PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE
10 March 2005

Item No:

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Address/Site: Electrical Substation, 35 Coombe Lane, Raynes Park, SW20 0LA

Ward: Raynes Park

Proposals: The demolition of existing buildings on the site and the development of a residential building (C3 use) to provide 14 dwellings, amenity space, including a roof terrace, a new service road, 5 parking spaces, ancillary cycle parking and service area with a bin store, and a new transformer chamber.

Drawing No’s: Fig 2 (Rev B); Fig 3 (Rev A); Fig 4 (Rev A); Fig 5 (Rev A); Explanatory Statement;

Contact Officer: Peter Duncan (8545 4714)

RECOMMENDATION
Grant Planning Permission subject to conditions

1. **BACKGROUND**

1.1 The current application follows a recent refusal by the Planning Applications Committee on 19 August 2004 (LBM Ref: 04/P1069). The reasons for refusal related to the size of the building, excessive density, lack of car parking, and inadequate amount of on-site amenity space. The current application seeks to address these concerns.

2. **SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

1.1 The 0.08 hectare site currently comprises two brick-built electrical plant buildings owned by EDF fronting onto Coombe Lane. The application site is located within the Raynes Park Town Centre, designated as a Local Centre in the UDP 2003, approximately 80m west of the main shopping parade, and 200m west of Raynes Park Railway Station.

1.2 Bordering the site to the west is Milburn House, a 1930’s two-storey residential development extending along the frontages of Coombe Lane and West Barnes Lane. This site is bordered by a small office development on West Barnes Lane and a petrol service station. To the east is the part two-
storey, part three-storey Thames Water Plc building and Raynes Park Car Park designated as Site 16P on the proposals map, identified for mixed-use development.

1.3 Opposite the site, on the north side of Coombe Lane, is Cottenham Parade comprising a mix of shops and restaurants on the ground floor with residential above. On the eastern side of Durham Road is Sheffield House, a six-storey block forming part of the core-shopping parade and comprising a co-op on the ground floor with offices above.

1.4 The site and immediate vicinity has a medium public transport accessibility level (PTAL 3) with Raynes Park Railway Station within 5 minutes walking distance and a bus stop located almost immediately outside the site currently served by Bus Nos. 57, 131, 200 and N77.

2. **CURRENT PROPOSAL**

2.1 The proposal under consideration seeks consent for the demolition of the existing buildings and the erection of a part 2 part 5 storey building for residential purposes to provide 6x1 bed and 8x2 bed flats. The proposal also provides for a new transformer chamber which is to be located at the rear of the site adjoining the proposed building. The existing access road along the western boundary will be upgraded and will provide a 3m wide access route into the site with a 1m pedestrian footway to the side. A bicycle store housing up to 14 bicycles, a refuse area, 5 parking spaces (1 disabled), and an 8x8m hardstanding accommodating a turning head, will also be provided.

2.2 360m2 of amenity space will also be provided by way of private balconies, a roof terrace, and a small communal garden at the rear of the site.

3. **PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1 Previous applications LBM Ref: 03/P1128 and 03/P2339 submitted in respect of the site were, following advice from Council Officers, withdrawn on design grounds. Both of these applications proposed locating the transformer chamber on the street frontage adjacent to the Thames Water site and concerns were expressed that this could prejudice development on that site and have a detrimental impact on the Coombe Lane streetscene.

3.2 A subsequent application was submitted in May 2004 (LBM Ref: 04/P1069) and considered by the Committee in August 2004 for the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and the development of a residential building (C3 use) to provide 26 dwellings, a new service road, ancillary cycle parking and service area, and a new transformer chamber. Although, the officer report recommended that planning permission be granted, after careful consideration Members took the decision to overturn this recommendation and to refuse permission for the following reasons:
(1) The proposal because of its size, its incongruous nature in Raynes Park and its lack of sufficient architectural quality is contrary to policies BE.16(i), BE20(i), (ii), (iii), (iv) and (vi) and BE.22(i) and (ii).

(2) Excessive density contrary to policy HP.4.

(3) Provides no car parking, contrary to policy PK2 and schedule 6 of the Unitary Development Plan leading to on-street car parking contrary to policy PK.3 and/or use of public car parks contrary to the Council’s management plan outlined in policy PK.4 and does not meet the car parking standards for car free development in policy PK.6.

(4) Contains inadequate amenity space contrary to policy HS.1 and the distance the site is from public open space makes compensatory provision inadequate in these circumstances.

(5) In respect of PPG 3, paragraph 60, Council is of the view that potential occupiers might want more than no car parking on the site and that there would be a need for off-street parking given the merely good public transport links that Raynes Park has.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 The proposal was advertised by means of a major press notice a site notice and notification letters to neighbouring occupiers. One letter of objection was received from a local resident. The grounds of objection are:

- Increased levels of congestion resulting from additional car movements and lack of parking facilities
- Building out of character with the area detrimental to the Coombe Lane frontage and an over development of the site
- Overlooking of the communal garden of Milburn house

4.2 Thames Water Property raised no objection to the principle of redevelopment of the site although they are concerned that the front building line which turns in towards the Thames Water site would limit the development potential on that site.

4.3 Thames Water Utility while no comments have been received in respect of the current application the raised no objection to the principle of development of the site in the first instance.

4.4 Environmental Health No objection.

4.5 The Residents Association of West Wimbledon. The height of the building is not consistent with the character of the townscape where two-storey buildings dominate. The proposal would result in a loss of amenity for adjoining occupiers and the forward projection of the building would excessively dominate the streetscape. The location of the proposal building
adjacent to the Thames Water site would prejudice potential development proposals for that site. The density of the proposal is inconsistent with the locality and exceeds guidelines in the UDP. The scheme would exacerbate on-street parking shortages, the rooms are cramped, and the provision of amenity space is inadequate.

4.6 The Wimbledon Society. The height of the building is out of character with the surrounding area and by coming forward of the building line it would impinge on the potential for a green strip along Coombe Lane, as is the case with the “front gardens” of Milburn House. The proposal building by doing so is inconsistent with NE.10 which says that the Council would use the development control process to enhance existing landscape features. The positioning of the proposal building on the site boundary would prejudice development proposals on the Thames Water site. The proposal would result in increased levels of overlooking and overshadowing of nearby residential properties. The proposal would exacerbate on-street parking shortages and the flank walls would be prone to graffiti. The quality of living for new residents would be poor given the incongruous shapes and lack of adequate ventilation for kitchens and bathrooms.

4.7 Raynes Park and West Barnes Residents Association. The proposal fails to provide sufficient amenity space and would result increased levels of overlooking and overshadowing of neighbouring residential properties. The proposal is out of context with the surrounding area, the provision of off-street parking facilities is insufficient, the density of the scheme is excessive, and the proposal would impinge on the future scope of development for the adjacent Thames Water site.

4.8 Transport Planning. No objection. While the provision of parking is below the maximum standard the provision of cycle facilities is consistent with the requirements of PPG13. In relation to levels of car parking developers are only required to provide levels, which they consider necessary, a view supported, by PPG13.

4.9 Conservation and Design Advisory Panel. The building should be set in line with Milburn House to retain the green space character of this section. Concern was raised regarding the layout of the rooms and whether it was acceptable for residential occupation. A greater number of parking bays would also be welcome.

4.10 Apostles Residents Association have requested that the current application be deferred until the draft planning brief for the adjacent Thames Water and Car Park site has been agreed, to encourage a cohesive redevelopment of this part of Raynes Park Town Centre.

4.11 Transport for London. No objection.

4.12 Plans and Projects. The proposal is a good example of sustainable development, taking advantage of the excellent local public transport to achieve both a high density scheme and by providing substantial cycle provision encouraging sustainable forms of transport. The location of the site
close to the Raynes Park commercial centre, its position defining the boundary between the commercial centre and the start of the residential area to the west, and its visibility means that the proposal building (together with its potential new neighbouring building) will be a landmark feature in the streetscene.

5. **POLICY CONTEXT**

5.1 The relevant policies of the Adopted Unitary Development Plan (October 2003) are ST.1 (Sustainable Development); ST.11 (Housing Provision); ST.12 (Development on Previously Developed Land); ST.13 (Housing Needs); ST.17 (Built Environment); HP.1 (Housing Target); HP.4 (Density of Development); HN.1 (Affordable Housing); HS.1 (Housing Layout and Amenity); BE.15 (New Buildings and Extensions; Daylight, Sunlight, Privacy, Visual Intrusion and Noise), BE.16 (Urban Design), BE.20 (High Buildings Appropriate Locations); BE.22 (Design of New Development), PK.2 (Car Parking Standards) and PK.3 (Car Parking and Development).

6. **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main planning considerations include the principle of redeveloping the site for residential purposes, the design of the development and its impact on the streetscene, the impact of the development on neighbouring amenity, traffic/parking issues, landscaping, and the standard of accommodation to be provided and affordable housing.

**Principle of redevelopment**

6.2 The site is currently occupied by electrical plant buildings, which are to be updated in the current proposal. In principle the use of this site for residential purposes whilst still incorporating the plant buildings is considered acceptable and in line with the overall strategy of the UDP.

**Design, impact on the streetscene, and density**

6.3 Policy BE.16 and BE.22 both require proposals for development to complement the character and appearance of the wider setting usually achieved by careful consideration of how the density (described below), scale, design, and materials of a development relate to each other and to the urban structure in which the development is placed.

6.4 The application site forms part of a streetscene that is typified by its diversity of architectural style, siting and scale of buildings. To the east are Sheffield House, a six storey concrete utilitarian building, and the Thames Water building a part two-storey part four-storey face brick building. Both bear no relation in character massing or orientation to any of the surrounding buildings. To the west buildings are generally two-storeys with 120 Coombe Lane being the exception at 5 storeys.

6.5 Although underdeveloped at present, the site itself occupies a prominent location in the town centre streetscene. By providing a landmark building set
forward of the building line it is possible to make a positive contribution to this streetscene.

6.6 At the eastern (town centre) side of the site the proposed building would be 5 storeys in height stepping down to 2 storeys in height to reflect the more traditional residential character typified by the 2 storey residential properties to the west of the site along Coombe Lane. The siting and design of the building has also taken into account the need to protect development opportunity for the adjacent Thames Water site.

6.7 The turn in towards the Thames Water site will help the building to address the streetscene when viewed from the station. Contrary to the concerns raised by Thames Water the turn in is consistent with the proposed development brief for that site which also envisages a building that address the streetscene when viewed from the east. Moreover the current scheme would provide a benchmark for future development.

6.8 In acknowledging concerns regarding the need for a more traditionally designed building the proposed ground floor level will comprise face brick to match that of both Milburn House, and the Thames Water building. This design change will aid the transition between these three buildings. The building has also been reduced by one level with the fifth floor being set back behind the main façade. At street level this level would be effectively obscured and would thus give the appearance of a four storey building of similar bulk and massing to the Thames Water building.

Density

6.9 Coombe Lane is located within an area of good transport accessibility (PTAL 3) with easy access into Wimbledon by bus and train. A cycle route also passes the site. Given the level of transport accessibility and parking provision, HP4 recommends a density range of 250-350 habitable rooms per hectare. The density of the scheme at 357 habitable rooms per hectare is considered acceptable particularly when compared with the density of 630 habitable rooms per hectare proposed in the previously refused scheme. Accordingly, although the density level slightly exceeds the 350 hrh threshold, the proposed density is in line with UDP and London Plan Policy and therefore, considered acceptable.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

6.10 The separation distance between the flank wall of the proposed building and the flank wall of Milburn House has been increased from 6m to 11m. By doing so the proposal exceeds similar separation distances in the area and would not therefore result in a reduction of amenity to the flank windows of Milburn House to a degree which would justify a refusal of planning permission.

6.11 While some overlooking of the rear garden of Milburn House is inevitable this is a communal garden and already is already overlooked by the residents of that building. However, in an attempt to keep the level of
overlooking to a minimum, the windows of flats located to the rear of the proposed building have been designed to either look out directly to the rear of the site or views have been restricted by flank walls.

6.12 The introduction of a roof terrace, on top of the fifth floor, has been carefully considered the terrace has been significantly set back from the main road. This arrangement would help ensure that the privacy of the adjoining residents using their communal garden would not be breached. Furthermore, it is considered that the positioning of the building to the east of Milburn House will have little impact on the amenities of occupiers in relation to daylight and sunlight.

Transport

6.13 As part of the current application 5 off-street car parking spaces are proposed. PPG13 advises local authorities to be flexible in requiring off-street parking especially in areas with good public transport. Guidance further recommends offsetting parking provision to achieve high quality and affordable high density residential development. This scheme is in marked contrast to the previous application which proposed 26 units and no car parking. In addition to the parking bays, 14 secure cycle parking spaces have been provided. The scheme is therefore consistent with PPG13 which advocates more sustainable means of transport.

Landscaping

6.14 It is important that open space and amenity areas surrounding the proposed building are designed in a way not only to be usable but to make a positive contribution to the character of the area. Suitable landscaping conditions are recommended in order to secure this objective.

Standard of accommodation/amenity space

6.15 The flat sizes comply with Council Guidance and the location of windows within the building would ensure adequate protection of future occupiers. In relation to amenity space, the current application through the provision of a rear communal amenity area, private balconies, and a roof terrace is in accordance with policy HS.1 which seeks 10 square metres of amenity space in the case of flats per habitable room. This is seen as a marked improvement upon the previous application where little space was provided in this regard it is considered that previous concerns have now been addressed.

6.16 Environmental Health raised no objection to the proximity of the electrical sub station and mentioned that at present there is no guidance to Local Authorities as to the location or proximity of residential property to electrical sub stations. However, they have recommended the imposition of an appropriate safeguarding condition regarding noise transference between the sub station and the adjoining residential units. Neither, has objection been raised regarding the future layout of the rooms.
7. **SUSTAINABILITY**

7.1 The proposal would help towards meeting the Council’s housing targets, it provides high density housing in town centres consistent with PPG3 and the London Plan, would provide enhanced cycling facilities and would have adequate access for people with disabilities. The scheme makes efficient use of this brownfield land and therefore attains a sustainability score of +41, which is above average for this type of development.

7.2 The proposal does not constitute Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 development. Accordingly, there are no requirements in terms of an EIA submission.

8. **CONCLUSION**

8.1 The scheme seeks to maximise the use of the site through the provision of housing consistent with National guidance in particular PPG3. The design of this building together with its location will provide the area with a high degree of legibility consistent with Council policy and would provide a benchmark for future proposals in the area. The design of the building will ensure that the scheme does not limit design aspirations on the adjacent site. By comparison with the previously refused scheme, the density has been significantly reduced, amenity space has been provided in accordance with policy HS.1, and some provision has been made for on-site parking. The provision of 14 cycle bays and the limited number of car parking is in accordance with National Guidance, The London Plan, and Council Policy. Careful placement of windows and balconies provide adequate protection in relation to neighbouring amenity and the location of the bulk of the scheme towards the eastern end away from Milburn House will reduce the effects of overshadowing.

8.2 In all respects the scheme is considered acceptable and accordingly is recommended for permission subject to conditions set out below.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**GRANT PERMISSION subject to conditions**

1. A.1 Commencement of Development (Full Application)
2. B.1 External Materials to be Approved
3. B.4 Details of Site, Surface and Boundary Treatments
4. B.6 Details of Refuse Storage
5. C.10 Hours of Construction
6. D.4 Cycle Parking
11. Development shall not commence until details of on site drainage works have been submitted to, and approved by, the local planning authority in consultation with the sewerage undertake. No works which result in the discharge of foul or surface water from the site shall be commenced until the onsite drainage works referred to above have been completed.

Reason: To ensure that the foul and/or surface water discharge from the site shall not be prejudicial to the existing sewerage system.

12. No noise from the transformer chamber shall be audible within habitable rooms of adjacent residential properties. A noise report shall be submitted in writing for approval to the Local Planning Authority detailing the sound attenuation measures to be provided to comply with this condition. The design specification must reflect the highest loads and temperatures that will occur. Once approved, the scheme shall be implemented and maintained thereafter.

Reason: In order to safeguard the amenity of the occupiers of surrounding residential properties.

**REASON FOR APPROVAL**

This determination has been made having had regard to reasons given in the officer's report and the policies contained in the Council's Adopted Unitary Development Plan (October 2003) so far as material to the proposals which are the subject of this approval. The policies listed below were relevant in the determination of this proposal. For further details of these policies, please refer to the Adopted UDP and the case officer report:

ST.1 (Sustainable Development)
ST.11 (Housing Provision)
ST.12 (Development on Previously Development Land)
ST.14 (Housing Needs)
ST.17 (Built Environment)
HP.1 (Housing Target)
HP.4 (Density of Development)
HN.1 (Affordable Housing)
HS.1 (Housing Layout and Amenity)
BE.15 (New Buildings and Extensions; Daylight, Sunlight, Privacy, Visual Intrusion and Noise)
BE.16 (Urban Design)
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BE.22 (Design of New Development)
PK.2 (Car Parking Standards)
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