

PROPOSED OFFICES, ROXETH GREEN AVENUE, HARROW

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

The proposed development to which this Design and Access Statement relates has been the subject of pre-application discussions with officers of the Council and has been discussed by the Planning Advisory Team (PAT).

Within this Statement the issues and planning policy considerations raised by the PAT are considered and the amendments made to the proposed development in response to this are explained.

We trust that the development now proposed can be considered to fully meet the Council's requirements and planning permission can accordingly be granted.

Site Context

The application site is in an area currently being regenerated by the construction of a substantial scheme of apartments, office space and other commercial uses. The redevelopment of the Biro Works site and adjacent arches was approved under planning reference: P/1233/05/CFU. This development will transform this semi-derelict, industrial land into a vibrant mixed use environment.

The regeneration of the railway arches and the new pedestrian thoroughfare, running between the new units in the arches and the proposed apartments, will bring new life and employment to the area, creating a link through between Roxeth Green Avenue and Stanley Road.

As further land becomes available, this link may be extended further along the railway line to improve pedestrian and cycle routes and create additional new units within the arches.

The application site was previously occupied by a single storey garage facility and forecourt. To the east, an access road serves an electricity sub-station with residential properties beyond fronting onto Roxeth Green Avenue. To the west, will be the new pedestrian thoroughfare with the new units within the railway arches opposite.

Roxeth Green Avenue forms the northern boundary of the site and, beyond the railway spur that projects out from the viaduct, the new pedestrian thoroughfare continues to the south of the site towards Stanley Road.

Use and Amount

The approved development for the Biro Works site includes plans for this area to be opened up as a pedestrian thoroughfare. Car parking spaces are proposed on the eastern boundary and the converted railway arches form the western enclosure.

It is felt that, to further enhance the vitality and viability of the area and the pedestrian thoroughfare, the land available between Roxeth Green Avenue and the railway spur could be better utilised. It is therefore proposed to construct a small office building, which would complement the adjacent mixed uses proposed within the railway arches.

The development will also provide a more effective transition between the residential development and the arches. It will screen the sub-station, add more interest to the street scene on the Roxeth Green Avenue frontage and will generate more activity, to the benefit of the surrounding area. Overall, the proposed building will have the effect of enhancing the intended use of the pedestrian thoroughfare.

The office space proposed has been pre-let to a local company, thus guaranteeing immediate occupation on completion. This will give significant confidence to the market and facilitate fast occupation of the archway units, thus providing a further catalyst to achieving the regeneration objectives for the area.

Layout and Landscaping

Narrowing the entrance at the northern end of the pedestrian area by the development of the proposed offices would act as a gateway feature, enhancing the prominence of the new commercial activity in the railway arches and shielding this end of the site from the view of the sub-station.

The more extensive section of the pedestrian boulevard beyond the railway spur will continue to relate in scale and proportion to the Biro House development. This end of the boulevard, however, will benefit from being framed by this building to create a more intimate feel.

The initial proposals for this development included gates at the entrance to the pedestrian area. These have been deleted at the request of the Council to ensure the area is kept as open as possible and access is not perceived to be restricted.

The building is proposed with a green roof, which has access for maintenance. The advantages of providing a 'green roof' are well documented. These include improving the insulation of the structure and its thermal mass, providing a habitat for a number of species of wildlife and minimising and delaying water run-off as the plants and soil act as a sponge, storing the water prior to eventual run-off. A high proportion of the water is also taken up by the roots and evaporates.

The landscape design at ground level will be predominantly hard landscaping to co-ordinate with the proposals for the Biro Works site and materials will be carefully chosen to complement the adjacent development.

Scale and Appearance

The floor plate available for the offices was determined by the curve of the spur of the railway structure and the need to maintain a generous width for the pedestrian area. This has enabled an imaginative design for the building to evolve that also makes the most effective use of the space available.

The height of the proposed building has been limited to three storeys. This relates well to the height of the railway arches, ensures that it is not overbearing in the street scene and ensures an acceptable relationship with the nearest flats within the Biro Works development.

The building has been designed with a modern elevational treatment. At ground floor level car and cycle parking is provided within open fronted bays. The parking is enclosed at both sides and to the rear. To the front, the presence of the pedestrian thoroughfare ensures natural surveillance of the parking,

A ground floor reception area to the office space is also provided at ground floor level. Two floors of office space are provided above. Stairwells are provided at both ends of the building and a lift at one end.

The building has been sited to ensure a reasonable separation from the flats in the Biro Works development. As can be seen from the sections and perspective drawings within the application drawings, the relationship with those residential properties will be entirely acceptable. Furthermore, it should be noted that the habitable rooms closest to the proposed building have windows facing in three directions. Light and outlook will therefore not be unduly affected by the location of the proposed building.

The external design of the building is proposed to have a modern appearance with the use of a range of materials to add interest and quality to the building form. The roof will be flat to allow the use of sedum roofing but this will be capped with a pitched parapet around the edge to ensure a balanced and attractive elevation.

The proposal includes the use of solar panels and seven small wind turbines at roof level to provide power to the building. The wind turbines have been located away from the residential units and are of a specification designed specifically to work well in residential areas with minimal noise levels.

Access

The approved Biro Works scheme shows this land as part of a pedestrian thoroughfare incorporating dedicated parking for the units within the arches. 5 car parking spaces were proposed at the Stanley Road end of the thoroughfare and 17 spaces at the Roxeth Green Avenue end.

These 22 spaces were in excess of the number of spaces normally sought for the size of site and floor area proposed. This was recognised by the planning officer in his report to the planning committee but, in the wider context of the proposed development, was considered to be acceptable.

The development scheme now proposed includes a reduction in the number of spaces to serve the arches and the provision of some spaces to serve the new offices.

How this relates to the Council's car parking standards and will affect traffic flows is dealt with in a separate Transport Statement accompanying this planning application. The Transport work concludes that the reduction in car parking provision is entirely appropriate for the site and the level proposed is an acceptable level to serve the development proposed.

The plans submitted to PAT for pre-application advice proposed a layout for the ground floor where the parking spaces were accessed from the access road to the sub-station to the north east of the site.

Concern was raised that this could cause safety and security issues due to limited natural surveillance. In response to this, the design has been changed. The parking spaces are now shown to be accessed from between the proposed building and the arches, as already approved within the Biro House scheme. The rear wall of the building backing onto the substation will be enclosed. This layout ensures adequate surveillance can be achieved and the building will relate better to the adjacent development.

The site is relatively level, allowing full accessibility to the building and parking areas. There will be no differentiation in levels or surface treatment across the pedestrian area, which will enhance permeability.

Included within the seven parking spaces under the building, one disabled car parking space will be provided adjacent to the reception area. Cycle parking and motorcycle parking will also be available at ground floor level.

Within the building level thresholds will be provided and all the normal accessibility requirements will be met or exceeded. A passenger lift, suitable for use by disabled persons, will serve all floors. A disabled toilet will be provided in the ground floor reception area.

Sustainable Features

The scheme is designed as a state of the art sustainable development with the following features:-

- 'Green roof', as previously described.
- The orientation of the scheme maximises passive solar gain with large areas of glass facing south-west and only insulating glass blocks facing north-east. Solar gain during winter months is thus maximised. Sun shades project from the façade ensuring that mid-day sunshine is restricted to prevent overheating in the summer months.
- The narrow plan form allows for natural cross ventilation to avoid the need for air-conditioning.
- A continuous bank of solar thermal collection cells facing south-west to provide heating top up and hot water.
- Seven small wind turbines maximise the available wind power.
- The fabric will be extremely well insulated to minimise heat loss, and the floor structure is likely to be of high thermal mass to balance out external changes in temperature, providing a stable internal environment.

Further information with regard to the technologies on site is detailed in the ZEDHomes' commitment to Environmentally Sustainable Solutions document that is included as part of this planning application.