

**St Michael's Convent, Ham Common,
Ham**
Planning Statement Addendum

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February 2017

Indigo Planning



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Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
Structure of this statement	1
Accompanying documents	1
2. Background and Context	3
Planning application LPA ref. 16/3552/FUL and LBC	
application LPA ref. 16/3553/LBC	3
Planning policy	3
3. Revised Proposals	5
4. Other Open Land of Townscape Importance	6
5. Heritage	7
6. Social / Community Infrastructure	8
Proposed meeting rooms	8
Summary	9
7. Ecology and Trees	10
Other Site of Nature Importance (OSNI)	10
Trees	10
8. Affordable Housing	11
9. Transport	12
10. Conclusion	13

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report has been prepared on behalf of Beechcroft Developments Ltd (the applicant), to support revisions to the development proposals submitted under planning application LPA ref. 16/3552/FUL and listed building consent (LBC) application LPA ref. 16/3553/LBC, at St Michael's Convent, Ham Common.
- 1.2. Revisions have been made to the scheme (Application 1) following statutory and non-statutory comments to the original planning application. The proposed amendments to the scheme seek to address concerns and evolve the development and enhance its compliance with planning policies.
- 1.3. This report effectively serves as an addendum to the previously submitted Planning Statement. It outlines the revisions that have been made to the proposed scheme (Application 1) as a result of comments that have been made during the consideration of the planning and LBC applications.

Structure of this statement

- 1.4. The remainder of this report is structured as follows:
 - **Section 2** outlines the background and context to the revisions;
 - **Section 3** sets out the revised development proposals;
 - **Section 4** considers the proposed OOLTI (Other Open Land of Townscape Importance) designation;
 - **Section 5** considers heritage and summarises the conclusions from the Heritage Statement addendum;
 - **Section 6** considers the proposals in the context of planning policies relating to social infrastructure;
 - **Section 7** considers ecology;
 - **Section 8** sets out the applicant's approach to affordable housing provision;
 - **Section 9** addresses other key planning considerations; and
 - **Section 10** provides the conclusions.

Accompanying documents

- 1.5. In addition to this Planning Statement Addendum, the following application documents have been updated with addendums to account for the revised scheme:
 - A full set of plans and drawings, prepared by PRP;
 - Design and Access Statement (including landscaping scheme), prepared by PRP;
 - Schedule of Works, prepared by PRP;
 - Heritage Statement Addendum, prepared by Indigo Planning;

- Health Impact Assessment (replacement of previously submitted document), prepared by Indigo Planning;
- Sustainability Statement Addendum, prepared by PRP;
- Energy Statement Addendum, prepared by PRP;
- Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing Assessment Addendum, prepared by PRP;
- Transport Statement Addendum, prepared by Glanville;
- Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy Addendum, prepared by Glanville;
- Foul Water Drainage and Utilities Assessment Addendum, prepared by Glanville;
- Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment Addendum, prepared by Cotswold Archaeology;
- Ecological Assessment Addendum, prepared by Ecology Solutions;
- Tree Report (Tree Survey and Constraint Advice), prepared by ACD Environmental;
- Arboricultural Method Statement and Method Statement, prepared by ACD Environmental; and
- Desk Study and Preliminary Site Assessment Report (contamination) Addendum, prepared by Southern Testing.

2. Background and Context

- 2.1. This section sets out the context and background to the revised development proposals for Application 1 at St Michael's Convent.

Planning application LPA ref. 16/3552/FUL and LBC application LPA ref. 16/3553/LBC

- 2.2. Planning application LPA ref. 16/3552/FUL and LBC application LPA ref. 16/3553/LBC were submitted on 7 September 2017. The description of development was:

Conversion and extension of the existing convent buildings (following demolition of some mid-20th century extensions), together with new build apartments and houses, to provide a total of 26 residential retirement units, parking and associated works within a landscaped site, with access via Ham Common.

- 2.3. The property is vacant and the building fabric is in a deteriorating condition.

On-going engagement

- 2.4. Prior to the submission of planning application LPA ref. 16/3552/FUL and LBC application LPA ref. 16/3553/LBC, the applicant undertook an extensive exercise of community engagement, including consultation events with local residents, engaging with local interest groups and pre-application dialogue with the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (LBRuT). Further information is provided at Section 4 of the original Planning Statement.
- 2.5. Following receipt of various statutory and non-statutory consultee consultation responses, the applicant has had further discussions with the Council to work through the substantive issues. The applicant has considered further the consultation responses, the discussions with Council officers and broader comments made during the consultation exercise with the local residents and local interest groups, and has decided to make significant reductions to the application to deal with the wide variety of comments. These changes have been made, not because the applicant is in full agreement with the substance of the comments, but rather in the spirit of listening carefully to comments with a view to reaching agreement on the issues quickly.
- 2.6. The applicant has reduced the overall quantum of development following concerns regarding 'overdevelopment' of the site and potential impacts on the listed building and its setting. The number of residential units has been reduced from 26 to 23 with a reduction in new build residential floorspace by 36% from the original proposal. Development has also been stepped back 15m further south so that it does not encroach into the gardens or the proposed OOLTI/OSNI designation.
- 2.7. The applicant has also re-arranged the scheme in order to include meeting rooms, in response to the Council's concerns regarding the loss of social infrastructure (through the loss of the convent). Residential accommodation has been removed from the Walled Garden. Overall, the quantum of residential development has been reduced.

Planning policy

- 2.8. Since the submission of the planning and LBC applications, LBRuT has published its Publication Local Plan for public consultation, between 4 January and 15 February 2017.
- 2.9. The applicant has submitted representations to previous iterations of the Local Plan. Representations were submitted to the Pre-Publication Local Plan consultation in August

2016.

- 2.10. The Pre-Publication Local Plan included a site designation for St Michael's Convent, Ham Common (Site Allocation SA 16). However, an additional site allocation has come forward and St Michael's Convent, Ham Common is now Site Allocation SA 17.

Neighbourhood planning

- 2.11. Since the submission of the planning and LBC applications, Ham and Petersham Neighbourhood Forum have prepared a draft Neighbourhood Plan (Pre-Submission Version). The Draft Neighbourhood Plan is subject to consultation for six weeks, which runs from 30 January to 10 March 2017.

3. Revised Proposals

- 3.1. The development proposals have been revised such that the number of residential units proposed has been reduced from 26 to 23. In turn, the amount of new build residential floorspace has reduced by 36% from the original proposal. Residential accommodation has also been removed from the Walled Garden. Overall, the quantum of residential development has been reduced.
- 3.2. The eastern block has been set back compared to the previous scheme. Similarly, the extent of new buildings has been set back 15m to the south, well away from the Mulberry tree.
- 3.3. The western group of mews dwellings (two rows of three units facing each other) have been set in 7m from the gable end of the existing chapel building and 5m from that of the originally submitted planning application.
- 3.4. The buildings have been re-sited and all buildings are now wholly outside the extent of the draft OOLTI designation.
- 3.5. Views from the garden back towards the main listed house (rear façade) have been significantly enhanced by the 7m set-back referred to above.
- 3.6. Policy responses indicate that the Council has accepted assessment undertaken in the original submission, that the wholesale re-use of the building and the site for community use was never going to be a viable proposition, given the very significant liabilities involved in improving and then maintaining a listed building and garden of this nature. The applicant has, though, revised the scheme to include new meeting rooms (which could be used by the local community) in the Walled Garden, on the site of an existing greenhouse. This will offer the most significant element of community use for at least 60 years and a significantly greater level of community use than can be equated to the occasional public access afforded by the previous occupiers, through the National Garden Scheme.
- 3.7. The Walled Garden itself also has the potential for community use by prior arrangement, perhaps in the form of a community gardening or dementia care project. We are happy to discuss the community use of the Walled Garden further.
- 3.8. The wooden shed in the south of the Walled Garden is also being retained.
- 3.9. The revisions to the scheme will require the description of development to be updated as such:

Conversion and extension of the existing convent buildings (following demolition of some mid-20th century extensions), together with new build apartments and houses, to provide a total of 23 residential retirement units, *an estate manager's office and meeting rooms*, parking and associated works within a landscaped site, with access via Ham Common.

4. Other Open Land of Townscape Importance

- 4.1. Emerging Policy SA 17 in the Publication Local Plan (January 2017) seeks to formally designate parts of the gardens as OOLTI.
- 4.2. Whilst the applicant takes issue with the manner in which proposals for the draft OOLTI designation have come forward (including the lack of an appropriate assessment to inform such a designation) and remains of the view that the draft is still of limited weight as it has not been subject to any examination in public, the applicant has made the significant gesture of re-positioning the northern-most buildings to be wholly outside the OOLTI.
- 4.3. The revised drawing now proposes the northern-most buildings being stepped back circa 15m to the south from the extent of the original scheme, resulting in the loss of residential accommodation.
- 4.4. The two residential buildings in the Walled Garden have also been removed completely from the application.
- 4.5. Consequently, no new residential buildings are located within the proposed draft OOLTI designation.
- 4.6. An estate manager's office and meeting rooms are proposed within the northern part of the Walled Garden, on the site of the existing greenhouse structures. Both emerging (Policy LP 14) and adopted (Policy DM OS 3) planning policy permit the replacement of existing built facilities within the OOLTI.
- 4.7. The existing storage shed in the southern part of the Walled Garden will be retained.

5. Heritage

- 5.1. The accompanying Heritage Statement Addendum concludes that the impact of the revised proposals would not result in harm to the significance of the listed building, Orford Hall/House, and suitable restoration of external and internal features of the principal building would result in some slight enhancement of its historic and architectural interest, which would be preserved.
- 5.2. The significance of The Cottage, subject to detailed design of the proposed interventions and new fabric, would not be harmed by the proposed works to it and proposals for the forecourt, subject to appropriate detailed design, would have a positive impact by improving the building's setting. The building's special historic character would be preserved.

6. Social / Community Infrastructure

- 6.1. Whilst the applicant does not accept the relevance of the Council's community infrastructure policies, the original submission of the application assesses the development proposals against these policies. This was acknowledged in the policy officer's comments to planning application LPA ref. 16/3552/FUL and LBC application LPA ref. 16/3553/LBC during November 2016.
- 6.2. As confirmed by policy responses, the Council accepts that the applicant has demonstrated that the existing facilities are no longer required and that the first part of adopted Policy DM SI 2 is satisfied.
- 6.3. The second part of adopted Policy DM SI 2 (the third criteria) requires the full consideration of the re-using or redeveloping of the existing site for the same or an alternative social infrastructure use. The Council has produced various evidence documents to support the purpose of the community infrastructure policies and these comprise the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, the Community Needs Assessment and the LBRuT Community Plan. The original submission of this application in September 2016 reviewed all of the Council's evidence base for identified community infrastructure needs locally, including primary education, sports facilities, leisure facilities, youth centre and library.
- 6.4. The Council's policy response to the application confirmed that:
- As there was capacity for expansion in existing schools when required it was agreed that education is not the most suitable use on this site;
 - Sports pitches would be an inappropriate use of the site;
 - There is already a youth centre in Ham (0.5km away);
 - The Ham Library was upgraded in 2013, so there is no longer a need for additional library facilities in the area; and
 - It is clear that the applicant has made a good attempt at considering the potential for alternative social infrastructure.
- 6.5. The Council's policy response goes on to state that the Council "acknowledge that the complete re-provision of social infrastructure on the site is unlikely to be feasible, [but] there is an expectation to provide some publicly accessible community space within the development of the site".
- 6.6. The Council's policy response states further that "this could be alongside the proposed retirement accommodation on the site, or as part of the residential offer".

Proposed meeting rooms

- 6.7. The application has been amended to provide this very facility and now includes the provision of new, purpose-built meeting rooms which could be used by the local community in the northern part of the Walled Garden, together with the site manager's office. The meeting rooms would be available by prior arrangement for a nominal charge, on a not-for-profit basis. The existing greenhouse would be replaced by this new building which would have the same footprint and same architectural style.
- 6.8. There is also the potential for community use in the Walled Garden itself, again by prior arrangement for a nominal charge, on a not-for-profit basis, perhaps in the form of a

dementia garden or other community gardening project.

- 6.9. This will be the first time that the local community will have had a physical 'on site' presence. The Sisters only granted requests for occasional limited access by the community (e.g. for the National Gardens Scheme) and therefore the proposed meeting rooms and use of the Walled Garden on a more routine basis is a significant benefit of this scheme.
- 6.10. Planning policy response also encouraged continued engagement with the Ham and Petersham Neighbourhood Forum. The applicant has met with the members of the Neighbourhood Forum again since the submission of the planning application, to ensure they are consulted on the proposed amendments to the scheme. Feedback from the Neighbourhood Forum has helped inform the revised proposals.

Summary

- 6.11. The applicant has carefully considered the policy responses and has responded to the substantive parts of what the policy officer wanted to see being delivered on site. The revised proposals have been subject to further engagement with the Neighbourhood Forum and those discussions have helped inform not only the community aspects of the scheme but also the changes to the residential component of the development. The Neighbourhood Forum has very much welcomed this ongoing dialogue from Beechcroft.

7. Ecology and Trees

- 7.1. The accompanying Ecological Assessment Addendum concludes that no additional ecological effects would arise from the revised development scheme, beyond those that were identified as part of the original assessment for the larger scheme.
- 7.2. The reduction in the number of units is of benefit to the ecological interest of the site (in particular the retention and only partial closure of the badger setts).
- 7.3. The biodiversity of the site will therefore continue to be safeguarded and enhanced in accordance with Policy CP 4 and DM OS 5.

Other Site of Nature Importance (OSNI)

- 7.4. LBRuT has elected to designate St Michael's Convent gardens in emerging Policy SA 17 of its Publication Local Plan.
- 7.5. As previously mentioned, the revised development proposals have been stepped back circa 15m to the south from the built extent of the original scheme. Consequently, no new built development is located within the proposed OSNI designation.

Trees

- 7.6. Officers requested an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and an Arboricultural Method Statement during the course of the application, both of which are provided alongside this package of revisions.
- 7.7. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement confirm that the relationship between the buildings and retained trees is sustainable and does not result in any situations which may result in unreasonable pressure to prune from future occupants.
- 7.8. The revised proposals pull development well away from the Mulberry tree ensuring that it is absolutely safeguarded.

8. Affordable Housing

- 8.1. As the Council is aware, St Michael's Convent is vacant following the departure of the Community of the Sisters of the Church to their new home in Buckinghamshire.
- 8.2. National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) states that where a vacant building is brought back into any lawful use, the developer should be offered a financial credit equivalent to the existing gross floorspace of relevant vacant buildings when the LPA calculates any affordable housing contribution (Paragraph: 021 Reference ID: 23b-021-20160519).
- 8.3. As the Council is aware, the Convent has a floorspace of 2,593sqm. The revised development proposals would yield a total residential floorspace of 2,861.5sqm (excluding the 70sqm of the estate manager's office and meeting rooms which is a replacement of an existing building).
- 8.4. In applying the Vacant Building Credit (VBC), affordable housing contribution is applicable on the uplift in floorspace of 268.5sqm.
- 8.5. Dividing the total proposed residential GIA (2,861.5sqm) by the number of proposed residential units yields an average unit size of 124.4sqm.
- 8.6. The number of (average sized) dwellings that can be provided by the net increase in floorspace is two units (268.5sqm ÷ 124.48sqm). LBRuT's affordable housing policy should therefore only apply to two residential units.
- 8.7. The NPPG advises that affordable housing contributions should not be sought from developments of 10-units or less, and which have a maximum combined gross floorspace of no more than 1,000sqm GIA (Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 23b-031-20161116).
- 8.8. Given that the affordable housing contribution can only be applied to two units and a very modest 268.5sqm of floorspace, an affordable housing contribution does not apply given the scale of reductions to the planning application.

9. Transport

- 9.1. The Transport Statement Addendum, prepared by Glanville, indicates that a maximum of 4 two-way vehicular movements are predicted during the AM peak hour and 3 during the PM peak hour, or one vehicle every 15 minutes on average for the dwellings accessed from Ham Common. As such, it is considered that the traffic generated during the AM and PM peak hours will be negligible and easily absorbed within the daily fluctuation of traffic already on the network.
- 9.2. The Transport Statement Addendum concludes that the residual cumulative impact of the development will not be 'severe' and therefore the revised development proposals are considered acceptable in transport terms in the context of paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1. The applicant has continued discussions with LBRuT following the submission of the original planning application (LPA ref. 16/3552/FUL and LBC application LPA ref. 16/3553/LBC). The applicant has listened to the comments from the various consultees and has revised the development proposals such that virtually everything that the Council has sought on this application has been satisfied.
- 10.2. The applicant has reduced the overall quantum of development and made amendments to the benefit of the listed building and its setting.
- 10.3. The applicant has also revised the scheme to include purpose built meeting rooms available for community use by prior arrangement, as well as a commitment to opening up the Walled Garden for community access (again by prior arrangement), in response to the Council's concerns regarding the 'loss of social infrastructure'. The site will therefore offer a much greater level of community use than ever before.
- 10.4. The revised proposals mean that no new build development is now proposed within the proposed OOLTI or OSNI.
- 10.5. The revised scheme results in a much reduced form of development which complies with the development plan.

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