

BMW site – Lee Terrace Local meeting minutes

Demolition of existing buildings and structures at the BMW Garage Lee Terrace SE3 and the construction of a part 3/part 4 storey building to provide a car showroom (284 sq metres)(sui generis use) on the ground floor and 9 one bedroom, 8 two bedroom and 3 three bedroom self-contained flats fronting onto Lee Terrace and the erection of 10 four bedroom townhouses at the rear, together with the provision of 16 car parking and 58 cycle spaces, roof terraces, associated access, landscaping, amenity space and refuse storage.

Date & time: 21 June 2016 – 7pm (started at 7.10pm ended at 8.10pm)

Location: The Crypt, St Margaret's Church, Lee Terrace

Attendees: Councillor Kevin Bonivia, Chair (Blackheath Ward Councillor)
Monique Wallace, Lewisham Development Management Officer
Halley Ellison, Executive Director Boyer London (Planning Agent)
Alex Davies, Berkeley Homes (Eastern Counties) Ltd (Applicant)
Sean Ellis, Executive Director Berkeley Homes (Eastern Counties) Ltd (Applicant)
James Everitt, EPR Architects (Architect)

Residents from Haynes Close, The Glebe, Belmont Hill, Orchard Drive, Dacre Park, Lee Terrace, Church Terrace and Belmont Park attended the meeting.

Key

R – Resident

Applicant - Applicant, agent or the architect for the proposals

Cllr Bonavia – Councillor Kevin Bonavia

MW – Monique Wallace

Cllr Bonavia Opened the meeting at 7.05pm and introduced himself and the case officer and advised of the necessary domestic arrangements for the venue. He also advised that the refreshments were provided by the applicant, without prejudice.

MW – Briefly advised that she was the case officer who took over the planning application during the pre-application process.

Applicant - Sean Ellis made a short presentation regarding Berkeley Countries as a company. He also spoke about the evolution of the planning application since 2014.

Applicant – James Everitt Explained the different design solutions and characteristics of the scheme and the site constraints including the presence of the BMW showroom at the front of the site. Reference was also made to the inability to provide access to the site from the west, north and east boundaries. Topography was also a constraint. The site was described as an island. The site is surrounded by heritage assets. The existing building is 2 storeys in height, set back from Lee Terrace with car parking. The proposals would result in a more coherent scheme for the site.

R- A resident sought clarification regarding the position on the frontage of the proposed building.

Applicant – James Everitt explained the position of the apartment building in the context of its surrounds. He also explained the proposals and justification and massing strategies. Reference was also made to natural/passive surveillance for St Joseph's Vale as an additional benefit of the scheme. He explained that the 20 apartments would comprise 1/2/3 bed units. A drawing showing the foot print of the existing compared to the footprint of the proposed building was shown to the audience. He explained that the porte cochère at the south eastern corner of the proposed apartment block would be an open area and not gated and allowed visual permeability.

Applicant – Sean Ellis advised that works would start early 2017 if planning permission is granted.

R – Sir Ian Mills advised that his comments were subjective and provided a critique of the scheme. He then asked the following questions:

Question 1 – If the proposal is to be designed sensitively to respect the conservation area and heritage assets, why is the apartment block twice the height of the two properties to the east and proposed properties to the north?

Question 2 – The proposed materials palette does not echo the materials used in the vicinity of the site

Question 3 – Demonstrate the views that would be affected by the proposed development.

R – Paul Wright from the Blackheath Society. This is a critical site. The principle of the development is ok, but there are still a number of serious issues. He considered the proposed building to be vulgar and inappropriate:

- It's too tall - the top storey does not work
- Poor use of topography of the site
- Why are the tallest parts of the site so close to St. Margaret's Church?
- The Blackheath Society have already advised that the shoulder of the proposed building should not exceed the shoulder of St. Margaret's church
- The proposed apartment would not be subordinate to St. Margaret's church, nor the church yard.

R – Anthony Quincy. Is the scheme led by BMW? The site was originally a house with stables. Garages survived then became BMW. Are the proposed designs a consequence of BMW's requirements?

R - Robert Hall. I echo the comments of the Blackheath Society regarding the proposed scale on top of a hill which exacerbates the height of the building which would be viewed from Belmont Hill, Brandram Road, St. Joseph's Vale. None of the plans incorporate views from the graveyard.

Cllr Bonivia - Asked the applicant to explain why the greatest mass is at the front of the site.

Applicant – James Everitt explained that the width of the car showroom dictates the height of the proposed building to have a slender, vertical emphasis, otherwise it would be squat in appearance. The top floor proposed sits lower than the shoulder of St. Margaret's church and the second floor (third storey) sits at shoulder height with the shoulder of St. Margaret's tower. He apologised that there were drawings showing views through the churchyard and not Belmont Hill.

Applicant – Sean Ellis advised that Berkeley Homes won the bid to develop the BMW site against other developers.

MW – Prior to the bid, BMW approached the Council in order to seek feedback regarding the possibility of expanding the existing site for more car sales and repairs. This was rejected by the Council which resulted in the applicant investigating the redevelopment of the site, with a smaller car show room.

Cllr Bonivia – St. Joseph's Vale has a narrow path and accidents and near misses are a frequent occurrence. Are there any proposals to widen/improvement the pavement?

Applicant - Sean Ellis – The land is not in our ownership, so we have no control over what happens to it.

Applicant – Alex Davies – The new position of the buildings and lowered boundary treatment would go a significant way in improving site lines for pedestrians and vehicle users.

Applicant – James Everitt – movements to and from the site would reduce significantly as a result of the proposed development.

R - (unknown) But the vehicular movements would be in the evenings and on weekends.

Applicant – James Everitt refers to 4 projecting bays and acknowledges that they are larger than adjacent villas but the scale addresses the open space in front of the church.

R - Howard Shields, Blackheath Society – Has the school objected?

Applicant – Alex Davies advised that during the pre-application stages, the school raised concerns regarding overlooking.

MW – The school did not object to the proposals during the consultation exercise for the planning application.

R – Paul Wright, Blackheath Society. There still has not been a show stopping reason why the large mass can't be located to at the rear of the site if the school has not objected.

Applicant – James Everitt – We've been through 8 iterations and concluded that the application version was the best one.

Cllr Bonavia – Only 1 floor above the car show room is wrong, but this is subjective.

R – Is the top floor of the apartment there for aesthetics or profits?

Applicant – Sean Ellis – Both (in answer to question above).

R – Howard Shields – the proposed materials are at complete odds with the materials in the locality. Have they changed from when the application was submitted?

[A brick and mortar sample board was presented to the audience]

Applicant – James Everitt said the scheme originally included a chalky material mixed with stucco – not render. Officers raised reservations with the brick proposed. We now submit a softer brick relating to the church which has more character and variety. It is a full structural brick, and the brick slips used are only for the sample board. James refers to the brick and mortar sample panel and advises that the revised materials would sit comfortably with the local brick and stone work.

R – (unknown) Are you trying to reflect the pilasters of the nearby properties?

Applicant – James Everitt said subtle recesses in the brickwork. Stone copings columns and bronze effect detail. James points to the drawings and explains where the various materials would be used.

R – (unknown) Will the columns be brick?

Applicant – Sean Ellis said that the columns would be wet cast stone and brick

R – (unknown) A horizontal emphasis is wanted?

Applicant – James Everitt said the Lewisham Design Review Panel wanted a horizontal emphasis. He also refers to a floor plan to explain the strategic response of the proposals in the context of the churchyard. He explains that the setting of the churchyard would be improved but accept that his comments are his opinion which is subjective. He considers that the proposals would open up the site and that the school and BMW are constraints.

Applicant – Sean Ellis said they have committed to paying £82k to restore the adjacent churchyard.

Applicant – James Everitt said the materials, including those used on the sample panel presented would be secured via condition.

R – Eileen Wyatt – Safety is an issue as the new entrance would be close to the busy bus stops. How would this additional access protect the school children?

R – Penny Aldred – Views from Brandram Road is significantly limited. Visitors parking permits and existing car club spaces are insufficient to support the proposed development.

Applicant – Sean Ellis said that there would be fewer car movements as result of the development. Further, the existing access would remain unchanged, and the access adjacent to the Brandram Road junction would be for vehicles coming out of the site only.

Cllr Bonavia requested revised rendered images to incorporate the brick which was presented at the meeting. The applicant agreed to provide this at least 1 week prior to the committee meeting proposed for 14 July 2016.

Meeting ended at 8.10pm.