



Planning Committee Map

Site address: Electric House, 296 & 296A Willesden Lane, Willesden, London, NW2 5HZ

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This map is indicative only.

RECEIVED: 4 June, 2013

WARD: Willesden Green

PLANNING AREA: Willesden Consultative Forum

LOCATION: Electric House, 296 & 296A Willesden Lane, Willesden, London, NW2 5HZ

PROPOSAL: Conservation area consent for demolition of Electric House to facilitate redevelopment of the site.

APPLICANT: Network Stadium Housing Association

CONTACT: Jones Lang LaSalle

PLAN NO'S:
See Condition 2.

RECOMMENDATION

Grant Consent.

EXISTING

The existing property is a three-storey office building on the north side of Willesden Lane. It is a locally listed building and is within the Willesden Green Conservation Area.

PROPOSAL

See description above.

HISTORY

13/1428. Demolition of existing office building and erection of a seven storey building comprising 25 residential apartments (11 x 1-bed, 13 x 2-bed and 1 x 3-bed) and 383sqm of retail floorspace on the groundfloor with associated cycle parking, first floor rear communal roof terrace and associated landscaping. Under consideration elsewhere on this report.

96/1312. Full planning permission sought for internal alterations and use of former retail showroom on ground floor as extension to housing association offices on upper floor. Granted 10/09/1996

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012 and replaces Planning Policy Guidance and Planning Policy Statements with immediate effect. It includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development in both plan making and decision making. It is considered that the saved policies referred to in the adopted UDP and Core Strategy are in conformity with the NPPF and are still relevant. The NPPF states that good quality design and a good standard of amenity for existing and future occupants of land and buildings are required. Of particular reference to this CAC application, the NPPF outlines policies for the historic environment and heritage assets. It emphasises the importance of being able to assess the significance of heritage assets that may be affected by a development.

Accordingly, the policies contained within the adopted SPG's, London Borough of Brent Unitary Development Plan 2004 and Core Strategy 2010 carry considerable weight in the determination of planning applications and appeals.

Adopted Brent UDP

BE24 Locally Listed Buildings. The special character of buildings on the local list will be protected and

enhanced.

BE26 Alterations & Extensions to Buildings in Conservation Areas. They should retain the original design and materials or where not practicable be sympathetic to the original design.

BE27 Demolition & Gap Sites in Conservation Areas. This policy is expanded on in the "Remarks" section below.

CONSULTATION

This application has been subject to widespread consultation. Over 400 letters were sent out to residents within 100m of the site, 3 site notices were installed outside the site and a press notice was served advertising the demolition within a Conservation Area. Consultation letters were also sent to local ward councillors, Urban Design and Policy.

Only one objection has been registered in relation to this application reference number however 20 objections were submitted in relation to the full planning application also under consideration elsewhere on this agenda. A number of these objected to the loss of an existing local landmark building which contributes to the character of the Willesden Green Conservation Area.

These comments will be considered further in the *Remarks* section of this report with officer comment.

REMARKS

Introduction

1. This application seeks consent for the demolition of Electric House to facilitate the redevelopment of the site to provide a mixed use building containing a ground floor retail use and 25 affordable flats above. Members will be aware that Policy BE27 of the adopted Brent UDP states that consent will not normally be given for the demolition of a building in a Conservation Area, unless that building positively detracts from the character or appearance of the area. It goes on to say that where demolition is considered to be acceptable, replacement buildings should be seen as a stimulus to imaginative high quality design and an opportunity to enhance the area.

Demolition of locally listed building within Conservation Area

2. The NPPF makes it clear that when determining applications Local Authorities need to understand the significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by the development. Furthermore, Local Authorities should account for the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including their economic viability. New development should make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. In respect of this, a report into the redevelopment of the site appears elsewhere on this Agenda and sets out that the proposed replacement building is of a high quality design.
3. The Willesden Green Conservation Area covers the area south west of and including Willesden Green Station, Walm Lane and Willesden High Road as well as Heathfield Park and a small section of Willesden Lane. It is a mixed use centre which was mainly developed around the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries following the expansion of the Metropolitan Railway. The buildings are predominantly mixed use with retail on the ground floor and office and residential above. The prevalent finishes are stock London brick and red brick. Most of the detailing is typical of the eclectic Victorian Architecture of the time.
4. The existing building is occupied by a part two- part three-storey building constructed in 1930s. The building was used as a showroom for electronic goods until 1985 when it was converted into offices. The office use ceased in 2007 and the site has remained vacant since then except for the temporary art gallery use which has been present in the building in recent months.
5. The site forms part of a Site Specific Allocation (SSA), which was adopted in 2011, which identified the site as suitable for redevelopment for mixed use with commercial on the ground floor and residential above. The justification for the redevelopment is that it would allow for a more intensive development which in turn could allow for a diversification of the retail use and an increase in residential units in the area. As such the demolition of the Electric House would need to occur for the aspirations of the SSA to be fully realised.

6. A Heritage Appraisal has been submitted as part of the report. This has been produced by a Conservation Consultant for the Applicants to set out the history and significance of the site. The building was originally commissioned by the Willesden Urban District Council and designed by the Borough Engineer and Surveyor. The existing building is distinct within the Willesden Green Conservation Area by reason of its construction in the 1930s contrast to the Victorian era of the majority of the Conservation Area and its size scale as a stand alone building in contrast to the established rhythm and uniform pallet of the other buildings. The building was not designed by an architect of any great significance and while it has some connection to the overall character of in that a semi-commercial activity operated there, the building is considered to make a slight positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.
7. The Heritage report notes that the existing buildings architectural and aesthetic significance has already been diminished by inappropriate alteration and adaptation. The heritage appraisal notes that none of the original interior fixtures and fittings survive, the windows of the building have been largely replaced and some have been blocked and the facing treatment of the main elevation had been changed. Given the diminished architectural significance and the buildings distinctive differences from the predominant character of the conservation area it is not considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.
8. Council officers are of the opinion that the building does make a contribution towards the local streetscape although its design and appearance make it distinct from the surrounding built environment. The Council's Urban Design Officer states: *The building was Locally listed principally for its stylistic contribution to local street scape character; in terms of plan form the building has difficult proportions with a very large open ground floor and relatively small floor plates higher up. This makes the reuse of the building very difficult and it is difficult to see what alternative contemporary use could be found that would be able to use the difficult spaces with and success or viability. It is always regrettable to lose a building in a conservation area but as Electric House would be very difficult to viably convert to other uses the Council needs to balance the Community benefits that a new multi-unit residential development may bring. Unfortunately buildings that are difficult to convert lie unused for many years and subsequently suffer from lack of maintenance.*
9. The applicants have considered the retention and conversion of the existing building and have concluded that a conversion scheme including a commercial use with off-street servicing would only allow for the provision of 7 flats. These units would have limited outlook with some being single aspect with limited space for amenity and long internal corridors. They conclude that the conversion of the existing building would not be viable in design terms or be code compliant.
10. Thus while it is regrettable that the existing building will be demolished the proposed replacement offers the potential for further community benefits in the form of affordable housing and employment opportunities. The local listing of the existing building ensures that the proposed replacement building will have to be of the highest quality of design to ensure that it makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. As a result, there is no objection in principle to its demolition. As explained in the report elsewhere on the Agenda looking at the redevelopment of the site it is considered that a redevelopment of the site allows for the provision of a high quality, although clearly modern, replacement building. However, the demolition of the buildings should not be allowed in the absence of an acceptable replacement scheme and this should be made a condition of any approval.

RECOMMENDATION: Grant Consent

REASON FOR GRANTING

- (1) The proposed development is in general accordance with policies contained in the:-

Brent Unitary Development Plan 2004

Relevant policies in the Adopted Unitary Development Plan are those in the following chapters:-

Built Environment: in terms of the protection and enhancement of the environment

CONDITIONS/REASONS:

- (1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning on the date of this permission.

Reason: To conform with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- (2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawing(s) and/or document(s):

P01
P02
P03
P04
P05
P06
P07
P08
P09
P10
P11RevA
P12RevA
P13RevA
P14RevA
P15RevA
P16RevA
P17RevA
P18RevA
P19RevA
P20RevA
P21RevA
P22RevA
P23RevA
P24RevA
P25RevA
P26
P27

Supporting Documents:

Planning Statement by Jones Lang Lasalle dated May 2013

Design and Access Statement by Steven Marshall Architects May 2013

Heritage Appraisal by KMHeritage dated February 2013

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- (3) The demolition works hereby approved shall not be allowed in the absence of an acceptable replacement scheme.

Reason: In the interest of the visual amenity and character of the Conservation Area, in general, and this building, in particular.

INFORMATIVES:

None Specified

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Robin Sedgwick, The Planning Service, Brent House, 349 High Road, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 6BZ, Tel. No. 020 8937 5229