

# LOCAL MEETING – Rear of 14 Wickham Road

THURSDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2023

**DC/23/130822** - The change of use for the siting of holiday let accommodation, comprising three shepherds huts, together with comprehensive landscaping works and community accessible forest garden on land to the rear of 14 Wickham Road SE4.

## Participants:

- *Cllr Ayesha Lahai-Taylor (Chair)*
- *Alfie Williams (Senior Planning Officer)*
- *Joe Badby (Applicant)*
- *Paul Webster (Agent)*

## Notes of the meeting

Chair – Welcomes everybody to the meeting

*Alfie Williams (AW)* – Provides a brief introduction detailing the purpose and rules of the meeting

*Joe Badby (JB)* – Gives a presentation beginning with the history of the site and background to the application. Then provides an overview of the proposed development.

*At this stage of the meeting the chair opened the meeting for questions and comments.*

## **Questions and comments (Q) from members of the public and the answers (A) given by the application team and Council Officers are detailed below:**

Q: JJ - States that gardens are generally quiet in contrast to the proposed holiday lets which would be used by more people on a more frequent basis. Also concern that there would be an increase parking stress to the surrounding roads and servicing traffic. Asked whether there would be wood burning stoves and whether the cycle and bins can be on site. Also pointed to security as a concern.

A: JB - Answered that the stoves are electric and there would be no open fires or BBQs permitted. Stated that revisions have been submitted to relocate the bins and bikes on site. On security noted that the site is currently vacant so the development would increase surveillance. Highlighted that noise monitors and cameras would be installed both linked to an app monitored by staff. Accepted that there will be some disruption from construction on site but that it would be relatively low level as most of the construction would take place off-site. On transport and parking pointed to the High PTAL and expects that most guests would arrive via public transport.

Q: JJ - Follow-up question about the frequency of serving.

A: JB - Responded that this would be short-term stays so waste generated would be low so frequency of servicing trips would also be low.

Q: JBE - Stated that the primary concern is noise and disturbance. Asked for clarification on the days of use and over how the site would be managed given that staff would be remote.

A: JB - answered that the accommodation would be let Thursday to Sunday. Explained that they have responded to advice from Officers on enforcement and have strengthened the management plan in response. Highlighted that Airbnb includes the function to pre-screen and approve guests and referenced the house rules detailed in management plan, which includes no parties or large groups. Detailed that the development has been designed to suppress noise via the landscaping and boundaries, that the huts are well insulated and referenced the video and noise monitoring. On enforcement stated that the company head office is 2.5 miles away and that neighbours would be given the emergency number and email which would allow staff to be dispatched to the site and reserve the right to remove guests if they contravene policy.

Q: JBE - asked whether staff will monitor 24hours

A: JB - answered that they aim to have staff available around the clock. Also explained that this would initially be a temporary permission to test the concept.

Q: RM - stated that it would be inappropriate to have the holiday lets in inner London as the use is orientated towards outdoor entertaining. Also raised concern that this would set a harmful precedent. Raised concern that vetting would not comply with Airbnb anti-discrimination policies.

A: JB - answered that guests with bad reviews will not be accepted.

Q: RM - asked whether it is legal to screen based on age as is stated in the Management Plan?

A: JB - explained that they will focus screening on the reviews rather than demographics and that bookings will be managed on a case by case basis but confirmed that they would not contravene discrimination policies.

Q: RM - asked whether there will be a minimum number of reviews?

A: JB - answered that the details have not yet been finalised but that the policy would establish a minimum number of stars and reviews.

Q: RM - asked whether they can guarantee that people will not know each other?

A: JB - explained that it would be difficult but no different to a house having guests over.

Q: RM - countered that gathering within residential gardens would be less frequent so the risk is lower and that it is possible to speak to adjoining neighbours directly and establish relationships.

A: JB - answer that the business will be your neighbour and that they will engage directly

Q: RM - asked whether the company owns any similar properties?

A: JB - stated that they own some visitor accommodation but not in the this area. Noted that the proposed development is being held to higher standard than a residential property letting via Airbnb.

Q: RM - proclaimed that key aspects of the management plan are not workable and that the risks from noise are higher than a residential property.

Q: CH - stated that there are so many issues that it would not be possible to cover them all within the meeting and that the result of the development would be making money to the detriment of neighbours.

A JB - countered that the development is responding to a need for visitor accommodation in London and has the benefit of preventing further loss of homes to 90 day Airbnb letting. Also highlighted that the development would enhance the green space and deliver a community benefit.

Q: CH - explained that this is the best-preserved mews and a jewel within the Conservation Area as there is currently no residential development on this stretch. Stated that the development would churn-up the mews and introduce the worst kind of residential development.

A: PW - stated that the use would be controlled by conditions and legal agreement.

Q: CH - responded that the development will be impossible to control and expressed concern that the neither the Council nor the police are able to control parties. Claimed that the development would torture local residents and asked why it cannot be retained as a garden?

A: JB - answered that back garden is private so this development will be available to wider community.

Q: CH - asked why it cannot be an allotment?

*Chaired intervened to allow other residents to ask questions.*

Q: MC - agreed with the previous concerns raised but stated that the main issue is security as there is a big issue with burglaries in the surrounding area so worried that this development would increase the risk.

A: JB - answered that the risks are no larger than the existing situation and pointed to additional monitoring and improved boundaries in addition to more regular activity and surveillance.

Q: MC - stated that many properties have cameras and a secure perimeter, but these measures have not proved to be effective.

A: JB - stated that the gate would be locked and that the code on the gate would be changed regularly so this would not be a public park.

Q: MC - raised concern that the site will only be monitored remotely.

A: JB - Countered that the site will only be open to reputable community organisations but acknowledged that it will not be possible to prevent people climbing over the fence.

A: PW - noted that the s106 agreement will define what type of community group can access the site.

Q: MC - stated that the development is totally inappropriate and that having no on-site management is a concern. Asked what would happen is an incident occurs at 3am?

A: JB - answered that they would send staff out and if there are disturbances they would be asked to leave and would then alert the appropriate authorities.

Q: MC - highlighted the potential for hen or stag bookings.

A: JB - explained that those type of booking would not be accepted.

*Chair spoke to warn that there is not time to discuss every worst case scenario and invited questions for residents who have not spoken.*

Q: PM - asked whether guests would have access during the day

A: JB - confirmed they would.

Q: PM - asked whether they would have water and electric facilities.

A: JB - confirmed that there would be a cooker and connection to water.

Q: PM - raised concern these will be used for permanent residential dwellings in the long-term.

A: PW - stated that planning permission would be required for residential conversion.

A: JB - explained that this is a concept that is being tested and that they would take the comments on board. Invited residents to contact him to discuss any concerns.

Chair - concluded the meeting and summarised that there is significant concern with noise and security then urged the applicant to liaise further with residents.

AW - thanked everybody for attending and noted that the revised documents have been uploaded online. Then assured residents that the application would be determined at committee in the event there is a recommendation for approval.

Chair - noted that objectors share 5 minutes to speak at planning committee meetings so advised that concerned residents should coordinate representations.

*The chair brought the meeting to a close at this stage and thanked everyone for taking the time to attend*

**End**