Design and Access Statement

Land to Rear of Compass House, Stanmore

Introduction

The site has been acquired by ZEDHomes who are looking to develop environmentally sustainable housing.

Zero (fossil) Energy Development (ZED) aims to dramatically reduce carbon emissions in its developments by combining innovative design with existing technology. ZEDHomes builds homes and workplaces that require a fraction of the energy required to run a traditionally built development of the same size. All the energy that is required for a ZEDHomes development is met by on-site energy sources that will make no demands on the earth's natural resources.

ZEDHomes are challenging the more ‘traditional’ approaches to development and construction, striving to deliver better quality schemes that not only protect the environment, but also create homes and workplaces that are spacious, comfortable and filled with natural light. They are stylish, finished with natural materials and easy to maintain and clean. ZEDHomes provide the end user with a better standard of living which is affordable, builds communities that live and work together; that create a positive impact on their environment; that instigate greater social responsibility and set a new standard in development.

ZEDHomes are leading the way in the delivery of these schemes, and are the only developer that is striving to deliver and exceed the current targets set at a national and local level. A ZED scheme will exceed current EcoHomes “Excellent” standards as set by the Building Research Establishment. ZEDHomes are confident to be held to these bold claims either by planning conditions or a S106 agreement.

ZEDHomes are committed to creating a step change in the way that buildings are designed, built, and used. This is an exciting and challenging time in what is seen as an emerging market in this country. Currently, there are limited examples of this in practice in the United Kingdom. When one examines the experience of our European neighbours, there are many examples of implementation of large scale carbon neutral schemes such as Solar City in Austria. The United Kingdom is at least 9 – 10 years behind Europe in the investment in, and implementation of, environmentally sustainable buildings and technologies.

However, Policy S1 of the Harrow Unitary Development Plan 2004 (UDP) seeks to secure a form and pattern of development in the Borough that accords with the principles of sustainable development. More explicitly, Policy SEP1 encourages account to be taken of reductions in the use and reliance on fossil fuel energy. Policy EP7 encourages the use of renewable energy and Policy EP8 encourages energy efficiency through the design of buildings.

This Statement will demonstrate that the proposed development is fully in accordance with these policies. It is, therefore, hoped that the London Borough of Harrow will enable ZEDHomes to deliver the desired scheme on this site.

The Site Context

The application site was formerly used as part of the car park serving the offices at Compass House. However, it is now surplus to requirements. It is not a public car park and has no association with the nearby shops. Its loss will therefore not affect the continued operation of the shopping frontage. Given reductions in car parking standards the remaining car parking provision available to Compass House will still be at an acceptable level.

The site lies between the rear of The Old Post Office in Church Road, Stanmore and the tennis club off Pynnacles Close, Stanmore. It is lower than the tennis courts and separated by a dense bank of young trees. The rear yard of the properties to the south is at a lower level.

The site can be seen from Pynnacles Close through a car park used for Compass House and past some mature trees. From the service car parking areas to the east the site is visible from all areas. Other than glimpses, the site cannot be seen from Church Road.

The quality of architecture that surrounds the site is poor and there is no merit in the surrounding area which would dictate or suggest any particular style of new building on the site.

The site benefits from a right of way to Pynnacles Close and a right of way over the service road which bounds the eastern boundary.

The Proposal

Use

The site can only be considered a redundant brown field site. It is within the Metropolitan District and Local Centre boundary of Stanmore yet it fulfils no function for that centre, having no street frontage. Its development for residential use would not harm the vitality and viability of the district centre and would therefore be fully in accordance with Policy SEM2 of the UDP, which seeks to sustain the health of town centres.

Given its marginal location in relation to the main centre it is not a desirable site for many uses. The applicant has considered the potential for both housing and office uses. However, given the continuing shortage of housing in the borough and the visible over supply of office space in Stanmore in particular, our clients see an opportunity to develop a scheme for residential units.

Policy EP21 of the UDP encourages this approach to releasing redundant land for new and beneficial development. It is considered that this proposal offers great potential to improve the character and appearance of the environment surrounding the site. It will also contribute to meeting housing need, in accordance with Policy SH1.

We have, therefore, tackled the design in relation to the site, its orientation, outlook context and surroundings.

We have used a design led approach and have been encouraged to seek an imaginative new building which positively contributes to the local environment. It has also been encouraged that the scheme promotes highly sustainable development principles and this has influenced the design, components, orientation layout, movement, energy efficiency and use of materials.

Whilst the site may be considered to be hidden away from the town centre frontages, its development enables a bold statement to be made which contributes to a positive identity for the site. This will energise an otherwise lack lustre area. The building has to be notable to ensure it enhances the general character of the area and has a positive impact on future development. It will also have an important relationship with the more publicly perceived sites on Pynnacles Close and Church Road

Layout

The layout developed from the shape of the site and its orientation.

The ground floor has a raised bed on the north side and a high wall on the south side with each of the east and west ends open. The features on the north and south side would preclude any habitable accommodation at ground floor level. This is being forced by its proximity to the isolated night time service yard where ground floor accommodation would not be accepted on security grounds.

The ground floor is therefore dedicated to car parking, bin storage and recycling, bicycle storage and the entrance hall and staircase to the building. Access can be gained from both ends in the current situation.

The depth of the site restricts the planning of the building and makes the flats single aspect. Distances from boundaries in terms of areas for windows is also a further restriction.

The promotion of energy efficiency and the adoption of sustainable design principles contributed greatly to the design process; the units have been designed to face south to maximize solar gain. This is considered more important than the potentially preferable outlook to the north. South facing aspects enable us to use solar panels and sun spaces and ensure maximum light to the habitable rooms. In the scheme the sun spaces are integrated with deep amenity balconies, also facing south and suitably deep.

The building is highly insulated with double and triple glazing being used for windows and sun spaces, together with super insulation to walls floors and roof structures

The design maxmises and regulates solar gain and day lighting in various ways during the season to maximize energy efficiency and contribute to lower resource consumption. Ventilation will be controlled, air tightness will be maximised.

Recycled materials will be used where possible and a green roof will be used as further amenity space on the roof.

Policy D5 of the UDP does not specify standards for the provision of amenity space. However, it is noted that the site is in an area identified in the UDP as having a deficiency of public open space. The proposed development has therefore sought to maximise the amenity space available to residents. The sunspaces, balconies and roof terrace will be both attractive and usable. The proposed areas far exceed the amount of usable space that might normally be provided in such a central location.

A fully detailed document describing the credentials of the buildings accompanies this report.

The proposed layout of the building is also important in that it has been designed to ensure it does not prejudice the potential for the future development of adjoining land. The orientation of the flats and the aspects of outlook would enable adjoining plots of land to be redeveloped in a similar fashion in the future.

Amount and Scale

The scale of the building has been carefully considered in relation to the surroundings.

The tree screen behind is tall and dense and will conceal a 4 storey building from the north. Compass House is 3 storeys with a large pitched roof, but as the buildings all step down towards Church Road it has been considered that it would not be inappropriate to have 4 storeys with a flat roof for this proposal.

We believe that the form, massing, composition, proportions and materials all respect the surrounding townscape. This has resulted in the provision of three 1 bed flats and three 2 bed flats with 6 parking spaces, balconies, sunspaces and a communal roof garden. This is in accordance with Policies SH2 and H7 of the UDP, as far as they apply to this scale of development, by providing a mix of unit types and sizes within the development.

Policy H4 of the UDP specifies that all development should exceed 150 habitable rooms per hectare. The proposed development with 15 habitable rooms on a site of 0.04 ha equates to 375 hr/ha. This is in line with that policy.

Furthermore, the Density Matrix in Table 4B.1 of the London Plan sets out guidelines for residential densities. In an urban area such as this, where development is mostly flats with low parking provision,

acceptable densities could be as high as 450-700 hr/ha. The proposed density of 375 hr/ha, which we believe is appropriate for its setting, should therefore not be considered to be unusual or unacceptable.

The south elevation is dictated by the function of the sun spaces and balconies. This represents an articulated elevation of glass, planting and recessed walls. We have added individuality and interest by using unconventional shapes for the windows.

The north elevation abuts the trees, but does not intrude into the canopy spread and will therefore have no impact on the trees. The proposed development will therefore not harm any trees and there is no need for a tree survey to be provided. The proposal satisfies the requirements of Policies EP29 and D10.

The north elevation contains indented balcony access to the flats and walls generally without windows. To add interest and camouflage we have introduced planted screen wall, which will provide a further green barrier between the building and the tennis courts.

This, along with the roof terrace, serves to enhance the biodiversity of the site which currently has no ecological value. The proposals therefore meet the requirements of Policies SEP4 and EP26.

The proposed development has been designed with regard to the relationship with the adjoining tennis courts. The screen of trees and orientation of the units away from the tennis courts will ensure privacy is protected. The planted screen wall will serve to further respect the relationship and ensure the two uses work well together.

Appearance

Policy D4 sets out a number of design objectives that new developments should seek to achieve. These have largely already been addressed earlier in this Statement. It only remains to explain the design

approach to the elevational treatment of the building. Policy SD1 advises that the Council will seek an appropriate standard of design to improve the quality of the built environment.

The side elevations of the proposed building will be devoid of windows because they abut the site boundary. We have, therefore, created interest in individuality by curling the heads of the flank walls to reflect the required angles of the solar panels. We have also added recycled timber cladding in an amorphous shape that reflects the interesting random forms of the windows on the front elevation. The result is a highly individual and unusual aesthetic, formed out of function rather than whim. The building will become a new landmark and enliven the otherwise sterile environment in which it sits.

We believe that the proposed development fully satisfies the policy objectives to improve the quality of the built environment and will set the standard for the future.

Access

Policy T13 and Schedule 5 of the UDP set out the Council's maximum parking standards at 1.2 spaces per 1 bed unit and 1.4 spaces per 2 bed unit. This development provides 6 spaces for the 6 flats. Whilst we are providing car parking spaces, the building is extremely close to shops and public transport links and therefore provision below the maximum standards is justified.

Cycle parking is also provided within the car park to allow secure storage of cycles for residents and visitors. This is in accordance with the objectives of Policy T11.

The application is accompanied by a Transport Report which will look at the access arrangements, parking and traffic generation for the development to ensure compliance with Policy T6 of the UDP in terms of the transport impact of the development.

The parking that is provided is located very close underneath the building it serves and disabled parking is also provided. A lift serves all floors of the building including the amenity space on the roof. One of the units is designed for wheelchair living and all others have been designed to Lifetime Home Standards.

Conclusion

The building is designed to provide much needed housing in the area. It offers brown field site development. It is fully environmentally sustainable and it offers full accessibility well in excess of other developments in the rough. It is an innovative design that will enliven an otherwise inhospitable environment. It will create a landmark that will be interesting and contemporary. It causes no harm to the environment, only benefits.