

Wandsworth Society

Please respond to:
49 Wandsworth Common West Side
London SW18 2EE

19 March 2023

Planning and Building Control
Wandsworth Borough Council
Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW128 2PU

For the attention of M/s Julia Kelly

Dear Ms Kelly,

Springfield Village: Development sites F,G,P and Q
Re: Planning Application No 2022/4812

OBJECTION

Our Society had meetings last July and October with representatives of the Springfield NHS Hospital Trust, Assael Architects, and the developers, 'London Square', to discuss the proposals for Springfield development sites F, G, P and Q. Our principal interest was for the latter three sites which between them form a quadrant of new housing development on the most public of all the development sites.

We wish to raise objections to the current application as follows:

Relationship of sites G, P and Q to the public park

- i) At our July meeting the three sites had houses lining the front, west drives, facing the new parkland. The drawings showed lines of semi-detached houses along the west face of the parkland which were acceptable in appearance and scale. Houses were promised in 2012, by the Trust to the Appeal Inspector, to a generally sceptical public which had *strongly opposed the development of these three particular sites*, and to our Society. We had supported the development of these sites but had sought a promise from the Trust that these sites would be very carefully designed with the opportunity to encourage the building of individual private houses. It is on record that these 3 particular sites, G, P and Q, were the most contested at the Inquiry as they encroached forward through the mature tree ring along the perimeter crescent road and into the open park; this was of great concern. We supported the designation of these sites on the hospital estate development plan and the way they were to be handled facing the parkland with houses on public view.
- ii) Regrettably, the thrust of these promises which enabled the Inspector to consider kindly to this strategic site plan, have become lost in time, as i) the special ring of individually designed private houses has become a ring of semi-detached houses of a regular pattern of design, and ii) the houses have been omitted from site G. We can accept the ring of semi-detached houses reluctantly, although we list some reservations about their design later, but we cannot accept the loss of houses fronting site G. We raised this issue at our October meeting but the blocks of flats which replaced the houses on site G remain as part of the current application.

- iii) The reason for crowding the flats onto site G was due to two factors explained to us at our October meeting, i) the loss of a block of flats at the south end return of site Q, facing the Listed west wing of the old hospital, to improve the relationship of the scale of development between the west wing and site Q to which we had objected to in July; the flats were replaced by four houses, and therefore sites G, P and Q. had suffered a lowering of density which was resolved by omitting the houses on site G and replacing them with flat blocks.
- iv) We would refer to the recently revealed housing densities at Springfield which have explained that the previous proposals for sites G, P and Q, have enabled the Hospital Trust to meet its planning appeal approved total target for housing of be 839 homes. Should a shortfall of a few homes on these 3 sites occur as a result of returning the terrace of houses to site G and turning the flank ends of site Q with houses instead of flat blocks, the Trust has the surplus sites Y and Z on which to make up the total numbers to 839. However the Trust appears to want all 839 homes to be built up to site Q, and thereby seek planning for an increase in development potential of the whole Springfield estate by 53.5% with further development on sites Y and Z to which our Society has raised strong objections.

Consequently, for the reasons discussed above, we object most strongly to the departure from the Appeal Inspector's conclusions about the public frontage to these three sites and the failure of the current application to respect the terms and spirit of the Appeal.

Appearance, Scale and Massing

- i) The 3 storey blocks of flats shown facing the park on site G in place of houses are unworthy of this very public area of the park. They replace proposals for houses until changes made in October 2022, just prior to the submission of the application. The flats appear to be bland and uninspiring, flat roofed and dull.
- ii) The plans indicate that some form of vehicle reservations and/or parking will be permitted at the front of the flat blocks. The plans do not indicate what the letters on these spaces make reference to, but in any case the purpose of the narrow drives accessing the park frontages of sites G, P and Q, we understood was to prevent parking to avoid the presence of vehicles standing between the park and the new buildings as an offensive backdrop to the public park.
- iii) The terraced houses on sites P and Q are respectful of the Appeal in terms of scale and massing. We have concerns about the house plans which show all the principal interior rooms with their backs to the park which they overlook and which generally face in a bright westerly direction. The family living rooms overlook the rear gardens without a single window giving a view of the park; this is a result of surrounding the car parking space with solid, unbroken walls. The first floor master bedroom faces the flats at the rear with an equally sized bedroom sized bathroom facing the park, presumably with screening for privacy internally. The ensuite bathroom could be centred on the floor plan as it is on the second floor and the front room could become the master bedroom whilst retaining the rear bedroom. The house floor plans do not reflect the location on which the houses are to be situated and this seems to us to be a serious failure to which we object.
- iv) Whilst the houses on sites P and Q have single car spaces per dwelling, and we support the proposal for narrow driveways to avoid the park stopping against a wide roadway on which parking would inevitably occur as an offensive backdrop to the visiting public, we can see no viable means of visitors to these houses finding parking spaces reasonably nearby nor room for deliveries without causing congestion. We have not received clear responses to this query in our discussions with the developers.

- v) The density of the development is high, with 253 homes proposed of which only 33 will be houses with gardens. We suggest that this density arises from the Hospital Trust wishing to reach its Appeal total of 839 homes concluding at site Q, so as to release the sites X, Y and Z for redevelopment at high density to raise capital despite flouting the terms and spirit of the Appeal permission for Springfield estate.
- vi) We raised a strong objection with the developer over the relationship of proposed flat blocks close to the west wing of the Listed hospital buildings. The revised drawings show a more relaxed and favourable relationship between the new and existing buildings and we welcome this approach. However, as we have stated, the loss numerically of flats removed from this location should not be used as an excuse to replace the frontage houses on site G with the proposed and unsatisfactorily designed flat blocks – our objection point i) above.
- vii) We are concerned too that the appearance of the flats proposed fronting site G to which we have objected in i) above, have been replicated to the east sides of each of sites G, P and Q. Indeed the scale and massing of the flat blocks are dense and stand 4 stories high on rising ground. We are concerned that viewed from a distance across the parkland by the visiting public, the massing and roof profiles in particular of the houses fronting sites P and Q will be lost by the flat blocks' profiles masking their skyline. This is a matter of concern to us and one that needs addressing.

Conclusion

We object to the current planning submission for Springfield development sites G, P and Q, on various grounds discussed above. Our principle objection is to the handling of the density of these sites in order for releasing the sites X, Y and Z from the terms of the Appeal and without the Hospital Trust publicly consulting on this major change of strategy.

The Trust is not a speculative developer but a public authority, and having regard to the strength of feeling which caused Wandsworth Council in 2011 to refuse the original redevelopment plan for the estate which caused the Appeal to be held and reported upon in 2012, we would have expected public feelings to have been recognised and addressed.

We trust that you will recommend to the Planning Applications Committee that they refuse the application now presented.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Whyte
Leader of Planning Sub-committee
Wandsworth Society

17/03/2023