



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Wednesday 13 March
2024 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Kelcher (Chair), Councillor S Butt (Vice Chair) and Councillors Ahmed, Akram, Collymore, Mahmood and Rajan-Seelan.

1. Apologies for Absence and Clarification of Alternate Members

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Begum, Dixon and Maurice, with Councillor Ahmed attending as a substitute for Councillor Dixon and Councillor Collymore attending as a substitute for Councillor Begum.

2. Declarations of Interests

Councillor Saqib Butt declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item 4 (23/3365 - 163-165 Edgware Road, London, NW9), stating that as the Councillor representing Kingsbury ward they had been contacted by both residential organisations and the developer but affirmed that they had not yet come to a decision regarding the application and thus was attending the Committee with an open mind.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meetings held on Wednesday 7 February 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

4. 163-165 Edgware Road, London, NW9

PROPOSAL

Redevelopment of the site for a basement (with small sub-basement for sprinkler pump and swimming pool plant room), ground plus five-storey building for an apart-hotel (152 rooms) with swimming pool and gym, a public house, co-working space and associated servicing, car parking (including accessible car parking), cycle parking and landscaping.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee resolve to GRANT planning permission subject to:

- i) The prior completion of a legal agreement to secure the planning obligations detailed in the Committee report.
- ii) The Head of Planning being delegated authority to negotiate the legal agreement detailed in the Committee report.
- iii) The Head of Planning being delegated authority to issue the planning permission and impose the conditions and informatives detailed in the Committee report.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

13 March 2024

- iv) The Head of Planning being delegated authority to make changes to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions, informatives, planning obligations or reasons for the decision) prior to the decision being actioned, provided that the Head of Planning is satisfied that any such changes could not reasonably be regarded as deviating from the overall principle of the decision reached by the Committee nor that such change(s) could reasonably have led to a different decision being reached by the committee.
- v) The Head of Planning being delegated authority to refuse planning permission if by the "expiry date" of this application (subject to any amendments/extensions to the expiry date agreed by both parties) the legal agreement has not been completed.
- vi) The Committee confirming that adequate provision has been made, by the imposition of conditions, for the preservation or planting of trees as required by Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Nicola Blake, Principal Planning Officer, introduced the report and set out the proposal. Members were advised that the supplementary agenda included further information relating to the sequential test and a minor clarification to the recommendations in the original agenda pack, as the application's approval was not 'subject to the application's referral to the Mayor of London (stage 2 referral)'.

The Chair thanked Nicola Blake for introducing the report and subsequently invited Mr Nic Rupalia (Objector) to address the Committee on behalf of Springfield Residents Association.

The following key points were highlighted:

- Concerns were raised relating to the height, size and character of the proposed development, which was said to be out of character with the local area, overbearing and detrimental to the local community.
- Further concerns were raised in relation to the Council having failed to consult residential properties on Lodore Gardens who would also be impacted by the development.
- The inclusion of kitchenettes in hotel rooms was questioned as it was believed that, despite the 90 day restriction on the length of stay, the hotel would be used for longer stays and therefore would result in greater congestion in the local area.
- Although local residents objected to Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ) in principle, it was stated that they would be forced to accept a CPZ due to the insufficient parking provision at the hotel and the increased vehicular usage that would be generated given the lack of public transport options in the locality.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

13 March 2024

- Overall, it was believed that the proposal would lead to overdevelopment in the local area and the extended stay of guests due to the inclusion of the kitchenettes in the units. However, members were informed that Springfield Residents Association would support the proposal if the height of the building was reduced to the same height as the adjoining Toyota showroom to be less visually intrusive and to better keep with the character of the local area.

The Chair thanked Mr Rupalia for addressing the Committee and invited the members to ask any questions they had in relation to the information heard. The Committee had questions regarding the 90 day stay restriction, the proposed CPZ, the height of the building, the consultation process and the inclusion of kitchenettes within the units.

The following responses were provided:

- In providing further information regarding concerns relating to hotel users staying for extended periods of time, Mr Rupalia explained that Springfield Residents Association wanted to prevent the hotel being used as an apartment for 90 days at a time given the previously highlighted worries of the individuals that this would bring to the local area.
- In discussing the proposed CPZ, it was outlined that currently there were no parking issues in the local area and it was felt that the development would introduce additional parking pressures which left residents with no alternative other than to support a CPZ, although residents opposed CPZ's in principle.
- Concerning the height of the building, it was detailed that the main concern related to the residential buildings to the rear of the property and the impact that the development would have on the skyline of the area.
- In response to a query from the Committee that sought further information regarding specific areas in Lodore Gardens that had been omitted from the consultation process, members heard that the required information could be provided outside of the Committee meeting.
- Regarding the inclusion of the kitchenettes in the units, Mr Rupalia questioned the necessity of the kitchenettes and queried whether it was identified as a requirement during the main study for the development.

Following the conclusion of the Committee's questions, the Chair thanked Mr Rupalia for responding to members' queries and proceeded to invite Mr Bhupesh Halai (Supporter) to address the Committee.

The Committee noted the following key points:

- Redevelopments in the local area were welcomed, particularly concerning vacant and neglected properties. In speaking on the specific proposal being considered, it was detailed that the property had been vacant for six years and had begun to attract anti-social behaviour.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

13 March 2024

- The co-working space included in the design was praised as it would provide local residents with an alternative working space.
- The leisure facilities and public house as part of the proposal were welcomed, in addition to the potential economic benefits that the establishment would bring.

The Chair thanked Mr Halai for addressing the Committee and welcomed questions and comments from members in relation to the information heard. The Committee posed a question concerning the possible stresses placed on parking in the local area as a result of the proposal. In response, Mr Halai expressed surprise that local residents had raised concerns regarding parking, stating that parking had never been an issue and they did not expect the development to cause significant disruption.

As the Committee did not have any other questions for Mr Halai, the Chair thanked him for addressing the Committee and welcomed Mr Rory Joyce, Mr Trevor Morriss, Mr Stephen Eyton and Mr Andrew Clements (on behalf of the Applicant) to address the Committee.

The following key points were highlighted:

- As a result of cooperation with Planning, Highway and Design Officers, it was detailed that the proposal adhered to local planning policies, with officers in a position to support the recommendation to grant planning permission.
- The proposed pub, apart-hotel and co-working space proposed for the former brownfield commercial site would bring benefits to the local area, through active frontages, community facilities and job creation.
- The proposal had been informed by a consultation and townscape assessment to ensure positive contributions to the neighbourhood.
- The proposed building would have a distinct and recognisable character to attract visitors and the local community but to also act as a mediator between the varied architectural styles in the locality.
- In addition to the aforementioned active frontages and public realm improvements, it was detailed that additional trees would be planted to enhance the local biodiversity.
- During the consultation process the design had been adapted to accommodate the views of planning officers and local residents, such as: reducing the height of the building by two stories, adjusting the rear of the building to comply with the Council's 45 degree standards, creating a more defined top, middle and bottom hierarchy to ensure greater cohesion of architectural elements, and altering the colour of the building (using red brick) to adhere to the character of the immediate area.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

13 March 2024

- Overall, it was felt that the proposal would reinvent an important site that was adjacent to the Town Centre, providing economic benefits in addition to facilities for local residents.

The Chair thanked Mr Joyce, Morriss, Eyton and Clements for addressing the Committee and welcomed questions and comments from members in relation to the information heard. Members raised queries relating to the amenities at the hotel, local need, the design and management of the pub, transport impacts, benefits for residents, contingency plans, the star rating of the hotel, and the use of the site for temporary accommodation.

The following responses were provided:

- In providing further information concerning the amenities available at the hotel, the Committee noted that rooms would include a bathroom, kitchenette and good quality space which lent itself for short and longer stays. However, it was reiterated that the apart-hotel, primarily aimed at the business and leisure sector, should not be confused with an apartment as the proposal did not have fully fledged amenities required for a permanent living space.
- It was explained that a hotel needs assessment had been conducted by Avison Young which showed that there was a market need in Brent due to a shortage of hotels. Members were informed that it was expected for one third of the rooms to be used by the business market, one third to be used by holidaymakers or those on leisure trips and the remaining third would accommodate other patrons, such as those visiting family for example.
- Regarding the design of the pub, it was detailed that the design and location had been carefully considered to provide maximum frontage, reduce disruption to nearby properties and to be connected to other areas of the hotel, such as the lobby. In speaking on the management of the pub, it was anticipated that the hotel, facilities and pub would be managed by a single entity.
- In response to a query on the estimated impact on the local transport network, members were advised that the transport assessment concluded that the proposal would have little impact on most transport modes, with the site accessible via bus routes and nearby rail stations.
- The Committee noted that the required provision for passive charging points would be designed into the proposal.
- Members heard that the benefits to local residents included a local pub with hire space at a discounted rate, a small pool and gym at discounted rates, a co-working space free of charge, more visitors and expenditure in the local area, contributions towards a CPZ (if necessary) and a large Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL) contribution. Moreover, the proposal would eliminate the anti-social behaviour currently occurring at the vacant property.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

13 March 2024

- In discussing contingency plans for the site in the event that the apart-hotel was not successful, the Committee was informed that the design was purposefully flexible so the building could be converted into residential living spaces if necessary. However, it was not the intention to convert the building into residential accommodation in the future, it was merely an alternative built into the design and business model.
- It was detailed that the developer was aiming for the hotel to have three star accommodation and four star front of house amenities.
- The Committee noted that the site would not be used for temporary accommodation.

The Chair thanked Mr Joyce, Morriss, Eyton and Clements for responding to the Committee's queries and proceeded to offer the Committee the opportunity to ask the officers any remaining questions or points of clarity in relation to the application. Members raised queries relating to best use of the site, the withdrawal of the condition requiring a referral to the Mayor of London, proposed use of the forecourt, parking pressures, public transport accessibility, the distance of the building to residential properties, economic benefits, cycle parking and hire bike provision, access to the pub, and local employment and training.

The following responses were provided:

- In response to a question surrounding the best of use of the site given the acute housing need in the borough, members were advised that the GLA had forecast that Brent required 2622 new rooms between 2015 and 2040, which the proposed 152 units in the apart-hotel would contribute towards. Moreover, it was detailed that the hotel needs assessment and sequential test had concluded that the site was the most suitable site out of all those that were evaluated as it was in a prominent location, and thus would attract visitors, and it was large enough to accommodate the proposal.
- The Committee noted that the indication that the decision would be subject to a stage 2 referral to the Mayor of London was a drafting error. However, the application was still subject to the other conditions and legal agreement outlined in the report.
- In discussing the use of the forecourt, it was explained that currently the plans were for tree planting, but further amenities (such as tables and chairs) could be explored in the future. Regarding the governance processes required to make use of the forecourt, members noted that the process depended on the number of objections received to any proposal.
- Members heard that the transport assessment suggested that the proposal would be largely accessed via public transport, despite the below average PTAL rating of the area.
- It was detailed that a safety audit had not been conducted, but a healthy streets assessment had been undertaken regarding walking and cycling in

PLANNING COMMITTEE

13 March 2024

the area which identified some issues which required improvement. Furthermore, it was explained that a road safety audit was not required due to the access into the building.

- Regarding parking pressures, the Committee was advised that officers did not expect the proposal to generate additional on-street parking. Moreover, although most nearby houses had private driveways, the Council could explore implementing a CPZ utilising contributions from the developer if required and subject to resident approval. However, as there was a CPZ north of the proposal, there were no current plans to introduce a CPZ in the immediate vicinity of the proposal.
- In response to concerns surrounding the distance between the back of the proposal and residential properties, members were informed that the 1st and 2nd stories were 6.7m away from the residential area and thus the windows in the relevant rooms were obscure glazed and non-opening to prevent overlooking. However, the Committee was reassured that the closest window to window distance between the site and neighbouring houses was 27 metres which was compliant with supplementary planning document regulations.
- In outlining the economic benefits of the development, it was detailed that the proposal would generate £1.2m in Brent SCIL and £500k in Mayoral SCIL, 39 full-time equivalent staff would be required for the hotel which may be sourced from the local community, local suppliers and services may be sourced to run the business, and the proposal would support other businesses in the borough by bringing in visitors who may use local shops and services.
- Members noted that the rear car park was deemed large enough to also be used as a taxi drop off/pick up location.
- The Committee was advised that both the Council and the developer could explore installing provision for bike hire either on or nearby the site, which could be included in the Travel Plan.
- As the proposal was not intended for residential use, members heard that council tax would not be levied.
- It was detailed that the pub could be accessed directly from the street and via the hotel lobby and co-working space.
- In response to a query regarding local training and employment arising from the development, the Committee was informed that the Council's Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document stipulated that 50% of the jobs should be secured as apprenticeships for Brent residents.
- Regarding electric vehicle charging points and disabled parking spaces, it was detailed that two disabled parking spaces included electric vehicle charging points, with seven passive charging points overall.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

13 March 2024

- The Committee noted that the proposal did not include a children's playground.

As there were no further questions from members the Chair then moved on to the vote.

DECISION

RESOLVED to grant planning permission subject to the completion of a legal agreement to secure the obligations and conditions set out in the Committee report, in addition to amending condition 17 to require the identification and delivery (if feasible) of facilities for hire bikes (which may include geofenced areas, docking stations or docking areas) and amending condition 34 to include provision for access for local residents to the gym and pool at discounted rates and the co-working space at nil rates within the Community Access Plan.

(Voting on the above decision was unanimous).

5. Any Other Urgent Business

None.

The meeting closed at 7:47pm.

COUNCILLOR KELCHER
Chair