

DC/19/113716: Local Meeting for Hesper House on 3rd September 2020 - Minutes

Councillor Leo Gibbons introduced himself and other Panel members: Sam James - Planning Officer, James Hughes – Planning Team Leader, John Smart – Planning Agent, Silas Koopmans – Planning Agent.

He went on to outline the reason for the virtual meeting to discuss planning application DC/20/115160. The purpose of this meeting is to allow residents to ask questions of, and put their views to, the developer and Council officers. He explained the format of the meeting and explained how the questioning process would work, following the Planning Agent's presentation.

John Smart of Craftworks spent approximately ten minutes outlining the proposal, and the design rationale behind it.

The first theme of questioning was design, and pre-submitted questions around this theme were read out by Cllr Gibbons. What is the design rationale for the proposed building? How will the design stop the building being 'visually intrusive'? Proposed building height is out of keeping with surrounding area. What is the developers' rationale for this height?

Sam James stated that officers support the height and design of the proposal, as it fits in with the surrounding context and is considered policy compliant.

John Smart explained the design rationale, including how the proposal has attempted to draw on nearby buildings for inspiration, and that the scale and height of the building had been designed to be of a similar height to neighbouring buildings. The design and access statement includes more detail of the studies which were carried out, which have informed the design rationale.

Further questions and comments submitted on the night were then read out by Cllr Gibbons. The first sought clarification as to whether the proposed building is five or six stories in height, the second related to clarification over the accuracy of the indicative 'street view' elevation which had been submitted. They state that existing larger properties are also set back further back than the proposal.

Sam clarified the proposed building was five stories in height, with the lower ground basement parking level at the same level of the street, however the building is set considerably back compared to the front of the basement parking level. John stated that the proposed building is set back considerably compared to the existing house. Sam stated that officer's consider the design of the proposal to be acceptable, and would not harm the appearance of the street.

Another question relating to the style and scale of the proposal, and the impact of large windows on bats was asked. John replied that the scale and massing is less tall and less wide than Greyfriars, and the other flatted development to the east. He also stated that there is some screening to the windows, and that the windows at the rear are smaller, which would reduce the impact to bats. He went on to discuss there are varying styles of buildings in the surrounding area, so we feel the style is appropriate.

The next theme of discussion was the highway impacts of the proposal.

Pre submitted questions were first asked by Cllr Gibbons, including how the construction impacts of the development would be managed, how the safety of the parking access would be ensured, how the development would ensure no harmful impacts to parking stress, and the safety of the refuse collection proposal.

DC/19/113716: Local Meeting for Hesper House on 3rd September 2020 - Minutes

John Smart responded that a construction management plan would be secured by condition and explained some general measures which would be employed. He also explained that modern methods of construction would be used, including off-site pre fabrication, which minimises construction and groundworks activity on site. He stated that the Transport Statement is available, which includes full highway safety measures, including sight lines for the parking space. Sensors, lights and signals as well as tactile paving would be installed. Ten parking spaces is a high provision in terms of policy, and therefore there would not be an impact on on-street parking. The use of Eurobins with brakes on the wheels will ensure the bin is secured during collection times.

Sam confirmed the level of parking proposed was policy compliant, and would not have a harmful impact on parking stress in the surrounding area. This has been confirmed by highways officers.

A further question was asked about the safety of the access, they stated that the site is on a bend and there is a history of accidents on the street. Another comment questioned the level of visibility of the access, and further questions about the warning alarms and sensors. Does the parking area allow for cars to turn or would they reverse out?

John Smart stated there is an existing crossover and driveway, and that the street is a 20mph limit. He also confirmed the site lines are greater than 90m, and that the proposed access is not located on a sharp bend. Vehicles could turn within the parking area, so no reversing out onto the highway. The sliding access gate would be wide to allow good visibility (almost 5m wide). The sensors would sound an alarm and light that the gate is about to open as a precautionary measure, this would be designed to a final specification by a relevant specialist.

The next theme for discussion was the impact on neighbouring amenity.

The pre-submitted question regarded overlooking and the impact on neighbouring amenity, and how this has been addressed.

Sam stated that officers had assessed the overlooking impacts, and that these are considered to be acceptable. There would be no direct overlooking into neighbouring windows, and the 21m distance to 125 Longton Avenue from the balconies is policy compliant, and ensures there would be no unreasonable impact on neighbouring privacy.

John Smart confirmed the orientation of the building was designed to minimise overlooking, and that side elevation windows would all be obscure glazed.

Further comments/questions submitted in the chat around the impact on amenity were read out by Cllr Gibbons, including further comments about overlooking onto Longton Avenue, loss of light to Greyfriars.

John Smart stated that the overlooking was studied carefully at the design stage, and that this is included in the design and access statement. The proposed house, whilst taller than existing, but would be set back further from the street, so impacts would be similar. Nonetheless 21m is generally acceptable for direct window to window overlooking. Further that a Daylight and Sunlight report has been submitted, which concludes the impact on Greyfriars would not be significantly harmful.

The next theme for discussion centred around the ecological impacts.

DC/19/113716: Local Meeting for Hesper House on 3rd September 2020 - Minutes

Firstly, a pre-submitted question regarding why the trees on site had been removed before permission was granted, despite ecology report comments which stated there could be roosting potential on site. Another question regarding the landscape enhancements that were proposed.

John Smart stated that the trees were removed as part of the sale agreement of the site, and all removed trees were Grade U or Grade C (low value) as assessed by submitted arboriculture report. He stated that the trees that existed on site had arisen naturally over the years, and there was no conscious landscape strategy. The proposed strategy will be well considered, more diverse and long term than the existing landscaping on site. Woodland planting, and planting on the roof will also be incorporated, and overall the site greening factor would be increased, and there would be less hard landscaping than existing.

Councillor Gibbons asked another question which had been submitted regarding the principle of development and justification for the demolition of the existing property. Sam explained that the loss of the existing house was justified, as it is of no architectural merit, and due to the public benefit of ten new dwellings.

Councillor Gibbons read out more which had been submitted during the ecology discussion, including, how could it be ensured the landscaping is managed, and how the provision of new trees could be considered better than those which were lost.

Further questions were read out including, what is the need for the proposed 'luxury' flats? What is the justification for the loss of the existing 1950s house which is heritage?

John Smart stated that a landscaping management plan, and soft landscaping scheme could be conditioned to ensure the scheme comes to fruition. Sam confirmed that this would be added as a condition if the proposal were granted.

John then stated that these are not intended as luxury apartments, as alluded to in the question, but that they are proposed as family homes, which would be more affordable than many of the existing single family houses in the surrounding area. The proposal has gone through affordable housing viability. Section 106 contributions and CIL payments will also be paid.

Sam confirmed stated that costs would be recovered through CIL payments to contribute to local infrastructure, including doctor's surgeries and schools.

Councillor Gibbons had some final questions to read out, these included, whether the applicants had consulted the owner of the old railway tunnel under the site, whether the impact on local ground water has been considered, have ground stability issues been considered? A commenter wanted confirmation of any precedents which justify the current proposal.

John stated that a desk-top study has been conducted on the railway tunnel, and there was no issues found with the proximity of the proposal to this. John stated that the proposal would not have a significant impact on local water courses due to its scale. A SUDS assessment is underway, this would look to recycle on-site water.

John stated that he considers the building to be subordinate to the existing houses on the Sydenham Estate. Sam stated that a precedent is not a planning consideration, and whether there are examples

DC/19/113716: Local Meeting for Hesper House on 3rd September 2020 - Minutes

other approved building of the same height in the surrounding area in recent years is not relevant. The proposal is assessed against its merits within the site context.

Another question was submitted, regarding whether the sunlight and daylight impact assessment is available to view, and Sam confirmed it was on the public access system.

Another resident asked what the next steps of the application process was. Sam confirmed that a committee report would need to be written and final assessments made, and then a recommendation given to the planning committee. He confirmed that all comments and objections raised would be addressed in the report. All commenters will be invited to the planning committee meeting. Councillor Leo reiterated this.

A further question was asked regarding where deliver vehicles would stop on the site. John stated that a construction management plan will outline the details for this.

Councillor Leo started to bring the meeting to a close. He invited further comments or questions to be sent to himself or officers following the meeting, and confirmed residents will be invited to the following planning committee. He thanked everyone for attending, and closed the meeting.