

Planning Committee Report Update

London Thames Gateway Development Corporation

Planning Application LTGDC-09-110-REG3

Land to the north of Rainham Station bounded by Ferry Lane, Wennington Road and former Station Approach Road, Rainham, Essex

Report of the Director of Planning

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Committee on 21st of April 2010, Members were presented with an application seeking full planning permission for the construction of a part-2 and part-5 storey building comprising a public library, lifelong learning centre and community facilities including space for a children's playgroup, a W.C. facility for bus drivers, retail unit, café and 16 residential flats together with new public open space, landscaping and cycle parking. For ease of reference, the original report with addendum can be found at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Following presentations both in support of the application from the London Borough of Havering and opposing the application from representatives of the local community, Members discussed the scheme and raised concerns relating to the car-free nature of the development, the servicing details and the massing and design. For these three reasons Members chose to defer their decision until further information could be provided to overcome these areas of concern.
- 1.3 In response to the reasons for deferral, the applicant has submitted a report that deals with each of the issues separately. This report can be found at Appendix 2.
- 1.4 Finally, Members are made aware of further consultation response received from Design for London at the request of the London Borough of Havering. This information is found at Appendix 3.

2 Car-free Nature of the Proposal

- 2.1 The applicant has set out the reasons why they consider the site is appropriate for car-free development. They contend that the site's location within Rainham District Centre as well as the accessibility to public transport and related borough policies are relevant factors for consideration. Additionally, the site's location adjacent to a

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future bus interchange, currently under construction, has been highlighted as improving the case for car free development.

- 2.2 The surrounding parking restrictions have also been identified, in particular the single yellow line restrictions along Wennington Road, Upminster Road and Rainham Broadway. The details of the station car parking areas have also been provided including the charging regimes.
- 2.3 The applicants maintain that with the exception of blue badge holders, the site's location and the public realm improvements steer the proposal towards a car free development. In light of the comments previously made by Members, the proposal now increases the size of the loading bay and reduces disabled parking from three to two bays. A clearer plan showing this arrangement in the context of the building's entrances has also been provided.
- 2.4 Officers consider that the information provided in the original application, along with the supplementary information provided following deferral of a decision, provides justification for the approach adopted. Members will also be aware of the prevailing policy context seeking to support sustainable means of transportation over private motor vehicles. PPS1, in relation to sustainable development, sets out within its general principles that development should be directed to areas with easy access to services and facilities by foot, cycle or public transport over private car. It is considered that the development is located in such an area, bearing in mind the minor district centre status of Rainham Village and the location of public transport services.
- 2.5 PPS3, in relation to housing, also emphasises the location of new development as being a key consideration in the level of car parking and goes on to state that any car parking should be well integrated into high quality public realm with priority for pedestrians, cycling and public transport. PPS3 also seeks parking policies for local areas to take account of expected levels of car ownership, good design and the efficient use of land. In the context of PPS3, officers again consider that the location of the site is capable of accommodating car-free development and that the provision of parking on site would be at the expense of the high quality public realm sought for the scheme. On-site parking provision, in the opinion of officers, cannot be justified in terms of PPS3.
- 2.6 PPG13 relating to transport heavily emphasises the need to reduce the dependence on private car and supports the reduction of car parking spaces as a key means of doing so, going so far as to state that reducing the amount of parking in new developments is "*essential ... to promote sustainable travel choices.*" Maximum parking standards are advised for local authorities and it is from these that the parking provisions in Borough Policy SSA15 have stemmed. These maximum standards are to be adhered to unless justification for exceeding them has been demonstrated. In this particular case, such justification would be difficult given the scheme's context within a minor district centre with good existing public transport services set to improve in the short term, the benefits of the development in delivering high quality public realm and the amount of cycle parking offered within the new building.

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2.7 In addition to the policy context for car-free development as outlined above, Members are reminded of the three planning conditions (13, 14 and 15) intended to be imposed on any planning permission. These can be found in the committee report at Appendix 1. Condition 13 excludes the eligibility of new residents to any existing, revised or new Controlled Parking Zones. This in itself would make owning a private car difficult for new residents. In addition, conditions 14 and 15 require the submission of workplace and residential travel plans to encourage workers and residents to use sustainable forms of transport.

2.8 Given the information provided to date, the existing policy and the local context, the car-free nature of the development can be supported. Officers consider that a reason for refusal on car parking grounds could not be justified.

3 Details of Servicing

3.1 The further submission by the applicant sets out the proposed servicing arrangements for the scheme and states that the general servicing of the building will be low. The key servicing details have been set out as follows:

- The library/learning centre expects 'one large van', three times a week for 15 minutes each visit
- The shop and café each expect a weekly delivery by van
- Residential element expects infrequent servicing requirements

3.2 The location of the servicing bay has not been changed, but the size of the bay has increased. The infrequent use of the servicing bay, coupled with its increased size has the benefit of allowing the space to be used as a drop off bay for users of the facilities on site. This is further co-ordinated by the imposition of a condition requiring a delivery and servicing plan (condition 16) and the play group opening hours, which have been confirmed as 9:15am to 11:45am and 12:15pm to 2:45pm including mornings only on Mondays and Fridays.

3.3 The servicing details are considered to be in line with the Borough's servicing policy DC36 and meets the criteria specifically set for highway servicing, being:

- Will not have an adverse effect on the functioning of the road hierarchy or the functioning of public transport (a layby is proposed which allows bus movements past the site without need for manoeuvre)
- Will not cause unacceptable levels of congestion (the layby allows clear movement along Ferry Lane, which is not a heavily trafficked route in any case)
- Does not have an adverse effect on pedestrian safety or residential amenity (sufficient pavement width is provided and deliveries are infrequent)
- There is no provision of a rear service road (the development is on an island site)

3.4 Overall, the servicing proposed for this development is considered by officers to be acceptable.

4 Massing and Design

- 4.1 The applicants have set out in their response the level of support for the scheme in terms of the design. This includes support from Design for London (DfL), Havering's Conservation Officer, English Heritage and the National Trust. In the applicant's view, the scale and massing is acceptable for the location and that design changes at this stage would be *"incongruous with the design philosophy"* supported by these bodies.
- 4.2 Although DfL input was limited to the pre-application stage, in light of the concerns raised, further advice has been provided on this version of the scheme before Members. The full version of the advice can be found in appendix 3.
- 4.3 In terms of the scale and massing of the scheme, DfL consider that the proportions of the scheme are well judged. They acknowledge the importance of the relationship with the Village and do not consider that the historic buildings are overpowered by the scale of the development. In fact, Design for London's advice states that the development marks a *"...significant civic building and public space around the station with a higher element"*, in effect punctuating the location of the station and addressing the marshes.
- 4.4 The advice received also highlights support for the design of the elevations and the materials proposed to be used. The references in the design to the various ages and designs of buildings within the Village are picked up upon and is considered to be a sensitive interpretation and supported. DfL also support other areas of the scheme including the density, uses and layout.
- 4.5 As set out in the main committee report appended to this update, the design, massing and impact upon the conservation area are supported both in policy terms and in specialist consultation response. The level of support from various consultation bodies, particularly DfL, lend significant weight behind these elements. It is not considered by officers that a reason for refusal is justified on massing and design.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 At the Committee meeting of the 21st of April, Members expressed concerns relating to car parking, servicing and design and massing. In the time since then the applicant has prepared a detailed response on all three aspects. In light of this further information, and the prevailing policy context for the area, it is the opinion of officers that the scheme should be approved, subject to the conditions set out in section 11 of the original committee report.

CASE OFFICER: Stephen Allen

Appendix 1: Committee Report with Addendum

Appendix 2: Response to Concerns from Applicant

Appendix 3: Support from Design for London