

14 Waldram Park Road - DC/11/76835

I am writing to you on behalf of the Forest Hill Society to object to the plans for 14 Waldram Park Road. This site has one of the worst recent planning records in the local area. A few years ago this house was a large habitable family home, when plans came forward for conversion to flats there was little objectionable in the plans. However, the method of building by Earlsfield Estates led to a poor quality structure, after they had almost completely gutted the building and then went bankrupt. Another developer purchased the site and continued with the conversion, not unexpectedly this resulted in the collapse of the building (following a pattern of previous Earlsfield sites) and tragically one of the workers on site died in the collapse. We are still waiting for results of any investigation into this death.

Since then a new developer has taken ownership of this site and has decided that the remaining structure cannot be safely preserved in any way. It is these plans that we are focusing on, but we will refer back to the previous family house on this site.

1) Family Units

The latest application contains nine units, but not one of them is a family unit. Had this been a conversion HSG9 would have protected family accommodation on this site, and family accommodation was included in the previously accepted planning application. However, we believe that in considering HSG6 at least one family unit should be provided in a new build development of this size on a site that previously had family housing. For this reason we ask the officers to reject the development based on the dwelling mix and the lack of family accommodation on this site that did, until recently, provide family accommodation.

2) Character of the street

Waldram Park Road is a main artery through South London (A205 South Circular) and for this reason we expect buildings to be of good architectural quality, despite some of the less impressive buildings that have been erected over the years. 14 Waldram Park Road is part of a group of large three-storey houses built in the early 20th Century with bay windows, space between properties, and large front gardens. As they have been converted many of the front gardens have been paved over to allow for parking on this red route.

The design of the new block does not fit with or compliment the adjacent properties. It has been built with four floors from ground level, compared to three floors on adjacent buildings, leading to different floor heights and windows at different heights. The width of the building is different from the remaining row of properties and the style is completely different. We do not believe that this meets HSG8 which, in the case of in-fill development, requires:

- (b) the scheme must respect the character of the area, including the cumulative impact;
- (c) the scheme must be particularly sensitively designed;

This policy is further supported by policy URB3 which states:

The Council will expect a high standard of design in new development or buildings and in extensions or alterations to existing buildings, whilst ensuring that schemes are compatible with, or complement the scale and character of existing development, and its setting (including any open space). Where appropriate, the following factors will be taken into consideration:-

- (a) scale and mass of development, particularly where a new development might be out of scale with the existing surrounding development;
- (c) relationship of development to the existing townscape which should maintain or complement the surroundings;

- (e) new development should respect the scale and alignment of the existing street including its building frontages;
- (h) details of degree of ornamentation, use of materials, brick walls and fences, or other boundary treatment should be given special attention at the design stage;
- (j) the retention and refurbishment of existing buildings that make a positive contribution to the environment will be encouraged;

Given the design of this proposal we believe the council should reject the application as not adequately meeting URB3 and HSG8, specifically the clauses which we draw to your attention above.

3) Access to garden and internal design

Garden access for all flats is only via the main entrance, through the front garden and round the side of the house. No attempt has been made to provide access from basement or ground floor flats to the rear garden. This is disappointing as it reduces the likely usage of the garden.

There is also concern regarding the internal layout, with a ground floor living room directly above both two basement bedrooms and adjacent to another bedroom in a neighbouring ground floor flat. This ground floor unit also has the only bedroom directly below another living room, as well as being next to the main door and entrance lobby. The layout of this ground floor flat does not seem in keeping with the rest of the block or with best practise for internal layout.

To ensure that this development is in accordance with policy HSG5 'and highest standards of layout and design' we would ask that the council ensure that appropriate sound proofing is provided and that consideration is given to rear access to the garden.

4) Parking

This nine unit development is located on a red route, making parking very difficult for residents. At present all multiple occupancy buildings on this stretch of road have large driveways to provide adequate parking and it is reasonable to presume that this development will require a similar level of parking made available. Although this site has a very high PTAL rating, this does not prevent many residents from owning cars for personal or business use.

Restricting the parking available to a single car is likely to put additional pressure on other local roads, particularly Westbourne Drive and Church Rise, which already have limited parking available due to multiple occupancy buildings and commuter parking. For this reason we believe it is in the interest of residents and neighbours for at least 2 additional parking space to be made available. If this were not a red route then this would be much less of an issue, but since it is we would refer to HSG 8e:

'Backland and in-fill development will be permitted provided the following criteria are met: (e) on a road where additional on-street parking would not be permitted the development would not worsen any (on-street) parking problems; '

With only a single parking space we believe that this development would worsen parking problems for residents and on-street parking for residents in neighbouring roads.

Finally, whilst we recognise that the current applicant is not responsible for the damage caused to the existing building, we would welcome any development that could restore the existing frontage of the building so that the building is in keeping with the neighbouring properties.

For the reasons set out above, we ask that the council rejects this application as not meeting council policies HSG8, URB3, and HSG6.