

**1 DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT**

Ref: 19/05345/PRE  
Location: Former Hospital Car Park, Land Adjacent to 93 93 Bensham Lane, Thornton Heath, CR7 7EU  
Ward: West Thornton  
Description: Redevelopment of car park site and relocation of electricity sub station. Erection of a number of buildings ranging from 2 to 6 stories to create 114 units of temporary accommodation  
Drawing Nos: TBC  
Applicant: Social Capital Partners Ltd  
Agent: DP9 Ltd  
Case Officer: Paul Young

1.1 This pre-application report aims to provide Members with sufficient information for effective engagement with the scheme, and covers the following points:

- a. Executive summary
- b. Site and surroundings
- c. Proposal
- d. Place Review Panel feedback
- e. Material planning considerations
- f. Specific feedback requested
- g. Procedural matters

**2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

2.1 The scheme proposes the redevelopment of the car park site and the relocation of the existing sub-station building to facilitate the erection of a number of buildings ranging from 2 to 6 stories to create (circa) 114 units of temporary accommodation, with associated internal and external communal and amenity areas. A flexible community/cafe ground floor use (circa 170m<sup>2</sup>) is also proposed along with associated public areas at the southern tip of the site which extends along Bensham Lane.

2.2 The scheme has developed through a series of pre-application meetings between including consideration by the Place Review Panel (PRP) on the 5<sup>th</sup> March. A summary of the Panel's feedback is provided in section 5 of this report.

2.3 Discussions so far have focused on the distribution of scale/bulk/height across the site, the design approach to the development and its visual relationship between the development and surrounding developments (including the locally Listed building), how to best meet the needs of the residents (in terms of services, management, quality of accommodation etc) and the proposed community space and surrounding public and private amenity areas – thier size, management, functionality and how this can be optimised.

2.4 The views of members are sought on the proposals, with particular regard to the issues mentioned above (in paragraph 2.3).

### 3 BACKGROUND

#### Site and Surroundings

3.1 The site comprises a former car park (area of 0.45ha) which (until recently) served the nearby Croydon Hospital. It is currently comprised mostly of hardstanding, although a small electricity sub-station building lies close to the vehicular entrance to the site (near 93 Bensham Lane).

3.2 Immediately to the west of the site, on the opposite side of Woodcroft Road, lies number 33 Mayday Road, an attractive 2/2.5 storey locally Listed building. The majority of the other nearby properties (along Bensham Lane and Woodcroft Road) comprise modest 2 storey terraced dwellinghouses.

3.3 The site is irregularly shaped, but given its siting is visible from a number of surrounding roads, including Bensham Lane, Mayday Road, Woodcroft Road and Lodge Road.

#### Constraints

3.4 The site is allocated (site 499) in the Croydon Local Plan (2018) for the following:

*“Consolidation of the Hospital uses on a smaller area of the site with enabling residential development on remaining parts subject to there being no loss of services provided by the hospital in terms of both quantity and quality.”*

3.5 This Policy is pasted below:

499: Croydon University Hospital Site, London Road

| Place  | Postcode | Size of site  | Site description  | Suburban, Urban or Central location? | Public Transport Accessibility of area | Local character of area   |                 |
|--|----------|---|---|--------------------------------------|--|---|-----------------|
| Thornton Heath   | CR7 7YE  | 8.17ha  | Various hospital and medical associated buildings along with a staff car park on Bensham Lane | Urban                                | Medium                                 | Industrial Estates;<br>Large buildings with well defined building line and adjacent to other buildings;<br>Medium rise blocks with associated grounds;<br>Retail Estates & Business & Leisure Parks |                 |
| Description of option  |          | Justification for option  |   |                                      | Anticipated phasing of development     | Evidence of deliverability  | Number of homes |
| Consolidation of the hospital uses on a smaller area of the site with enabling residential development on remaining part subject to there being no loss of services provided by the hospital in terms of both quantity and quality |          | In order to fund improvements to the existing hospital buildings residential development on part of the site may be required. This option is dependent on their being no loss of services provided by the hospital both in terms of quantity and quality. |   |                                      | 2021 - 2026                            | Site is part of a partners' Estate Strategy   | 77 to 290       |

3.4 The site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level of 3 (moderate), and lies within an area with a 1 in 100 year (medium) risk of surface water flooding. It lies within, and is surrounded by, controlled parking zones and various other parking and waiting restrictions.

## Planning History

3.5 There is just one relevant recent planning application relating to the site and this is outlined in the table below:

| Reference    | Description   | Decision              | Date       |
|--------------|---|-----------------------|------------|
| 18/05857/OUT | Re-development of the existing car park to include the erection of a four/five storey flatted block to provide 37 units and the erection of 16 houses ranging from two/three storeys (53 residential units to be provided across the site). Associated car parking and access, landscaping, children's playspace/communal amenity area, cycle and refuse storage. (Access, Layout and Scale Only) | Application Withdrawn | 28.02.2019 |

## 4 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The application proposes the redevelopment of car park site and the relocation of the existing sub-station building to facilitate the erection of a number of buildings ranging from 2 to 6 stories to create (circa) 114 units of temporary accommodation. Around 31% of which would be 1 beds (35 units), 53% would be 2 beds (61 Units), and 16% would be 3 beds (18 Units).
- 4.2 The proposed units are specifically designed to be temporary homes for the homeless (referred to as "Stage 1" accommodation) before more permanent accommodation can be found/allocated (referred to as "Stage 2" accommodation). They are not intended for any other use, and therefore they would fall within the 'sui generis' planning use class (NOT C3 like standard residential units)
- 4.3 Internal ground floor communal areas providing laundry facilities and study areas would also be provided for these units (circa 174m<sup>2</sup>) along with semi-private landscaped/amenity areas to the rear (north of the site) – circa 1000m<sup>2</sup>.
- 4.4 An adaptable community/cafe ground floor use (circa 170m<sup>2</sup>) is also proposed along with associated public areas at the southern tip of the site which extends along Bensham Lane.
- 4.5 The applicant is a private developer seeking to enter into a lease with the Council's Housing department. This lease will see the developer constructing the development, leaving the Council to rent (at a discounted rate) and manage the resulting accommodation for a period set out in the lease (eg 50 years). The lease will also provide the Council with an option to purchase the land for a nominal fee at the end of the lease period.

4.6 Owing to the above, Council Housing Officers have therefore been feeding into the application prior to, and during, the planning pre-application process to help ensure it meets the needs of the intended occupants.

## **5 PLACE REVIEW PANEL (PRP) RESPONSE**

5.1 The scheme was presented to PRP on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

5.2 At the time of writing this report, the minutes of this meeting had not been written/finalised. However, an overview of the issues/points raised by the panel is as follows.

5.3 The panel is supportive of the principle of the development, and recognises the importance of substantially improving Croydon's provision of Stage 1 Temporary Accommodation.

- The panel considers that consultation with occupants is needed to gain a better understanding of the general experience of a resident, especially the arrival experience. As a result of this, the proposed joint/combined arrival may need revision to provide privacy at the point of arrival. The panel also recommended more thought be put into the arrangement/function and size of the lobbies/internal circulation spaces in the L-shaped core building, as they seem long and narrow at present.
- Panel stresses that due to large numbers of young occupants/children, the amount and surveillance of external and internal communal spaces is important, and needs further consideration.
- Whilst recognising the desire for high quality landscape design, the panel considers that the overall landscaping strategy is overcomplicated in terms of functionality at present. The panel questions the design of the public realm facing Bensham Lane.
- The panel suggest the design team explore an option where the central amenity space is more protected through a courtyard form.
- The panel is more supportive of the option for increased massing to front part of building facing Lodge Road and for an associated reduction in stories/height on the L-shaped core building (from 6 to 5 stories), subject to articulation in response to the Locally Listed building.
- The panel considers that the visual approach moving South from Woodland Road is stark due to the rapid increase in height from 2 to 6 stories, and recommend this change in scale is better addressed.

- The panel raises concern regarding the value of materials and finishes across the design. The panel is not against the use of high quality materials, but consider that a strategy for materials and finishes based on cost and quality should be developed to maximise value, whilst delivering high quality architecture for public's visual benefit.
- The panel stresses the importance of the public consultation events as a means to ensure that the development builds a good relationship with neighbours.
- The panel supports the general approach to the mews development, but that further development is needed. They suggest that a front amenity/defensible space is needed to the front of these properties to create a buffer, and the deck access should be moved to the central space.
- The panel raises concerns regarding the quality of daylight and outlook reaching to the North Facing units and the external amenity space in/around the core L-shaped building.

## **6 MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main planning issues raised by the application that the committee must consider are:

- Principle of proposed development
- Function, nature, mix, quality and management of accommodation
- Townscape and design
- Impacts on amenities of adjoining occupiers
- Transport, Highways and Servicing of development
- Other considerations (including likely S106 obligations)

### **Principle of development**

6.2 The site is allocated (site 499) in the Croydon Local Plan (2018) for *“Consolidation of the Hospital uses on a smaller area of the site with enabling residential development on remaining parts subject to there being no loss of services provided by the hospital in terms of both quantity and quality.”*

6.3 The proposed scheme would broadly meet this definition, albeit the development would not be standard housing and would not be ‘enabling development’ as such.

6.4 In relation to the second part of the Policy, it is understood that the land which forms the application site was originally owned by the hospital, and that this was only sold off once the hospital had provided evidence that they reconfigured their site/operation (both physically and organisationally) to ensure that the loss of this car park would not generate undue traffic nor compromise the operation of the hospital. The applicant has advised that they have this evidence, although this has not yet been seen by Officers. Otherwise, there are no policies which raise an in principle objection to the loss of car parking facilities

- 6.5 In terms of the provision of the rather 'niche' temporary residential accommodation, Policy 3.8 (Housing Choice) of the 2016 London plan states Londoners should have a genuine choice of homes that they can afford and which meet their requirements for different sizes and types of dwellings in the highest quality environments, and that supported housing needs are identified authoritatively and co-ordinated action is taken to address them in LDF and other relevant plans and strategies. Policy SP2.7(c) of the Croydon Local Plan states that the Council will working with partners to facilitate the provision of specialist and supported housing for elderly and vulnerable people.
- 6.6 Council Housing officers indicate that there is a well evidenced and urgent need for accommodation for the homeless, and there is a statutory requirement for the Council to provide for this need.
- 6.7 It is noted that a community space/café is also proposed near the southern tip of the site. Policy DM19.2 states that the Council will support applications for community use where the proposals:
- a) Include buildings which are flexible, adaptable, capable of multi-use and, where possible, enable future expansion;
  - b) Are accessible to local shopping facilities, healthcare, other community services and public transport or provides a community use in a location and of a type that is designed to meet the needs of a particular client group; and
  - c) Are for a use that is a town centre use, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework, are located within Croydon Metropolitan Centre or a District or Local Centre, have no more than 280m<sup>2</sup> of floor space (net) and are in the vicinity of a Neighbourhood Centre, or are a change of use of an existing unit in a Shopping Parade.
- 6.8 It is indicated that the proposed community space/café would primarily act in conjunction with the temporary housing, providing social, educational and cultural features for the residents, but is also intended to be available, and provide a link to, the wider community.
- 6.9 It would be circa 170m<sup>2</sup> in area, (and would not therefore exceed the 280m<sup>2</sup> threshold set out in Policy DM19.2), but it would not comply with the second aspect of point c) in that it would not be located on a Shopping Parade, although it would be located in close proximity to one (which lies to the NE along Bensham Lane).

#### **Function, nature, mix, quality and management of accommodation**

- 6.10 As noted previously, the proposed accommodation is specialist in nature, designed to meets the needs of a specific user group, and as such, planning policies relating to the mix and quality of standard C3 units would not be applicable in this instance.
- 6.11 In terms of mix, the Council Housing officers have provided feedback on current and future needs relating to "stage I" housing. No single person units are

proposed, and most units are 2 bedroom plus, and so the development would likely house a fair number of children (100 plus). Housing officers have not raised any objections to the mix, but have expressed desire to incorporate a high % (more than 10%) and a good mix of DDA and part DDA compliant dwellings into the development (as these are in the highest demand).

6.12 In terms of the quality of the accommodation, Housing officers indicate that most “stage 1” accommodation currently consists of B&Bs, Hotels and other similar formats, which provide a poor quality of accommodation, particularly for families.

6.13 The proposed modular units would not have private amenity space and are approximately 1/3 smaller in GIA than the standards set out for ‘standard’ units within the 2016 London Plan. However, Housing officers have indicated that these units are of a markedly greater quality than the majority of the existing stock of “stage 1” accommodation. An indicative floor plan of a standard 2 bedroom unit is shown below.



6.14 Notwithstanding the above, owing to the very high demand for “stage II” (permanent) housing, the average stay for occupants in “stage I” (temporary) housing is approximately 2 years, and, as such, given the length of stay and size of the development, it is important that its occupants have access to suitable internal and external communal space and suitable facilities so as to have a satisfactory quality of life whilst staying in these units.

- 6.15 Similarly, given the transient nature of the accommodation (and occupants), and the large numbers which it would accommodate (potentially 300-400 occupants), the management of this accommodation is also important. The Council currently manages a number of similar facilities along London Road (Concord House, Sycamore House and Windsor House) and these three sites provide a total 338 units.
- 6.16 As such, the Council has experience managing these facilities, and the Council Housing team has fed back any issues experienced with these to the applicant during the pre-application discussions. For example, a lack of quiet 'study' space for occupants was raised as an issue in the London Road facilities, and a quiet study area has since been added to the ground floor reception area of the proposed development.

#### Townscape, Design and impact on heritage assets

- 6.17 A number of the pre-app meetings have been focussed on the design element of the proposal and the distribution of massing across the site.
- 6.18 The current proposal can be broadly split into 3 aspects or 'zones':
- 1) 'The hidden gem' located at the southern tip of the site
  - 2) The L – shaped 'core',
  - 3) The lower rise 'mews' development running along the northern strip of land.
- 6.19 The original proposal focussed a much greater level of massing towards the southern tip (the hidden gem area). Following concerns regarding potential visual dominance and the relationship with the locally Listed building (at 33 Mayday Road), this bulk has been reduced and staggered to a greater degree and the building has been pulled away from the boundary with the public highway to reduce its dominance. Further development of long range views is recommended to demonstrate any potential impacts on this Locally Listed building and the wider area.
- 6.20 Concerns were also raised regarding the visual relationships (and amenity implications) between the core and mews developments and the adjacent two storey dwellings along Woodcroft Road and Bensham Lane (particularly Woodcroft Road), and as a result, part of the mews development was re-sited away from the boundary and the massing of the core situated closest to the dwellings along Woodcroft Road and Bensham Lane was reduced. These changes are highlights in the map below, along with massing diagrams of the development as it stands.

### Legend

- Context
- Retaining trees
- Set back upper floors
- The Hidden Gem
- The Mews Street
- Feature Corner
- Increased height for
- Entrance set back
- Improved pedestrian arrival to building
- Linear Playspace
- Parking provision





1. Aerial view looking north east



2. Aerial view looking south west



3. Aerial view looking north west



4. Aerial view looking south east

6.21 In terms of architectural design, in order to provide units quickly and economically to meet the need for this type of housing, the bulk of the development would be modular in form. Notwithstanding, a variation in external materials and finished is proposed to distinguish the 'hidden gem' from the main core. This is illustrated in the CGIs below.

6.22 *Hidden Gem and L – shaped core*



View from the corner of Bensham Lane & Woodcroft Road



View from Woodcroft Road

6.23 *Mews Development to rear*



- 6.24 Materials have yet to be finalised, though a terracotta coloured metallic finish has been put forward for the 'hidden gem' at the southern tip, with a more matted and lighter colouring to the core development and a more traditional stock brick to tie in with the two storey dwellings nearby along Woodcroft Road.

### **Impact on the amenities of Surrounding Residents**

- 6.25 A large number of residential dwellings bound the site, and the development would need to take into account the impacts on neighbouring properties in terms of daylight/sunlight, outlook, privacy, noise and disturbance and other forms of pollution (eg light). Numbers 12-36 Woodcroft Road lie in closest proximity to the bulk of the built development and are therefore appear to be the greatest affected.

#### *Daylight/Sunlight*

- 6.26 In pre-application discussions the applicant has indicated that a BRE daylight/sunlight analysis has been undertaken and this has informed the siting of the height/massing of the development to a certain degree. Officers have requested this report and an explanation of this and how this has shaped the design and distribution of massing.

#### *Privacy and outlook*

- 6.27 The Council's SPD states that a minimum of 18m should be retained between existing rear facing habitable room windows and any proposed on the new development.
- 6.28 It is noted that during the pre-app discussions, part of the rear mews development was set back from the shared boundary with Numbers 12-36 Woodcroft Road in an attempt to address concerns raised.
- 6.29 The relationship between the Mews and existing windows at 15A Frant Road still requires further testing although it should be noted that this building is in D1 use

and the windows serve secondary circulation spaces, and therefore the weight given to loss of light and outlook to these windows is minimal.

*Noise, disturbance and pollution*

- 6.30 The scheme would likely house around 300-400 occupants, and as such the use of the site would notably intensify as a result and the dwellings would need to be adequately sound insulated and external lighting sensitively used to avoid adverse disturbance/harm to nearby residents. It is noted that the development would reduce the amount of car fumes on the site and some reduction in this form of pollution is therefore likely as a result of the proposal.

**Transport, Highways and Servicing of Development**

- 6.31 As noted previously, the site has a PTAL of 3 (moderate). The site historically was used as a car park. It is understood that the land which forms the application site was originally owned by the hospital, and that this was only sold off once the hospital had provided evidence that they reconfigured their site/operation (both physically and organisationally) to ensure that the loss of this car park would not generate undue traffic nor compromise the operation of the hospital. The applicant has advised that they have this evidence, and officers have requested that this be submitted in any forthcoming application (preferably before).
- 6.32 In terms of the proposed development, a significant number of units are proposed, although given these are for temporary units for the homeless it is considered that car ownership would be very low. Irrespective of this, the site is surrounded by controlled parking zones and so the council would ask the applicant to enter an agreement precluding residents (or staff) from obtaining parking permits. Subject to this, no increase in parking pressures would result in the local area.
- 6.33 Notwithstanding this, the council would seek the provision of a small number of accessible parking spaces and EVCP bays to Draft London Plan, the exact number may be related to the number of DDA units proposed. The applicant currently shows 3 accessible spaces accessed via the existing access from Bensham Lane and no obvious issues are apparent in this regard.
- 6.34 It has not currently been demonstrated that a fire appliance and/or a refuse vehicle can enter the site if required, although at this stage it appears that there is sufficient space for this to be achieved. It is noted that the servicing requirements for this type of use could be quite intensive.
- 6.35 No cycle parking area is currently shown. There are no specific cycle parking standards for this type of use, however it appears that the standards for student accommodation (currently 1 space per 2 bedrooms) appears to be most applicable in this case. Exact provision will be discussed once the design reaches a more finalised stage.
- 6.36 It is also noted that as well as the community space/café, the applicant is also exploring the installation of a small bicycle workshop designed to work in conjunction with 'The Bike Project'. The bike project is a community of civilians,

cyclists, mechanics and volunteers who take second hand bikes, fix them up in a workshop and give them to those in need.

### **Other considerations**

6.37 In At this stage it is envisaged that some planning obligations will be required to mitigate the impacts. Discussions are forthcoming in relation to the Heads of Terms, but it is anticipated that these would include the following:

- Restriction on use of premises
- Employment and training
- Air Quality
- Community use plan
- Car parking permit restrictions
- Public realm delivery and maintenance
- Highway works

## **7 SPECIFIC FEEDBACK REQUESTED**

7.1 In view of the above, it is suggested that members focus on the following issues:

1. Amount and distribution of scale/bulk/height across the site.
2. Design approach to the development and elevational details including materiality
3. Visual relationships between the development and surrounding developments (including Locally Listed building).
4. How to best meet the needs of the residents (services, management, the quality of accommodation and the amount of communal space - internal and external)
5. The proposed community space – its size, management, functionality and how this can be optimised.

## **8 PROCEDURAL NOTE**

8.1 This is the first presentation of the scheme to the Planning Committee. The proposal is reported to Planning Committee to enable Members to view and comment on it prior to submission of a formal application. The proposal is not a planning application. Any comments are provisional and subject to full consideration, including public consultation and notification as part of any subsequent application.