Urban Design & Heritage

Memo

To: [redacted] *– Major Projects Team*

From: [redacted] *- Urban Design & Heritage*

CC:

Date: *3rd September 2020*

Re: *B and Q , Broadway Retail Park, Cricklewood Lane, London, NW2 1ES* *20/3564/OUT*

Proposal: Outline planning application (including means of access with all other matters reserved) for the demolition of existing buildings and the comprehensive phased redevelopment of the site for a mix of uses including up to 1100 residential units (Use Class C3), and up to 1200 sqm of flexible commercial and community floorspace (Use Classes A3/B1/D1 and D2) in buildings ranging from 3 to 25 storeys along with car and cycle parking landscaping and associated works (this application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement).

Initial comments: Significant amendments required.

General comments:

Whilst there is no in-principle objection to the redevelopment of this site, it is clearly demonstrated within the applicant's own submissions, that in terms of the overall scale, density, massing, height, layout, and relationship to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally, the proposal does not promote or reinforce local distinctiveness. It can clearly be considered that little thought has been given to the connections between people and places, the character of the surrounding vernacular and building typology in the local area and the integration of this gargantuan development into the existing built and historic environment.

It is interesting to note, looking through the applicant's Built Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA), that the proposed development is merely outlined with a blue line, rather than fully blocked out, which would be a fairer representation of the impact of the development in views. It is clearly evident, even in long distance views such as 1,3 and 4 for example, the sheer scale, height and mass of the proposed development is visually intrusive. But view 5 truly demonstrates the vast disparity and inappropriateness of scale, height and massing between the existing built environment of the locality and the proposal.

There are two designated heritage assets which are in close proximity to the site and which are situated within Barnet.

The Crown Public House:

This is a Grade II listed building, listed in 1981, situated on Cricklewood Broadway. The list description is as follows:

The Crown Public House TQ 28 NW 7/11 20.11.81

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2. Dated 1900. Grand "Jacobean" public house of 2 storeys with 2 dormered storeys in mansard roof. Three storey wing to right 4 bays faced in sandstone. Rusticated attached columns and pilasters flank 4 entrance doors to main block and 2 doors to wing, first floor projection of 16 lights with single flanking 2 light windows. Two windows to wing. Two bay decorative gabling at second floor with mullioned windows surmounted by blind archway. Second floor to wing battlemented with ornamental crest, pyramid roof and decorative finial.

The building is set back from the pavement with a large forecourt to its front. It is connected, by a rear extension, to the neighbouring Clayton Crown Hotel, which sits forward of the pub in the street. Due to the difference in architectural appearance of both buildings, the pub appears in the streetscene as a standalone structure. It is a prominent building within the townscape, viewed and experienced as it is with its iconic roofscape and a clear sky above and around.it

The applicant's HTVIA clearly shows that due to the vast height of the proposed main tower, this block would be clearly visible in views from the public realm looking north. Another smaller block would be then be seen to "fill in" the existing space between the pub and its neighbour to the north.

It is clear therefore, that whilst no actual harm may be done to the heritage asset itself, its significance within the streetscape and Cricklewood town Centre would be diminished by the visual intrusiveness of the proposal.

The Cricklewood Railway Terraces Conservation Area:

The Railway Terraces, Cricklewood Conservation Area was designated by the Council in March 1998. Conservation Area status acknowledges the importance of an area, highlighting its real and potential attractiveness. It also means that the Council's efforts in the area are geared to preserving and enhancing its special character and appearance. The majority of historic buildings are also locally listed, so are undesignated heritage assets which need consideration. The formal, regular street scape and building layout, together with the unusual relationship between buildings, private and public open space all help to give the area a distinctive, intimate but ordered feel. The area is characterised by small scale, dense development with regular building rhythms and designs.

Views into and out of the conservation area are important. It is interesting to note that the original character appraisal for the area recognises that harm has been caused with *"views from the Conservation Area to intrusive features such as the mast to the north east across the railway line and the new industrial building on Kara Way and glimpsed views of the ends of Gratton Road from Edgware Road."*

The fact that these developments are considered intrusive pales into insignificance in relation to the scale of intrusiveness that the proposed development will have on views, particularly looking south and east. It should be pointed out that the various views submitted by the applicant from

within the conservation area are taken at ground level and fail to recognise the views that resident will have of the development from within their properties at first floor level. However, nowhere more so is the vast disparity in scale, height mass and bulk and its impact demonstrated more clearly between the locally listed buildings within the conservation area and the proposed scheme than in view 14, taken from the allotments to the east.

It is quite clear in this view, despite the LPA's consistent message to the applicant that the blocks nearer the CA need to be more respectful in size and scale to the existing terraces, that whilst they do diminish in storey height the closer they come to the terraces, far greater significant reduction in storey height would need to happen in order for this to be achieved. Given that all the blocks are prominent in most views looking south this would need to be applied to all the mega tower blocks

The most recent appraisal states that "*Chimneys are part of the historic streetscape, and an important visual feature because of their prominence as seen against the shallow pitch roofs, making a positive contribution to the conservation area. They usually have tall terracotta clay pots which are striking features against the skyline."* These features are identified as positive characteristics within the conservation area. It is quite obvious that in views looking south towards the scheme, these positive features will disappear into the mass of the new development behind which adversely affects their significance in their contribution to the CA.

Conversely, the appraisal talks about inappropriate development. Certain development which borders the conservation area, such as the Cricklewood Timber warehouse on Kara Way, has failed to respect the character of the original buildings within the conservation area and careful consideration would need to be given to the scale, siting and design of any new development and a high standard of design and materials will be expected.

As such it can be considered that the proposed development, in terms of its excessive scale, mass, bulk and height will have a detrimental impact and cause less than substantial harm to the setting of both of these designated heritage assets, aside what other interested 3rd parties may identify in regard to other heritage assets further afield.

Conclusion:

Policy DM01 states that: Protecting Barnet's Character and Amenity states that **development proposals should preserve or enhance local character and respect the appearance, scale, mass, height and pattern of surrounding buildings, spaces and streets**. In order to protect character Policy DM01: Protecting Barnet's Character and Amenity **requires development to demonstrate a good understanding of the local characteristics of an area. Proposals which are out of keeping with the character of an area will be refused.**

Core Strategy Policy CS5 states that: Protecting and Enhancing Barnet's Character to Create High Quality Places highlights **that development in Barnet should respect the local context and distinctive local character.**

It is quite clear in terms of scale, mass, bulk and height that the proposed development does not concord with these policies.

Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed

against the public benefits of the proposal. Whilst officers may consider that the additional residential units and open space being provided creates public benefit, it should also be born in mind that there are also negative public impacts, often brought to the LPA's attention by objectors, such as the impact on existing local services and vehicular infrastructure, to name just a few, which need to be considered as weighing against the perceived public benefit of increased residential units.