

Wandsworth Society

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

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

For the attention of M/s Julia Kelly

Dear Sirs,

**Re: Application No 2022/5288
Springfield Village: Development sites X,Y and Z**

Objection

Introduction:

Public consultation of the plans for redevelopment of the Planning Appeal sites X, Y and Z, zoned for housing, were held in early October 2022. Our Society met with a senior representative of Barratts London last July and again early in the Autumn in collaboration with representatives of the Hospital Trust. It was only by chance then that we learnt of the Trust's engagement with Barratts and the plan to increase housing provision by 53.5% above the Planning Appeal's approved figures.

General appraisal of application:

The Appeal sites X, Y and Z are at the southern end of the hospital estate adjoining the new parkland, and Streatham Cemetery to the south. There is currently some housing and a detention block on sites Y and Z which are due for demolition. Sites Y and Z will be/have been purchased by Barratt London who are applying for consent to build blocks of flats. Site X is planned to remain undeveloped, as a change to the outline planning approval of 2012 and to be added back to the parkland. The boundary between the parkland and site Y is already formed by a deep strip of high, thick, mature trees, so it is argued, the impact of any residential blocks behind them to the south will be reduced, as will the impact upon the setting of the southern wing of the existing Listed hospital building from the new development nearby - a tricky issue, still to be resolved, with the close proximity of housing site Q close to the northern, Listed, old hospital wing.

Applicant's argument for change:

To accomplish the change of land use of site X, the applicant, Barratts London, argues this will require a higher density, massing and building heights than was previously envisaged for the remaining Appeal sites Y and Z, as both of these sites were originally envisaged for houses whose density would be too low for the applicant and the Trust to recover the cost of the land and its development. Consequently, for the site to be profitable, it is now proposed that c450 flats will be constructed on the remaining sites Y and Z.

This has come as quite a surprise to us as the original planning consent for Springfield's estate development was for a hospital, a park and development of

designated areas of its land for 839 homes. We are advised that this total has already been reached without inclusion of sites Y and Z which were part of the original Appeal approval. Currently for these two sites, the applicant's proposals are for a mix of flats in blocks of varying heights, up to five floors but generally between 3 and 4 stories high, and will be "carless".

We emphasise the "Appeal," as its granting of approval for the Springfield estate's development was conditional, following very heavy local public opposition at the time.

Our Society backed the Applicant(The Trust) then as the issues were broader, particularly in terms of providing funding for a new Springfield Hospital. The Appeal Inspector approved the reduction of the refused planning application total from c1200 homes to 839. However, the current application by Barratts London, with the support of the Hospital Trust, has resurrected the spectre of 1288 homes seemingly in defiance of the Appeal decision which had been welcomed at that time.

As far as we are aware, and we have had close links with the Trust since the Appeal, it has not publicised its intention to build all its approved 839 dwellings on a lower number of the appeal sites, the consequences of which we learn, through a third party, seeking permission for an additional 449 dwellings(the current application) on two of those three remaining sites, a sleight of hand which has caused considerable concern to our Society.

General observations:

- i) This is a significant move by the Hospital Trust which argues that the additional, substantial monies gained from the developer Barratt London for the purchase of the two sites, will enable it to complete its new hospital at Kingston, complete the redevelopment of outdated facilities at Tolworth Hospital, as well as completing the Springfield hospital buildings. We presume that the increase in land values since 2012 has led to the Trust to consider raising more capital. However, this approach has been done surreptitiously, without seeking an official change to the Conditions of the Appeal, as we would expect of a major public body, consulting about its revised aims and their significant consequences.
- ii) This type of intervention to seek increases in the potential of their development sites is not unusual for private developers in our experience, but not on this huge scale, nor following a major public planning appeal and inspector's report. We were therefore most surprised to learn last July at a meeting with the Hospital Trust, that such a late move was to be made by a public institution without earlier, prior consultation of its strategy to seek a major amendment to its appeal permission.
- iii) In judging the new proposals for sites Y and Z, we have, on the one hand, the gain in parkland area, almost zero car ownership of a new development of flats, correct levels of affordable housing and the retention of many mature trees which under previous plans might have been lost.
- iv) On the other hand, we are seeing planned the additional development at Springfield of a **53.5% increase of the original 839 homes approved at Appeal**, raising the total of new housing to 1288 homes. As a result;
- v) the proposed buildings will pose a significant overlooking problem with the adjacent John Hunter Avenue 2 storey housing recently built nearby to the east.

Currently, the application drawings are shown as being five stories high on the high eastern boundary, which would be quite overpowering close to the two storey houses and pronounced from the parkland. We consider that if any five storey blocks be proposed that these should be on the lower ground of the two sites, to the west and south overlooking

- Streatham Cemetery. We are of the view that five storey blocks too high for this site in any case. The blocks adjacent to John Hunter Avenue should be three storeys high maximum as considerate neighbours.
- vi) However, we consider this planning application for development to be quite inappropriate, for these sites Y and Z have effectively become redundant, the Trust having met the Appeal total for housing development elsewhere, and they should revert to MOL once they are cleared.
- vii) **Environmental Impact.**
- a) The development sites X, Y and Z were designated for development largely of houses to replace the small, attractively designed, Diamond Estate of staff housing, and the nearby detention centre.
- b) The Hospital Trust having reached its Appeal total of new dwellings makes sites X, Y and Z redundant for development and they should revert to MOL designation as being the key factor for consideration of any further development. New housing is not a form of recognised development for such land under Local and London planning policies, and the Trust's sale to Barratts London can only be judged as very speculative indeed. For it is Barratts, acting as the applicant and not the Trust, who have made the current application to build on this land, outside the terms of the Appeal.
- c) The environmental damage to this mature area of MOL must preclude its development, especially to the scale, density and massing of the proposed development. The land should be landscaped to form a wood of mature trees which, with complementary planting, would form a delightful wood as a suitable habitat adjunct to the neighbouring cemetery with which there is to be a direct link for public access through to Garrett Lane, Tooting, St George's Hospital, and further afield.
- viii) As we have noted above, the original purpose of development sites X, Y and Z, was to provide new houses. We believe that should any housing development be granted planning permission in the future for these sites, despite our above arguments, it should include, as was intended, houses not flats. This would substantially reduce the scale of the currently proposed blocks of flats. To date flats have proliferated across the Springfield estate with proportionately very few houses. Sites Y and Z could help improve that balance if the proposals showed development similar in scale to the nearby Aboyne Estate, where 60 years ago a most successful mix of homes and flats lies within a mature landscape. Indeed, such a mixed balance and low scale would reflect and extend the scale of John Hunter Avenue to its advantage.
- ix) The planning application proposes a 'carless' development. We suggest this is primarily due to avoiding local protest for the generation of traffic which at Appeal they believed had been addressed for the estate's development as a whole. Also, 'carless' new housing is a policy which the council can adopt. However, we question whether these two particular sites are suitable for a wholesale ban on car ownership as they are quite remote from public transport as PTAL readings show, despite the possibility of a second, rerouted 315 bus service from Balham being introduced by TfL to serve the hospital, to supplement the existing G1, but this is not yet confirmed.

We have considered the objection submitted on the 6th February 2023 by M/s Zastawniak which sets out very clearly and in great detail many points of objection to the current application. We are most grateful to the analysis which has been undertaken and thoroughly endorse this objection.

In conclusion:

- We welcome the incorporation of site X into the parkland.
- The current application should be withdrawn as it contravenes the terms and spirit of the Planning Appeal approval for the density and pattern of the Springfield estate's development granted to the Hospital Trust, which, without involving public consultation it is seeking to very substantially increase development by over 50%.
- We consider the proposals for sites Y and Z to be over density, too great in scale and massing, and inappropriately designed in relation to the scale of John Hunter housing.
- The scale and massing would have a profound effect upon the new parkland viewed from the south especially during the months of the year when the leaf screen is reduced or nil, despite retaining some mature trees.
- That there is a strong case, now that the terms of the Appeal potential for the estate has been met, for the remaining undeveloped sites to revert to Metropolitan Open Land and become a treed landscaped feature of the parkland.
- However, if the planning authority considers there is room for some further development on the remaining designated sites, this should be to provide an appropriate medium to low density housing to enable a mixture of sizes and types of homes, with and without gardens, to echo the original intent of the Appeal approval.
- For whatever is built upon these two sites will be a bonus to the Trust in monetary terms but that alone should not be the principal test for the design of homes for families for these two attractive sites.

We trust that you will recommend that the Planning Applications Committee refuse the current application.

Yours faithfully,

Philip Whyte
Leader Planning Group
Wandsworth Society