

Plan: D 05/00492/FUL Abbey Ward (A)

Address: 101 - 113 Longbridge Road, Barking

Development: Redevelopment of site involving erection of a 3/4 storey residential care home providing 30 bedrooms for people with learning disabilities together with associated parking

Applicant: Sahara Homes Ltd

Introduction and Description of Development

The proposal involves the complete redevelopment of the former Citroen showroom and garage (the part situated on the north side of Longbridge Road) involving the demolition of all existing buildings on the site and the erection of a replacement building to provide a 30 bed care home for people with learning disabilities. The site is not designated for any particular purpose on the Proposals Map of the Council's Unitary Development Plan.

The site is located at the corner of Longbridge Road and Park Avenue. The land to the south-east, south-west and north-west of the site comprises Victorian and Edwardian housing in Park Avenue and Longbridge Road. The buildings to the south-west of the site within Longbridge Road include ground floor shop units, generally with flats above.

The north-west boundary of the site flanks the side boundary of no. 2 Park Avenue which forms one of a pair of semi detached houses. The flank wall of this house is set back from the boundary by 2m. The existing terraced building at the front of the site, which would be demolished, is attached to no. 115 Longbridge Road which is in use as a veterinary surgery. Adjacent to the veterinary surgery is the Barking Park Lodge and beyond that Barking Park itself to the north of the application site.

Details of the appearance, scale and siting of the proposed building are included in the Design section below.

Background

There are a variety of historical planning applications relating to the previous use of the site as a car showroom and service garage none of which are relevant to the current proposal. In 1982 planning permission was refused for the redevelopment of the site as a petrol filling station.

Prior to the current scheme a previous application was submitted for the redevelopment of the site involving the erection of a 4/5 storey residential care home providing 39 bedrooms for people with learning disabilities. This application was withdrawn following officer advice that the proposed building was considered to be of excessive height out of scale with the surrounding development, and would be likely to be recommended for refusal.

The main difference between the current application and the previous scheme is a reduction in height throughout, to provide a building with a height of 3/4 storeys. The current proposal was submitted following extensive pre-applications discussions with the applicant's architect, and there have been a number of amendments to the scheme in accordance with officer advice.

Consultations

a) Adjoining occupiers

Two site notices were displayed and 93 letters sent to neighbouring residents and businesses.

5 letters all objecting to the proposal were received from neighbouring residents and a petition with a covering letter signed by 57 people, mainly residents of Park Avenue and Longbridge Road.

The main reasons for objection were as follows:

- Loss of light to neighbouring houses
- Out of scale with surroundings (contrary to policy H13 of the UDP)
- Affect on traffic conditions in the vicinity
- Preference for a retail shop on this site
- Additional on street parking demand
- Overdevelopment
- Concern about whether it is a suitable location for vulnerable people next to a busy road
- Development may subsequently be sold for an alternative use

b) Access Officer

Verbal response stating no objections.

c) Traffic and Highway Safety

New vehicular access required to site, as opposed to use of existing vehicular pavement cross-over. The access should have a minimum radius of 6m.

The development may result in additional on street parking pressure in an area with limited existing parking availability.

Within the parking and turning area a raised kerb is required adjacent to the boundary fence and to the north-west elevation of the building in order to provide protection from vehicles.

d) Urban Design

Would like to see the refurbishment of the paving and public realm in the vicinity of the site.

Asks whether green or brown roofs have been considered.

Requests that further information should be provided regarding renewable energy.

e) Sustainable Development

The development should, if feasible, provide at least 10% of its energy needs from renewable sources. A shower/washroom should be provided for staff who cycle.

f) Crime Prevention Officer

Various recommendations relating to the boundary treatment in order to provide greater protection to the perimeter of the site. Also recommends that entrance doors are flush with the building line rather than recessed in order to remove potential hiding spaces and opportunities for anti-social behaviour.

g) Fire Safety

“The Brigade is satisfied with the proposals.”

h) Environmental Protection

Requests the standard hours of work condition and recommends that mitigation measures are provided so that residents are not adversely affected by traffic noise from Longbridge Road.

i) Cleansing

Verbal response stating that the number, size and siting of the bin storage units is acceptable.

j) Parks

No objections to the suitability of the proposed development following the reduction in scale.

k) English Heritage – Archaeology

No response

l) Thames Water

No objections

m) Environment Agency

No objection in principle but recommend that a land contamination condition is imposed in order to prevent the pollution of ground and surface water.

U.D.P. Policy

Policy DE1	Urban Design
Policy H1	Housing Supply
Policy H7	Special Needs Housing
Policy H13	New Residential Development
Policy H15	Residential Amenity
Policy H16	Internal Designs
Policy H17	Residential Parking Standards
Policy H20	Energy Conservation
Policy BTC13	Design (Barking town centre)
Policy G66	Parks
Policy DE5	Facilities for People with Disabilities
Policy DE9	Energy Conservation
Policy DE16	Hard Landscaping
Policy T13	Development Standards
Interim Parking Standards 2002	

Policies contained within the Barking Town Centre Interim Planning Guidance 2004 and within the London Plan are also relevant.

Analysis

Proposed Use

The proposed development is to provide a 30 bed space care home for adults (aged 18 to 65) with learning disabilities. The accommodation would be divided into 10 three bedroom flats. Each flat would have its own kitchen, utility room, living/dining room and a work station for a member of staff. Each bedroom would have an en suite bathroom. On the ground floor there would be ancillary staff offices, a staff rest room, a reception area and two communal activity rooms for the use of residents.

The developer, Sahara Homes Ltd, would also be the operator of the care home. Residents would require 24 hour support and supervision which would be provided by staff. The applicant states that the provision of care services would be within a framework of 'valuing people' and 'person centred care planning', designed to empower and maximise the full potential of service users. It is understood that the concept of providing self contained flatted accommodation is in order to avoid an institutional environment and to encourage residents to learn 'life skills' and to care for themselves as far as possible. Residents would also be assisted in accessing external activities such as daycentres, colleges, sports and skills training.

All of the flats would be accessible to people with disabilities, and two of the bedrooms and en suite bathrooms within each three bedroom flat would be designed to wheelchair standards.

The developer anticipates that the scheme would generate 35 to 45 jobs at the site. The expected staffing levels would be 13 staff on site between the hours of 7am and 9pm, and 6 staff between the hours of 9pm and 7am.

The development of the site for residential purposes would be appropriate in policy terms, and it is considered that a town centre location is particularly suitable for the residents in order to easily access local services, and the likely difficulty for residents in travelling far due to a lack of skills, and or mobility impairment.

The proposed care home has been designed in accordance with the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2004. The developer operates a number of existing special needs care homes elsewhere in east London including one in Ilford. The home would be regulated by the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

Siting and Design

The existing buildings on the site consist of the original terraced frontage onto Longbridge Road and an attached brick built shed/workshop to the rear. Attached to this is a canopy over the forecourt adjacent to Park Avenue. The shed has an eaves height of approximately 3.2m and has a double ridged roof with a height of approximately 5m. The existing buildings cover the majority of the site area.

The proposed building would be set back from the Longbridge Road frontage by 1.6m and from the Park Avenue frontage by 3m. It would be set in the side wall of no. 115 Longbridge Road by 2.4m and would be set back from the rear boundary of the site adjacent to 2 Park Avenue by 5.5m.

The main entrance would be from Longbridge Road. To the rear a new vehicular access would be provided from Park Avenue which would be adjacent to the rear boundary of the site. A parking and turning area would be provided for a mini bus and two cars (one of which would be a disabled parking bay). The parking spaces would be beneath the first and second storeys of the building which would over sail this area.

The building would be three storeys in height rising to four storeys at the corner of Longbridge Road and Park Avenue. The building would be roughly square in plan form and consists of four blocks, one in each corner, and a central glazed lift shaft with adjacent stair cases. A glazed screen adjacent to the stairs and landing on each floor provides natural light to the core of the building.

Three of the four blocks would have a winged 'butterfly' roof i.e. an inverted roof with a central valley with the roof slopes rising to the eaves at the front and rear of the building. The orientation of the roofs would be such that the winged features would be visible on the north-east and south-west elevations of the building, and would therefore be seen from Longbridge Road on the approach to Barking town centre, and when travelling in the opposite direction. The roof of the fourth block, in the north corner of the building, would be a flat roof providing a roof terrace at third floor level. This would be at the rear of the building adjacent to no. 2 Park Avenue and no. 115 Longbridge Road.

In respect of the Longbridge Road and Park Avenue frontages of the buildings, the main elevations visible from the public realm, two of the four blocks referred to above would be clearly visible and would help to break up the bulk of the building and provide a more vertical emphasis.

On the Longbridge Road frontage the three storey element of the building would be approximately 0.5m higher than the peak of the roof of the neighbouring building at no. 115 Longbridge Road. The four storey element would be approximately 0.5m higher than the peak of the roof of no. 99 Longbridge Road, on the opposite corner of Longbridge Road and Park Avenue. No. 99 is three storeys in height in comparison with the adjacent two storey housing. The proposed design would reflect this design concept of giving greater height and emphasis to the corner of the building at the junction of the two roads. In relation to no. 2 Park Avenue the adjacent part of the proposed building would be three storeys in height with a distance between flank walls of 7.4m. The maximum height of this part of the building would match the chimney height of no. 2 Park Avenue.

Between the two blocks on the Longbridge Road frontage would be the main entrance at ground floor, the area above which, on the upper floors, would be inset. At third floor level there would be a glazed screen housing the top of the lift shaft. Above this would be the lift motor room, contained within a cylindrical box with exterior cladding on the roof of the building, which would provide an architectural feature and would be the highest point of the building.

At ground floor level the building would have large shop front style windows, providing an active frontage, appropriate to this edge of town centre location. The boundary would consist of a dwarf brick wall with metal railings above, with a higher gate and fence adjacent to the parking area and the space between the proposed building and no. 115. The boundary treatment has been amended to incorporate the crime prevention design officer's comments where appropriate.

The corners of each block are partly defined by the feature corner windows which are replicated at each level. Adjacent to the corners of each block would be a rendered element, and the materials for the centre of each block would be red terracotta tile hanging which would be broken up by the window openings and a horizontal band detail which would define each floor of the building. The applicant has stated that the render would be in an off white colour and a tile sample has been provided which is considered to be acceptable. However, full details of materials would be the subject of a condition in the event that planning permission is granted.

The Park Avenue elevation would be similar to that described above, the main difference being that there are fewer window openings and the winged roof feature would be visible. The part of the building between the two main blocks would be a glazed screen from ground to third floor, the depth of the inset of which would be less than in respect of the Longbridge Road elevation. The lift motor room feature would not be visible from this elevation, even though it is shown on the drawing, due to the effect of perspective.

A number of alterations were made to the design at the pre-application stage in response to the comments of the Council's urban designer. It is considered that the design is well proportioned and pleasing and relates well to neighbouring development whilst adding variety and interest to this corner plot. The proposal would also be in accordance with the objectives of the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 9 which states that developments on corner sites should emphasise the townscape importance of the junction by their siting, scale and shape.

One of the objectors to the proposed development refers to policy H13 which states that new residential development should not normally exceed 3 storeys in height. It is considered that this policy was introduced because in most cases development of greater height would be out of scale and character with the predominantly two storey development in the Borough. However, the policy uses the word 'normally' which implies that there will be cases where development of greater height will be appropriate. It is also the case that the more recent Barking Town Centre Interim Planning Guidance encourages higher density residential development within the town centre.

Residential Amenity

a) Existing residents

The development would have an impact on some of the neighbouring residential occupiers. With regard to the houses on the opposite side of Longbridge Road to the application site, the proposed building is to the north-west of these houses and therefore there would be no significant impact on daylight or sunlight. In respect of no. 99 Longbridge Road the proposed development would be to the north-east, and the ground floor is in use for commercial purposes.

The relationship with no. 2 Park Avenue is such that the building would be to the south-east of this property and its garden. The proposed development would be set back from the side boundary of no. 2 by 5.5m and would rise to a height of 10m. The building would extend to the rear of the rear building line of no. 2 by 10m. The existing brick shed on the site is built up to the boundary with no. 2 although it is a substantially lower building. The main windows of no. 2 face to the front and rear of the building, with two small secondary windows facing towards the application site. It is not therefore considered that the proposed development would have a harmful affect on daylight.

In terms of sunlight, given that the proposed development is to the south-east of no. 2, it appears that due to the additional height of the proposed building, it would reduce the quantity of sunlight, particularly morning sunlight from the east, reaching the rear facing windows and the garden. The effect of this would be greater in the winter months when the sun is lower in the sky and there would therefore be a greater shadowing effect. It is also considered that there would be an effect on winter sun from the south where the proposed building would cause additional shading of the rear garden. There would also be an affect on the rear garden of no. 4 Park Avenue although much less significant.

Whilst the proposed development would have the above described affect and would be more visually prominent than the existing building when viewed from the adjacent rear gardens, it is not considered that the development would cause harm to the amenities of the neighbouring residents such as to warrant the refusal of planning permission. It is also necessary to weigh the impact on the neighbouring occupants against the benefit of maximising the development potential of the site. The proposed residential use is also likely to be quieter and a better neighbour than the previous garage/workshop use of the site.

The north-west elevation of the building which faces towards no. 2 Park Avenue has a number of windows which have the potential to cause overlooking. The applicant has agreed that these windows would be obscure glazed in order to prevent this. The corner windows on this elevation would not require obscure glazing as these provide an outlook towards Park Avenue and towards Barking Park rather than towards the adjacent gardens. This arrangement will also ensure that all rooms have at least one clear glazed window in order to provide an outlook.

The third floor roof terrace is also within the block of the building which is adjacent to no. 2 Park Avenue. This would have a frosted glass safety screen which would be of sufficient height to prevent any overlooking. However, on the north-west elevation of the roof terrace the screen would be lower, which would provide for views over the Park

b) Future occupants

Internally the floor area of each flat unit would exceed the minimum standards set out in policy H16 of the UDP. It is also understood that there is a minimum floor space required in order to achieve the standards set by the Commission for Social Care Inspection which would be met by the development.

Following the original submission of the application an amendment has been made at the request of officers in order to improve the amenity of one of the flats which was previously positioned within the building such that it would have had a very poor outlook and standard of natural light.

Due to the level of site coverage of the building there is relatively little space to provide an external amenity area. There is a small landscaped area in the northern corner of the site, although this does not appear to provide a useable amenity space. The main amenity area would be the roof terrace which would provide an area of 120m². Whilst this has the potential to provide a pleasant and useable amenity space with an outlook over the Park it would be fairly limited in size for the number of residents, and its area would be substantially below the Council's normal standard for 10 three bedroom flats which would be a minimum area of 400m².

In view of this mismatch and the proximity of the development to Barking Park it is considered likely that the residents would make substantial use of the park. The park however, requires substantial improvement and the Council has put in place the 'Barking Park Restoration and Improvement Project' which is the subject of a Heritage Lottery Fund

bid. In these circumstances it was considered appropriate to request from the applicant, in the event that planning permission is granted, a S.106 financial contribution of £50 000 towards the project. This sum would pay for improvement to the Longbridge Road entrance to the park, and certain other improvements to the park would be undertaken from the Council's funds even in the event that the Heritage Lottery Fund bid is unsuccessful. The applicant has agreed to this request and has prepared and signed a S.106 unilateral undertaking to pay the sum upon the commencement of the development.

In such circumstances it is considered that the level of on site provision of amenity space would be acceptable and would be in accordance with policy 4.31 of the Barking Town Centre Interim Planning Guidance which states: "A reduction in amenity space provision may, where appropriate be facilitated by a financial contribution to enhance, protect and encourage the use of existing open space."

Sustainability

The applicant proposes a number of measures to improve the environmental sustainability of the building including a high standard of insulation and glazing, and the use of condensing gas boilers.

It is also proposed to install roof mounted solar water heating panels. Due to the roof profile these would not be readily visible from ground level and would not therefore affect the design of the building.

London Plan policy states that in respect of major developments, a proportion of the energy needs of the development should be generated from renewable sources on the site. The Mayor's Energy Strategy states that the proportion should be at least 10%. The applicant's initial calculation is that the provision of the solar heating panels would result in a reduction in carbon emissions from the site of 8.5%. However, the applicant has agreed that it would be possible to achieve 10% by either increasing the area of the solar panels or incorporating other renewable technologies within the scheme. It is therefore recommended that in the event that planning permission is granted an appropriate condition is imposed in order to ensure that this target is achieved.

Transport

The town centre location of the proposed use would enable residents to walk or use a wheelchair in order to access local services. A mini bus would be provided by the care home for longer trips and group outings. The mini bus would be parked at the site.

The proposed scheme would provide a parking space for the mini bus and two car parking spaces for the use of staff or visitors, one of which would be a disabled parking space. Cycle parking facilities would also be provided for staff and visitors. It is understood that the residents of the development would not have the skills required to learn to drive or cycle and therefore residents parking provision is not required.

The scheme has been amended in accordance with the Highway Officer's comments to incorporate an access from Park Avenue and to provide kerb protection to the fence and the building adjoining the parking area. This has resulted in a 1m set back to the ground floor of the building in order to provide additional space to the parking and turning area.

It is not possible to provide a turning area for the mini bus to normal highway standards due to the limited site area. However, the drawings have been amended in order to provide a small turning area which would enable the mini bus to turn within the site but which would require a greater degree of manoeuvring than normal. In the circumstances this is considered to be acceptable.

Park Avenue and most of the surrounding streets, both towards Barking town centre and away from the centre, are situated within a controlled parking zone, where parking is restricted to holders of residents parking permits between the hours of 8.30am to 5.30pm Mondays to Saturdays. Restrictions are in place to prevent parking along most of Longbridge Road, but there are some marked on street parking spaces on the north side of the road adjacent to the park. These spaces are within a short walk of the site and are metered with a maximum stay of one hour, or are available to residents permit holders.

There are bus routes passing the site along Longbridge Road and it is approximately 400m from Barking station. It is therefore a site which has a high degree of accessibility by public transport.

Paragraph 4.56 of the Barking Town Centre Interim Planning Guidance states that the Council will encourage car free developments for sites within 200m – 400m of Barking station (for sites within 200m car free development is expected). The distance of 400m from the station actually passes through the site it is therefore considered appropriate to apply this policy.

The proposed development would not be car free but it would provide a very low level of parking provision, 2 spaces, apart from the mini bus, one of which would be a disabled parking bay. It is considered desirable to provide a small amount of parking for operational reasons. The majority of employees and visitors would not therefore be able to park on site.

In view of the parking restrictions in the surrounding streets it is considered that the low level of parking provision would have the desired affect of encouraging travel to the site by public transport, and would not affect the ability of neighbouring residents to park on street because the residents of the development would not be car users and the employees would not be entitled to parking permits.

It is possible that employees working at night would park in Park Avenue when the parking restriction would not apply. However, it is not considered that this would have a significant effect on parking availability in the street given that only 6 staff would be required for night shifts.

The applicants states that they recruit locally, and that at their care home in Ilford, which is also close to good public transport facilities, only one member of staff regularly drives to work, despite the availability of 6 car parking spaces.

It is considered that the transport impact of the development would be acceptable, and it would be in accordance with the Interim Planning Guidance.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposed design of the building would represent a substantial improvement on the visual appearance of the existing vacant site. The proposed development would maximise the potential of the site and provide special needs housing which is encouraged by policy H7 of the UDP. The development would provide a good standard of accommodation in accordance with UDP standards.

Recommendation

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1) F.1B Details of Soft Landscaping
- 2) F.2 Implementation of Proposed Soft Landscaping
- 3) F.4 Details of Hard Landscaping
- 4) Q.1 Details/Samples of Facing Materials
- 5) P.1 Details of Boundary Treatment
- 6) T.1 Programme of Excavations
- 7) O.2 Approved Dustbin Enclosures
- 8) M.41 Hours of Construction Work
- 9) Details of a scheme of on site cycle parking provision shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of the development. The approved cycle parking facilities shall be installed prior to first occupation of the building and thereafter maintained for such use.
- 10) I.6 Completion of Parking Areas
- 11) The disabled parking bay indicated on the approved site layout plan; shall be clearly marked with a British Standard disabled symbol and permanently retained for the use of disabled persons and their vehicles and for no other purpose.
- 12) Details of a scheme of noise mitigation to protect residents from traffic noise emanating from Longbridge Road shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of the development. The development shall be completed in accordance with the approved scheme.
- 13) Before the development is commenced a detailed site investigation shall be carried out to establish if the site is contaminated, to assess the degree and nature of the contaminant present and to determine its potential for the pollution of the water environment. The method and extent of this site investigation shall be agreed with the Local Planning Authority prior to commencement of the work. Details of appropriate measures to prevent pollution of groundwater and surface water, including provisions for monitoring, shall then be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before development commences. The development shall proceed in strict accordance with the measures approved.
- 14) The development shall provide 10% of its energy needs from renewable energy generated on site in accordance with a scheme that shall have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. No part of the development shall be occupied until the approved renewable energy scheme has been implemented.

- 15) The development authorised by this permission shall not begin until the local planning authority has approved in writing a full scheme for the provision of a vehicular access serving the site from Park Avenue. The occupation of the development shall not begin until those works have been completed in accordance with the local planning authority's approval and have been certified in writing as complete by or on behalf of the local planning authority.
- 16) The windows and balcony screen on the north-west elevation of the building shall be designed and installed so as to prevent the overlooking of the adjacent gardens in accordance with a scheme which shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of the development.