

PART 5: Development Presentations

Item 5.1

1. DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

Ref: 17/06247/PRE
Location: Queens Hotel, 122 Church Road, Upper Norwood, London SE19 2UG
Ward: South Norwood
Description: Presentation of a pre-application scheme for the demolition of existing buildings to the centre and rear of the site and the construction of a new spine building, including glazed link to a retained mews building and the erection of a further extension to the south western facing elevation of the existing locally listed building, to create a 495 hotel rooms with 207 car parking spaces (including 13 van spaces), the recladding of the 1970's extension with ground floor canopy, the provision of landscaping including 3 spaces for the parking of coaches within the forecourt area.
Drawing Nos: N/A
Applicant: Queens Crystal Palace Euro Hotel (Jersey) Limited
Agent: Richard Quelch, Bulfinger GVA
Case Officer: Pete Smith

2. PROCEDURAL NOTE

- 2.1 This report is in an experimental format to provide a more focussed approach to pre-application engagement with Planning Committee – especially as this pre application engagement follows on from a previous decision to refuse planning permission and which the Planning Committee will already be familiar. It should be noted that this report represents a snapshot in time, with negotiations and dialogue on-going. Therefore considerations and detail may have moved on by the time the case is presented to Members. The report covers the following points:
- a. Background and Scheme Amendments
 - b. Site Briefing
 - c. Summary of Matters for Consideration
 - d. Officers' Preliminary Conclusions
 - e. Specific Feedback Requested

3. BACKGROUND AND SCHEME AMENDMENTS

Background

- 3.1 As members will recall, at its meeting of the 19th October 2017, the Planning Committee resolved to refuse planning permission for the following development:

Demolition of existing buildings to the centre and rear of the site and existing extensions to the roof, and the construction of a new spine building including

glazed link to part retained mews building, an extension from the southwestern facing elevation of the existing locally listed building, a single storey extension to the restaurant, subterranean accommodation, parking, a swimming pool and servicing space, to create a total of 530 hotel rooms and 170 vehicle parking spaces, the re-cladding of the 1970's extension with ground floor canopy, provision of enhanced landscaping across the site including 3 coach parking spaces to the front, formation of a vehicle access and the adaption of existing entrance to the hotel.

3.2 After much discussion and debate, the two reasons for refusal were confirmed and incorporated into the eventual decision notice. The reasons covered under-provision of on-site parking facilities and the harm caused by the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Church Road Conservation Area and are detailed below:

1. The proposed development would represent an over-development of the site, with proposed extensions failing to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Church Road Conservation area, contrary to Policy SP4.13 of the Croydon Local Plan Strategic Policies (April 2013), saved Policy UC3 of the Croydon replacement Unitary Development Plan (July 2006) and Policy 7.8 of the Consolidated London Plan 2016.
2. The intensification of the hotel use associated with the proposed development in an area characterised by relatively low levels of public transport accessibility, would be accompanied by inadequate on-site parking facilities, placing additional pressures on on-street parking capacity in the immediate vicinity, detrimental to highway safety and the locality, contrary to SP8.17 of the Croydon Local Plan Strategic Policies (April 2013), Saved Policy T2 of the Croydon Replacement Unitary Development Plan (July 2008) and Policies 6.12 and 6.13 of the Consolidated London Plan 2016.

3.3 As the application was referable to the London Mayor (under the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008), the case was further considered by the London Mayor on the 13th November 2017 (at Stage 2) post the Planning Committee resolution. Whilst the London Mayor determined that he was content to allow Croydon Council to determine the application itself (following on from the Planning Committee resolution) the officers' report highlighted the following issues/concerns that remain relevant as part of this pre-application process and any future planning application submission:

- The London Mayor noted that Historic England welcomed the retention of the mews building. He also noted that whilst Historic England considered the demolition of the west wing to be undesirable, they recognised that the amended scheme represented a significant improvement
- Further information required to deal with potential over-heating of the building along with the design of the energy centre and the extent of renewable energy usage.
- The need to capture planning obligations associated with legible signage, financial contributions towards setting up a controlled parking zone for the area (if required) coach parking arrangements and the provision of a taxi rank

- On site car parking should be reduced.

3.4 Following on from this process, the decision notice was issued on the 29th November 2017. The applicants and their advisors have been engaging with your officers to discuss possible amendments to the scheme with a view to overcoming the reasons for refusal. It is understood that the applicant preference is to resolve outstanding issues by agreement and secure a planning permission from the Council – rather than resorting to appealing to the Secretary of State.

Proposed Amendments

Reductions in Hotel Bedrooms

- 3.5 The previous scheme proposed 530 hotel bedrooms (following completion of the works). The number of bedrooms has been proposed to be reduced by 35 rooms (to 495 hotel bedrooms) through the removal of the previously proposed upper floors of the two western elements of the proposed replacement spine building.
- 3.6 The applicant has also increased the number of family rooms (from 32 to 64) which results in roughly 25% of rooms suitably sized for visiting families. This has been partly facilitated through the provision of further accommodation at basement level – to allow for family duplex rooms, each having internal stair access within the duplex space.

Increases in the Level of On-Site Car Parking

- 3.6 The applicant has reviewed the level of accommodation and plant to be provided within the basement areas, which has provided additional space within the basement for a further 37 car parking spaces, resulting in an overall provision of 207 car parking spaces (including 13 spaces for the parking of vans). This would equate to 0.418 car parking spaces per hotel bedroom. The refused scheme proposed 170 car parking spaces (including 18 spaces for vans) with a car parking ratio of 0.32 car parking spaces per hotel bedroom. The current hotel provides a 0.19 car parking ratio.
- 3.7 At the previous Planning Committee, there was much discussion around whether hotel customers should be required to pay to park within the hotel car park (as part of their paid-for stay). The hotelier has confirmed that it is his intention for customers to pay to park on site, with the availability of on-site car-parking advertised on the hotel web-site (alongside the lack of availability of on street car parking in the immediate vicinity).
- 3.8 The applicant is also exploring the options available for over-night coach parking (with further clarity around agreements for over-night coach parking in neighbouring areas/boroughs) including exploring the possibility of accommodating a fourth coach car parking space on site (within the hotel forecourt area). The current submitted plans still indicate space for the parking of 3 coaches within the forecourt area.

Design Changes

- 3.9 The reduction in the height (to the western spine elements) has also been accompanied by amendments to the façade and elevational treatment to the south elevation, with the introduction of recessed panelled elements and vertical linked sections; designed to introduce greater rhythm and verticality to the elevations (in the form of 2/3 window-width bays separated by recessed elements). There has been a move to suitably terminate the north/south Fitzroy Gardens axis (near to the retained mews building) with a stronger built form, with a bay width that is suitably proportioned to the width of the street. Finally, the architect has also been working further on materials and the use of brick and metal cladding (including a warmer colour palette) to break up the elevations further and to provide added interest; especially the details of the proposed southern extension to the original hotel range.

Windows facing 2 Fitzroy Gardens

- 3.10 The previous proposal elected to angle windows (in the vicinity of 2 Fitzroy Gardens) to direct views away from that property and towards the shared amenity garden situated to rear of Fitzroy Gardens. The applicant has been keen to explore the need for these angled windows, preferring instead to have slightly recessed windows in the same elevational plane as the building façade but with (possibly) the use of some obscure glazing to protect privacy. The architect considered that the previously proposed angled windows were somewhat contrived with (arguably) no reason to mitigate any potential loss of privacy caused by the proposed development.

4. SITE BRIEFING

Site and Surroundings

- 4.1 The site falls within the Church Road Conservation Area and Queen's Hotel is a locally listed building (dating to about 1854). The only part of the original building which remains relates to the central element, which fronts onto Church Road. Church Road is designated as a London Distributor Road and to the north of the site is the commercial area of Upper Norwood District Centre.
- 4.2 In the 1950s the southern wing of the Queens Hotel was demolished to create access to the Fitzroy Gardens housing estate to the west of Church Road. The hotel acquired 120 Church Road and demolished the historic building to construct a large new northern wing in the 1970s.
- 4.3 The Queens Hotel occupies a prominent position on the street due to its large scale and massing set on a variety of planes. It is faced with stucco and decorative treatments including a projecting cornice supported by brackets, quoins and open balustrading. Unfortunately, the building includes a poorly designed extension from the 1970's.
- 4.4 The existing site is an operational hotel with 334 rooms, 38 car parking spaces at the front of the hotel and space for 25 cars to park at the rear of the hotel, bringing total onsite provision to 63 spaces (ratio of 0.19 spaces per room). There are also 2 informal spaces for coaches to drop off/pick up. No dedicated facilities

currently exist for cyclists parking at the site and there is currently very limited controls over car and coach park management.

- 4.5 The hotel overlooks a garden area to the west which provides communal amenity space for the houses in Fitzroy Gardens. To the south of the site, the character of the area is mostly residential, with a mixed character of hotel, office and residential accommodation to the north. The land level drops significantly to the rear (west) of the site; ground level (level 0) is taken at the front of the site, the top of the ground floor level at the rear of the site is therefore roughly equivalent to the highest part of 18 Fitzroy Gardens.
- 4.6 112-116 Church Road (immediately to the north-east) and 181-203 Church Road are locally listed buildings. Also 124-128 Church Road (to the south-west) are statutorily listed.

5. SUMMARY OF MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 This issues for consideration (compared to more standardised pre application submissions) should be focussed on the extent to which the amendments proposed resolve the reasons for refusal highlighted by the Planning Committee back in October 2017; those being:
 - The extent to which the reductions in height, mass and bulk of the proposed east/west spine element reduce the harm caused to the character and appearance of the conservation area and whether a lesser impact allows the decision taker to balance the scheme more favourably (in view of the regenerative benefits of the proposed development and other related benefits).
 - The extent to which the elevational changes (specifically the south facing elevation to the east/west spine extension and the east facing façade of the southern extension to the original hotel range) provides added enhancement and interest to the architectural rhythm of the proposed extensions
 - Whether the reduction in the overall number of hotel bedrooms proposed (a reduction in 35 rooms compared to the previously refused scheme) successfully reduces the intensity of the use, the scale of development proposed towards the rear of the site and the overall on site car parking ratio
 - Whether the increase number of on-site car parking spaces (when viewed alongside the overall reduction in the number of hotel bedrooms and the hotelier's decision to charge for on-site car parking) successfully addresses the lack of available on-site car parking for hotel visitors and the potential effect of the development on the availability and capacity for on street car parking
 - The extent to which further information on available overnight coach parking satisfies Members that the local area will not be materially affected by overnight coach parking
 - Whether the removal of the previously proposed angled windows (in the vicinity of 18 Fitzroy Gardens) reduces the degree of privacy enjoyed by those living immediately adjacent to the site and whether there is a need to obscure any of the (potentially) offending windows.

6. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Officers comments on this scheme is very much framed in the context of the previous recommendation to grant planning permission, although officers recognise and acknowledge the previous decision reached by the Planning Committee and will defend the reasons for refusal with appropriate rigour. This report now deals with each issue in turn

Design and Conservation Area Character

- 6.2 Officers consider that the applicant's focus on the scale and mass of the east-west spine building and how it responds to with changes in levels has resulted in a much enhanced relationship with the Fitzroy Gardens shared amenity space; when viewed from within the gardens themselves as well as from the junction of Church Road and Fitzroy Gardens. The elevational changes with the introduction of enhanced elevational rhythms, subtle use of a more sympathetic materials palette with some recesses and bay details now proposed and a suitable termination of the north-south Fitzroy Gardens cul-de-sac has helped to lift the building's overall architectural expression and limit the degree of harm caused to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 6.3 As Members will recall, Historic England agreed with your officers that the works to this building represented less than substantial harm to the various heritage assets found in the vicinity of the site (including the building itself). The applicant had previously modified the proposals to retain and incorporate the mews buildings (located to the rear of the site) and there are elements of the existing east-west spine building which leaves much to be desired (in terms of its contribution to the character and appearance of the building itself as well as the conservation area). There were elements of the previous proposal that might have reasonably been considered to represent enhancements to the various heritage assets, especially the remodelling of the 1970's extension (the northern element of the Church Road hotel range). Reductions in the bulk of the east-west spine building (as the lands fall away to the west and towards the lower, more domestic scale development of Fitzroy Gardens) significantly reduces any degree of harm and provides confidence that the balance of the various issues should be weighted more in favour with the proposed development (as currently proposed to be amended).

Intensity of Use

- 6.4 The reduction in the number of hotel bedrooms has also helped reduce the overall scale and intensity of the development, although it is recognised that the proposed development would still represent a significant uplift in the number of hotel bedrooms (compared to those that are currently available).
- 6.5 It is clear however that the existing hotelier wishes to inject substantial capital into re-branding a hotel that has been established on this site over many years. The hotel is situated relatively close to Upper Norwood District Centre and the increase in hotel activity should benefit existing businesses in and around Upper Norwood – alongside a general boost in associated night-time economy. The

applicant is still keen to work with the local planning authority and the Council's Job Brokerage Service to make sure that local people are properly trained and made aware of the jobs that will be offered should an eventual scheme be granted planning permission.

On Site Car Parking

- 6.6 The current London Plan (March 2016) advises that the maximum on site car parking standard for hotels ranges from between 1 space per 20 bedroom (short stay) to 1 space per 50 bedrooms (longer stay). The hotel (as it currently operates) has 334 hotel bedrooms with 63 car parking spaces and the London Plan would limit on site parking to between 7 and 18 spaces (depending on the intended length of stay highlighted above). This is the main reason why Transport for London was very keen to reduce the level of on-site car parking as part of the previous proposals and Transport for London's request to reduce car parking on site will (more than likely) be highlighted robustly by the applicant, if and when the previous scheme is tested on appeal.
- 6.7 It is fair to say that the emerging policies (in the London Plan December 2017) advise that car parking levels (where hotels are located within PTALs of 0-3) should be considered on a case by case basis rather than through strict adherence to maximum car parking standards, with use of travel plans to encourage and deliver reductions in car use and to promote enhanced accessibility by more sustainable transport modes (including coaches). The application site has a PTAL of 3. This potentially might give some scope for flexibility, although it is likely that Transport for London will continue to object on grounds of excessive levels of on-site car parking (irrespective of the issues being raised by local residents and as highlighted by the previous reason for refusal).
- 6.8 Notwithstanding the above issues, the applicant has sought to increase the level of on-site car parking and linked to the overall reduction in guest accommodation proposed, the car-parking ratio would increase markedly compared to the previous ratio (a change from 0.32 spaces per hotel bedroom to 0.418 spaces per hotel bedroom). Both these ratios would be in excess of the current London Plan standards although it is recognised that the applicants suggested changes have been designed to try and overcome the previous reasons for refusal (by agreement). Dialogue with Transport for London would need to be carefully managed by the applicant and your officers would contribute to these future discussions.
- 6.9 The applicant has now confirmed that on site car parking would be "charged-for" as part of the visitor stay, with messages placed on the web site that on street car parking is at a premium and unlikely to be available for guests. It is common practice for hotels to charge for on-site car parking, partly to provide added services for hotel guests but also to provide for enhanced vehicle security and overall customer service. The level of car parking on street is relatively restricted and officers feel that active promotion of "charged-for" on site car-parking (delivered through an agreed Car Parking Management Plan) would represent

the most appropriate way to respond to the issues that arose as part of the previous planning application.

- 6.10 The applicant is intending to present more detailed information about over-night coach parking (including any further capacity for on-site coach parking and/or recognised over-night coach parking sites elsewhere).

Protecting Privacy

- 6.11 Officers consider that the previously proposed angled windows were overly contrived and (arguably) were not necessary, in view of the angled window to window separation between the proposed east-west spine building and the closest Fitzroy Gardens properties. The reduction in the scale of development and the continued angled window to window line of sight would suggest that angled windows are not necessary, with privacy adequately protected. The direct window to window separation between the east-west spine building and the remaining properties within Fitzroy Gardens would be well in excess of 20 metres.
- 6.12 There is scope to obscure glaze the relevant hotel bedrooms, but officers are of the view that this would not be necessary in this particular case and would limit outlook from the relevant hotel guest accommodation and might well upset the overall treatment of the proposed south elevation of the east-west spine building.

7 Specific Feedback requested from Members

- 7.1 In view of the above, it is suggested that Members focus on the following five issues.
- 1) The reductions in the scale and bulk of the east-west spine building and the balance between any harm caused to heritage assets when viewed alongside the benefits of the proposed development
 - 2) The amendments to the elevational treatment of the proposed east-west spine building and the southern extension to the original hotel range and the extent to which these changes have reduced any harm to heritage assets
 - 3) The increase in the level of on-site car parking with associated increases in the car parking ratio – and whether this overcomes the previous reasons for refusal (taking into account current and emerging London Plan policy).
 - 4) The applicant's intention to charge for on-site car parking – which can be captured and controlled through the use of a Car Parking Management Plan.
 - 5) The need to modify elevational detailing to deal with any real or perceived overlooking to the nearest Fitzroy gardens properties.
- 7.2 The stated reasons for refusal will represent an important material consideration moving forward. However, it is appreciated that this pre application submission might well lead to a new planning application process, with all planning merits requiring consideration. Therefore Members should not feel overly constrained when questioning planning merits of this revised proposal.