MINUTES OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Thursday, 3 September 2020 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors John Paschoud (Chair), Leo Gibbons (Vice-Chair), Kevin Bonavia, Andre Bourne, Aisling Gallagher, Olurotimi Ogunbadewa, Sakina Sheikh and James-J Walsh

ALSO PRESENT:
Under Standing Orders:
Councillor Silvana Kelleher

Presenting Officers:
Service Group Manager, Major & Strategic Projects Manager, and Senior Planning Officer.

Legal Representation:
Charles Merrett, Francis Taylor Building – on behalf of Lewisham Council.

At the start of the meeting, the Chair, Councillor John Paschoud announced that external participants should follow the proceedings via the public webcast, and would be invited into the meeting when the Committee starts consideration on item(s) of particular interest to them. It was stated that external participants would remain in the meeting until the conclusion of those item(s) for which they had registered to speak on.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Suzannah Clarke and Councillor Liam Curran.

1. Declarations of Interests

No interest was declared at the meeting.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED that minutes of meetings of the Strategic Planning Committee held on 9 June 2020 and 30 July 2020 be confirmed as correct records, subject to amendments agreed with the Chair, Councillor John Paschoud, prior to the start of the meeting.

3. Temporary changes to the Scheme of Delegation - update

The Service Group Manager introduced the report and highlighted to Members reasons for a decision to temporarily amend matters in the Council's Scheme of Delegation (SoD) that were reserved to Planning Committees A, B and C, and to Strategic Planning Committee. It was stated that the current proposal recommended that the temporary measures, which were initially agreed on 9 June for a period of three months should be extended to 10 March 2021. The Officer

stated that the extended timeline would enable the Planning Service to continue to operate efficiently and ensure that it remains able to meet its statutory responsibility to determine the full range of planning applications in a timely fashion.

The Committee noted the report and the rationale for the proposal. It was understood that the changes to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, which were made at the time the initial temporary measures were agreed, would continue to remain effective throughout the extended period.

In response to questions raised, the Officer reiterated to Members that the changes and extended timeline were publicised on the Council's internet. In addition to that, key stakeholders were notified. It was stated that a number of responses were received, and the concerns which they raised were reproduced in the addendum report. Members also received confirmation that the safeguards initially implemented would remain throughout the extended period, in order to ensure transparency and democratic accountability in decision making.

Continuing with his response, the Officer advised Members that arrangements for considering planning applications during the current crisis would vary because each council had to identify its own threshold markers for referring planning applications to committees. However, Lewisham's thresholds were lower in comparison to many other London boroughs, but the temporary proposed measures had brought it in line with the general picture across London boroughs.

Councillor Kevin Bonavia, a Member of the Committee, and also Cabinet Member for Democracy, Refugees and Accountability, emphasised that the system in place should remain accountable in light of recommendations from the Council's recent review on local democracy. Councillor Bonavia stated that it was vital for Members and officers to actively consult and liaise with objectors and applicants at the outset, and consider feedback and responses in time, with a view to submitting improved applications to planning committees. Commenting on restrictions relating to face-to-face contacts as a result of the current pandemic, Councillor Bonavia suggested that residents and local amenity groups could lobby on planning applications via the telephone, emails, and/or make appointments for virtual meetings with their respective ward councillors.

In considering submissions made at the meeting, Members agreed that the Council should be supported to continue meeting its statutory duties. However, the temporary measures should not be viewed as a precedent. Views expressed by Councillor Bonavia that residents and local amenity societies should continue to be consulted about development proposals was also echoed.

The Committee voted on the proposals and

RESOLVED

Unanimously

That the following be agreed for a time-limited 6 months' period expiring on 10th March 2020:

- AUTHORISE the temporary amendment of the list of matters that are reserved to Planning Committee's A, B and C and to Strategic Planning Committee in the Council's Scheme of Delegation set out on page 311 of the Council's Constitution to enable the following matters to be delegated to officers (unless the recommendation is for refusal):
- APPROVE the threshold of objections for applications being required to go to Planning Committee for decision to be raised from 3 to 5
- APPROVE that any application with an amenity society objection to be subject to case review with Chair to determine whether it is referred to planning committee for a decision
- APPROVE that applications with 5-9 objections to be subject to case review with Chair to determine whether it is referred to planning committee for a decision.

4. Land and Property Comprising Silwood Street, London, SE16

The Planning Officer gave an illustrative presentation to the report, recommending to the Committee to approve planning application for the construction of a mixed-use development to deliver at Silwood Street, SE16. It was confirmed that the proposed development comprised of four (4) building blocks, A. B and C, with heights ranging between five to nine (5-9) storeys, including associated landscaping with street trees, play space, public realm improvements, and service facilities.

The Committee noted the report, and that the proposal would deliver sixty-one (61) residential dwellings, including commercial, business and service floorspaces. It was recognised that Block A would be nine (9) storeys in height, with no affordable units. The Committee understood that the affordable units would be located predominantly in Blocks B and C. It was noted that Blocks B to D would stretch the remainder of the proposed site, and would provide commercial uses at the ground and first floors.

In response to questions raised the Officer advised the Committee that the Council had made no request for further contribution from the applicant for additional play space because the provision was considered at pre-application stage as adequate for the type of development. However, in regards to older children, the expectation was that they would visit public parks close to the application site to hang-out and play. It was stated that the applicant had also proposed to provide a table tennis facility on-site which older children could use.

Continuing with her response, the Officer informed the Committee that empirical evidence had shown that railway arches were attractive for business operations, and that it was not unusual to have higher buildings close them in a London urban area. Thus, it was unlikely that the proposal would prevent future entrepreneurs from using the railway arches at Silwood Street.

In a follow-up question to the latter, the Officer gave an assurance to the Committee that the anticipation to increase footfall at Silwood Street and its environs would be realised because the proposal aimed to deliver open and accessible outside areas, with a view to attract businesses to operate from the

railway arches at the back of the proposed buildings. It was stated that the spaces at the back of the proposed buildings in the design illustrations were considered adequate for potential customers to move about in with ease. Members were advised that it was likely that the business potentials would result in increased job opportunities once the development becomes operational.

The Committee also received clarification from the Officer that car-free development schemes were not unusual in a London urban setting. Therefore, it had come with no surprise that objections were not raised by the Council's Highway Team and officials at Transport for London (TfL) regarding plans by the applicant to deliver a car-free development, with the exception of six (6) blue badge spaces for potential disabled occupants.

In light of a concern expressed by Members, the Officer reiterated that it was unlikely that the development would impact adversely on potential occupants to the family units given that the applicant had proposed to deliver two (2) loading bays and restricted parking instructions for deliveries and servicing activities. The Committee heard that Lewisham, along with other London boroughs, had joined up to the flexible Zip-Car scheme. In addition to that, potential occupants could sign up to the local Enterprise car-sharing scheme. The Committee's attention was also drawn to the fact that the location of the proposed site was in close proximity to walking paths, and that pedestrian routes and footways along Silwood Street would remain a minimum of two metres in width. The Committee was also asked to note that PTAL rating would be substantially be increased in the area when the new additional bus route becomes operational, and upon implementation of the overground railway station that had been proposed for operation in the vicinity of Silwood Road.

The meeting was also addressed by the agent to the applicant. He highlighted the benefits of the proposed development in terms of its sustainability, the delivery of affordable homes to include family units, the potential for new businesses and increased job opportunities, and the delivery of new community space with landscaped public realm. The Committee was advised that the density and massing of the proposed buildings were arranged in accordance with the land context to maximise the impact of the site, without detracting from the character of the Silwood Street environment. The Committee also received confirmation tthat the applicant had agreed to a financial contribution towards lighting provision under the railway arches for improved security at the back of the proposed buildings.

In response to questions raised, the agent informed the Committee that the applicant would not deliberately segregate areas within the proposed development and limit spaces to benefit potential private occupants, other than for security or design reasons. It was confirmed that the apportionment of amenity space across blocks B to D in terms of scale would be larger because affordable units with family units would be contained within them. Notwithstanding that, there should be no reason why the applicant would not be willing to work with Council officers and the police to ensure access for all residents to all the amenity areas across the proposed development, subject to 'secured by design' considerations.

The meeting was also addressed by a resident as the Chair of the Bermondsey South Homeowners Association (BSHA). The representative informed the Committee that residents welcomed plans to develop Silwood Road. However, given the substantial nature of the plans, residents were concerned that the proposal constituted an over-development because the bulk and mass would impact inappropriately on existing dwellings in regard to overshadowing, loss of light, and privacy. Thus, residents' physical and mental wellbeing would be will be adversely affected. It was also the view of the representative that the transport assessment was based on an inconsistent assumption, and the PTAL rating for the area had ignored individuality. The representative stated that because the applicant had made non-constructive and minimal engagement, residents felt that their concerns were not taken into account, or adequately addressed. Thus, the Committee should defer consideration of the proposal to allow time for residents and the applicant to work out a compromise.

In light of issues raised by the BSHA representative, the Committee asked questions and received clarification from the Officer that the density metrics calculations, although slightly higher, was considered appropriate for delivering a mixed-use development. The Committee was further advised that the distances from the application site to existing dwellings were also assessed as adequate for the type of scheme, particularly that the proposed building blocks would be set back in a step-elevated design within the context of the site.

The Committee also received representation made by Councillor Silvana Kelleher on behalf of her constituents in the Evelyn Ward. Councillor Kelleher stated that she was supportive of the proposal because it would help to reduce social housing pressures for residents in Lewisham. Councillor Kelleher commended the applicant for delivering on his promise to provide a development that was sympathetic to the local community, and one that would increase job opportunities and enhance the environment at Silwood Street.

In considering submissions made at the meeting, Members reiterated that the Council was committed to community engagement and democratic accountability.

Specific to the proposal, Members stated that they were not convinced that the car-club schemes would alleviate burdens of lack of parking spaces at Silwood Street. It was the view of Members that a reliance on public transport was often frustrated by inconsistent operating schedules, particularly at weekends when needed by families. Thus, while a car-free development was attractive, the cumulative effect of moving towards such a trend was a concern. Members suggested that in developing future schemes, applicants should consider limitations of car-free proposals, particularly when delivering homes for families.

Members also welcomed the provision of affordable, and that the proposed development included family unites, however, information that some amenity spaces would not be accessible by all residents was unacceptable. Members stated that steps should therefore be taken to ensure equality of access by all potential residents all communal areas, subject to security issues. Members suggested that the play areas should also be sufficient for children of all ages, including teenagers.

Members' summations were captured and read out at the meeting by the Service Group Manager.

The Committee endorsed the statements as read by the Officer, and suggested that they should be finalised in consultation with legal officers for implementation as a condition. Thereafter, Councillor James-J Walsh moved the recommendations outlined in the report, and in light of the statements read out at the meeting. The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Olurotimi Ogunbadewa.

The Committee voted on the recommendations and

RESOLVED unanimously

That it be agreed to:

- AUTHORISE officers to negotiate and complete a legal agreement under Section 106 of the 1990 Act (and other appropriate powers) to cover the principal matters set out in Section 11 of this report, including such other amendments as considered appropriate to ensure the acceptable implementation of the development.
- AUTHORISE the Head of Planning to GRANT PERMISSION to conditions set out in the report and the addendum to it subject to completion of a satisfactory legal agreement,
- INCLUDE additional condition following discussions at the meeting that all of the external amenity spaces within the development, including the roof-top amenity space on Block A shall be made accessible to all residents of the entire development at all times for the duration of the development, unless a report has been submitted to, and approved by the Local Authority, prior to first occupation of the development, detailing how such a requirement would prevent the development from achieving 'secured by design' certification.

Meeting closed at 21.16pm.

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Chair