

DC/14/89593: The change of use of the existing single storey building on land at the rear of 26 Inglemere Road SE23

I am writing on behalf of the Forest Hill Society regarding the proposed development on the land at the rear of 26 Inglemere Road SE23 (ref: DC/14/89593).

The Forest Hill Society is the local amenity society for the area covered by SE23 and has around 400 members. The society is keen to ensure that the area develops in a positive way for the people that live and work in it. Generally we try to be positive about changes to the area and proposals for improvements, however in some cases it is necessary for us to raise concerns about proposals as part of the planning process.

With regard to the proposed development, we have significant concerns regarding this planning application. These relate to:

- The design quality;
- The quality and legibility of the planning application documentation;
- The planning history of the site; and
- Site suitability.

Our concerns regarding this application are:

1. Design quality

1.1. No details of landscaping are presented in the application documentation. Unless this is a reserved matter, which I do not believe to be the case, these details should have been provided as part of the application. Following a visit to the application site with the applicant, I believe that a high quality landscape scheme is fundamental to the success of this development in relation to three aspects:

- a) Overcoming the topographical constraints – there is a difference in levels from the proposed access to the side of 26 Inglemere Road to the location of the building within the site of approximately 3 metres.
- b) In order to provide step-free access in line with Lifetime Homes standards, this difference in levels will need to be overcome. The applicant's Lifetime Homes Statement states that there is levels or gently sloping access provided, but no evidence is provided to support this.



Figure 1: Looking south towards the entrance to the site from Inglemere Road

- c) When I met with the applicant, I was told of commitments made to neighbours regarding tree planting in order to deal with overlooking. However, without a mechanism to secure this tree planting within the planning process I am concerned that it will not be delivered.



Figure 2: Photos showing the overlooking of the existing building from surrounding properties

1.2. There is an external ramp down to the front door but the area in front of the door doesn't seem large enough to allow a wheelchair to turn into the building.

1.3. The Lifetime Home Plan shows no dimensions internally and as such it is not possible to determine whether sufficient space is actually provided to meet requirements.

1.4. I have significant concerns regarding ceiling heights. The only internal dimension provided is 2370mm towards the middle of the building. Where the roof slopes down towards the rear this will be significant less, and quite probably inadequate. Furthermore, I have doubts that the roof structure is shown accurately, as the roof build-up for a green roof system adds thickness. This may further impact ceiling heights internally if the external building height is to be maintained.

1.5. The interface of the building and the landscape are difficult to interpret. In order to achieve some head-height within the building it is clear that excavation is proposed. What is not clear is how this extends into the surrounding landscaping. This is particularly difficult to understand on the western elevation where it appears that large windows or bi-fold doors are proposed which are below the existing ground level.

1.6. The proposed green roof is welcomed. This would alleviate some issues of overlooking, as well as providing biodiversity benefits.

2. Quality and legibility of planning application documentation

2.1. A number of the application documents submitted appear to be the same as those submitted for application reference DC/14/89593, the previously refused application for this site. The Forest Hill Society had significant concerns about the documentation produced for that application and our concerns regarding the current application are not helped by the re-use of such poor quality documentation.

2.2. There is confusion on some of the drawings, with hand amendments frequently used. This is particularly troublesome in determining which drawings show the proposed design and which show the existing building.

2.3. The Design and Access Statement is of poor quality and explains little of the design principles. Any description of landscaping and access is entirely absent.

2.4. The Sustainability Statement is also of poor quality. It refers to an incorrect PTAL level for the site, and mentions that a car parking space is provided. These errors seriously damage the credibility of the Statement.

3. Planning history

3.1. The Decision Notice (dated October 2012) granting the application for the original outbuilding (ref: DC/12/80972/X) imposed an additional condition that the building should not be used as residential accommodation:

"Additional Condition The outbuilding hereby approved must only be used for storage and purposes incidental to the enjoyment of flat 1, 26 Inglemere Road and not as residential accommodation or for any commercial activities. Reason for the imposition of the Additional Condition The use of the outbuilding as a separate commercial or residential unit would not comply with the local planning authority's normal policies in

respect of such schemes, with particular regard to the protection of residential amenity, in accordance with policy 15 High quality design for Lewisham in the adopted Core Strategy (June 2011) and saved policies URB 3 Urban Design, URB 6 Alterations and Extensions and HSG 4 Residential Amenity of the adopted Unitary Development Plan (July 2004)"

3.2. More recently, the Council saw fit to refuse planning permission for a very similar development on this site (ref: DC/14/89593). The reasons for refusal relate to:

- (a) The size and location of the development in relation to its siting on a backland site;
- (b) The design quality, noting the "poor standard of living accommodation"; and
- (c) Disruption due to the proposed vehicular access.

3.3. While the third reason for refusal has been resolved, concerns remain regarding the first two issues and it would be difficult to see how the Council could now grant consent in light of this.

4. Site suitability

4.1. Finally, I would like the Council to note that the Forest Hill Society does not object to the principle of residential development on this site. We do believe that the existing outbuilding is an eyesore and its redevelopment to an appropriate standard would be of benefit. However, a better solution might be to construct a small dwelling elsewhere on the site, perhaps in the north-west corner where existing planting would deal with many of the concerns regarding overlooking. I would urge the Council to take this into account in any future discussions regarding development on this site.