

## Planning Committee

Wednesday, 17 June 2020

7.00 pm

### Present:

Cllr Lauren Sullivan (Chair)  
Cllr Harold Craske (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:        Bob Lane  
                          Jordan Meade  
                          Elizabeth Mulheran  
                          Tony Rice  
                          Steve Thompson  
                          Lyn Milner

**Note:** Councillors:        John Burden, Diane Marsh and Brian Sangha were also in attendance

Wendy Lane	Assistant Director (Planning)
Myles Joyce	Service Manager (Development Management)
Faye Hobbs	Senior Planning Officer
Peter Price	Principal Planner
Dave Herrington	Digital Manager
Lauren Wallis	Committee Services Officer (minutes)

### 1. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence as received from Cllr Brian Francis and Cllr Lyn Milner attended as his substitute.

### 2. To sign the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory Board (Planning) held on 5 February 2020 were signed by the Chair.

### 3. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Steve Thompson made a voluntary announcement of an other interest in respect of his shared ownership of his home which was located in the town centre in that the regeneration and development of the town centre could see an increase in the value of the property.

Cllr Jordan Meade made a voluntary announcement of an other interest as he had quite recently been a pupil at Mayfield Grammar School and his niece, who lives in the same property as Cllr Meade, was starting at the school in September.

Cllr Elizabeth Mulheran made a voluntary announcement of an other interest as her daughter had attended the Mayfield Grammar School.

#### **4. Planning applications for determination by the Board**

##### **4.1 20190504 - Former Gravesend & North Kent Hospital (M Block), Bath Street, Gravesend DA11 0DG**

The Committee considered an application reference in relation to the conversion of the existing building with an 11 storey side extension and a single story roof extension, the construction of a new residential building ranging from three to six storeys to provide 115 residential units comprising 47 one bedroom units, 59 two bedroom units and 9 three bedroom units together with associated parking for 69 cars, 6 motorcycles and 212 bicycles, amenity space, private gymnasium and waste and a B1, D1 and D2 flexi use space.

The Senior Planner introduced the application and advised that the 5 storey building was a former maternity unit of the Gravesend Hospital that had been vacant since 2006 and went with a block of land to the west of Stuart Road. There had been a car park associated with the building that remains in the ownership of the NHS. The total site consists of 0.39 hectares and has an internal floor space of 4,725 m<sup>2</sup> with roads on three sides – Bath Street to the east, Stuart Road to the west and Clifton Road to the north. The site comprised of a number of building types and forms. There was an extant planning permission on the site which would be valid until January 2021 and the details of this permission were set out in the report.

The development that was the subject of the current application had been designed to take advantage of the sloping topography of the site which minimised the height of the building in line with the height of the old building. The design of the proposal reflected the design of the M Block to create familiar and easily integrated surroundings with high quality building materials proposed. An amenity space would be developed on the podium level of the car park and some of the units would have the benefit of private balconies. The commercial aspect of the application could include B1 (business offices excluding some such as banks), D1 – non-residential – health centre etc or D2 – leisure uses such as cinema, gyms etc Opening hours would be controlled by condition. The officer also drew attention to the Emerging Heads of Terms contained in the supplementary report.

In conclusion, the officer stated that the application was policy compliant and moved the recommendation as set out in the report.

The application had been referred for consideration at the request of Cllr. Diane Marsh.

The Board heard the views of the public speaker in support of this application who answered questions from Members.

The Board heard the views of the Ward Member, Councillor Brian Sangha.

The following points were made during discussion on this application:

- The title of the land was raised as some residents believed that a legacy had bequeathed the site to the people of Gravesend. The Principal Lawyer (Place) confirmed that the legal title of the site was not a planning consideration.

- Post Covid-19 proofing of the application was raised by a number of Members including there being enough space for social distancing to be practiced in the proposed gymnasium and in the amenity area. It was confirmed that the amenity space conformed to current standards. In addition and following a question about designing in 'working from home' space, the Committee was advised that the 2 and 3 bedroom units exceeded minimum space standards. It was also noted that the good provision of broadband had been requested via the S106 agreement. It was also noted that post Covid-19, a number of residents had expressed a preference for more cycling and walking possibilities.
- A request was made that, if planning permission was to be granted, that the applicant be required to conform with any new guidelines with regard to virus protection. The Senior Planning Officer noted that the "new normal" remained open ended and advised that the applicant could be asked to explore this request. However it was not a matter that could be conditioned as when the S106 Agreement is signed and dated, the policies and guidance etc in place at that time would apply. Members were reminded the building regulations might change after any permission had been granted.
- A concern was raised about the proposed location of the central corridor. The Senior Planning Officer advised that the layout of the corridors in this application had been improved as the length of the corridor in the original plans submitted had been considered excessive and had therefore been relocated into the centre of the building. The officer acknowledged that the relocation did not address the light concern that had been raised.
- A question was raised in the unattractive design of the frontage (east elevation) and the Senior Planning Officer described the lower section near the car park as a louvered design, not a blank block wall. In addition, concern was expressed with the quality of the construction materials and the future need to preserve the appearance of the building in the coming years. It was noted that Design South East had suggested changes to the proposals to ensure the future appearance of the build. In addition, further details were requested on how the application would fit into its surroundings, how it would work. For example a Toucan crossing was mentioned but not where it would be sited.
- It was suggested that the amenity area above the car park be made available for the use of residents of Stuart Road to use as this would address their own lack of space. It was noted that the amenity space was likely to be for the private use of the residents of the development and that the advice of the agent would have to be sought on the possibility of access/..
- The proposed number of cycle spaces was considered to be excessive and that the spaces would not be used if they were all in the same place. The Committee was shown the layout of the secure cycle storage which was dotted across the site so as to be accessible to all parts of the development.
- Following a question about the proximity of some of the residences in Stuart Road to the development, Members were advised a daylight and sunlight test had been undertaken, and given that the units closest to the residences did not have habitable windows, this was considered acceptable. The officer also explained how and when the 21 metre guidance between residences was applied. It was also noted that applicant had worked with the officer to reduce the bulk of the development as much as possible.
- The limited amount of asbestos present at the application site would be removed prior to conversion.

- Following a question in relation to the balconies, it was advised that some had moveable privacy screens set with brass, the bigger units had two storey vaulted balconies and some units had square balconies which protruded from the building line. However, all balconies had been designed to be useable and to take advantage of the views up and down the river. Members were also advised that only units that opened directly out onto the podium level did not have balconies.
- It was noted that all new apartment buildings had sprinkler systems installed in the flats and in the corridor and a question was raised on the lack of detail on this subject with regard to this application and whether this matter could be conditioned. It was noted that that building regulations on this issue were constantly changing and, at the moment, the requirements for such systems only applied to buildings over 30 metres in height and that the proposals would have to be submitted to Building Control for assessment.
- A concern was expressed on the proximity of the site to a very busy road and the need for noise amelioration measures. Members were informed that an acoustic report, undertaken in January 2019, had been submitted, the development was set a fair distance back from Bath Street and noise levels had not exceeding the level needing specialist glazing.
- An issue was raised on the number of car parking spaces (69) compared to the number of units (115) and there would need to be a robust transport plan. The Committee was advised that the area in and around the town centre was an area of low car ownership. In addition, new residents would be supplied with a travel pack which would contain amongst other things, a free bus pass and information on how to enrol for car schemes.
- The Committee noted the archaeology report and its lack of detail. Members were advised that Kent Archaeology had commented on this report as well as the heritage report and no further action had been recommended. However, it was intended to protect any remains in situ. The L block part of the proposals had been designed to mirror and compliment the design of houses in the locality.
- Following a question of the arrangements in relation to the units, the tenure and service charge etc, Members were informed that the tenure proposals were fully policy compliant. There would be 16 Affordable Housing units which might be leased or available on the open market. The agent also stated that he was unsure where these units would be located in the building and undertook to communicate the Members' request that the units be located throughout the development to the applicant.
- It was explained that the fact of that existing building had retained and repurposed meant that its effect on the environment from a carbon footprint perspective remained low as the carbon would remain locked up in the building's construction materials.
- The green credentials of the application were considered and it was felt that these could be improved with the possible consideration of the inclusion of green walls, rain water saving and solar panels. The conversion of the building would also result in a reduction need to build on the Green Belt.
- In relation to the S106 Heads of Terms, inclusion of a Heritage element was raised and the restoration of Queen Victoria's hand (the statue in Darnley Road, Gravesend) was mentioned. Also mooted was the allocation of the S106 heritage monies to the town centre. The officer stated it was important to note that the S106 monies had to meet the relevant series of tests and she undertook to explore this further.
- It was noted that the building had been vacant for 14 years, had become an eyesore and a magnet for vandalism which had contributed to the perception of local

residents that the town centre area was “rough”. In addition, whilst the number of units in the proposal had increased, the site had good transport links including the nearby railway station.

- A suggestion was made on a possible name for the new building. Ursula (known as Sally) Sullivan put in long service at the hospital and in the community as a midwife and had arrived in the country on Empire Windrush. The Senior Planning Officer undertook to look into this suggestion and mentioned the due process via the Naming and Numbering procedure.
- Since all major developments were submitted to the Committee for consideration, a more holistic approach to town centre applications was suggested. It was felt that making a decision on a single application was difficult without information on what was proposed for the area such as weightings, heritage, fit for purpose, town centre cohesion and quality housing.
- In relation to affordable housing, the Chair noted that the 30% normally required may be converted into a community sum because the site was in an urban area. However, she advised that she would rather see this used for housing.
- Members were advised that applicants could not be forced to start construction. However, any planning permission given would last for a period of 3 years and that conditions attached to the permission would be limited to make it more amenable for the applicant.

**Resolved:**

**(a) that application 20190504 be DEFERRED to enable negotiations with the applicant and/or the applicant’s agent to address the Committee’s concerns with regard to the following:**

- **Green initiatives**
- **Noise**
- **Affordable Housing provision**
- **Overlooking**
- **Heritage and Archaeology**

**(b) that the application be reported back to the Planning Committee at in the next meeting cycle for determination of the application.**

## **5. Appointment of Appeals Sub-Committee**

The Committee considered the wishes of the political groups in relation to the appointment of members to the Appeals Sub-Committee.

**Resolved that an Appeals Sub-Committee be appointed as shown below:**

**Labour:**

**Cllr Lyn Milner (Chair)  
Cllr Christina Rolles (Vice-Chair)**

**Conservative:**

**Cllr Gary Harding**

**6. Appointment of Hackney Carriage Sub-Committee**

The Committee considered the wishes of the political groups in relation to the appointment of members to the Hackney Carriage Sub-Committee.

**Resolved that a Hackney Carriage Sub-Committee be appointed as shown below:**

**Labour:**

**Conservative:**

**Cllr John Burden (Chair)**

**Cllr Jordan Meade**

**Cllr Lauren Sullivan (Vice-Chair)**

**7. Planning applications determined under delegated powers by the Director (Planning & Development)**

A schedule showing applications determined by the determined by the Director (Planning & Development) under delegated powers had been published on the Council's website.

**Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm