

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee

Date: Wednesday, 17 August 2022

Venue: Council Chamber, Ealing Town Hall, New Broadway, Ealing W5 2BY

Attendees (in person): Councillors

P Anand, J Ball, L Brett, T Mahmood (Vice-Chair), D Martin, S Padda, M Hamidi, M Iqbal, S Kohli and F Mohamed

Attendees (virtual): Councillors

S Kumar

Also present:

Councillor K Crawford (Ward Councillor)

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

It was noted that Councillor Seema Kumar had attended the meeting virtually and although she was permitted to ask questions and contribute to the debate, she was not able to vote on any of the applications as she had not attended in person.

2 Urgent Matters

There were none.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Seema Kumar declared that she had received communications from residents relating to item 7, planning application 220178FUL East Acton Arcade, 93 Old Oak Common Lane, Acton, W3 7DJ, but did not deem these communications to prejudice her.

4 Matters to be Considered in Private

There were none.

5 Minutes

The committee considered the minutes of the meetings on 22 June 2022 and 20 July 2022.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings on 22 June 2022 and 20 July 2022 were agreed as true and accurate record of proceedings of the meetings.

6 Site Visit Attendance

The following Councillors had attended site visits prior to the committee meeting:

Councillors T Mahmood (Vice-Chair), P Anand, M Hamidi, M Iqbal, S Kohli, S Kumar, D Martin and S Padda.

7 Planning Application - 220178FUL - East Acton Arcade, 93 Old Oak Common Lane, Acton, W3 7DJ

Before passing to the planning officer to introduce the item, the Chair noted that the committee had been provided with commercial arrangements between the applicant and leaseholders at the existing site prior to the meeting. The committee was reminded that any monies offered or extensions to continue occupation of the site was a Property Law matter and was not to be considered at the meeting for the purpose of making a decision.

Emma Bunting, Planning Officer, introduced the item and explained that the application before the committee was for the demolition of the existing building at 93 Old Oak Common Lane, with the construction of a multi-storey hotel in its place. The proposed building was to be five-storeys from ground level with a two-storey basement. It was going to deliver 129 guest rooms with ancillary ground floor hotel lobby and shared café, restaurant and workspaces.

The site was to the west of Old Oak Common Lane, bound to the north, south and west by neighbouring developments. The site was not in conservation area and was not deemed to impact the conservation areas to the eastern side of Old Oak Common Lane, the Old Oak and Wormholt Conservation Area of the London Borough Of Hammersmith and Fulham.

It was explained that the site currently contained shops on the ground floor, including an optician and a butcher, whilst a snooker hall was operating on the first floor. A snooker and pool needs assessment had been completed, and officers considered that it demonstrated that there was adequate supply in the local and sub-regional area for snooker and pool facilities. It was considered that these facilities could absorb the increased demand which would result from the closure of the hall. It was noted that the snooker hall was classified as a class E use, which was not protected by the Council's policies. It had to carry little weight in the planning officer's assessment.

Ms Bunting noted that there had been 85 objectors to the proposal, of which many related to the loss of the snooker hall. Other objections related to the proposal's impact on the character and appearance of the area and the harm to neighbouring amenities. The committee was informed that officers considered that the points raised in objection to the proposal did not outweigh

the recommendation for approval, given the public benefits of the scheme, which included redevelopment of the site, additional expenditure in the local economy and the creation of construction and long-term jobs. Planning officers therefore recommended to the committee that it grant planning permission for the application subject to conditions and a Section 106 legal agreement.

A briefing note in respect of the application had been produced by Planning Officers, circulated to the Committee and published on the Council's website prior to the meeting. It had provided information on amendments to the committee report's recommendation, and amendments to the conditions proposed. Additional representations, comments and objections had been received since the agenda for the committee had been published, and these were noted in the briefing note along with officer's responses.

Vivek Kumar, an objector to the development, made a representation to the Committee which included the following key points:

- The Snooker Hall on the first floor of the existing building, known as London Snooker, was an important community asset with over 8000 members. It provided an affordable place to relax for all ages groups.
- The needs assessment noted in the committee report was deemed by Mr Kumar to be inadequate. In his opinion, it relied on overly generalised datasets, inaccurate results for travel time to alternative venues and no user interviews. Mr Kumar considered that the proposal was not compliant with policy S5 of the London Plan.
- Mr Kumar recommended to the committee that it reject the application. In the event that it was not minded to do so, Mr Kumar invited it to either defer the application on the grounds of the inaccurate needs assessment carried out, or to grant the application subject to a condition requiring the developer to make contributions towards local sporting amenities relating to snooker and pool.

Simon Fowler, on behalf of the applicant, spoke in favour of the application. The representation made the following key points:

- The site was ideally situated for the construction of a hotel due to its proximity to Acton Town Centre and major transport links like the Central Line. The site had the possibility of challenging the central London hotel offer, which would bring tourists to Acton and boost its local economy. The development would also bring long term jobs at the hotel, as well as multiple construction jobs.
- The applicant had engaged with the planning process to reduce and mitigate the impact of the development on neighbouring amenities. They also aimed to continue working with the snooker community to address their concerns where possible.
- Mr Fowler spoke on the leases in place at the existing site but acknowledged that this was not a planning consideration and was not to be considered by the committee in its decision making.

Councillor Katherine Crawford, a local ward councillor, made a representation to the Committee which included the following key points:

- In Councillor Crawford's opinion, the committee report had undervalued snooker as a sport and had painted it as a sport in decline. London Snooker was a local recreational and sporting asset.
- It was disagreed that local and sub-regional facilities could absorb the demand for snooker and pool venues if the club was closed. Councillor Crawford noted that London Snooker supported all age groups in the local community and its community offer was not easily replaceable.
- None of the alternative venues for pool and snooker mentioned in the needs assessment were up to the standard of London Snooker, particularly given the size and quality of its tables.
- In Councillor Crawford's opinion, inaccurate times had been given for travelling between Acton to Southall.
- Councillor Crawford recommended that the item be deferred in order for the pool and snooker needs assessment to be reviewed. Alternatively, if the application was to be granted, Councillor Crawford invited the committee to ensure that the applicant made contributions to local snooker.

Rupa Huq (MP), MP for Ealing Central & Acton, made a representation to the Committee. The representation made the following key points:

- The existing site was a local landmark, which was likely to be lost with the block shape building proposed.
- Local businesses were trading on the existing site, and the services they provided were not immediately available elsewhere if residents were not able to drive. It was noted that the optician was widely respected in the community and had around 3000 customers on its register.
- London snooker was described as a community hub. It was emphasised that its community contributions included affordable tuition for all age groups and sessions for local children with special educational needs to improve their coordination.
- Whilst it may have been true that several snooker and pool clubs had closed over the previous decades, snooker was increasing in popularity and the perceived sparsity of clubs only strengthened the needs for venues like London snooker.
- East Acton was not a holiday destination, and a large hotel such as the one proposed was deemed inappropriate for the area.

The Committee asked questions and debated the proposal. In response to some of the questions and points raised, officers confirmed that:

- Given that the site had a class E designation, it was not protected by sports development rights. On this basis, it was unreasonable to impose conditions on the application to require contributions to local sports such as snooker.

- The snooker and pool needs assessment had been included in the report insofar as the provision of facilities for snooker and pool was a concern of many residents who objected to the proposal. However, in officers' view, in terms of planning considerations and Ealing's Council's planning policies, little weight was able to be given to the provision of pool and snooker.
- It was not possible for the owners to apply for a change in their designation from Class E to one that recognised the site as a sporting and recreational amenity. This was because changes in designation required a material change in what the site was being used for.
- The snooker and pool needs assessment drew on data from Sports England and its data was up to date.
- The windows of the hotel on the side of Brassie Avenue would have physical barriers to prevent overlooking from hotel windows into the neighbouring properties. The design of the building had also set back some of the internal spaces to counteract some overshadowing.
- The proposal was deemed by officers to have a net benefit on highway safety. There was not going to be pickups and drops off to the rear of the development, only taxi services to the front. Contributions to traffic calming through the Section 106 Legal Agreement were going to improve the nearby junctions and pedestrian crossings.
- Track diagrams had been submitted as part of the application to demonstrate that delivery vehicles were able to successfully use servicing area.

A deferral of the application was proposed and seconded. The Committee then proceeded to vote on the deferral.

RESOLVED:

That the item was deferred by the Planning Committee for further clarification on:

1. the snooker and pool needs assessment;
2. traffic management around the site and the usage to the rear of the site; and
3. the natural light impact of the proposal to the rear of the site.

8 Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was Wednesday 21 September 2022.

Meeting commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting finished: 8.36 pm

Signed:

Dated: Wednesday, 21 September
2022

