PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE **AGENDA ITEM 14**
15th July 2021

UPRN	**APPLICATION NO.**	**DATE VALID**
	20/P0801	14.02.2020

Address/Site Former Mitcham Fire Station
30 Lower Green West
Mitcham
CR4 3GA

(Ward) Cricket Green

Proposal: **CONVERSION OF FORMER FIRE STATION TO PROVIDE 9 X RESIDENTIAL UNITS INVOLVING ERECTION OF REAR AND SIDE EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING BUILDING.**

Drawing Nos; Site location plan, drawings 6724-PL-300 Rev D, 6724-PL-301 Rev G, 6724-PL -302 Rev F, 6724-PL -303 Rev E, 6724-PL -304 Rev E, 6724-PL-307 B & 6724-PL -308 A and document 'Arboricultural Appraisal and Implications Assessment' compiled by ACS (Trees) Consulting dated Jan 27th 2020

Contact Officer: Leigh Harrington (020 8545 3836)

RECOMMENDATION

Grant Planning Permission subject to conditions.

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: 58
- Press notice – Yes
- Site notice – Yes
- External consultations: Yes, Metropolitan Police
- Archaeological Priority Zone – Yes Tier 1 & 2
- Flood risk zone - No

- Controlled Parking Zone – No
- Number of jobs created: N/A
- Density 236 Dwellings per hectare
- PTAL 3 on a scale of 0 to 6B where 6B is highest.
- Located within Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area
- Locally or statutorily listed buildings – Building is locally listed. 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 is brought before the Committee given the nature and scope of objections and as the proposals involve the use of Council land to access the development.

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 Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation area. A new replacement fire station has been constructed nearby on London Road. 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 introducing a more contemporary development to the area. 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.

2.2 The majority of the land to the front of the site leading to the front of the building is in the ownership of Merton Council having previously been used to provide access and egress for the fire engines using the fire station building.

2.3 As part of the access arrangements updated in 2016 there is a right of way at all times and for all purposes for the land to the rear of the site up to Vestry Hall and for the forecourt. There is also a pedestrian right of way along the side of the building by Lower Green.

3. CURRENT PROPOSAL

3.1 Conversion of former fire station to provide 9 dwellings involving the erection of rear and side extensions to the existing building.

3.13 The proposals can be summarised as involving;

- Main part of existing locally listed building to be retained.
- Retained main building to be enhanced by replacing PVCu windows and restoring engine bay doors to original style.
- Single storey extension to rear to be demolished and replaced with new rear extension in sympathetic style but distinct from the existing.
- Side elevation to be repaired and altered to provide a more sympathetically arranged façade than the current untidy arrangement.
- New upper floor side extension (south-east) to be set back from the main façade to respect the Fire station original proportions.
- Ridgeline of proposed roofs to be subordinate to the existing building.
- New roof level extensions set back from main roof to ensure views of existing original roof shape are maintained.
- Proposed new side window arrangement in original roof to be fully recessed to maintain original roof lines but with amenity terraces at this level.
- Courtyard to rear maintains visual separation between the proposal and the Vestry Hall.
- New stonework and roof coverings to match existing.

3.10 The proposal involves the removal of a small ground floor area where the more modern service entrance is and on the ground floor the erection of some new additional structure to the centre rear of the building. At first floor level there will be a new full width extension across the centre of the building and extension works to the rear and side at the back of the building. At roof level the works to the rear carry on up from the first floor to a new roof level and include new works to the side of the main roof by Cricketers House and a smaller dormer on the Lower Green side of the building.

3.2 Following the concerns of officers the schedule of accommodation has been amended and consequently the proposed accommodation would now be in the form of 5 x 1bedroom two person units, 1 x 2bedroom three person unit and 3 x 2 bedroom four person units. The originally proposed 3 bed five person unit being reduced to improve internal layout.

3.3 The site is formed predominantly of the building itself now that the plans have been amended to remove the amenity area from in front of the feature fire bay doors and to relocate it within the building footprint. The drawings originally indicatively showed five parking bays being provided on the forecourt but as this caused a conflict with the functioning and servicing of Vestry Hall this element has been removed and no on site parking is now proposed.

3.4 The applicant has offered to fund the removal of the existing tarmac and parking area to the side of the building and its replacement with a continuation of the grass of the Village green towards the site just leaving a hardstanding

pathway for resident access and for the movement of the Vestry Hall refuse containers on collection day.

3.5 Materials for the proposals include replacing the functional UPVC windows in the main façade with thin framed aluminium windows to reflect the original design. The existing fire engine bay doors will be replaced with new screens to match the original design and colour. Bricks taken from alterations at the rear will be reused on the Northwest elevation. Where new bricks are needed Leicester red bricks would be used that will weather to match the existing. A new brick wall will be provided to replace the wooden one currently separating the site from Vestry Hall. Roofing materials would match those of the existing building.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 19/P2688 Application withdrawn by applicant for change of use of vacant fire station to residential use involving the erection of a rear extension to provide 9 self-contained units with associated refuse, 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 19/P3904 Concurrent application for site hoardings.

5. CONSULTATION

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

Three letters of objection raised concerns relating to;

- It does not respect the heritage of the building and so would be detrimental to the local environment
- Design is inappropriate in its context and fails to take the opportunity to improve the character and quality of the area,
- As the previous building served the community any new use should also do so.
- Gross over development of the site with little landscaping
- Fitting 9 flats in the former fire station is not suitably respectful.
- Pressure on parking, land may be given up for more parking
- Insufficient parking in the area already.
- Conditions would be need for hours of construction and details of construction vehicles.
- Two of the flats will be able to look into neighbouring flats' kitchen window from their bedrooms.
- Trees will need to be cut down on the Cricketers site but they are not shown on the plans.

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

- The poor quality of early engagement and misunderstanding of our role means this is not an application that can be looked upon more favourably.
- This should not be solely residential but include some D1 and or D2 uses, perhaps a community arts centre.
- Needs to address the relationship with adjoining open space, Listed war memorial station apron and Vestry Hall
- Should retain the integrity of the engine bay which would be harmed by bin stores and parking.
- The gross internal area increases by 83% from 359.5m2 to 657m2 which is disproportionally large for this modest building. Also involves demolition 26m2 of the original building
- Intrusive new terraces on the front elevation will harm the historic significance of the key frontage of the locally listed building.
- Damage the visual quality of Lower green west through new lighting, bin stores, hard surfaces and parked vehicles
- The required public access to the side of the building results in lack of defensible space for residents.
- Main entrance is inappropriately located facing the Town Green and the War memorial and conflicts with the right of way
- Awkward relationship with vestry Hall leaves unresolved space between the two buildings
- Causes harm to relationship between the buildings on lower green West
- Lack of assurance over public rights of access across the apron will continue in perpetuity.

5.2.1 Following the submission of revised designs the group commented

- Notwithstanding our previous objections, including the failure to provide for mixed use and the disproportionate scale of the proposed extension, we welcome the changes for their positive impact on the key historic elevation facing Lower Green West. They successfully remove the clutter created by the previous plans for a balcony, planting and bin store.
- There should be no use of the Fire Station apron for parking with public access in perpetuity
- Strict controls on external lighting methods are required.

Internal consultees.

5.3 LB Merton Estates Department and Vestry Hall

Both consulted and raised no objections.

5.4 LB Merton Design. The officer was involved in pre application discussions and commented on the evolving design which has been amended in response to his comments and those of officers and the public with the result that the officer no longer raises any objections to the design.

5.5 Officers also raised the matter of planting across the front of the building along with concerns about parking on the forecourt and the potential impact of this on the users of Vestry Hall. With both of those initially proposed elements being amended and withdrawn from the application these matters have has consequently been addressed. Future Merton Officers also raised concerns that the positioning of bedrooms to the front of the building at ground floor level might result in a lack of active frontage. However the bedrooms only account for half of the frontage with the remainder being the main living area and therefore it is considered that the resultant level of activity would be proportionate to the proposed residential use.

5.6 Merton Conservation officer. Expressed reservations about the refuse store being located in front of the building on the grounds of visual intrusion and consequently the bin store and bike store were moved to the rear of the site.

5.7 Merton Transport planning officer.

Using the 200m walking distance to and from the site in accordance with the standard Lambeth Parking Methodology there is very little significant parking available due to the unique setting of this site. Therefore the survey been extended to a wider area where parking is feasible and safe to 500m which is used for Commercial applications in accordance with current Lambeth parking methodology. When considering safe and desirable parking options, just 5 mins walk from site:

The parking stress resulted in 74%-71% [in the region of 80 overnight spaces] - by looking at this wider parking survey area which equates to around a 4/5 min walk to the boundaries of this larger survey area.

The applicant acknowledge that in strict terms for a residential site, then 200m is usually adhered to for the Lambeth Parking model, but given the unique position of the site, and also taking into account safe pedestrian access, open footpaths [not alleyways] and safe pedestrian crossing points, to make a valued decision considering the wider area.

Transport is satisfied with the results and the methodology adopted for this unique site'.

External consultees.

5.8 Metropolitan Police Safer by Design officer. The ward has the second highest crime rate in the borough and the site's location and setting made it vulnerable. Details for a more robust cycle store should be required for approval, the entrance lobby should be airlocked and a recess in the wall facing Lower Green should be blocked off with a gate or form of planting. In response the entrance lobby would be controlled by video link to the flats and the recessed area is to be fenced to waist height with pyrcantha planted behind.

6. POLICY

6.1 NPPF (2019).
Key sections:
5. Delivering a sufficient supply of homes.
12. Achieving well-designed places.

6.2 London Plan 2021;
H1 (Increasing housing supply), H2 (Small sites), D1 London's form, character and capacity for growth, D3 (Optimising site capacity through a design lead approach), D5 (Inclusive design), D 6 (Housing Quality and standards), D11 (Safety & Security), G7 (Trees and woodlands), GG2 (Making the best use of land), GG4 (Delivering Homes Londoners need), GG6 (Increasing efficiency and resilience), HC 1 (Heritage conservation & growth), SI 2 (Minimising greenhouse gas emissions), SI.13(Sustainable drainage), T 2 (Healthy streets), T5 (Cycling), T6.1 (Residential Parking),

6.3 Merton Core Strategy 2011:
CS 9 (Housing targets), CS 11 (Infrastructure), CS 13 (Open Space, Nature conservation), CS 14 (Design), CS 15 (Climate change), CS 17 (Waste management), CS 18 (Transport) & CS 20 (Parking, Servicing & delivery).

6.4 Merton Sites and Policies Plan 2014:
DM C1 Community facilities, DM D1 (Urban Design and the public realm), DM D2 (Design considerations in all developments), DM D4 (Managing Heritage assets), DM EP 2 (Reducing and mitigating noise), DM EP4 (Pollutants), DM H2 (Housing mix), DM 02 (Trees, hedges and landscape features), DM T2 (Transport impacts of development) & DM T3 (Car parking and servicing standards).

6.5 London Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance 2016

6.6 GLA Guidance on Preparing Energy Assessments (2020).

6.7 DCLG Technical standards 2015

7. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 The key considerations are the principle of the use of the locally listed building for the provision of dwellings, the standard of accommodation provided, the impact of the development on the conservation area, the amenity of local residents and parking and servicing.

7.2 **Principle**

The building is locally listed rather than a statutorily listed building and therefore not subject to the caveat that the best use or re-use for listed buildings is to revert to their original use. Additionally as it was a purpose built fire station and that use transferred to a nearby facility, weight cannot reasonably be afforded to a reversion to the original use.

7.3 The National Planning Policy Framework 2019, London Plan 2020 policy H1 and the Council's Core Strategy policy CS9 all seek to increase sustainable housing provision where it can be shown that an acceptable standard of accommodation will also provide a mix of dwelling types. .

7.4 Core Strategy policies CS8 & CS9 seek to encourage proposals for well-designed and conveniently located new housing that will create socially mixed and sustainable neighbourhoods through physical regeneration and effective use of space.

7.5 The revised housing targets in the new London Plan represent a significant increase in the level of housing provision with much to be provided from small sites such as this. This proposal will provide 9 flats for which there is an identified need and as the location is away from areas of naturally high footfall it would limit the range of suitable commercial uses and consequently the proposed residential use is considered a suitable alternative use.

7.6 **Need for additional housing**

7.7 The new London Plan has set the borough a yearly target of 918 new homes and this proposal will provide 9 units towards that challenging target but making optimal use of this small site. Policy H1 of the London Plan sets out that boroughs should optimise the potential for housing delivery on all suitable and available brownfield sites through their Development Plans and planning decisions. The proposal to introduce residential use to this unused site responds positively to London Plan policies and Core Strategy planning policies to increase housing supply and optimise sites and is supported.

7.8 **Residential density**

A number of objections were concerned with the density of development. When originally submitted the application was subject to guidance from the 2016 London Plan in terms of density. Based on Table 3.2 of that London Plan with a Ptal of 3 the density of 236u/ha exceeded with the recommendation of 50-95 u/ha. However it should be noted that the current London Plan does not include a proscriptive density table and as the site includes very little unused land it will skew the figures to provide what appears to be such a very high density. There are only 9 units on the site and the increasingly diminished level of weight given to density and its reasoning for refusal in light of the drive to provide more housing mean that it is not considered that the level of density would warrant a reason for refusal of the application.

7.9 **Design/Bulk and massing/Appearance/Layout.**

Design of new buildings should ensure appropriate scale, density and appearance, respecting, complementing and responding to local characteristics (London Plan policy D3, LDF policy CS.14 and SPP policy DM D2). As the site comprises a locally listed building in a conservation area London Plan policy HC1 and SPP policy DM D4 are also important material considerations and therefore any proposed changes need to be appropriate and sympathetic to the heritage asset and its wider setting.

7.9.1 **Design- Appearance.**

The scheme previously was presented to the DRP who encouraged a more modern design to the extensions however those designs were considered too modern by officers and the application was withdrawn. Arguably the most important design element of the existing building is its frontage and the roof design. The current proposals have undertaken various iterations through the pre application process and whilst it is acknowledged that by its very nature the change of use will involve some alterations to the appearance of the building it is considered that these have been sympathetically designed so as to retain and preserve the character of the original building by reflecting the various architectural details of the building and its materials and key architectural features such as the carved Fire Station sign, the use of steel for the balustrades and the design of the engine bay doors will be retained. The extensions are largely set to the rear and as can been seen from the accompanying CGIs the works for the new section of front facing roofing has been designed to mirror that of the original roof form whilst the new brickwork blends in with the existing building so as to be considered to conserve and hence the original building and its wider setting.

7.9.2 **Bulk and massing.**

London Plan policy D3 and SPP policy DM D2 require developments to relate positively and appropriately to the siting, rhythm, scale, density and proportions of surrounding buildings and the pattern and grain of existing streets.

7.9.3 The proposals involve no alterations to the height of the building but provide extensions at the side and rear which whilst they increase the bulk of the development they are considered to have been sympathetically positioned and designed so as to mitigate any negative impacts that may otherwise be associated with increased bulk and massing. Officers consider that through the design and choice of appropriate materials the proposals are optimising the site whilst still being respectful of neighbouring residents and the wider conservation area.

7.10 **Standard of accommodation.**

London Plan 2021 policies D3 (Optimising site capacity through a design lead approach), D5 (Inclusive design), D 6 (Housing Quality and standards), D11 (Safety & Security), SPP Policy DM D2, Core Strategy 2011 policies CS 9 Housing Provision and CS 14 Design are all policies that seek to provide additional good quality residential accommodation including the provision of a safe and secure layout.

Unit provision

Unit	Unit size	Proposed GIA	Required GIA	Proposed Amenity	Required Amenity
1	1B2P	59m2	50m2	7m2	5m2
2	2B3P	63m2	61m2	7m2	6m2
3	2B4P	77m2	70m2	7m2	7m2
4	1B2P	53m2	50m2	7m2	5m2
5	2B4P	71m2	70m2	7m2	6m2
6	2B4P	73m2	70m2	7m2	6m2
7	1B2P	51m2	50m2	5m2	5m2
8	1B2P	54m2	50m2	5m2	5m2
9	1B2P	50m2	50m2	5m2	5m2

7.10.1 All the proposed units meet or exceed the minimum space standards in terms of both Gross Internal Area and private amenity space having made amendments to provide all units with external amenity areas. The units provide regular shaped rooms which allows for more efficient use of furniture and most are dual aspect and consequently on balance the proposals are considered to provide a good standard accommodation for future residents.

7.11 **Affordable housing**

As the proposal is for less than 10 units there is no longer any requirement to provide either on site or off site affordable housing contributions.

7.12 **Neighbour Amenity.**

London Plan policy D3 and SPP policy DM D2 relate to amenity impacts such as loss of light, privacy, overshadowing and visual intrusion on neighbour amenity.

7.12.1 Objections were received in relation to the impact of the block on the amenity of neighbouring residents in Cricketers Court. Neighbours were concerned in relation to loss of privacy and overlooking from the new flats and in particular the upper floors. However at first and roof floor levels the blank wall of the Cricketers building is matched by the blank wall of the fire station whilst the windows in Flats 4 & 7 of this proposal will be high level facing those flats and obscure glazed facing Vestry Hall. This allows light in but prevents

overlooking. The first floor terrace aligns with the blank wall of the Cricketers development. In view of this it is considered that the proposals would not cause material harm to the amenity of neighbours from overlooking and loss of privacy.

7.12.2 Objections were received raising concerns that the proposals would result in a loss of light to neighbouring properties. However the combination of the relative positioning of the block to Cricketers House and the back drop of the bulk of Vestry Hall means that it is considered that no new shadows will be caused that would materially harm the amenity of neighbours from a loss of light.

7.13 **Parking, servicing and deliveries.**

Core Strategy Policy CS 20 requires proposals to have regard to pedestrian movement, safety, serving and loading facilities for local businesses and manoeuvring for emergency vehicles as well as refuse storage and collection.

7.13.1 The proposed use of the forecourt in front of the fire station has been revised a number of times following concerns about its use and the impact of and changes to its appearance. Only a small section of forecourt directly in front of the building falls within its curtilage, the remainder being Council property and which has been used for Vestry Hall parking since the station closed. The forecourt also provides access for refuse collections from the Vestry hall refuse store to the side and rear of the site. The situation is that there would be no parking provided for the flats and the main forecourt would retain its current tarmac finish to reflect the previous use with the area to the front of the building within the applicants control being finished in either cobblestones or resin bonded brickwork to differentiate the spaces. Being within the Council's control there would remain the possibility of future improvements being made to it but this would not be something that could be secured from the developer.

7.13.2 As the site is not within a Controlled Parking Zone it would not be possible to make the scheme permit free. The submitted transport assessment undertaken within the Lambeth Methodology framework demonstrates that at night there is sufficient car parking capacity within 500m of the site to accommodate parking that may result from the development.

7.13.3 The quantum of cycle storage provision is considered acceptable as are the quantum of refuse facilities although conditions requiring details of their design to be approved are recommended.

7.13.4 The applicant appears amenable to enabling improvements to both the overall appearance of the forecourt and the space alongside the side of the fire station by way of resurfacing and removal of a small area of tarmac so just leaving a hardstanding pathway for resident access and for the movement of the Vestry Hall refuse containers on collection day. The offer may be considered as mutually beneficial to both the applicant, enhancing the setting of their development, and the Council, covering costs for

improvements to land in its management. A S106 could help deliver such works and in the event that members are minded to approve officers recommend brokering a suitable S106 agreement for part of any resolution.

7.14 **Trees**

An objection was raised to the loss of a tree near Cricketers House but the proposals do not involve the removal of any trees but the proposals were accompanied by an arboricultural report setting out details for the protection of trees adjacent to the site, a Common Lime and a Norway Maple. A condition requiring the adoption of the tree protection methods shown in the report is recommended

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.

8.2 A condition requiring the proposals to comply with current sustainability criteria for a development of this size is also recommended.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The proposals will provide 9 new flats that will provide a good standard of accommodation for future residents within what is considered to be an attractively and sympathetically designed conversion and extension to this locally listed building, development that will preserve the appearance and character of the Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area.

9.2 The proposals have been designed to mitigate their impact on neighbour amenity and are not considered materially harmful to the amenity of neighbours.

9.3 There remains capacity on the surrounding highway network for vehicles to park and the absence of o-site parking is not considered a basis to withhold permission.

9.3 A S106 agreement between the Council and the developer could enable improvements to the setting of the building that would enhance the appearance of the wider conservation area and objective embedded in the overall policy assessment of development proposals in conservation areas. Coupled with the imposition of suitable planning conditions, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and in compliance with relevant planning policies and is therefore recommended for approval**.**

RECOMMENDATION: Grant planning permission subject to:

a) The completion of a S106 agreement to secure environmental improvements to the forecourt and spaces around the application site, and the developer covering the Councils costs of drafting and monitoring the agreement, and

b) The following conditions.

A1 Commencement within 3 years.
A7 ;In accordance with plans; Site location plan, drawings 6724-PL-300 Rev C, 6724-PL-301 Rev F, 6724-PL -302 Rev E, 6724-PL -303 Rev E, 6724-PL -304 Rev D, 6724-PL-307 A01 & 6724-PL -308 and document 'Arboricultural Appraisal and Implications Assessment' compiled by ACS (Trees) Consulting dated Jan 27th 2020

B1 Materials to be approved
B4 Surface treatment
B5 Boundary treatment
C5 No cables or flues
C6 Refuse details to be approved
C7 Refuse details to be implemented
D9 No external lighting
F1 landscaping and planting
F2 Landscaping implementation
F8 trees site supervision
Tree protection in accordance with details shown in 'Arboricultural Appraisal and Implications Assessment' compiled by ACS (Trees) Consulting dated Jan 27th 2020

H1 Details of new vehicle access
H2 vehicle access to be provided
H4 Vehicle parking to be provided
H6 Cycle storage to be approved
H7 Cycle storage to be implemented
H10 Construction working method statement
H11 Parking management strategy
H12 Delivery and servicing plan
H13 Construction logistics plan

Non-standard condition No part of the development hereby approved shall be occupied until evidence has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority confirming that the development has achieved CO2 reductions of not less than a 19% improvement on Part L regulations 2013, and internal water consumption rates of no greater than 105 litres per person per day.'
Reason: To ensure that the development achieves a high standard of sustainability and makes efficient use of resources and to comply with the following Development Plan policies for Merton: Policy SI 2 of the London Plan 2021 and Policy CS15 of Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011.

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