

Mr D Fowler
London Borough of Camden
5 Pancras Square
London
N1C 4AG

12 October 2015

Dear David,

**11 BLACKBURN ROAD, LONDON NW6 1RZ REF. 2015/3148/P
REVISED DRAWINGS AND MATERIAL FOR PLANNING APPLICATION**

We write following our project meeting on Friday 18 September, to present a further series of amendments to the scheme in response to feedback from officers.

In advance of this meeting, the drawings were amended in light of the consultation response from the Design and Conservation officer and a model was prepared showing the site in context. The purpose of our meeting was to present and discuss these amendments to officers. The following points were raised at the meeting:

- Design matters;
 - Scheme evolution to date;
 - Number of units and their plot width;
 - Footprint, bulk and mass of townhouses;
 - Height - the proposal in its wider context and setting;
 - Articulation of front façade of townhouses;
 - Treatment of rear façade of townhouses;
 - Relationship with Asher House;
- Employment matters.
 - Usability of space;
 - Practical utility of space;

Whilst officers acknowledged improvements in the scheme, helpful feedback was provided. We have taken these comments on board and subsequently write now to explain what further changes have been made to the scheme and to provide additional supporting material for officers consideration.

A. DESIGN

Scheme evolution to date

In our meeting we recapped on the scheme's evolution and the changes that were made as a result of pre-application discussions (LPA ref. 2014/3740/PRE), which included:

- The proposed under-croft has been removed and level access front doors provided, creating more lively communal landscaped space and better passive surveillance of the communal areas.
- Removal of car parking. Access only for servicing/emergency vehicles.
- Improvements to the proposed landscaping scheme.
- Cycle parking and bin storage provided in accordance with standards.
- Detailing and design justification for PV panels.

We also touched on the earlier discussions our client had with the owners of Asher House, in terms of bringing forward a comprehensive scheme together. Unfortunately, this was not feasible in our client's timescales.

Number of units and their plot width

Footprint, bulk and mass of townhouses.

The overall driver for the depth and width of the design of the terrace of single family dwellings comes from adhering to the lifetime homes standards. The architects (HCLA) have designed the dwellings to the absolute minimum footprint possible, without the dwellings being this depth and width the size of the bedrooms would not have the required circulation space, neither would there be adequate space for a wheelchair accessible bathroom nor space for future provisions for the addition of a lift within each residential unit.

Nevertheless, with the loss of a whole unit, reconfiguration of the stairs, loss of a bathroom and roof kitchen in each of the houses, HCLA have been able to:

- The building line of the townhouses has been brought back as advised with officers, so that the townhouses respectfully sit back from the Victorian warehouse.
- Townhouses at ground level have been set back by 2,605mm to provide a scheme with more amenity space at the front of them. This has reduced the rear garden by 750mm. However, it was agreed with officers in the meeting that as long as some defensible space was retained at the rear this relationship would be acceptable, given that the provision of amenity space at the front of the property would be more appealing to residents. For the avoidance of doubt the townhouses would also have access to private amenity space in the form of balconies and roof gardens.
- The roof level element of the townhouses has been set back even further by 5,755mm. This has reduced the bulk of the townhouses and has in turn created a bigger terrace area for future residents to enjoy.
- The PV louvre has also been taken down to the top of the second floor, previously at roof level, giving the top storey of the townhouses a lighter weight appearance.

Height - the proposal in its wider context and setting

At the meeting, HCLA presented a model of the development, which included the wider context and setting of the site.

As such, in the meeting, it was agreed that the height of the townhouse element of the scheme was acceptable, given the height of the neighbouring student block and retail premises fronting West End Lane (which also sit on higher ground). The height of the proposed townhouses, in actual fact provide a suitable transition between the two building forms and would as a result enhance the streetscene.

As explained earlier in this letter we have re-designed the proposal reducing the number of units and made further amendments that reduce the depth and bulk of the proposal, the extent of this reduction is clearly illustrated on the section drawings, we strongly suggest you refer to these, following your review and comment, if positive we will update the model to reflect the new design.

Treatment of front façade of townhouses

From the beginning, the design intent of the new element of the scheme (the townhouses) was to enhance the singular character of the existing Victorian warehouse, creating an intentionally detached and contrasting element. Clearly identifying what is old and what is new.

However, we note the design officer's comments regarding articulation of the façade of the townhouses and as such amendments are proposed. Essentially, each townhouse now has its own frame that support the balconies and PV panels, these frames have been taken down to the ground floor level to enhance articulation between each townhouse, defining each individual unit, separating them visually from each other and making them clearly read as dwelling houses, albeit part of a terrace; a modern mews typography.

Treatment of rear façade of townhouses

An observation was made at the meeting that the rear elevation of the building has a commercial nature.

Yes the rear façade has modern, functional design, but isn't considered that its appearance is commercial. The party walls are expressed with infill cladding and square (not full height windows). The window openings create clean lines and the shadow created by the depth of the apertures would add interest.

Again, when viewed from the rear (albeit there are only local views along Billy Fury Way), the townhouses would be able to be read as a modern addition in contrast to Victorian warehouse and in-keeping with the adjacent student block to the east.

We would be prepared to further develop the design of the façade if the principle of the overall scheme as revised is supported.

B. RELATIONSHIP WITH ASHER HOUSE

Noting the extant (but unimplemented) prior approval allowing Asher House to convert from offices to a residential premises, the distance between the townhouse façade and Asher House has been increased up to 15,000mm at the west corner and 21,805mm at the east corner, giving more space between the proposal and Asher House and therefore more privacy.

The accompanying plan (**dwg. SK001**) helps to visualise the nature of this relationship. Overall, the stepped plan of the mews houses maximises distance from Asher House while the PV louver screens provide shading and privacy to the occupants.

The boundary treatment between the two properties would also help to protect amenity and we would expect the Council to attach a suitably worded condition to agree this detail.

C. EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

The objective of the scheme is to re-provide high quality new employment floorspace, which is of good practical utility, provides space for existing users and is flexible and adaptable for modern B1 occupiers.

The planning case is as follows:

- The existing employment floorspace on site is poor quality;
- The modern warehouse proposed to be demolished detracts from the character and appearance of the area;
- The current employment floorspace is of a poor practical utility;
- It does not meet the needs of the current tenants, nor can it meet the needs of the market;
- It provides a low density of employment in terms of jobs;
- The investment required to bring the modern warehouse building up to a suitable (useable) standard makes this course of action unviable;
- The building could be demolished without planning permission;
- As such, a more proactive approach has been taken to the re-provision of employment floorspace, with B1 space is re-provided in the Victorian warehouse which would additionally benefit from investment to support this use.

As requested by officers, we have undertaken a survey of the current floorspace to demonstrate the usability and quality of the space, please refer to **Zoning Plans, prepared by HCLA**. These show that a high proportion of the building is unused or has been historically used for storage purposes. Only circa. 200 sq m GIA is used for studio/workshop space. The proposed development would reprovide 180.75 sq m GIA in the ground floor of the warehouse. The current tenants are aware of the proposals and have written in support.

Overall, the proposed scheme would provide the following benefits:

- Flexible and adaptable employment (Class B1) floorspace;
- Employment (Class B1) floorspace that meets the needs of current Class B1 occupiers;
- Improve the energy and thermal efficiency of the Victorian warehouse; and
- Provides the optimum density of employment space.

The proposal provides the opportunity for substantial improvement of the appearance of the site and its contribution to the character of its surroundings. The current modern warehouse building has no architectural merit and it will be replaced by high quality modern terraced houses that would better integrated into the local area and which would provide substantial enhancement to the character and appearance of the area.

The proposed development would also provide six 3 bedroom houses and two 2 bedroom apartments, a well balanced mix of unit sizes, catering for a range of households from families through to smaller households.

The relevant policy tests have been satisfied and it has been demonstrated that the site should be released for an alternative use. This alternative use would secure the effective re-use of this brownfield site providing homes and floorspace for businesses. This accords with the NPPF encourages the planning system to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes and business units; to promote and recognise the multiple benefits of mixed-use developments; and to encourage the effective use of land by reusing brownfield sites.

D. SUMMARY

We have been engaged in process of positive discussion with officers for over 18 months and the scheme has evolved and has been refined as a result.

The latest set of amendments reflect the comments made at the design meeting in September, in summary these include:

- Loss of a townhouse, reducing the scheme to eight new homes overall.
- Bringing back the building line of the townhouses.
- Reducing the mass and bulk of the townhouses.
- Increasing the distance between Asher House and the townhouses.
- Adding further articulation to the front façade of the townhouses.

We trust that these amendments have gone far enough to satisfy officers that the scheme can be recommended for approval to planning committee - we look forward to understanding officers' views. We anticipate that officers would need to re-consult and would welcome an open discussion with officers about the associated timescales, the likely target committee date and any further supporting material that maybe required for committee.

ICENI are no longer involved with the project so please communicate with me directly at HCLA.

Should you wish to discuss or have any queries please feel free to contact me on 02074954119 or blee@hcla.co.uk

Yours sincerely,

Billie Lee,
HCLA Director

cc. Mr I Blakeley, Narrowpack Ltd
Ms C Bond, LB Camden

enc. Proposed revised application drawings, prepared by HCLA
Zoning plans and photos showing space utilisation, prepared by HCLA
Area and accommodation schedule, prepared by HCLA