station (Jubilee London Underground line) is located adjacent to the site, to the south approximately 20m to the east of the site by foot. South Hampstead Train Station is located 400m walking distance from the site, providing services south to London Euston and north to Watford Junction.
- 2.12 The nearest bus stops are situated immediately adjacent to the site, on Finchley Road. These stops give access to a number of bus routes and destinations, including Marble Arch, Victoria, Central Middlesex Hospital, Archway, Aldwych and Golders Green.
- 2.13 Local community services include Swiss Cottage Community Centre, Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre and Belsize Library. A number of schools are situated locally, including The Phoenix School, South Hampstead High School, Swiss Cottage School and UCL Academy.
- 2.14 The application site is located within an area identified within the Camden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2014) as being located with an area which is not deficient of open or play space. The nearest publically accessible open space is located across Finchley Road, at Eton Avenue, Northways Corner and Swiss Cottage Open Space.
- 2.15 The site is located within Flood Zone 1.



## 3. Background

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- 3.1 This section provides a summary of the relevant planning history followed by a brief description of the consultation undertaken by the project team prior to the submission of the application. Further details about the consultation are provided in the Statement of Community Involvement.

### **PLANNING HISTORY**

#### **External Works to the Residential Entrance on Belsize Road (January 2015)**

- 3.2 Full planning permission was granted on 20 January 2015 for external works to the residential entrance on Belsize Road (LBC ref: 2014/7558/P), specifically for:

*“External works to the residential entrance on Belsize Road including re-cladding of the steps and planter, replacement of the existing handrail, replacement of the door and lighting; removal of existing plant; redecoration of canopy and repair of the existing fire escape door and external painted areas.”*

- 3.3 The proposals were to refurbish and improve the appearance of the external residential entrance area from Belsize Road and improve the existing residents’ day to day experience of their building.

#### **Prior Approval for Change of Use from Office to Residential (October 2014)**

- 3.4 Prior approval, under Class J of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 1995 (as amended), was granted on 16 October 2014 (LBC ref: 2014/5567/P) for the:

*“Change of use of 1st to 5th floors from office (Class B1a) to 35 residential units (Class C3) comprising 15 x Studio and 20 x 1-bedroom flats.”*

- 3.5 Prior approval was granted for the conversion of the existing office floors of Centre Heights to be converted to residential use. Prior approval was granted subject to condition requiring cycle parking to be provided for the new residential units. The conversion works currently being carried out.

#### **Prior Approval for Change of Use from Office to Residential (July 2014)**

- 3.6 Prior approval, under Class J of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 1995 (as amended), was granted on 2 July 2014 for the

conversion of each of the five office floors to residential use (LBC refs: 2014/3147/P; 2014/3148/P; 2014/3158/P; 2014/3159/P & 2014/3160/P) as follows:

*“Change of use of the ...floor from office (Class B1) to 7 residential units of 3 x studio, 4 x 1-bed flats (Class C3)”.*

- 3.7 Prior approval was granted for the conversion of the existing office floors of Centre Heights to residential use. Prior approval was granted subject to condition requiring the submission of a Construction Management Statement. The conversion works currently being carried out.

#### **Redevelopment of Multi-Storey Car Park to the Rear (March 2009)**

- 3.8 An application for the demolition and redevelopment of the multi-storey car park to the rear of Centre Heights was made in January 2009 (LBC ref: 2008/5520/P), specifically for the:

*“Erection of a building comprising basement, ground and first to third floor to provide 9 residential units (3 x 3-bedroom and 6 x 2-bedroom) with 17 car parking spaces (contract car parking) and 12 bicycle parking spaces at basement level (following demolition of existing multi-storey car park).”*

- 3.9 The application was refused on 12 March 2009, and subsequently appealed by the former owners of the site (ref: APP/X5210/A/09/2108402). A copy of the Inspector's decision is provided at Appendix 1. The Inspector considered the main issues in the appeal were:

- a) Whether provision should be made for affordable housing;
- b) Whether there would be an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes; and
- c) The effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of the occupiers of Campden House in terms of daylight and sunlight.

- 3.10 The Inspector dismissed the appeal on issue (a) alone as he saw no reason why in principle a suitably designed scheme for at least 10 dwellings could not be accommodated satisfactorily on the site; and therefore provision could have been made for affordable housing. As no such provision was made, the proposed development would be contrary to Policy (paras. 7-8). The proposal was for a mix of 2 and 3 bedroom units.

- 3.11 In respect of issue (b), notwithstanding the finding that the site had the capacity to accommodate more dwellings, the Inspector was satisfied that the proposal would result in an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes (para. 9).

3.12 In respect of issue (c), the Inspector was satisfied that the Daylight Sunlight Assessment had been undertaken in accordance with the BRE good practice guidance. Taking into account the relative height and position of the existing and proposed buildings on the site, along with the generally enclosed nature of the immediate locality, the Inspector considered that the findings of the Assessment were valid. Whilst there may be a modest effect on the amount of daylight and sunlight experienced from some of the windows in Campden House, this was not likely to be to the extent of causing significant harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of the flats concerned. The proposed development was therefore acceptable in this respect (para. 10).

3.13 In relation to other matters in the appeal, the Inspector identified the following in his decision:

- Given the position, height and design of the proposed building, and taking account of existing circumstances, it would not result in significant harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of surrounding dwellings in terms of sunlight, daylight, outlook or privacy, subject to an appropriate condition relating to the use of obscure glazing where necessary (para. 17).
- The immediate locality is already densely developed and he considered that the proposed building would not alter the overall built form to a significant extent. In the Inspectors view, the existing car park has a rather drab and unattractive appearance. The proposed building would add visual interest, without being unduly dominant (para. 18).
- The development would contribute to the supply of housing in the Borough, making use of previously developed land close to local services and good public transport links (para. 21).

#### **Application to List the Building (February 2015)**

3.14 In May 2014, an application for the statutory heritage listing of Centre Heights was submitted to English Heritage. As part of this application, consultation was undertaken with the applicant, the owners of the building and their representative, the local planning authority and the Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER).

3.15 The decision on the application for listing was issued by English Heritage on 12 February 2105. The decision states:

*“We have taken into account all the representations made and completed our assessment of the building. Having considered our recommendation, the Secretary of*

*State for Culture, Media and Sport has decided not to add Centre Heights to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.*

- 3.16 To inform the consideration of the application for listing, English Heritage prepared an advice report (attached at Appendix 2) for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. This states:

*“After examining all the records and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for listing are not fulfilled.”*

#### **PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION**

- 3.17 The importance of pre-application engagement and front loading is emphasised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012), highlighting that there is significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties through early engagement. At paragraph 188 the NPPF states:

*“Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”*

- 3.18 The NPPF encourages local planning authorities to encourage developers to engage with them prior to the submission of a planning application. In addition, it encourages engagement with local communities.

- 3.19 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2014) also encourages pre-application engagement. It states that the approach to pre-application engagement needs to be tailored to the nature of the proposed development and the issues to be addressed (Ref ID: 20-001-20150326). Having regard to this clear guidance, the applicant began pre-application discussions with LBC Officers at an early stage of the design process in December 2013. The applicant has also entered into a Planning Performance Agreement for the proposed development with LBC.

- 3.20 The pre-application engagement and consultation undertaken by the applicant has been extensive and is detailed within the supporting Statement of Community Involvement. The process led to an iterative design process as explained within the Design and Access Statement. A summary of the pre-application engagement and consultation is provided below.

#### **Consultation with the Local Planning Authority**

- 3.21 The scheme has been developed in light of extensive pre-application discussions held with Planning, Design and Transport Officers at LBC. Requests for pre-application advice were

made in December 2013, September 2014 and April 2015 and meetings were held with Planning, Design and Transport Officers at the Council's Planning Department on 26 September 2013 and 27 January 2014. Written responses were issued by LBC on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2014 and 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2014. Following the meetings, dialogue continued with Officers as the design developed.

- 3.22 The development proposals have evolved significantly since conception and a significant amount of work has been undertaken by the design team, as far as it is feasible, to address the comments made by Officers. A summary of the design evolution and an explanation of how the scheme has evolved to take account of the consultation process is provided in the Design and Access Statement.

#### **Consultation with the Existing Residents**

- 3.23 The project team has prioritised engagement with both residents and leaseholders of the Centre Heights building from the beginning of the project, ensuring that they have been fully aware of the consultation process and the details of the proposals throughout. With regards to the proposed refurbishment of Centre Heights, direct engagement with residents and leaseholders has previously included a series of emails, phone calls, letters and exhibitions held in December 2014 and January 2015 in the lobby of Centre Heights.
- 3.24 The project team remains in contact with residents and leaseholders and further details of this process and outcomes are provided within the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement.

#### **Consultation with the Local Community**

- 3.25 With regard to the current proposals, consultation has been undertaken with the local community in March – April 2015.
- 3.26 Over 1,000 consultation leaflets were distributed to local households, businesses, councillors and community groups in March 2015. The information leaflet included the proposals, an invitation to visit the public exhibition and also provided a consultation telephone number, email address and Freepost address for stakeholders to leave feedback with the consultation team. In addition, letters and emails were sent to key local stakeholders, including local councillors, schools, residents associations and amenity groups. There has been ongoing dialogue with residents of the building as well as a well-publicised consultation hotline, email address and Freepost address for stakeholders to get in touch.
- 3.27 A staffed public exhibition was undertaken in the afternoon and evening of 31st March 2015.

The proposals were put on display for all members of the community to view at the Swiss Cottage Community Centre which is located across Finchley Road from Centre Heights. The project team were present to answer questions from attendees and record feedback.

- 3.28 The exhibition was attended by local residents, existing residents of Centre Heights, local business personnel and a local councillor. The feedback captured during the consultation is detailed in the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement. The proposals for the building were generally well received. Concerns raised by the local community have been responded to and fed into evolution of the proposals and the preparation of the planning application.

## 4. Proposed Development

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- 4.1 The proposed scheme is designed by award winning London-based architects, Levitt Bernstein Architects (LBA), who have been involved with a series of high profile, high quality development projects in London.
- 4.2 The proposals seek to significantly enhance the appearance of the building through refurbishment and appropriate extensions which will help to improve its appearance and help to optimise the potential of this brownfield site. The proposal includes the erection of a roof extension to the existing Centre Heights building, to provide 5 residential units, and the demolition and redevelopment of the existing multi-storey car park to the rear, to provide a further 11 residential units. A small-scale retail extension to the rear is also proposed to enhance the retail offer which fronts onto Finchley Road.
- 4.3 The proposals form part of a wider refurbishment which seeks to provide high quality residential dwellings, whilst fully optimising the development potential of brownfield land.
- 4.4 Full details of the proposed development are included within the Design and Access Statement and Application Drawings. This section provides a summary of the scheme.

### **REFURBISHMENT OF CENTRE HEIGHTS**

- 4.5 Externally, an extensive programme of improvement works to the building envelope are proposed that includes concrete repairs to address the poor physical condition of the exterior, re-decoration, building envelope improvements generally, upgrade of the residential entrance on Belsize Road, and further aesthetic enhancements that draw all the elements of the projects into a coherent whole.
- 4.6 The concrete finish forms a strong part of the building's character. As well as repairs in certain areas, it is proposed to apply a specialist protective coating to the concrete to enhance the longevity of the concrete finish and addressing the discolouration of the concrete that has occurred over time. A similar treatment has recently been successfully applied to the Brunswick Centre, also located within the London Borough of Camden.
- 4.7 As detailed in section 3 of this statement, planning permission has recently been granted for refurbishment works to the existing residential entrance to Centre Heights from Belsize Road. This application proposes to build on that refurbishment work by proposing the creation of a new covered residential entrance with glass doors inset from the building. This further enhancement to the entrance will result in a more accessible and secure street frontage.

4.8 To similarly upgrade the building, extensive internal refurbishment works are also to take place which do not require planning permission. These works seek to improve the common areas throughout, the creation of a secure lobby with improved lighting, a concierge desk and back office. The existing windows on floors 1 to 5 are also being replaced, again these replacement works do not require planning permission.

## HOUSING

4.9 The development will deliver a total of 16 new residential units in a mix of two and three bedroom units, with 5 no. 3-bed duplex units within the two storey roof extension to Centre Heights and 3 no. 3 bed and 8 no. 2 bed mews units to the rear. The proposed housing mix is set out in the table below:

Unit Size	Number
Two bed	8
Three bed	8
Total	16

4.10 All homes have been designed to meet the Mayor's minimum space standards, Housing SPG and Lifetime Homes standards. 10% of the units have been designed to be wheelchair accessible or adaptable.

4.11 An assessment of financial viability is being undertaken to determine the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing. This will be submitted to LBC under separate cover.

## RETAIL

4.12 The proposals seek to extend the retail floorspace with a 130.2 sqm retail extension to the rear of the existing Lloyds Bank unit. The extension of the retail space will provide a unit that is more able to meet the needs of existing and future occupiers, taking account of modern retailing operational requirements.

## DESIGN AND LAYOUT

4.13 The site fronts onto Finchley Road, with the twelve storey Centre Heights building stepping



back above the retail plinth westwards towards Belsize Road.

- 4.14 The proposals seek a two storey extension to the existing building, fronting Finchley Road, to provide five units of duplex accommodation. The massing of the roof extension has been developed to express it as a distinct element with a set back at the lower of the two new storeys in order to articulate a visual separation from the existing building. Roof gardens are proposed above the top floor and these are individually accessed from each apartment.
- 4.15 The redevelopment of the existing multi-storey car park to the rear of Centre Heights to provide 11 no. residential mews development will be erected within the existing car park footprint. The mews proposal will rise from two storeys on the western part of the site, to five storeys on the east.
- 4.16 The mews dwellings will be erected in a crescent shape, orientated southwards, with each unit facing into a central landscaped courtyard. The mews courtyard and roof gardens provide amenity space for these residents.
- 4.17 This courtyard layout has been designed to enhance the existing urban grain and provide a large proportion of units with access from street level. The positioning of key circulation routes across the development encourages movement through the courtyard generating activity, a feeling of safety and interaction between the new mews residents community.
- 4.18 Individual block heights have been informed through the study of the townscape responding to the varying heights of surrounding buildings, and also having regard to the need to protect the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. This has created a design which features a series of interlocking levels allowing for generous amenity areas for adjoining flats. Activity at a range of levels enlivens is previously developed constrained site.
- 4.19 The materials palette draws references from the existing context, with the roof-top extension comprising cementitious sheet cladding and glazing to complement the concrete building. The mews will comprise a brick exterior, with standing seam cladding used on the upper storeys of the internal face of the mews, and glazing panels.
- 4.20 Hard and soft landscaping is proposed for the access road, rear courtyard and mews courtyard. Further details are provided in the Design and Access Statement.

#### **DENSITY**

- 4.21 The existing residential density of the site comprises 540 habitable rooms per hectare (hrph) when including the residential conversion underway. The proposed development will increase

this to 787 hrph.

### **AMENITY SPACE**

- 4.22 Amenity space will be provided for each of the new residential units in the form of private and/or communal space.
- 4.23 Each of the new duplex units on the roof of Centre Heights will be provided with a generous private 30 sqm roof garden. In addition, each penthouse will have access to an eleventh floor balcony facing onto Finchley Road, and a twelfth storey balcony to the rear.
- 4.24 Within the mews development, all but one of the dwellings will have access to private amenity space in the form of balconies or roof gardens. The communal courtyard also provides approximately 150 sqm of amenity space for these units.

### **ACCESS, PARKING AND SERVICING**

- 4.25 The application site is highly accessible and has a PTAL 6a rating being located within close proximity of Swiss Cottage Underground Station, for which an entrance is located to the front of the residential entrance on Belsize Road, and also to the front of Centre Heights on Finchley Road. Numerous other transport links are available in the vicinity of the site. The proposed development will therefore be car-free and thus there are no areas of car parking proposed, other than 1 no. wheelchair accessible parking space. The space is accessible to the units in Centre Heights via lift and accessible to the mews.
- 4.26 Pedestrian access to the new homes will be from the residential entrance and access way from Belsize Road. Following completion of the office to residential conversion, the entrance on Finchley Road will also provide a residential access into the building. Within the mews, front doors are provided to some of the new homes, with others accessed off a residential core.
- 4.27 Cyclists could access the site from the improved access on Belsize Road, or from the residential entrances. Secure cycle parking for the penthouses will be provided internally within the main building. Additional parking will be provided within the rear courtyard for the retail users of the new extension. Secure cycle parking for the mews development is to be provided within the mews courtyard. 35 cycle parking space will be provided across the two parking areas for the residential and retail extension accommodation.
- 4.28 38 cycle parking spaces will be relocated from the multi-storey car park into the Centre Heights building.

- 4.29 Refuse and recycling provision for the penthouses will provide within the existing refuse store. An additional store is provided adjacent to the access from Belsize Road for the mews homes.
- 4.30 Retail delivery and servicing arrangements will stay as existing, with access to the rear of the Finchley Road retail units from Belsize Road.

#### **SUSTAINABILITY AND ENERGY**

- 4.31 The application proposes the introduction of energy efficiency measures, a communal VRV heat pump and photovoltaic panels to provide carbon reductions and on-site generation of renewable electricity.
- 4.32 Photovoltaic panels are proposed on the lantern roofs above the penthouses, whilst the mews flats have been modelled with waste water heat recovery to reduce the number of photovoltaic panels on the penthouse roof.
- 4.33 Green roofs are proposed on the Centre Heights roof, inaccessible from but adjacent to the penthouses' roof terrace, and a sustainable urban drainage proposal has been prepared by Synergy.
- 4.34 Further details are contained within the accompanying Sustainability and Energy Statement, and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Proposal, prepared by Synergy.

#### **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

- 4.35 Existing telecommunications equipment (7 no. antenna) located on the roof of Centre Heights is to be appropriately relocated. Further details are provided in the Design and Access Statement and Application Drawings.

## 5. Planning Policy Framework

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5.1 Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:

*“where in making any determination under the planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.*

5.2 The Development Plan for the site comprises the London Plan (2015, consolidated with amendments since 2011); the London Borough of Camden Core Strategy (adopted November 2010), and the Development Policies Document adopted in November 2010. Material considerations include; the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); Planning Practice Guidance (PPG); regional and local supplementary planning guidance/documents; emerging policy and guidance, and site specific circumstances.

### **NATIONAL POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

#### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

5.3 The NPPF was published in March 2012. The Ministerial Foreword of the NPPF says that the purpose of planning is *“to help achieve sustainable development”*, which should work to enhance and improve the places in which we live. In defining sustainable development, the NPPF refers to the UN General Assembly’s definition which is set out below:

*“meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.*

5.4 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF sets out three dimensions of sustainable development: supporting a strong, responsive and competitive economy; strong, vibrant and healthy communities and protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment. Paragraph 15 highlights that Local Plan policies should follow the approach of the presumption of sustainable development, whilst paragraph 197 confirms that the presumption needs to be central to the decision-making process.

#### Sustainable Development

5.5 One of the overarching objectives of the NPPF is the encouragement of growth and acknowledgement that decision-makers should adopt a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Government expects the planning system to deliver the homes, business, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs, while protecting and enhancing

the natural and historic environment.

- 5.6 The use of brownfield land is encouraged in paragraph 17 of the NPPF. The 11<sup>th</sup> bullet-point under paragraph 17 (Core Planning Principles) refers to managing patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling. Paragraph 34 supports this assertion.
- 5.7 Paragraph 111 goes on to say that the “*effective use*” of such land should be encouraged, provided it is not of high environmental value.

#### Competitive Economy

- 5.8 The NPPF, at *Building a strong, competitive economy*, states that the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity. It further requests that investment in business should not be over-burdened by the combined requirements of planning policy expectations and that planning policies should recognise and seek to address potential barriers to investment, including a poor environment or any lack of infrastructure, services or housing.

#### Retail

- 5.9 The NPPF, at *Ensuring the vitality of town centres*, seeks to protect and enhance competitive town centre environments, and seeks to recognise town centres as the heart of their communities.

#### Transport

- 5.10 The thrust of the NPPF in respect of transport is that development should not be refused on transportation grounds unless the impacts are severe, according to Paragraph 32. The document places an emphasis on encouraging sustainable transport modes.

#### Housing

- 5.11 The NPPF, at *Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes*, seeks to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. It states that the planning system should deliver sufficient housing in suitable locations, making efficient and effective use of land.
- 5.12 Paragraph 9 of the NPPF makes it clear that “*improving the conditions in which people live*” and “*widening the choice of high quality homes*” are central to achieving sustainable development. Housing supply is another key issue which is central to the NPPF. The 2<sup>nd</sup>

bullet point of paragraph 7 states that it is one of the responsibilities of planning to provide “the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations”.

5.13 Paragraph 47 identifies boosting significantly the supply of housing as a key objective for local authorities.

5.14 Paragraph 50 states that to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, planning authorities should:

*“plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community”.*

### Design

5.15 The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Paragraph 56 of the NPPF states that “good design is a key aspect of sustainable development” and that it should “contribute positively to making places better for people”. Therefore, paragraph 64 states:

*“In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the area”.*

### Planning and Climate Change

5.16 The NPPF, at *Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change*, sets out how planning should contribute to reducing emissions and stabilising climate change. The Framework promotes designing environmental performance into proposed development and planning approval for applications where environmental impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

### Planning and the Historic Environment

5.17 The NPPF, at *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, requires planning applications to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.

### **Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)**

5.18 On the 6th March 2014 the DCLG launched the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The PPG replaces the majority of previous planning practice guidance, consolidating it and providing it as an online resource. The PPG sits alongside the NPPF, and it provides the most up-to-date

guidance on national planning policy.

- 5.19 The PPG encourages high quality design and states that, *“local planning authorities should give great weight to outstanding or innovative designs which help to raise the standard to design more generally in the area.”* [ref ID: 26-004-20140306]
- 5.20 The PPG provides guidance on a range of policy issues, including in relation to: air quality, climate change, the historic environment, design, housing, contamination, transport, planning conditions, obligations and viability.
- 5.21 The PPG [ref ID: 2b-001-20140306] requires local planning authorities to plan positively to support town centres and generate local employment, promote beneficial competition within and between town centre and create attractive, diverse places where people want to live, visit and work.

## **REGIONAL POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

### **The London Plan (2015, consolidated with alterations since 2011)**

- 5.22 The London Plan provides a planning policy framework for London and was adopted in July 2011. Revised Early Minor Alterations to the London Plan were adopted in 2013. Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP) were prepared to address the key housing and employment issues emerging from an analysis of census data released since the publication of the London Plan in July 2011. These were adopted in March 2015.
- 5.23 The Finchley Road / Swiss Cottage Centre, within which the application site is located, is designated as a District Centre within the London Plan.

#### Sustainable Development

- 5.24 Planning policies set out in the London Plan promote sustainable development. Policy 2.1 (London in its Global, European and United Kingdom Context) provides support for the development of London in ways that secure the plan’s social, environmental and economic objectives.

#### Housing

- 5.25 Policy 3.3 (Increasing Housing Supply) identifies a need to provide 42,000 net additional homes across London between 2015 and 2025, including an annual monitoring target for Camden of 889 net additional dwellings, a ten year requirement of 8,892. The updated annual target increased by 33% from 665 net additional dwellings in the 2011 London Plan.

5.26 Policy 3.4 (Optimising Housing Potential) states that development proposals that compromise the policy to optimise housing output taking account of local context and character, design principles and public transport capacity should be resisted. The policy justification states at paragraph 3.29 that:

*“While there is usually scope to provide a mix of dwelling types in different locations, higher density provision for smaller households should be focused on areas with good public transport accessibility...”*

5.27 Table 3.2 provides a guidance density range for this Urban site of 200-700 hrph or 45-260 uph. However, paragraph 3.28 confirms that *“It is not appropriate to apply Table 3.2 mechanistically.”*

5.28 Policy 3.5 (Quality and Design of Housing Developments) states that new housing should enhance the quality of local places and should incorporate minimum space standards in general conformity with Table 3.3.

5.29 Policy 3.8 (Housing Choice) requires housing development to offer a range of housing choices, in terms of the mix of housing sizes and types, taking account of the housing requirements of different groups. This policy also requires all new housing to be built to Lifetime Homes standards and 10% of new housing to be designed to be wheelchair accessible or easily adaptable for residents who are wheelchair users. The provision of play space is encouraged through Policy 3.6 (Children and Young People’s Play and Informal Recreation).

#### Affordable Housing

5.30 Policy 3.11 (Affordable Housing Targets) states that 60% of the affordable housing provision should be for social rent and 40% for intermediate rent or sale, and that priority should be given to family housing. The policy allows boroughs to set separate targets for social rented and intermediate housing.

5.31 Policy 3.12 (Negotiating Affordable Housing on Individual Private Residential and Mixed Use Schemes) requires development to deliver the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing whilst having regard to a number of factors, including current and future requirements for affordable housing; affordable housing targets; the need to encourage rather than restrain residential development; the need to promote mixed and balanced communities; the size and type of affordable housing needed in particular locations; and the individual circumstances of a site for example the developments viability and the availability of public subsidy.



- 5.32 Boroughs should require affordable housing provision on sites which have the capacity to provide 10 or more homes, as stated in Policy 3.13 (Affordable housing thresholds).

#### Retail

- 5.33 Policy 4.7 (Retail and town centre development) states that retail, commercial, culture and leisure development should be focused on sites within town centres.

#### Transport

- 5.34 Chapter 6 of the London Plan provides policies on highways and transport matters. Policy 6.9 (Cycling), Policy 6.10 (Walking) and Policy 6.13 (Parking), all promote sustainable travel behaviour through encouraging measures to promote walking, cycling and by setting maximum parking standards. Table 6.3 outlines the minimum cycle parking standards.

#### Sustainability

- 5.35 The Mayor expects all development to make the fullest contribution to the mitigation of climate change. Policy 5.2 (Minimising Carbon Dioxide Emissions) requires that development proposals follow the energy hierarchy: 1) Be lean: use less energy, 2) Be clean: supply energy efficiently, and 3) Be green: use renewable energy. Policy 5.3 (Sustainable Design and Construction) states that development proposals should demonstrate that sustainable design standards are integral to the proposal. In accordance with Policy 5.6 (Decentralised Energy in Development Proposals), the feasibility of Combined Heat and Power (CHP) systems should be evaluated for development proposals. Policy 5.7 (Renewable Energy) requires the provision of on-site renewable energy generation where feasible to provide a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, and Policy 5.9 (Overheating and cooling) states that particular attention should be paid to the use of passive solar design and natural ventilation in developments.
- 5.36 Policy 5.10 (Urban Greening) states that development proposals should integrate green infrastructure to contribute to urban greening. This can include tree planting, green roofs and soft landscaping. Policy 5.11 (Green Roofs and Development Site Environs) states that major development proposals should be designed to include roof, wall and site planting in order to mitigate climate change. Policy 5.12 (Flood Risk Management) and Policy 5.13 (Sustainable Drainage) relate to national flood risk assessment requirements and the need to utilise sustainable urban drainage systems within development proposals.
- 5.37 Policy 5.14 (Water Quality and Wastewater Infrastructure) outlines that development proposals must ensure that adequate wastewater infrastructure capacity is available with

development. Policy 5.15 (Water Use and Supplies) outlines that new development should have proper regard to the impact of the proposals on water demand and existing capacity by minimising the use of treated water and minimising rainwater-harvesting opportunities. In accordance with Policy 5.17 (Waste Capacity), suitable waste and recycling storage facilities should be provided in all new developments.

### Design

- 5.38 Policy 7.1 (Lifetime Neighbourhoods) states that development should be designed so that the layout, tenure and mix of uses interface with surrounding land and improve people's access to employment opportunities, commercial services and public transport. New buildings and the spaces they create should help reinforce or enhance the character, legibility, permeability and accessibility of the neighbourhood; and should meet the principles of lifetime neighbourhoods. In accordance with Policy 7.2 (An Inclusive Environment) development proposals should take account of the principles of inclusive design.
- 5.39 Development should reduce the opportunities for criminal behaviour and contribute to a sense of security without being overbearing or intimidating, in accordance with Policy 7.3 (Designing Out Crime). Policy 7.13 (Safety, Security and Resilience to Emergency) also requires development proposals to include measures to design out crime.
- 5.40 Policy 7.4 (Local Character) requires development to provide a high quality design response having regard to the pattern and grain of existing spaces and streets; the urban structure and the surrounding historic environment.
- 5.41 Policy 7.5 (Public Realm) supports development that enhances the public realm.
- 5.42 Policy 7.6 (Architecture) says that new development should be of the highest architectural quality, whilst also being of an appropriate proportion and scale so as not to cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of surrounding land and buildings, especially where these are in residential use. The policy requires development to optimise the potential of sites.
- 5.43 Tall and large buildings should generally be limited to sites in the Central Activities Zone, opportunity areas, areas of intensification or town centres that have good access to public transport. As stated in Policy 7.7 (Location and Design of Tall and Large Buildings) tall and large buildings should not adversely affect an area's character in terms of scale, mass or bulk. They should relate well to the character and context of the surrounding area, and improve the legibility of an area. Furthermore, they should incorporate the highest standards of design and where possible make a significant contribution to local regeneration.

5.44 Development proposals should also be devised taking account of Policy 7.14 (Improving Air Quality) and 7.15 (Reducing Noise and Enhancing Soundscapes).

5.45 Policy 7.21 (Trees and woodlands) seeks to retain existing trees and states that any loss as a result of development should be replaced following the principles of 'right tree, right place'.

#### **GLA Supplementary Planning Guidance**

5.46 The Mayor has produced a number of supplementary planning guidance (SPG) documents that have been considered in the preparation of the development proposals. These are listed below:

- Accessible London: Achieving an Inclusive Environment SPG (October 2014);
- Draft Social Infrastructure SPG (May 2014);
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPG (April 2014);
- Shaping Neighbourhoods: Character and Context SPG (June 2014);
- London Planning Statement SPG (May 2014);
- Housing SPG (November 2012); and
- Shaping Neighbourhoods: Play and Informal Recreation SPG (September 2012).

5.47 The Mayor of London CIL Charging Schedule (2012) is also applicable to this proposal. The rate of this varies across London but in Camden it has been set at £50 per sqm of net increase in floorspace.

#### **LOCAL POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

5.48 The Local Plan for LB Camden comprises of the Camden Core Strategy (2010) and Development Policies (2010).

5.49 LB Camden has initiated a review of its Development Plan. The Draft Local Plan was released for consultation between 16 February and 17 April 2015, and sets out the key elements of the vision for the Borough and, upon adoption will replace the Camden Core Strategy (2010) and Development Policies (2010).

5.50 Given the embryonic stages of the Local Plan's evolution, no weight can be afforded to its provisions, in accordance with paragraph 216 of the NPPF.

## **LBC Core Strategy (2010)**

- 5.51 The London Borough of Camden's Core Strategy (CS) was adopted on 8 November 2010 and sets out a plan for development for the borough until 2025.
- 5.52 The site is designated in the Core Strategy Proposals Map as being within the Finchley Road / Swiss Cottage Town Centre.
- 5.53 The Belsize Park Conservation Area is located approximately 120m to the east of Centre Heights, the Fitzjohns Netherhall Conservation is located approximately 140m to the north of Centre Heights and the South Hampstead Conservation Area is located approximately 250m to the west of Centre Heights.
- 5.54 The Northways Corner designated open space is located approximately 50 metres to the east of Centre Heights, across Finchley Road.

### Location of Development

- 5.55 Policy CS1 (Distribution of growth) states that LBC will focus Camden's growth in the most suitable locations, and manage it to make sure that they deliver its opportunities and benefits and achieve sustainable development, while continuing to preserve and enhance the features that make Camden such an attractive place to live, work and visit.
- 5.56 Appropriate development at highly accessible locations, in particular Central London and the town centres of Camden Town, Finchley Road/Swiss Cottage, Kentish Town, Kilburn High Road and West Hampstead will be promoted.
- 5.57 This policy further states that the Council will promote the most efficient use of land and buildings in Camden by seeking development that makes full use of its site, taking into account quality of design, its surroundings, sustainability, amenity, heritage, transport accessibility and any other considerations relevant to the site.
- 5.58 Policy CS5 (Managing the impact of growth and development) seeks to protect the amenity of Camden's residents by balancing the needs of the development with that of the local social and environmental context.

### Housing

- 5.59 Policy CS6 (Providing quality homes) sets out the desire of the Council to provide 8,925 homes between 2010 and 2025.

5.60 Paragraph 32 identifies the Core Strategy's Strategic Objectives, within which housing is identified as the priority land use and this is reiterated within Policy CS6.

#### Affordable Housing

5.61 Policy CS6 (Providing quality homes) states that the Council will aim to secure high quality affordable housing available for Camden by seeking to ensure that 50% of the borough-wide target for additional self-contained homes is provided as affordable housing.

5.62 In identifying the affordable housing requirements of individual proposals, LBC will seek to negotiate a contribution on the basis of the maximum reasonable amount, having regard to the site specific circumstances and financial viability.

5.63 The target level of provision is identified as 50% of the total additional housing floorspace, of which 60% are to be social rented housing and 40% intermediate housing.

#### Retail

5.64 Core Strategy Policy CS7 (Promoting Camden's centres and shops) seeks to protect and enhance Camden's centres by ensuring that new development is of an appropriate scale and character.

#### Access and Transport

5.65 Policy CS11 (Promoting sustainable and efficient travel) states that the Council will promote the delivery of transport infrastructure and the availability of sustainable transport choices in order to support Camden's growth, reduce the environmental impact of travel, and relieve pressure on the Borough's transport network.

5.66 As part of its approach to minimising congestion and addressing the environmental impacts of travel, the Council will minimise provision for private parking in new developments, in particular through:

- car free developments in the Borough's most accessible locations; and
- car capped developments.

#### Climate Change

5.67 Policy CS13 (Tackling climate change through promoting higher environmental standards) requires all development to take measures to minimise the effects of climate change, by:

- Ensuring patterns of land use that minimise the need to travel by car and help support local energy networks;
- Promoting efficient use of land and buildings; and
- Minimising carbon emissions from the redevelopment, construction and occupation of buildings by ensuring development use less energy, making use of energy efficient resources such as decentralised energy networks, and generating renewable energy on-site; and ensuring buildings are designed to cope with and minimise climate change.

#### Design and Conservation

5.68 Policy CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage) requires development to respect local context and character; preserve and enhance Camden's heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas, listed buildings, archaeological remains, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens; provide high quality landscaping and works to streets and public spaces; seek the highest standards of access; and protect London's significant views.

#### **LBC Development Policies (2010)**

5.69 Camden's Development Policies (DP) set out detailed planning considerations that are used to determine applications for planning permission in the Borough. The following policies are considered most relevant to this application:

#### Housing

5.70 The Council will seek to maximise the supply of additional homes in the Borough, especially homes for people unable to access market housing, by expecting the maximum appropriate contribution to supply of housing on sites that are underused or vacant, taking into account any other uses that are needed on the site, as detailed in Policy DP2 (Making full use of Camden's capacity for housing).

5.71 All housing development should meet lifetime homes standards. 10% of homes developed should either meet wheelchair housing standards, or be easily adapted to meet them.

#### Density

5.72 The Development Policies Documents, at Policy DP2 (Making full use of Camden's capacity for housing), requires new developments to adhere to the density ranges set out in the London Plan, and to be towards the higher end of the appropriate density range.

5.73 It further states that for Camden, in accordance with the London Plan, density ranges should generally fall within 45 – 405 dwellings per hectare.

Affordable Housing

5.74 As stated in Policy DP3 (Contributions to the supply of affordable housing) the Council will expect all residential developments with a capacity for 10 or more additional dwellings to make a contribution to the supply of affordable housing.

5.75 On sites capable of providing 10+ residential units a contribution to affordable housing will be expected. This is calculated on a sliding scale, from 10% provision for 10 units to 50% provision for 50 units.

5.76 LBC will negotiate the affordable housing provision on individual sites to seek the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing on the basis of the Core Strategy's 50% of additional housing floorspace target.

5.77 The Council will expect the affordable housing contribution to be made on site, but where it cannot practically be achieved on site, the Council may accept off-site affordable housing, or exceptionally a payment-in-lieu.

Housing Mix

5.78 Policy DP5 (Homes of different sizes) outlines the priority in terms of housing sizes for the Borough and expects a mix of housing sizes in all new developments, as below:

	<b>1-bed</b>	<b>2-bed</b>	<b>3-bed</b>	<b>4-bed (or more)</b>
Social rented	lower	medium	high	very high
Intermediate affordable	medium	high	high	high
Market	lower	very high	medium	medium

Access

5.79 Policy DP6 (Lifetime homes and wheelchair housing) requires 10% of homes developed to either meet wheelchair housing standards or be easily adapted to them.

### Retail

- 5.80 Policy DP12 (Supporting strong centres and managing the impact of food, drink, entertainment and other town centres) seeks to protect and enhance identified centres by considering the effect of on-retail development on shopping provision and the character of the centre in which it is located.

### Transport and Parking

- 5.81 The Council will promote walking, cycling and public transport use. Development should make suitable provision for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.
- 5.82 Policy DP16 (The transport implications of development) seeks to ensure that development is integrated with the transport network and is supported by adequate walking, cycling and public transport links.
- 5.83 Policy DP17 (Walking, cycling and public transport) states that the Council will resist development that would be dependent on travel by private motor vehicles.
- 5.84 The Council will expect development to be car free in the Finchley Road/Swiss Cottage town centre, as outlined in Policy DP18 (Parking standards and limiting the availability of car parking).
- 5.85 Policy DP19 (Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours) further states that the Council will only permit public off-street parking where it is supported by a transport assessment and is shown to meet a need that cannot be met by public transport.
- 5.86 Policy DP20 (Movement of goods and materials) seeks to minimise the movement of goods and materials by road.

### Design and Conservation

- 5.87 Policy DP22 (Promoting Sustainable Design and Construction) requires development proposals to demonstrate how sustainable development principles have been incorporated into the design and proposed implementation, and incorporate green or brown roofs and green walls wherever suitable.
- 5.88 Policy DP23 (Water) requires new developments to reduce their water consumption and the pressure on the combined sewer network and the risk of flooding by incorporating water efficient features and equipment, and limiting the amount of run-off and waste water entering the sewer network.



5.89 As detailed in Policy DP24 (Securing high quality design), the Council will require all developments to be of the highest standard of design and will expect developments to consider:

- a) character, setting, context and the form and scale of neighbouring buildings;
- b) the character and proportions of the existing building, where alterations and extensions are proposed;
- c) the quality of materials to be used;
- d) the provision of visually interesting frontages at street level;
- e) the appropriate location for building services equipment;
- f) existing natural features, such as topography and trees;
- g) the provision of appropriate hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatments;
- h) the provision of appropriate amenity space; and
- i) accessibility.

5.90 Policy DP25 (Conserving Camden's heritage) precludes development outside of a conservation area or within the vicinity of a listed building where harm would be caused to the character and appearance of that conservation area or listed building.

#### Residential Amenity

5.91 Policy DP26 (Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours) expects outdoor amenity space to be provided in new developments. Where possible this should be private garden space, however the Council accepts that this is not realistic in all parts of the Borough and in these instances balconies, roof gardens, or communal space will be expected. This is expanded upon in the Camden Planning Guidance Document which is summarised below.

5.92 Policy DP26 also seeks to protect the amenity of neighbours and occupiers. It states that the Council will consider the following in relation to new developments:

- a) visual privacy and overlooking;
- b) overshadowing and outlook;

- c) sunlight, daylight and artificial light levels;
- d) noise levels;
- e) odour, fumes and dust;
- f) microclimate; and
- g) the inclusion of appropriate attenuation measures.

5.93 Policy DP28 (Noise and Vibration) seeks to control and manage development likely to generate noise pollution or development sensitive to noise in locations with noise pollution.

5.94 Policy DP32 (Air Quality and Camden's Clear Zone) requires air quality mitigation measures in developments located within areas of poor air quality.

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

#### Camden Planning Guidance (September 2013)

5.95 The Camden Planning Guidance supports the policies in the Local Development Framework and provides further guidance on issues such as design, sustainability, amenity, transport and planning obligations.

5.96 With regards to overlooking the guidance suggest that best practice would be a minimum distance of 18m between the windows of habitable units to ensure privacy. Where this cannot be met the Council will expect design measures that reduce the potential for overlooking to be incorporated. This may include mitigation measures such as obscured glazing or screening by walls and fencing.

5.97 Outdoor amenity space should be private and in the form of balconies, roof terraces or communal gardens. Family dwellings should be provided with private gardens. Access to these areas should be level and from the main living space, and balconies should have a depth of no less than 1.5m. The guidance refers to the Mayor's London Housing Design Guide, now the Housing SPG 2012, which requires 5sqm minimum of outdoor space for 1 – 2 person dwellings, and an extra 1sqm for each additional occupant.

### **LBC Community Infrastructure Levy**

5.98 Camden Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule on 2 March 2015, charging of which commenced on 1 April 2015.

5.99 The current charging schedule requires a payment of £250 per square metre for residential development in this location. In addition, retail is proposed to be charged at £25 per square metre.

## 6. Planning Considerations

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6.1 This section assesses the proposals against the planning policy framework for the site, and other material considerations. Consideration is given to the principle of the proposed land uses and other planning issues arising from the redevelopment proposal, including:

- Principle of Development;
- Housing Mix (including Affordable Housing);
- Design Considerations;
- Quality of Residential Development;
- Impact on Neighbouring Amenity;
- Density;
- Transport Considerations; and
- Sustainability and Energy.

### **PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USES**

#### **Housing**

6.2 National policy requires the efficient and effective use of brownfield land, including to boost significantly the supply of housing. London has an identified housing shortfall and housing requirements are ever increasing, with the London Plan 2015 having provided updated and increased minimum housing targets for the individual boroughs. As noted in the previous section, LBC minimum annual housing target has been increased by 33%, and Boroughs are asked to exceed these minimum targets. The need for new homes is therefore significant.

6.3 LBC's Core Strategy (2010) clearly states a desire to increase housing supply within the Borough. The proposed development would assist the borough in meeting its increased targets, and would provide residential accommodation in a highly accessible part of the Borough on a brownfield site. The building already includes a residential land use, and there is a large proportion of residential accommodation in the immediately surrounding area. New housing provision would therefore be compatible with the existing land uses on the site and in the surroundings.

- 6.4 Housing has also been identified as a priority land use within Policy CS6 and, in accordance with Policy DP2, the proposals seek to optimise housing delivery on this accessible brownfield site, including at the rear of the site replacing the multi-storey car park which represents an inefficient land use.
- 6.5 The Inspector's Report in relation to the 2009 appeal at the site (LBC ref: 2008/5520/P) makes note of the fact that the redevelopment of the multi-storey car park would contribute to the supply of housing, upon previously developed land and within close proximity of local service and good public transport links. A residential land use was found to be acceptable in place of the car park by the Inspector.
- 6.6 Pre-application advice in relation to the proposals has also confirmed the boroughs support for a residential land use on this site.
- 6.7 Having regard to the above, it is considered that the principle of additional residential land use at Centre Heights is acceptable, and is in accordance with development plan and NPPF policies.

#### **Retail**

- 6.8 The site is located within the Finchley Road / Swiss Cottage Town Centre and it already provides a retail land use fronting onto Finchley Road. London Plan Policy 4.7 (Retail and Town Centre Development), Policy CS7 (Promoting Camden's centres and shops) and Policy DP12 (Supporting strong centres and managing the impact of food, drink, entertainment and other town centre uses) support retail growth within existing centres.
- 6.9 The 130.2 sqm retail extension is proposed to the rear of the existing retail floorspace. It will form an extension to the existing floorspace and will be accessed from Finchley Road. The extension will improve the retail offer of the site.
- 6.10 These retail proposals accord with the provisions of the aforementioned policies, and the NPPF. Support for the retail extension has been confirmed by the Council during pre-application discussions.

#### **Demolition of Car Park**

- 6.11 Given the site's location, directly adjacent to Swiss Cottage London Underground Station and within an area of exceptional public transport links, a car free development is encouraged by national, regional and local policies, including Policy CS11 (Promoting sustainable and efficient travel) and Policy DP18 (Parking standards and limiting the availability of car

parking). These policies seek car free development in areas of high accessibility and specifically within the Finchley Road / Swiss Cottage town centre. In this context, the principle of the loss of the multi-storey car park to the rear of Centre Heights is considered to be acceptable. This was also confirmed through the previous application and appeal to demolish and redevelop the car park.

### **Refurbishment of Centre Heights**

- 6.12 The NPPF and the PPG place great importance on the design of the built environment. The proposals will significantly enhance the appearance of Centre Heights, and this in turn will have a positive impact on the character and appearance of the area. In accordance with the NPPF, great weight should be given to outstanding design which helps raise the standard of design more generally in the area. The appearance of the existing building is poor, and this detracts from the character of the area. Upon completion, the development will raise the standard of design in the area.
- 6.13 Paragraph 9 of the NPPF makes it clear that “*improving the conditions in which people live*” and “*widening the choice of high quality homes*” are central to achieving sustainable development. In this regard, the refurbishment works to the existing building will significantly improve the residential amenities of existing and future residents.
- 6.14 The improvement to the external appearance of Centre Heights is therefore strongly supported by policy at all levels.

### **Telecommunications**

- 6.15 The proposal merely seeks to relocate existing antennae to appropriate locations on Centre Heights. The treatment of the antennae to match the colour of the concrete will ensure that they do not have an adverse impact on the improved appearance of the building. All other roof-top plant from Centre Heights will be relocated internally to the basement; thereby, improving the visual appearance of the building. The proposals are therefore acceptable in this respect.

### **HOUSING MIX (INCLUDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING)**

- 6.16 In accordance with the aims and objectives of local, regional and national planning policies, the proposed development will deliver a choice of high quality homes in a mix of unit sizes and tenures. The scheme will deliver 16 new dwellings, comprising two and three bedroom homes.

- 6.17 In accordance with Policy DP5, the subject proposals provide for 2 and 3 bedroom units for which there is a medium to very high priority requirement.
- 6.18 The proposed unit mix should also be considered in the context of the wider residential mix within Centre Heights. For example, the prior approval conversion is providing for 35 smaller residential units, inclusive of: 15 no. studio units; and 20 no. 1-bed units.
- 6.19 In this regard, the Centre Heights site provides for a wide range of housing needs, in accordance with the NPPF, which seeks to support the delivery of a wide range of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities.

### **Affordable Housing**

- 6.20 In accordance with London Plan Policy 3.12 (Negotiating Affordable Housing on Individual Private Residential and Mixed Use Schemes), Policy CS6 (Providing quality homes) and Policy DP3 (Contributions to the supply of affordable housing), the proposed development will seek to provide the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing provision. A financial viability assessment is being undertaken and this will be submitted under separate cover.

### **DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.21 National policy and guidance, the London Plan and adopted local planning policies all place considerable emphasis on the importance of achieving good quality design to ensure that new developments are appropriate to the shape, size, location and context of the site. A detailed description of the main design principles underpinning the proposed development is set out in the Design and Access Statement prepared by the award winning architects LBA.
- 6.22 The quality of the existing Centre Heights building has over time become poor. It has become a negative feature in the character of the area, and this proposal presents an exciting opportunity to significantly enhance the quality of the building and character of the area. This is particularly important because the NPPF states that *“great weight should be given to outstanding and innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the area.”* The proposed development will deliver a significant improvement on the development currently on the site which has become of poor quality and which detracts from the character of the area.
- 6.23 In accordance with London Plan Policies, Policy CS14 (Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage), and Policy DP24 (Securing high quality design), the development will deliver the highest standard of design appropriate to the character and context of the

area. The proposed roof-top extension has been designed to retain the integrity, character and proportions of the existing building.

- 6.24 The Design and Access Statement includes a series of townscape views, including from the nearby conservation areas. The views were agreed with the LBC Camden officers during pre-application discussions. The views assessment demonstrates that the proposals will not have an adverse impact on the character of the area, local views, or the setting of nearby conservation areas. The refurbishment and improvements to the Centre Heights building will have a positive impact, enhancing the character of the area, and enhancing legibility. High quality landscaping works are proposed within the site, improving the site conditions for existing residents and future residents. Inclusive access principles have also been taken into account in the design.
- 6.25 Policy DP24 requires consideration to be had to a number of characteristics in designing development proposals. As set out Design and Access Statement prepared by LBA, detailed consideration has been given to the character and context of the site, including the form and scale of surrounding buildings. The proposed design and refurbishment will enhance the character of the area and also improve legibility in the area through the significant aesthetic architectural improvements proposed. The roof level extension is designed to be complimentary to the existing building, and it is of an appropriate scale. The lower level has been set back from the façade to align with the glass plane of the residential component, whilst the upper level aligns with the glass plane of the office component. The roof extension is designed to generate a horizontal emphasis that acts as a visual ‘crown’ to the building. Overall, this improves the overall proportion of the building. The façade design reflects the rational design of Centre Heights by creating strong block forms with prominent vertical and horizontal rhythms. This creates deep windows which echo the depth and privacy achieved in the existing elevation. The cladding of the upward extension of both the residential element and the circulation core is intended to complement the concrete painting of the refurbished building façade, whilst continuing to emphasise the vertical grid, by use of cementitious sheet cladding.
- 6.26 The orientation of the mews provides for a south-facing courtyard, and its scale has regard to the surrounding scale of development rising from 2 storeys to five storeys from west to east. The mews development has been designed to enhance the existing urban grain and provide a large proportion of units with access from street level. The single residential core is located to the rear of the courtyard, encouraging movement and activity through the site. The provision of front doors at ground level and large glazing panels will create activity and natural surveillance over the south facing courtyard of the mews. The mews development responds



to surrounding residential blocks through the use of brick whilst incorporating glass panels, which relate to the context of the existing Centre Heights building. The standing seam cladding will create its own grid into which glazing, doors and balconies will slot, echoing the horizontal and vertical grids created in Centre Heights. The external skin of the mews development which follows the boundary line will create a decorative brick shell, punctured with glazed apertures of obscured glass to bring daylight into the rear of the dwellings.

- 6.27 High quality hard and soft landscaping proposals have been devised for the mews courtyard and rear courtyard to provide high quality amenity and a suitable pedestrian environment.
- 6.28 The proposed development is of the highest architectural quality and it will significantly improve the appearance of the building, and enhance the character of the area. The proposals are therefore wholly compliant with the NPPF, PPG, London Plan Policies set out in Chapter 7 and local plan policies and guidance.

### **QUALITY OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 6.29 In accordance with Policy CS6 (Providing quality homes), Camden Planning Guidance 2 (Housing) and London Plan Policy 3.5 (Quality and Design of Housing Developments), a high quality of residential accommodation is proposed. The dwellings have been designed to meet the minimum space standards set out in the London Plan, and regard has been given to the other standards set out in the GLA Housing SPG and CPG. Furthermore provision has been made for adequate off-street refuse and recycling storage, and cycle parking. Consideration has also been given to inclusive design standards and the need to provide an appropriate internal environment in terms of noise and air quality.

#### **Internal Space Standards**

- 6.30 The proposed development will deliver a high quality of residential accommodation. The units have been designed to achieve the Mayor of London's minimum space standards which are set out in Table 3.3 of the London Plan and to accord with the GLA's Housing SPG (2012). They have also been designed taking account of the provisions of Camden Planning Guidance 2 (Housing).

#### **Amenity Space**

- 6.31 All of the residential units will have access to private and/or communal amenity space. All but one of the new residential units will have access to private amenity space in the form of private gardens, balconies or terraces. In total, approximately 311.5 sqm of private amenity space is proposed, which is equivalent to an average of 19.47 sqm per unit. Private amenity

space is supplemented by a high quality south facing landscaped mews courtyard of approximately 150 sqm.

### **Aspect**

- 6.32 Each of the penthouse units provides dual aspect accommodation. The mews housing has been designed to ensure that there are no single aspect north facing units. As far as possible, dual aspect accommodation is proposed but given site constraints, where this has not been possible, south, east and west facing accommodation is provided.

### **Inclusive Access**

- 6.33 The new homes have been designed to meet Lifetime Homes standards. Furthermore, 10% are designed to be wheelchair accessible or adaptable. Inclusive design principles have also been taken into account in the hard and soft landscaping proposals.

### **Internal Daylight and Sunlight**

- 6.34 The accompanying Daylight and Sunlight Report, prepared by Anderson, Wilde & Harris, concludes that both the penthouse and mews development will be provided with adequate daylight and sunlight for this urban location, in accordance with national BRE guidelines.

### **Air Quality**

- 6.35 The accompanying Air Quality Assessment, prepared by Phlorum, concludes:

*“...the Proposed Development has been determined to be acceptable in terms of its impact on, and sensitivity to, local air quality. The Proposed Development is expected to comply with all relevant air quality policy. Air quality should not, therefore, pose any significant obstacles to the planning process.”*

### **Noise**

- 6.36 The Noise Assessment, prepared by KP Acoustics concludes that the proposed development will provide an appropriate acoustic environment for residential occupiers.

### **IMPACT ON NEIGHBOURING AMENITY**

- 6.37 In accordance with Policy DP26 (Managing the impact of development on occupiers and neighbours), the design development of the proposals has evolved to ensure that impact on neighbouring amenity is minimised.

### **Privacy and Overlooking**

- 6.38 The roof level extension to Centre Heights gives rise to no adverse overlooking or privacy impacts upon neighbouring dwellings. Despite the building being located within an area of high rise development, the nearest residential elements are some distance from the proposed penthouse extension.
- 6.39 Camden Planning Guidance 6 (Amenity) requires a minimum distance of 18 metres between windows of habitable rooms, to ensure privacy. Both the penthouse extension and the mews development is located in excess of 18 metres from neighbouring habitable rooms.
- 6.40 Whilst the mews design creates blocks within close proximity to one another, careful attention to frontages, window orientation and the use of screens, obscure glazing and set-backs ensures that privacy throughout the scheme and to neighbours is maintained. The proposed design results in the increased architectural merit of the design through the animation of facades, and the creation of an intimate courtyard setting for the small scale mews community.

### **Daylight and Sunlight**

- 6.41 The accompanying Daylight and Sunlight Report, prepared by Anderson, Wilde & Harris provides a comprehensive assessment of daylight and sunlight impact on neighbouring properties in accordance with the national BRE guidelines. The assessment considers impact on the properties at: Hickes House, Campden House, Maresfield Court, Swiss Terrace, Cresta House and Northways Parade.
- 6.42 The proposed development does not give rise to any unacceptable daylight and sunlight impact on neighbouring amenity, having regard to the urban context within which the development lies.

### **Noise**

- 6.43 The proposed residential and retail land uses are compatible with the surrounding land uses, and do not give rise to any unacceptable noise emissions. All new or relocated plant will be chosen, designed and/or appropriately attenuated to ensure that there is no adverse noise impact on existing residents of Centre Heights, and neighbouring residents.

### **Construction Impact**

- 6.44 The submitted Construction Management Plan outlines that best-practice measures will be put in place to reduce the short-term amenity impacts associated with the demolition and

construction phases of the development. Measures will be put in place to minimise impacts and disruption to existing and neighbouring residents.

- 6.45 The Air Quality Assessment also concludes that *“During construction, and with the adoption of appropriate mitigation measures, dust emissions should not cause any significant off- or on-site effects.”*

## **DENSITY**

- 6.46 The proposals make full use of the application site in accordance with Policy CS1 (Distribution of Growth), Policy DP2 (Making full use of Camden’s capacity for housing), and London Plan policies, having had regard to the need to deliver a high quality design appropriate to its context, high quality accommodation and the need to minimise impacts on neighbouring impact.
- 6.47 London Plan Policy 3.4 encourages proposals to optimise housing output, taking into account local context and character, the design principles in Chapter 7 and public transport capacity. The policy states that development proposals which compromise this policy should be resisted.
- 6.48 A design led approach has been taken and the density proposed is a product of the design that has evolved following a detailed contextual analysis, and following pre-application discussions with officers at LBC and consultation with existing and neighbouring residents. As set out in the foregoing, the design has been prepared to ensure that: the proposals enhance the character of the existing built environment; the amenity of existing residents is maintained; and the proposed accommodation is of a high quality. The evolution of the scheme design is explained within the Design and Access Statement.
- 6.49 In line with the objectives of the NPPF, the proposals seek to make the most efficient use of the site, given its location and exceptional accessibility, whilst respecting the site context. Local Plan Policies also seek to ensure that developments make efficient use of sites, as do adopted policies within the London Plan. The site is situated in an area with excellent access to public transport, adjacent to an underground station and bus stops, and within a town centre. The London Plan includes a density matrix at Table 3.2 which provides guidance on appropriate densities at different locations. Para. 3.28 of the London Plan outlines that it is not appropriate to apply the density matrix mechanistically.
- 6.50 The proposals have been prepared following a detailed contextual analysis to ensure that the scheme respects the built environment and does not result in any detrimental impacts on the amenity of existing or neighbouring residents. The proposed design will create a high quality

development for future residents and the siting of the building will not result in an unacceptable impact on existing properties surrounding the site.

- 6.51 The proposals comply with the Council's sustainable design aspirations providing a car-free development and providing high quality landscaped amenity space. Furthermore, the proposed development will not have an unacceptable impact on the daylight and sunlight conditions within neighbouring properties, and will provide appropriate daylight and sunlight conditions internally. Accordingly, the proposals do not exhibit any symptoms of overdevelopment and are entirely appropriate given the urban site context. The density proposed, being a product of the design is therefore considered entirely appropriate.
- 6.52 In summary, the design has been developed through consultation with LBC Planning and Design officers, and has evolved to take into account the concerns raised by officers as part of the pre-application process. Taking into consideration the above aspects of the scheme and also the exceptional accessibility to public transport, it is apparent that the proposed development seeks to make efficient use of the brownfield site, optimising housing output whilst ensuring that high quality living accommodation is delivered. The proposed density, which is the outcome of the design-led approach taken, is therefore considered to be acceptable and is thus in compliance with the prevailing planning policy at all levels.

#### **TRANSPORTATION CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.53 The transport consideration relevant to this proposal, in relation to the local highway network, public transport, servicing, cycling and the pedestrian environment has been fully considered within the Transport Statement, prepared by TTP Consulting, submitted in support of this application. The Transport Statement concludes that the development will not result in a material increase or change in the character of traffic in the vicinity of the site.

#### **Access**

- 6.54 The existing site access will be retained and improved as part of the proposed developments works. The existing access road from Belsize Road which is used by vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians in its existing condition will be improved. This access road is also used for servicing and this will continue.
- 6.55 The existing residential entrance to the Centre Heights building on Belsize Road is proposed to be improved further, and this will continue as a residential entrance for the building. Following completion of the residential conversion works, the Finchley Road entrance (used by commercial occupiers) will also become a residential entrance.

6.56 The site is accessible by non-car modes being within easy walking and cycling distance of local amenities, and close to bus, train and London Underground services.

### **Car Parking**

6.57 In accordance with Policy CS11 (Promoting sustainable and efficient travel) and London Plan policies, the subject proposals allow for a car free development in a highly accessible location. In this regard, car parking will be restricted to one wheelchair accessible parking space, to the rear of Centre Heights and within the existing courtyard.

### **Cycle Parking**

6.58 As outlined in section 4, 35 cycle parking spaces are to be provided, both within the main Centre Heights building and within the mews' courtyard.

6.59 London Plan Table 6.3 requires 2 cycle parking spaces for each of the 16 additional dwellings, totalling a minimum of 32 spaces plus one short stay space. Additional spaces are provided for the retail extension.

6.60 The cycle parking for residential units at floors 1 – 5 of Centre Heights will be relocated from the multi-storey car park to within the Centre Heights building.

### **Servicing**

6.61 Access for all servicing, deliveries and refuse collection will take place as per the existing arrangements off-street.

### **Highway and Public Transport Impact**

6.62 Having regard to the on-going office-to-residential conversion works, the Transport Statement concludes that the cumulative impact of the converted and new residential units will still generate a substantially lower travel demand than the former office use, potentially offering improved capacity on the local public transport network. Further, the removal of the car park will further reduce the vehicle trip generation of the site.

6.63 The proposed development will not lead to an increased demand on on-street parking within the surrounding controlled parking zones, as residents will not be entitled to a parking permit. No parking stress is therefore expected to arise from the development.

## **SUSTAINABILITY AND ENERGY**

- 6.64 The accompanying Sustainability and Energy Statement identifies a number of sustainable development principles that have been incorporated into the proposals, in accordance with Policy DP22 (Promoting Sustainable Design and Construction), and other sustainable design policies of the Local Plan and London Plan. The incorporation of very high insulation levels, a communal VRV heat pump and photovoltaic panels seek to provide on-site generation of renewable electricity for the residential units, whilst achieving reductions in carbon dioxide emissions.
- 6.65 In accordance with Policy DP23 (Water) the proposed development will minimise water consumption, achieving compliance with a 110 litre per person per day limited water consumption.
- 6.66 Green roofs are proposed at Centre Heights in accordance with London Plan Policy 5.10 (Urban Greening).
- 6.67 In line with national, regional and local policy requirements detailed consideration has also been given to sustainable urban drainage principles. A detailed Sustainable Urban Drainage System Proposal has been prepared by Synergy, and this is submitted in support of this application.

## **ABORICULTURAL IMPACT**

- 6.68 Landmark Trees have prepared an Aboricultural Impact Assessment to consider the impact of the proposal. The tree survey identified 6 trees on and around the site; however, only two Category U trees will be impacted by the proposal. Category U trees are categorised as being unsuitable for retention as they are of low quality. One of the trees is on-site but this is a self-sown tree that is growing in a small gap between the car park ramp and wall. The other tree is off-site and it has a life expectancy of less than 10 years; however, its existing crown spread which overhangs the car park could be cut back to the legal boundary and this would allow the development to proceed. The aboriculturalist recommends that this tree should be felled and replaced given its short life-expectancy in any event.

## **CONTAMINATION**

- 6.69 A Phase 1 Desk Study Report on Land Contamination Issues has been prepared by GB Card & Partners. The report concludes that the *“the overall contamination risk for the proposed redevelopment is considered to be low to negligible. After the proposed development, ...with mitigation measures..., the site would not be contaminated land.*

## 7. Conclusions

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7.1 This Town Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Anaspel Ltd in support of a planning application for the extension and refurbishment of Centre Heights, 137 Finchley Road in the London Borough of Camden. The application follows pre-application consultation with LBC Officers, and with existing residents and the local community.

7.2 A design-led approach has been taken by award winning Levitt Bernstein Architects following a detailed contextual analysis of the site and surroundings. The development proposals will generate numerous planning and regenerative benefits for the local area and community, including:

- In accordance with national, regional and local planning policy, the proposed development will make efficient use of this highly accessible urban brownfield site;
- The development proposal will provide 16 new high-quality residential units comprising 2 and 3 bedroom units, which will help the Council to meet and exceed its recently increased housing targets in accordance with planning policy requirements;
- The proposed architectural approach adopts the highest design standards and seeks to significantly improve the appearance of the Centre Heights building, and provide a high quality mews development to the rear, both of which will assist in enhancing the character of the surrounding area;
- A retail extension to the rear of the development will improve the existing retail offer of the development which is located within the Finchley Road / Swiss Cottage town centre;
- Internal and external refurbishment works, including the improvements to the residential entrance on Belsize Road, will considerably improve the quality of the accommodation for the existing and future residents of the development;
- The proposals incorporate a number of measures to deliver a sustainable development, including energy efficiency measures, and PV Panels to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 36%. Hard and soft landscaping, green roofs and sustainable urban drainage systems also add to the sustainability credentials of this proposal; and
- Significant CIL payments will be paid to LBC which could be used by LBC for local infrastructure improvements for the benefit of the existing and future residents of the



site, and also the wider community. LBC would also receive New Homes Bonus payments from the government.

7.3 Overall, the proposed development comprises sustainable development and has been designed taking into the integrity of the existing building, the site context, pre-application consultation feedback and the requirements of national, regional and local planning policies. This Statement has demonstrated that the proposals have been developed to accord with the development plan and national policies, and as such, we respectfully request that planning permission be granted so that the benefits of the scheme can be realised without delay.

# APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1: APP/X5210/A/09/2108402  
INSPECTOR'S REPORT



# APPENDIX 2: CENTRE HEIGHTS' ENGLISH HERITAGE LISTING DECISION

