

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE 24th September 2020

<b>UPRN</b>	<b>APPLICATION NO.</b> 19/P3904	<b>Item No:</b> <b>DATE VALID</b> 05.11.2019
<b>Address/Site</b>	Former Mitcham Fire Station 30 Lower Green West Mitcham CR4 3GA	
<b>(Ward)</b>	Cricket Green	
<b>Proposal:</b>	ERECTION OF HOARDINGS TO FRONT OF FIRE STATION FOR A PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS	
<b>Drawing Nos;</b>	Site location plan and drawing 6724-PH01	

**Contact Officer:** Leigh Harrington (020 8545 3836)

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### RECOMMENDATION

Grant Planning Permission subject to conditions.

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### CHECKLIST INFORMATION.

- Heads of agreement: No
- Is a screening opinion required: No
- Is an Environmental Statement required: No
- Has an Environmental Impact Assessment been submitted: No
- Design Review Panel consulted: No
- Number of neighbours consulted: 116
- Press notice – Yes
- Site notice – Yes
- External consultations: No
- Archaeological Priority Zone – Yes Tier 1 & 2
- Flood risk zone - No
- Controlled Parking Zone – No
- Number of jobs created: N/A
- Located within Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area

- Locally or statutorily listed buildings – Both the White Hart and the Burn Bullock are Grade II listed public houses in close proximity to the site whilst Grade 2 listed War Memorial is located adjacent to the site

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The application was originally brought before the Committee at the request of Councillor Martin Whelton on March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020 when members decided to defer the matter for improvements to be made to appearance of the hoardings.

## **2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

- 2.1 The application site is occupied by the vacant former fire station building which is locally listed and identified as making a positive contribution to the Conservation area. The building is part of a group of buildings on the Lower Green West ‘island’ comprising Vestry Hall, the Fire Station and the former Cricketers pub which has now been demolished and replaced by a block of residential flats, and which break the surrounding established building layout but forms a distinctive focal point on the green. The local listing description states “This is a two storey detached building, which dates from 1927, and is in a simple classical style. The building materials used include red brick on the upper floor, and ashlar sandstone on the ground floor. The roof is of green slate. The main features of interest include the curved roof slope, the diamond window set within the front facing gable, and the inscribed lettering above the fire engine doorways.

## **3. CURRENT PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 This application involves the erection of hoardings to the front of the fire station. Permission is sought for a period of 12 months. The applicant has already erected site hoardings in front of the vacant former Fire Station in the form of black painted wooden panels, supported on the inside by concrete blocks with gates to the front. The hoardings extend beyond the land in the ownership of the applicant and include land owned by Merton Council.
- 3.2 Prior to the sale of the building to the applicant the London Fire Brigade (LFB) employed property guardians to reside on site to protect it from squatting. The applicant no longer operates this system and has erected the hoardings for security purposes. In the meantime the applicant has been discussing proposals for the conversion of the building to a residential use with the Council.
- 3.3 Following the application deferral the applicant has had new signage/information boards made and has fixed these to the front of the hoardings in the form of both black and white and colour images of the Old

Fire station with explanations of the history of the site and images of the proposed remodelling and extension of the building.

#### **4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 19/P2688 Application withdrawn by applicant for CHANGE OF USE OF THE VACANT FIRE STATION TO A RESIDENTIAL USE INVOLVING THE ERECTION OF A REAR EXTENSION TO PROVIDE 9 x SELF-CONTAINED FLATS, COMPRISING 5 x 1 BED, 3 x 2 BED AND 1 x 3 BED UNITS, WITH ASSOCIATED REFUSE AND CYCLE STORAGE AND PARKING
- 4.2 19/P3033 PRE-APPLICATION SUBMISSION FOR THE PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE AND EXTENSION TO EXISTING BUILDING TO FORM 9 SELF CONTAINED FLATS.
- 4.3 20/P0801 Concurrent application for: CONVERSION OF FORMER FIRE STATION TO PROVIDE 9 X RESIDENTIAL UNITS INVOLVING ERECTION OF REAR AND SIDE EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING BUILDING.

#### **5. CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The application was advertised by means of Conservation Area Site & Press notice and letters to local residents.

One letter of objection raised concerns relating to factual matters in the application paperwork and;

- There is no mention of the concrete blocks put in place
- The owner of the fire station does not own the forecourt which belongs to Vestry Hall
- Council website does not show the land as being for sale.

- 5.2 The Mitcham Cricket Green & Heritage Group raised concerns that;

- The application was not submitted with a heritage statement
- The concrete bollards are not included in the description but should be removed
- Hoardings will have major detrimental visual impact on this key location in the heart of the MCCA.
- Defined views through and across the MCCA will be significantly disrupted.
- It will damage setting of the listed War Memorial
- Will cause harm to views and context of the Fire Station and Vestry Hall
- No justification for securing such a large area of land, the apron in front of the building does not need to be enclosed. Only the building needs to be secure at its immediate perimeter.

- The best action would be to retain the building guardians
- The hoarding won't go after 12 months, they were erected without consent and unlikely to resolve the change of use within 12 months.
- We would like to help co design the scheme for the redevelopment of the site.

5.3 The Council's Conservation officer, Estates Department, Future Merton and Vestry Hall were all consulted and raised no objections.

## 6. **POLICY CONTEXT**

6.1 Relevant policies in the London Plan 2016 are; 7.4 (Local Character), 7.5 (Public realm), 7.6(Architecture) & 7.8 (Heritage assets)

6.2 Relevant policy in the Core Strategy 2011 is; CS 14 (Design)

6.3 Relevant policies in the Sites and Policies Plan 2014 are; DM D1 (Urban Design and the public realm), DM D2 (Design considerations in all developments) & DM D4 (Heritage assets)

6.4 Supplementary guidance: Mitcham Cricket Green Character assessment.

## 7. **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

7.1 The main planning considerations in this case relate to the design and impact on the locally listed building and Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area and neighbour amenity.

### 7.2 **Design and Appearance.**

London Plan policies 7.4 and 7.6, SPP policies DM D1 and DM D2 and LBM Core Strategy Policy CS14 offer guidance on relevant policy requirements for the design, bulk and massing of new developments, intended to ensure that proposals are well designed whilst Policies 7.8 in the London Plan and SPP policy DM D4 require that works in conservation areas preserve and where possible enhance the conservation area.

7.3 It is acknowledged that the hoardings are of a functional design but they are only to be a temporary measure to protect and secure the locally listed building until it can be brought back into use. However it is considered that through the addition of the new signage/information boards that they adequately compensate for the functional appearance of the hoardings and ensure that the site does not look abandoned. The applicant has secured the side windows with anti-squatter screens but as this is an old fire station the front doors are of significant size and they could not be secured in the same manner and it may be considered that to do so could result in a less attractive appearance than the hoardings.

7.4 Mitcham has historically suffered from squatters and traveler sites utilising vacant sites and buildings. Vacant buildings locally have also required robust measures to protect them from entry including steel window shutters installed at the former Cricketers Public House which remained vacant for a number of years and with its deteriorating condition marring the appearance of the conservation area. It is considered that the hoardings allow for the protection of the building and wider site in the longer term and any minor issues relating to appearance, which is now improved through the signage/information boards, on a temporary basis are outweighed by the longer term benefit to the building and the MCCA.

7.5 Objections were raised that the hoardings impacted the Listed War Memorial but that structure is considered sufficiently distant from the site so as not to be compromised by any temporary works.

7.6 **Neighbour Amenity.**

An application would be assessed against adopted planning policies in particular London Plan policy 7.6 and SPP policy DM D2 in terms of possible impacts such as loss of light, privacy and visual intrusion on neighbour amenity.

7.7 There were no objections from immediate neighbours and none on amenity grounds other than visual intrusion for the wider area. The positioning and size of the hoardings are such that they are not considered to cause material harm to amenity no issues in relation to loss of light, privacy or outlook.

7.8 **Other matters.**

Officers acknowledge that the unrestricted retention of the hoardings would mar the appearance of the conservation area. However members are now to determine an application for the conversion of the former fire station to provide 9 x residential units involving erection of rear and side extensions to existing building and so there is progress towards the redevelopment of the site and so in the interests and benefits of making the site secure, a limited period permission is considered appropriate. Members are advised that in the event of permission being granted to redevelop the site hoardings may be retained to make the site secure under permitted development (GPDO 2015 Schedule 2 Part 4 Class A). In the event that members are minded to grant permission officers recommend that permission be granted on a temporary basis as follows:

This permission is for a temporary period and the hoardings shall be removed on or before the 1st October 2022 or on re-occupation of the existing building,

or on commencement of any development that may be granted planning permission on the site, whichever is the sooner.

Officers confirm that the hoardings occupy land outside the ownership of the applicant but the Council's Estates manager has raised no objection. The size of the hoardings coupled with the robust measures to keep them in place including the concrete blocks also protects the front of the site being used being used by caravans etc. An informative advising the applicant that the grant of the application is not in itself consent to use the Council's land and that the Council retains the right to require their removal is recommended.

- 7.9 Officers are tasked with assessing the merits of the planning application and the Council is not in a position to require the applicant to provide property guardians for the site.

## **8. SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS.**

- 8.1 The proposal does not constitute Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 development. Accordingly there is no requirement for an EIA submission.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The hoardings are intended to be temporary and offer a pragmatic solution to protecting the fabric of the old fire station and the appearance of the site and its surroundings in the short term. Their appearance is considered to have been significantly improved through the addition of the new signage/information boards and subject to being temporary they are considered acceptable and the proposals are recommended for approval subject to conditions and informatives.

## **RECOMMENDATION.**

Grant planning permission subject to the following conditions.

1. This permission is for a temporary period and the hoardings shall be removed on or before the 1st October 2022 or on re-occupation of the existing building, or on commencement of any development that may be granted planning permission on the site, whichever is the sooner.

Reason. Retention of the hoardings on a permanent basis would be likely to detract from the visual amenities of the Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area and the Council wishes to retain adequate control over their retention for a longer period pending suitable development proposals for the Fire Station

coming forward and to comply with policies 7.8 of the London Plan 2016 and DM D2 & DM D4 of the Adopted Merton Sites and Policies Plan 2014..

2. The hoardings shall be retained in accordance with the following plans: Site location plan and drawing 6724-PH01.

Reason. In the interests of safeguarding the visual amenities of the Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation area and to comply with policies 7.8 of the London Plan 2016 and DM D2 & DM D4 of the Adopted Merton Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

#### Informative

1. The applicant is advised that the grant of planning permission does not confer or imply to confer approval by the Council in its capacity as land owner for which separate approval should be sought. The Council, as land owner, retains the right to require the removal of the hoardings subject to a period of notice of not less than 1 month.

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