

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE
18 June 2020

Item No:

UPRN

APPLICATION NO.

DATE VALID

19/P3814

25/10/2019

Address/Site:

1 – 4 Francis Grove, Wimbledon, SW19 4DT

(Ward)

Hillside

Proposal:

Demolition of existing building and erection of a new building comprising two basement levels, ground floor, and nine storeys above for the provision of Use Class B1 Office space with ancillary leisure and café facilities (Total GIA 8,638sqm), creation of vehicle servicing bay.

Drawing Nos:

052-A-00-00-A, 01-A, 052-A-11-08-A, 09-C, 10-C, 11-A, 12-A, 13-A, 14-A, 15-A, 16-A, 17-A, 18-A, 19-A, 20-A, 052-A-16-01-C, 02-C, 052-A-17-01-A, 02-A, 10-A, 11-A, 12-A, & 13-A

Contact Officer:

David Gardener (0208 545 3115)

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT Planning Permission Subject to any direction from the Mayor of London, completion of a S106 Agreement, and conditions

CHECKLIST INFORMATION

- Heads of agreement: Financial contribution for provision of disabled persons electric charge points and street tree replacement, public realm improvements and permit-free
- Is a screening opinion required: No
- Is an Environmental Statement required: No
- Has an Environmental Impact Assessment been submitted: No
- Press notice: Yes
- Site notice: Yes
- Design Review Panel consulted: Yes (at pre-application stage)
- Number of neighbours consulted: 356
- External consultations: Greater London Authority, Transport for London

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application has been brought before the Planning Applications Committee due to the nature and number of objections received following public consultation.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application site comprises an office building, consisting of a ground floor raised on a podium plus three storeys. Below the podium is a lowered car park level with 23 car parking spaces. The building currently has a gross internal floor area (GIA) of 2657sqm. The site is located in Wimbledon Town Centre on land bound by St George's Road and Francis Grove. The façade of the features red brick, white render, and dark tinted windows.
- 2.2 The application site is not subject to any statutory heritage asset designations although Raymond Road, which is located in the Merton (Wimbledon Hill Road) Conservation Area is located approx 120m to the north of the site. The immediate area comprises an eclectic mix of building styles, sizes and uses. To the north of the site along Worple Road properties comprise a mix of uses including commercial and residential. The building immediately to the north of the site, 22-24 Worple Road was recently refurbished and extended to five storeys. Adjacent to the site to the east is Prospect House, a three storey office building. Office buildings are also located immediately to the south (Tuition House – six storeys) and west (34 Francis Grove – three storeys) of the application site. In terms of the wider context building heights generally range between three and seven storeys.
- 2.4 The application site has excellent public transport links (PTAL rating of 6b) being sited in very close proximity to Wimbledon tube, railway and tram station and a number of bus routes. The site is also located in a Controlled Parking Zone (Zone W1).

3. CURRENT PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Demolition of existing building and erection of a new building comprising two basement levels, ground floor, and nine storeys above for the provision of Use Class B1 Office space with ancillary leisure and café facilities (Total GIA 8,638sqm), and creation of vehicle servicing bay. Please note that the mezzanine floor originally proposed has now been removed from the proposal.
- 3.2 The proposed building would have a maximum height of 44.56m to the top of the roof plant. The cladding materials have been divided into three distinct sections. The middle section is clad in red brick, the base or ground floor of the building is clad in green glazed terracotta, whilst at the top of the building, the set back roof would be clad in aluminium with a grey metallic PPC coating.
- 3.3 The new vehicle service bay would be created on the Francis Grove side of the building. It should be noted that following submission of the application this has been lengthened from approx 10.2m to 13m at its narrowest. The bay would be 3m wide. An existing Horse Chestnut street tree would be removed to facilitate

the service bay. The existing pedestrian pavement would be re-routed around the service bay and under part of the roof overhang.

- 3.4 The development is car free with no off-street car parking proposed with nearby St. Georges car park providing disabled parking. In total 134 long stay cycle spaces would be provided with 12 spaces provided at ground floor level and 122 spaces provided in the first basement level. 12 short stay cycle spaces would be located outside the building's St. George's Road ground floor frontage. In terms of landscaping, the proposal will incorporate two large planter features, which will frame the entrance to the building.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

The following planning history is relevant:

- 4.1 MER/980/78(0) - Outline application for part 1, 3 and 4 storey office block with basement car park - Granted - 25/04/1979
- 4.2 MER980/78(D) - Detailed application for part 1, 3 and 4 storey office block with basement car park. Granted - 26/07/1979
- 4.3 14/P0683 - Reconfiguration of main entrance and installation of platform lift to provide disabled access to office building, along with refurbishment of frontage. Granted - 25/04/2014
- 4.4 In October 2018, pre-application was sought for the demolition of existing site and erection of 10 storey office (LBM Ref: 18/P3965)

5. POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 The following policies from the Adopted Sites and Policies Plan and Policies Maps (July 2014):
DM D1 (Urban design and public realm), DM D2 (Design considerations in all developments), DM D3 (Alterations and extensions to existing buildings), DM D4 (Managing heritage assets), DM E1 (Employment areas in Merton), DM E2 (Offices in town centres), DM EP2 (Reducing and mitigating noise), DM F1 (Support for flood risk management), DM F2 (Sustainable urban drainage systems SuDS, wastewater and water infrastructure), DM R1 (Location and scale of development in Merton's town centres and neighbourhood parades), DM T1 (Support for sustainable transport and active travel), DM T2 (Transport Impacts of development), DM T3 (Car parking and servicing standards) and DM T5 (Access to the road network).
- 5.2 The relevant policies in the Adopted Core Strategy (July 2011) are:
CS.6 (Wimbledon Town Centre), CS.7 (Centres), CS.12 (Economic development), CS.14 (Design), CS.15 (Climate Change), CS. 16 (Flood Risk Management), CS.18 (Active Transport), CS.19 (Public Transport), CS.20 (Parking, Servicing and Delivery)
- 5.3 The relevant policies in the London Plan (2016) are:

4.2 (Offices), 5.2 (Minimising carbon dioxide emissions), 5.6 (Decentralised energy in development proposals), 5.3 (Sustainable Design and Construction), 5.9 (Overheating and cooling), 6.3 (Assessing effects of development on transport capacity), 6.9 (Cycling), 6.13 (Parking), 7.2 (An inclusive environment), 7.4 (Local character), 7.6 (Architecture), 7.7 (Location and design of tall and large buildings), 7.8 (Heritage Assets and Archaeology)

- 5.4 National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF)
- 5.5 National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 (NPPG)
- 5.5 The London Plan Intend to Publish Version (December 2019)
- 5.6 Future Wimbledon Supplementary Planning Document (Final Consultation Draft 2020)
- 5.7 Merton's Tall Buildings Background Paper 2010

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 The application was originally publicised by means of a site notice and individual letters to occupiers of neighbouring properties. In response, 63 letters of objection and 51 of letters of support were received. The letters of objection, which include objections from The Wimbledon Society, Wimbledon E Hillside Residents' Association (WEHRA), and Queen's Road Group Residents' Association, are on the following grounds:

- Impact on surrounding infrastructure
- Excessive building height/scale/bulk which is out of character/proportion with area/overdevelopment/not suitable for Wimbledon Town Centre
- Tall buildings rejected in Wimbledon Masterplan consultation responses
- Unacceptable impact on daylight/sunlight levels/visually intrusive and overbearing impact on surrounding residential properties
- Building line projecting forwards
- Ordinary/unattractive design
- Demolishing existing building is unsustainable/energy use of proposed building
- Increased pollution/congestion/no off-street parking
- Overlooking/loss of privacy of residential properties
- Should provide affordable housing instead of office/lack of demand for office
- Double basement/impact on flooding
- Impact on pedestrian safety
- Poor provision of cycle parking
- Poor precedent
- Impact on wider views
- Wind funnelling at street level

6.2 Wimbledon Society

Objects to the proposed building due to its excessive height, building line, and loss of daylight/sunlight. Concerns also raised regarding sustainability given

the proposal would result in the demolition of a modern building, and whether new offices are needed in Wimbledon.

6.3 Wimbledon E Hillside Residents' Association (WEHRA)

Objects to the proposed building's insensitive design and excessive height. Little demand for large scale offices in Wimbledon with upmarket businesses attracted to Wimbledon looking for small and medium sized space. Concerns also raised regarding the proposed basement and impact on flooding, sustainability, and greenwashing.

6.4 Queen's Road Group Residents' Association

Object to this building due to its excessive height that is inappropriate visually in a residential environment. There is no consideration for neighbours daylight and it doesn't meet any zero carbon emissions. The buildings does not also comply with any of Merton councils own guidelines.

6.5 The letters of support, which includes a letter of support from Love Wimbledon, are on the following grounds:

- New building will be more environmentally sustainable
- High quality design
- Provides new, modern and improved Grade A offices, increasing employment in the borough
- Significant improvements to streetscape including widening of pavement
- Bring new customers to surrounding shops helping to sustain the high street
- Existing building is no longer fit for purpose

6.6 Love Wimbledon

The proposed building is a vast improvement on the existing building and builds a stronger relationship with the Victorian buildings. At street level there is also a significant improvement and the new building would also be more environmentally sustainable. The proposal would also provide modern and improved Grade A offices and this will also boost surrounding businesses.

6.7 Greater London Authority (GLA)

6.8 The application is referable under Category 1C(c) of the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008, given it is a development which comprises or includes the erection of a building i.e. it is an existing building which is more than 30m in height and is outside the City of London. The GLA Stage 1 referral report states that the key strategic policies relevant to this application are: – principle of development, urban design, energy, urban greening and transport.

6.9 The report concludes as follows:

- Principle of development – The redevelopment of this town centre site to provide additional office floorspace is strongly supported.
- Urban design – The overall urban design approach is well considered and supported.

- Transport – Further information is required to demonstrate that the basement cycle parking is designed and laid out in accordance with London Cycling Design Standards. Consideration of how cycle parking facilities will cater for larger cycles, including adapted cycles for disabled people is also required.
- Energy - The Energy Hierarchy has been followed; and the proposed strategy is generally supported; however, additional information should be submitted to ensure compliance with the London Plan and policies of the Mayor's intend to publish London Plan. Detailed technical comments in respect of energy have been circulated to the Council to be addressed in their entirety.
- Urban Greening - A landscape plan detailing the landscape proposals should be provided and the Urban Greening Factor should be calculated in accordance with Policy G5 of the Mayor's intend to publish London Plan and meet the specified target. Increasing the quality and quantity of urban greening at ground level, on the building facades and on the roof, may be required to improve the score.

6.10 The covering letter and report states that the proposal does not comply with the London Plan but that the changes set out above in relation to urban greening, energy and transport, could remedy its deficiencies.

6.11 Transport for London

6.12 Healthy Streets and Vision Zero - The proposed development will see an increase in pedestrian and cycle trips to / from the site and the local area. Whilst a basic healthy streets check has been undertaken it doesn't identify any improvements to the local area. Furthermore, no accident analysis has been provided and the TA fails to identify measures which can be used to eliminate accidents and how the scheme will contribute towards the Vision Zero approach. However, given the distance to the TLRN and SRN; TfL would recommend that it is for the borough to secure a financial contribution to improve pedestrian and cycle infrastructure in the surrounding area.

6.13 Public transport - Given the number of public transport services in close proximity of the site, the uplift in public transport trips will not result in capacity issues on these services.

6.14 Cycle Parking - 134 cycle parking spaces are proposed on site which accords with the draft London Plan. Short-stay cycle parking is located within the public realm. Long-stay cycle parking is located within two cycle stores; one located on the ground floor and a larger store located within the basement. Whilst access to the ground floor cycle store is acceptable and would accord with the guidance contained in Chapter 8 of the London Cycling Design Standards (LCDS), the access to the basement cycle store would not. Access to the basement cycle store is not step free, requires cyclists to use a bike rail on the stairs and is only accessed via multiple doors. The type of long-stay cycle parking has also not been specified. TfL have previously requested that 10% of the cycle parking spaces should be Sheffield Stands on the ground floor. The applicant should confirm that this is what is proposed. There is also a

requirement to provide cycle parking space for larger adapted cycles. Further work is required concerning the basement cycle store to ensure it is designed and laid out in accordance Chapter 8 of LCDS.

- 6.15 A delivery and Servicing Plan, and Construction Logistics Plan should be secured by condition.
- 6.16 Design and Review Panel – (Pre-application submission – 24th January 2019)

- 6.17 The Panel asked about the choice of height and felt that whilst the emerging Wimbledon Masterplan was referred to by the applicant, a stronger case needed to be made for the height in townscape and general design terms. A lack of an agreed development strategy for the adjacent sites made this more difficult. It was also recommended that long street elevations should be produced to show the building in context along the whole length of St. George's Road, and also Francis Grove/Raymond Road. The Panel felt that the plot ratio for the site was very high, though they noted the attempt to allow for an internal courtyard in the development of the wider block.
- 6.18 The height proposed was at the maximum suggested by the Masterplan and therefore the Panel were clear that the proposal should be of exceptional quality and give back more to the public realm than currently proposed. Essentially this was simply a slightly wider pavement. It was recommended that this was given more thought as to how more public gain could be achieved and the public realm be more substantially improved at this busy corner.
- 6.19 It was suggested that the road crossings could be improved here to facilitate people getting to and from the office. It was also felt that the proposed lay-by might not be the best solution. It was removing pedestrian space and as a result the applicants land would need to be dedicated as highway to compensate for lost space, and it was felt that this did not necessarily reduce the amount of dead frontage that an off-street loading bay would create. At basement level the route to the cycle store was overly complicated and would be better if swapped with the gym.
- 6.20 The Panel were clear that the ground floor needed to be animated and active, yet despite the suggestion of a café, this still appeared somewhat sterile. This needed further thought. To improve the street interface, the Panel suggested a double height ground floor as is being seen in other developments and as is advocated in the emerging Masterplan. Related to this, the Panel also felt that there needed to be a more obvious change in the appearance of the building as it moved through the storeys to the top – having more gravitas at the base and more lightness at the top. It was in danger of becoming plain. The building needed to be elegant and crisp, rather than plodding and clunky.
- 6.21 The Panel were clear in that they liked the faceted rather than the curved corner and it was considered the detail was more apparent and easier to achieve. It was felt that the curved design would be too susceptible to value engineering. The Panel noted the green walls and roof but felt they would not be very effective on northerly facing elevations. It was felt that the approach to landscaping was sparse but the building itself should concentrate on being highly energy efficient, rather than trying to be sustainable through landscape design. The large glazed south facing frontage could create issues with solar gain and there were no suggestions at how this would be addressed, or how the internal environment of the building would be managed.

VERDICT: **AMBER**

- 6.22 Design and Review Panel – (Pre-application submission – 24th July 2019)

- 6.23 The Panel noted a range of changes that had been made to the proposals as the design had been evolved since the previous Panel review. The Panel were unanimous in that they felt that the design had improved in almost every respect. The scale, height and massing were considered by all to be suitable and appropriate for the site.
- 6.24 The Panel liked the double height entrance area, with its glazed bricks and public realm and felt overall that it was a quality entrance to the building. It was felt this added a degree of finesse and that this was helping to develop a characteristic relevant for Wimbledon.
- 6.25 It was evident however, that the public realm area had lacked the input of a proper landscape design and this needed to be addressed to develop this into a truly quality space fully integrated with the building entrance and public realm. The Panel felt that the trees worked well with the green glazed brick.
- 6.26 It was felt that the changes to the horizontal bands in the elevation were a positive change. They made the proportions of the building work better. It helped the building meet the sky in a more subtle way though it was felt that there was scope here to introduce further lightness of touch – perhaps with the use of colour and a lighter metallic feel. It was felt that the proportions will work well in perspective from different viewpoints.
- 6.27 It was noted that although the proportions of the elevation worked better, they should not be done in a contrived way or because they were aping an inappropriate comparison with classical form. Similarly, the colour palette should remain restrained and elegant.
- 6.28 The Panel did feel that there was probably scope to raise the height of the mezzanine entrance area from 5.5m to 6m, to further improve the proportions of the building, but this should not undermine the human scale of the space. The Panel liked the choice of a red brick. However, there was slight concern that the suggested finish was too textured, and that it needed to be more durable and maintainable.

Verdict: **GREEN**

- 6.29 Council's Urban Design Officer (Comments received during pre-application 5th June 2019)
- 6.30 Combined, the height reduction, elevation changes and composition of the main body of the building are improvements and the differently proportioned side section works well.
- 6.31 The recessed base feels less of an undercroft, which is an improvement. However, the recess, the dark tiles (in themselves an improvement) and the large mass of the main body of the building combine to make the building still feel a bit top-heavy. In this respect the ground/mezzanine needs further work to address this and further changes to the main elevation – such as the glass/brick ratio and potential for further decorative modelling – should be

explored. The mezzanine level brick cornice is quite heavy. How this works could be revisited – perhaps making it part of the base rather than the middle of the building.

- 6.32 The red-brick approach is good, but the balance of brick to glass still contributes to the building seeming quite heavy from some angles. It is important it does not appear overbearing, so it is recommended this is further refined. It is important that the exterior is not compared unfavourably with the 1980s St. George's buildings almost opposite.
- 6.33 The amount of cycle parking and its simple layout is also welcomes. As a new building there really should be no impediment to providing cycle parking, showers and access to them in an inviting, convenient and accessible way. This is important in encouraging otherwise 'non cyclers' to cycle to work. Unfortunately the arrangement is not good in this respect. Cyclists are firstly required to walk their cycles down and up a long flight of stairs, which seems only to be there to accommodate the wheel channels they will be required to use. This will require considerable effort that would be unnecessary if there was a ramped approach, lift or other means of access taking advantage of the level change. Following this the cyclist is required to go down to the lower basement to shower and access lockers, before going back up again to their floor of work. Not only is this highly inconvenient, it will unnecessarily place more demand on stairs and lifts and if cycling is at a high capacity, could lead to overcrowding that would be another factor in dissuading people to cycle.
- 6.34 In principle, providing on-footway vehicle servicing should be avoided if at all possible. It creates conflict with pedestrians, forces detours around vehicles, creates visual and actual clutter through bollards, signs and the vehicles themselves and leads to maintenance issues with paving. The applicant must demonstrate that this is the only practical approach to servicing, that it is necessary to have it (i.e. what are the current service arrangements) and that it does its utmost to overcome the negative impacts referred to above. The proposed 'lightwell' glazing is welcomed. The approach to the paving should be to provide high quality natural materials across a footway stretching from carriageway to back of building.
- 6.35 Council's Urban Design Officer (Comments received 31st March 2020)
- 6.36 Reservations remain with this scheme with the ground floor and its overhang making an already tall building seem top-heavy. Whether the mezzanine is there or not, the building is still the same height and proportion.
- 6.37 The on-footway servicing is sub-optimal for good quality public realm, and requires pedestrians to walk under the building overhang when the lay-by is being used for servicing.
- 6.38 Cycle parking accessed by a 'retro-fit' staircase is surely not the best option, even with the mechanical means suggested – the staircase appears only to exist to facilitate the cycle access – so if the servicing is on-footway then why not just have a couple of larger lifts to more space efficient. Cycle parking and

showers are on two different levels, which is unnecessary and inconvenient.

- 6.39 Lightwells to the basement are also considered to be too small whilst planters at the entrance on the corner narrow the footway where it should be widest. There also does not appear to be no proper reception/concierge at the ground floor.
- 6.40 These are matters that have been discussed before and still do not work from a design point of view.
- 6.41 Council's Transport Planner
- 6.42 The site has a PTAL of 6b (excellent) with bus, train, tube and tram available within the PTAL calculation area, it is also located within a designated town centre area and W1 controlled parking zone. Given these factors car free development is considered to be acceptable however future users of the development should be exempt from applying for parking permits.
- 6.43 The proposed servicing bay is considered acceptable however the area around the street tree (which is to be removed) should be strengthened as specified by the Council. New development is also normally required to provide off-street parking with dedicated EVCP's for disabled motorists. As the Francis Grove development is unable to provide such a facility (due to physical constraints) the nearest alternative public parking is at St Georges Road Car Park. A financial contribution of £20,000 should be secured for the provision of 2 disabled persons charge points at St. George's car park. The proposed cycle parking, is also considered acceptable.
- 6.44 Council's Highway Officer
- 6.45 No objections subject to appropriate conditions on construction.
- 6.46 Council's Climate Change Officer
- 6.47 The Council's Climate Change Officer has confirmed that the proposal would comply with both regional and local policies on water and climate use.
- 6.48 Council's Flood Risk Officer
- 6.49 No CMS (Construction method statement) has been submitted and the application is not supported by any site specific ground investigation (boreholes). While this document is required in line with Merton's Basement SPD, you may consider that it is appropriate in this instance to condition the requirement for this to be submitted prior to commencement of development, on the basis that there is an existing basement.
- 6.50 If seasonal fluctuations of groundwater does occur (in this location perched groundwater may exist), the lower parts of the proposed basement level may sit within the water table and furthermore, dewatering maybe required during

construction and appropriate waterproofing of the structure will be needed and measures must be considered to prevent uplift. Prior to construction, groundwater monitoring must be undertaken to take into account fluctuations in groundwater levels due to seasonal variation.

6.51 In terms of drainage and SuDS, the supporting Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd Flood Risk Assessment(September 2019) report states that the proposed solution involves a green roof, a blue roof, rainwater harvesting and an attenuation tank beneath ground floor level. Hydrograph storage calculations were carried out for a 1 in 100 year storm event plus 40% climate change allowance, and these show that a storage volume of 69.0 m³ is required. This is compliant with the London Plan 5.13 and Merton's policy DM F2 and DM D2. It is recommend that consideration of installation of non-return valves and a FLIP device on the foul drainage to prevent flooding and back up from the sewer network.

6.52 Council's Environmental Health Officer

6.53 No objection subject to appropriate conditions.

6.54 Council's Structural Engineer

6.55 The submitted Basement Impact Assessment and the other supporting documents demonstrate that the proposed basement works can be undertaken safely without adversely affecting the surrounding built and natural environment. A condition is recommended.

6.56 Thames Water

6.57 No comments have been received.

7. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Principle of Development

7.2 The Council supports the development of major offices in Wimbledon town centre, which is defined in Policy DM R1 of the Adopted Sites and Policies Plan (July 2014) as offices with more than 1,000sq.m of floorspace. Policy CS.7 of the Core Planning Strategy states that in Wimbledon Town Centre the Council will support high quality offices, especially major development. Policy DM E1 of the Adopted Sites and Policies Plan and Policies Maps (July 2014) states that proposals relating to employment sites will only be supported that (subject to Policy DM E2 and DM E3), retain existing employment land and floor space. The Council will support proposals for the redevelopment of vacant and underused existing employment land and floor space for employment use and proposals for large and major offices (B1(a) use class) in town centres. Policy DM E1 notes that as Wimbledon town centre is tightly bound by residential areas, the possibilities for growth include increasing density on existing sites. This policy states that the council will work with landowners to meet market demand for high quality, well designed large floorplate offices commensurate

with Wimbledon's status as a major centre and to take advantage of the internationally recognised Wimbledon 'brand'.

- 7.3 At a regional Policy GG5 of the Mayor's intend to publish London Plan states that to conserve and enhance London's global economic competitiveness and ensure that economic success is shared amongst all Londoners, those involved in planning and development must, among other things, promote the strength and potential of the wider city region, seek to ensure that London's economy diversifies and plan for sufficient employment space in the right locations to support economic development and regeneration. London Plan Policy 2.15 and Policy SD6 of the Mayor's intend to publish London Plan recognise that town centres should be the focus for commercial development beyond the Central Activities Zone (CAZ). Policy SD8 of the Mayor's intend to publish London Plan seeks a range of sizes of commercial units to support the diversity of the town centre and Policy SD6 of the Mayor's intend to publish London Plan states that town centres should also be strengthened to remain the primary location for commercial activity beyond the CAZ as well as a focus for place and local identity.
- 7.4 In addition, it should be noted that London Plan Policy 4.2 and Policy E1 of the Mayor's intend to publish London Plan seek to consolidate and, where viable, extend office provision in town centre locations. Over the 2016 – 2041 plan period, demand for office floorspace in outer London is expected to rise by 23%, with an increasing proportion required for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. At a national level, Paragraph 19 of the NPPF states that the Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.
- 7.5 The applicant has submitted a market overview and summary which states that within Wimbledon, there were only two speculative office buildings delivered to the market last year, Wellington House (No. 60 -68 Wimbledon Hill Road), which provided circa. 1,800 sqm of space, and No.24 Worple Road which delivered c. 4,300 sqm of office space. Wellington House was let prior to completion and No.22 Worple Road has already let two floors. The only other office building currently being delivered is along the Broadway, where 2,100 sqm of office space is being refurbished. These are all refurbishment schemes, which are limited by the existing envelope of the building and will not suit flagship operators. Currently, there are no schemes available that would be capable of providing over 2,500 sqm of office floorspace within Wimbledon Town Centre. Further, none of the space that is available will provide the high quality specification of the office proposed by the application. The report notes that six different companies are currently looking in the south west London area, wanting to take space of over 2,000sqm of space. This includes a requirement of nearly 5,000sqm from one occupier, that could bring 416 jobs to Wimbledon, based upon the HCA Employment Density figures. The evidence shows that there is no other site in Wimbledon at the moment that can provide the space required.

- 7.6 The report provided by the applicant broadly reflects the findings set out in the Future Wimbledon Supplementary Planning Document (Final Consultation Draft 2020) which states that the supply of Grade A office space within Wimbledon is extremely limited, with availability of less than 2% available in September 2018 with the majority of larger office buildings in Wimbledon are almost fully occupied including St George's House, Wimbledon Bridge House, Wimbledon Gate and Pinnacle House. The recently redeveloped Wellington House and 24 Worple Road completed in 2019 for occupation in 2020.
- 7.7 No. 1 - 4 Francis Grove is located in Wimbledon Town centre and has excellent transport links (PTAL rating of 6b), which means it is a highly suitable location for a major office development. It is considered that the proposal would comply with local, regional and national planning policies by providing 8,638sqm GIA of Grade A floorspace in a sustainable office building with well-designed large flexible floorplates, commensurate with Wimbledon's status as a major centre. There is therefore policy support for the proposal in principle.
- 7.8 Design, Impact on Streetscene and Wider Conservation Area**
- 7.9 The London Plan states that tall buildings are those buildings that are substantially taller than their surroundings, cause a significant change to the skyline or are larger than the threshold sizes set for the referral of applications to the Mayor. Policy 7.7 states that tall buildings should generally be limited to sites in town centres that have good access to public transport. More specific guidance is outlined in the Tall Buildings Background Paper (2010) which forms part of Merton's Local Development Framework, as an evidence base in support of the Design Policy outlined in the Core Strategy. This states that in Wimbledon Town Centre, tall buildings should contribute to creating a consistent scale of development based on a range of similar but not uniform building heights. These should be determined by reference to surrounding building heights and townscape characteristics.
- 7.10 The proposed building would comprise 10 floors plus plant above ground level with a further two basement floors. The building would have a maximum height of 44m from ground level to the top of the plant level (41.5m to roof of 10th floor). The proposed building is considered to be a tall building given surrounding buildings generally range between 3 and 7 storeys in height. It is considered that although the building is materially taller than surrounding buildings it is not excessive and would still respect its context. Planning policy has evolved since the publication of the Tall Buildings Background Paper in 2010, with publication of the Future Wimbledon Supplementary Planning Document (Final Consultation Draft 2020), which identifies this part of the town centre as being suitable for taller buildings with the site itself as being able to potentially accommodate a 10 storey building. The proposed building does not exceed this height. The GLA Stage 1 response advises that the proposed height and massing is well considered with the proposal optimising the development capacity of the site and responds to the context and sensitivity of the nearby conservation areas. The Design and Review Panel in giving the proposal a green verdict stated that the scale, height and massing were considered to be

suitable and appropriate for the site. The proposed building would also be located in Wimbledon town centre, which is the borough's largest town centre, and identified as a major centre in the London Plan. The centre has the highest level of public transport accessibility in the borough and this makes the centre a sustainable location for a tall building (The site has excellent access to public transport (PTAL – 6b)).

- 7.11 In terms of design, the proposed building would be predominantly clad in red brick, with the base of the building clad in green glazed terracotta. This design approach is considered acceptable and has been successfully applied on other buildings in the town centre such as Wellington House on Wimbledon Hill Road. It is also considered that the buildings proportions work well with a well defined bottom, middle and top. The building features a double height ground floor which is necessary in this instance to prevent the building appearing squat at ground floor and top heavy. The Design and Review Panel complemented the double height entrance area, with its glazed bricks and public realm and felt overall that it was a quality entrance to the building. It was felt this added a degree of finesse and that this was helping to develop a characteristic relevant for Wimbledon. It should be noted that although the application site is not located in a Conservation Area, given its height, it would be visible from the Merton (Wimbledon Hill Road) Conservation Area along Raymond Road to the northwest of the site. It is however considered that given the high quality design of the building that it would have an acceptable impact in this instance and would not cause a harmful impact on its setting.
- 7.12 The streetscape at the front of the building is largely formed of a myriad of hard materials and paving types, with little in the way of existing planting. Adjacent to the building, mixed quality red block-work defines the property boundary, matching the brick tone of the existing building. Beyond this, within the public pavement space, buff paving slabs with block paving details are used. In order to clear the streetscape of clutter the proposal will include a number of public realm improvements including new pedestrian paving which will be in keeping with the character of the wider Wimbledon area. Overall, it is considered that the proposal would comply with all relevant design policies.
- 7.13 Residential Amenity**
- 7.14 Policy DM D2 of the Adopted Sites and Policies Plan and Policies Maps (July 2014) states that proposals for development will be required to ensure provision of appropriate levels of sunlight and daylight, quality of living conditions, amenity space and privacy, to both proposed and adjoining buildings and gardens. Development should also protect new and existing development from visual intrusion.
- 7.15 The application site sits within Wimbledon's commercial district and as such does not abut any residential properties. There are however residential properties located nearby, including "The Courtyard", a five storey residential building located on the opposite corner of Francis Grove, to the south of the site, No.21 – 33 Worple Road, a 7 storey residential block located approx. 46m

to the northwest of the site, and 2a Raymond Road, a three storey block of flats, which is located at the junction with Worple Road approx. 60m from the development.

- 7.16 It is considered that the proposed building would not be visually intrusive or overbearing when viewed from surrounding residential properties. The building would be located on the opposite side of the road to "The Courtyard". The building would also be located approx 30m from this development and sits to the north which means it would have a limited impact on daylight/sunlight levels. The building is also located approx. 45m from No.21 – 33 Worple Road and 60m from 2a Raymond Road. Although the building would sit southeast of these buildings, it is considered a combination of the buildings distance and small footprint would limit its impact on daylight/sunlight. The applicant has also submitted a daylight/sunlight report which shows that the proposed development would have an acceptable impact on daylight/sunlight levels of surrounding residential properties. It should also be noted that the site is located in Wimbledon Town Centre's commercial district so some degree of intensification should be expected. Overall, it is considered that the proposal will accord with planning policy relating to neighbour amenity.

7.17 Parking and Traffic

- 7.18 Policy 6.1 of the London Plan (2016) supports development which generates high levels of trips at locations with high levels of public transport accessibility and improves the capacity and accessibility of public transport, walking and cycling. At a local level Policy CS.18 promotes active transport and encourages design that provides attractive, safe, covered cycle storage, cycle parking and other facilities (such as showers, bike cages and lockers). Policy CS.20 of the Core Planning Strategy states that the Council will require developers to demonstrate that their development will not adversely affect pedestrian and cycle movements, safety, the convenience of local residents or the quality of bus movement and/or facilities; on-street parking and traffic management. This is endorsed in Policies DM T1 and DM T3 of the 2014 Sites and Policies Plan. Developments should also incorporate adequate facilities for servicing to ensure loading and unloading activities do not have an adverse impact on the public highway.
- 7.19 The application, which includes swept path analysis, proposes a layby for refuse and delivery vehicles. This would result in the removal of an existing street tree (Horse Chestnut - Category 'U'), and the pedestrian pavement being re-routed around the layby. This is considered to be an acceptable solution in this instance given the small footprint of the site makes on-site servicing provision very difficult. It should be noted that an onsite servicing bay capable of accommodating servicing vehicles with forward in / forward out access as required would result in the whole of the ground floor area for servicing and would prevent an active frontage use at the ground floor level. The existing building does have a semi-basement car park however the height limit is 1.92 m, which means most delivery vehicles cannot access the basement. It should also be noted that there is relatively low footfall along this section of Francis

Grove and a minimum of 2m pavement width would also be retained meaning that pedestrian movement would not be impeded.

- 7.20 The application site is well connected and has excellent public transport links (PTAL rating of 6b). The site is served by rail services from Wimbledon station and a number of bus routes run close by. The proposal does not include any car parking for employees, however this is considered acceptable given the sites highly accessible location in this instance. New development is normally required to provide off-street parking with dedicated Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCP's) for disabled motorists. As the Francis Grove development is unable to provide such a facility (due to physical constraints) the nearest alternative public parking is at St Georges Road Car Park. The Council will therefore seek a financial contribution of £20,000 for the provision of 2 disabled persons charge points in St George's Road car park in this instance.
- 7.21 The proposed building would provide 8,638sqm of floorspace which means 96 long stay cycle spaces and 11 short stay cycle spaces should be provided to comply with London Plan Policy 6.13. It is therefore considered that the 134 long stay and 12 short stay cycle spaces is acceptable and would comply with London Plan and local planning policies. In response to GLA comments, the ground floor cycle store has now been amended to provide all 12 spaces as Sheffield Stands which provides 6 spaces that could be used as a parking space for larger, adapted cycles. It is considered that the access to the bicycle store offers the best possible use of the space and requires users to place their bike in railing with brushes, which will take the bike down/up to/from the basement, however it does not require the user to push the bike.
- 7.22 The Council's Transport and Highways officers have assessed the application and consider it acceptable subject to appropriate conditions.

7.23 Sustainability and Energy

- 7.24 The BREEAM design stage assessment provided by the applicant indicates that the development should achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' in accordance with Merton's Core Planning Strategy Policy CS15 and Policy 5.2 of the London Plan 2016. The Council's Climate Change Officer has assessed the application and has confirmed that the application would comply with policies on climate change and water usage. Appropriate conditions are recommended.

7.25 Basement Construction and Flood Risk

- 7.26 The submitted Basement Impact Assessment and the other supporting documents demonstrate that the proposed basement works can be undertaken safely without adversely affecting the surrounding built and natural environment. The site lies within Flood Zone 1 wherein principle basement development is acceptable. The Council's Structural Engineer has reviewed the submitted documents and has raised no objection subject to condition.
- 7.27 With regards to flood risk, the Council's Flood Risk Officer has outlined that if seasonal fluctuations of groundwater does occur (in this location perched

groundwater may exist), the lower parts of the proposed basement level may sit within the water table and furthermore, dewatering maybe required during construction and appropriate waterproofing of the structure will be needed and measures must be considered to prevent uplift. Prior to construction, groundwater monitoring must be undertaken to take into account fluctuations in groundwater levels due to seasonal variation. Appropriate safeguarding conditions have been recommended.

- 7.28 The Council's Flood Risk Officer has reviewed the proposed drainage measures and outlined it is compliant with the London Plan 5.13 and Merton's policy DM F2 and DM D2. It is recommend that consideration of installation of non-return valves and a FLIP device on the foul drainage to prevent flooding and back up from the sewer network.

7.29 Street Tree

- 7.30 There is an existing Horse Chestnut street tree which will need to be removed to facilitate the proposed layby. This tree is considered to be a category 'U' tree and is in terminal decline with extensive crown dieback. The tree is therefore considered to be unsuitable for retention. A financial contribution will be sought for its replacement.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The application does not constitute Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 development. Accordingly, there are no requirements in terms of EIA submission.

9. LOCAL FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 The proposal would result in a net gain in gross floor space and as such will be liable to pay a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The funds will be spent on the Crossrail project, with the remainder spent on strategic infrastructure and neighbourhood projects.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 1 – 4 Francis Grove is located in Wimbledon Town centre and has excellent transport links (PTAL rating of 6b), which means it is a highly suitable location for a major office development. The proposal would provide an enlarged, modernised and highly sustainable office building with well designed large floorplates commensurate with Wimbledon's status as a major centre. It is considered that the proposal would respect its context in terms of its scale and massing, would be of a high quality design which contributes to local distinctiveness. New major office floorspace proposals are encouraged within Wimbledon Town Centre and the proposal would be compliant with policy. It is acknowledged that the height of the building would be greater than current surrounding buildings and would be a noticeable addition to the local area. The high quality design is such that officers are satisfied that it would not be a visually harmful building and would be commensurate with the desires for intensification of development in the town centre as set out in the Draft Future

Wimbledon SPD. The impact on residential amenity and transport and highways is considered to be acceptable subject to the imposition of suitable conditions. It is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions and heads of terms set out below.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the completion of a S106 agreement covering the following heads of terms:

- 1) Financial contribution for provision of disabled persons electric charge points (£20,000)
- 2) S278 agreement to be entered into for public realm improvements
- 3) Financial contribution for replacement street tree (Sum to be agreed)
- 4) Permit free
- 5) Paying the Council's legal and professional costs in drafting, completing and monitoring the legal agreement.

And subject to the following conditions:

1. A.1 (Commencement of Development)
2. A.7 (Approved plans)
3. B.1 (External Materials to be Approved)
4. No external windows and doors shall be installed until detailed drawings at 1:20 scale of all external windows and doors, including materials, set back within the opening, finishes and method of opening have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. Only the approved details shall be used in the development hereby permitted.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the following Development Plan policies for Merton: policies 7.5 and 7.6 of the London Plan 2016, policy CS14 of Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011 and policies DM D1 and D2 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

5. C.7 (Refuse and Recycling (Implementation))
6. D.11 (Construction Times)
7. H.7 The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the cycle parking, washing and locker facilities shown on approved plan Nos. 052-A-11-9 A & 10 C have been provided and made available for use. These facilities

shall be retained for the occupants of and visitors to the development at all times.

Reason: To ensure the provision of satisfactory facilities to promote sustainable modes of transport and to comply with Policy CS18 (Active Transport) of the Adopted Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011

8. H.8 (Travel Plan)

9. Development shall not be occupied until a Delivery and Servicing Plan (the Plan) has been submitted in writing for approval to the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall include details of loading and unloading arrangements. The plan shall also include any necessary works to the highway to be carried out prior to occupation of the extended building. The approved measures shall be maintained, in accordance with the Plan, for the duration of the use, unless the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority is first obtained.

Reason: To ensure the safety of pedestrians and vehicles and the amenities of the surrounding area and to comply with the following Development Plan policies for Merton: policies 6.3 and 6.14 of the London Plan 2015, policy CS20 of Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011 and policies DM T2, T3 and T5 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

10. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a detailed Demolition/Construction Logistic Plan (including a Construction Management plan) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved measures shall be implemented throughout the demolition/construction of the development, unless the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority is first obtained to any variation.

Reason: To ensure the safety of pedestrians and vehicles and the amenities of the surrounding area and to comply with the following Development Plan policies for Merton: policies 6.3 and 6.14 of the London Plan 2015, policy CS20 of Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011 and policy DM T2 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

11. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, no part of the development hereby approved shall be used or occupied until a Post-Construction Review Certificate issued by the Building Research Establishment or other equivalent assessors confirming that the non-residential development has achieved a BREEAM rating of not less than the standards equivalent to 'Excellent'.

Reason: To ensure that the development achieves a high standard of sustainability and makes efficient use of resources and to comply the following Development Plan policies for Merton: policy 5.2 of the London Plan 2011 and policy CS15 of Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011.

12. No development shall be commenced until a detailed scheme for the provision of surface and foul water drainage has been submitted to and approved in

writing by the local planning authority. The drainage scheme will include detailed drainage layout construction drawings and dispose of surface water by means of a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) at a restricted runoff rate (no more than 1l/s), in accordance with drainage hierarchy contained within the London Plan Policy (5.12, 5.13 and SPG) and the advice contained within the National SuDS Standards.

Reason: To reduce the risk of surface and foul water flooding to the proposed development and future users, and ensure surface water and foul flood risk does not increase offsite in accordance with Merton's policies CS16, DMF2 and the London Plan policy 5.13.

13. Prior to the commencement of development, the applicant shall submit a detailed proposal on how drainage and groundwater will be managed and mitigated during construction and post construction (permanent phase), for example through the implementation of passive drainage measures around the basement structure.

Reason: To reduce the risk of surface and foul water flooding to the proposed development and future users, and ensure surface water and foul flood risk does not increase offsite in accordance with Merton's policies CS16, DMF2 and the London Plan policy 5.13.

14. No works will commence on site until the below documents have been submitted and agreed by the Planning Officer.
- a) Site specific ground investigation report with borehole logs.
 - b) Detailed Demolition Method Statement submitted by the Contractor responsible for the demolition of the existing property.
 - c) Detailed Construction Method Statement and construction/excavation sequence produced by the respective Contractors responsible for the piling, excavation and construction of the basements. This shall be reviewed and agreed by the Structural Engineer designing the basement.
 - d) Design calculations, drawings, propping and de-propping sequence of the temporary works supporting the highway and adjoining properties required to facilitate demolition and excavation.
 - e) Design calculation and drawings (plan and sections) of the piled retaining wall and the permanent lining wall. The design has to be undertaken in accordance with Eurocodes. We would recommend using full height hydrostatic pressure and at-rest soil pressures for the design of all retaining walls and a highway loading surcharge of 20 KN/m² where applicable.
 - f) Movement monitoring report produced by specialist surveyors appointed to install monitoring gauges to detect any movement of the highway/neighbouring properties from start to completion of the project works. The report should include the proposed locations of the horizontal and vertical

movement monitoring, frequency of monitoring, trigger levels, and the contingency measures for different trigger alarms.

Reason: To ensure structural stability of adjoining buildings and public highway are safeguarded and to comply with policy DM D2 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

15. Noise levels, (expressed as the equivalent continuous sound level) LAeq (15 minutes), from any fixed external new plant/machinery shall not exceed LA90-10dB at the boundary with any residential property or noise sensitive premises, and as detailed in the Waterman Planning Noise Assessment, dated October 2019.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the area and the occupiers of neighbouring properties and ensure compliance with the following Development Plan policies for Merton: policy 7.15 of the London Plan 2016 and policies DM D2, DM D3, DM EP2 and DM EP4 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014

16. All Non-road Mobile Machinery (NRMM) used during the course of the development that is within the scope of the Greater London Authority 'Control of Dust and Emissions during Construction and Demolition' Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) dated July 2014, or any subsequent amendment or guidance, shall comply with the emission requirements therein.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the area and the occupiers of neighbouring properties and ensure compliance with the following Development Plan policies for Merton: policies DM D2 and DM EP4 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014