



**The Planning and The Environment and Transport Committees of the Finchley Society were invited to attend workshops held by TFL, in addition to attending the public exhibition held in January 2020. The Planning Committee has collated the comments of these two committees and prepared the following report on the proposals exhibited.**

- 1.1 The assessment has been deliberately carried out in a structured way based on the criteria set by Bartlett School of Planning, Place Alliance and the CPRE in their recent audit of Housing Scheme designs across England.
- 1.2 Where a design based approach is used rather than the traditional density calculation to determine the amount of homes and other uses that the site can accommodate, such as here and in the new London Plan, it is even more crucial that all aspects of the design are considered to ensure that good place making ensues and that the development benefits the greater community, providing good quality environment and homes to live for decades to come. The categories are therefore to be considered together with no conclusions drawn from the order in which they are presented
- 2.0 **ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY**  
***Community facilities – Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as a school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafés?***
- 2.1 The proposal is centrally positioned on the high street with shops, restaurants, pubs and cafes close by. The question remains though whether the social infrastructure can cope with the addition of 560 households.
- 2.2 The Council will need to assess the additional demand for school places, access to GP's and other services as a consequence of this development and demonstrate how this will be coped with.
- 2.3 The proposals show the inclusion of some retail outlets. These might be used to house more than just shops, perhaps a walk-in medical facility and a multi-use space for community use and cultural activities. The council is currently looking to revitalise the High Street experience in the area and TFL could work with them to ensure that the mix of uses is appropriate and shop units are affordable to even small independent outfits.
- 2.4 Victoria Park and Stephens House and Gardens are not close enough to remove the need for proper provision of individual amenity space, play areas and green areas within the development.
- 3.0 ***Housing types – Is there a mix of housing types to meet varied local needs?***
- 3.1 The aim for a development of this size and location should be to create a multi-generational community who wish to stay and be a part of the Finchley Central community. A development that produces homes that are bought for investment only then either left empty or rented out on short term lets at the highest return would be a failure. A condition that flat owners should not be allowed to sublet might be considered.

- 3.2** The 'first dibs' scheme that offers priority to local people will only benefit those who have the deposit available at the time of offer. If this happens at 'plan stage', as is often the case, that will exclude anyone who needs to sell their current home first, or is currently renting and needs the cash to pay the rent for the period they will have to wait for the property to be completed. In an area where there are possibly people who would welcome downsizing from their family home into a smaller apartment this is a missed opportunity to free up family homes.
- 3.3** Of the 560 homes currently proposed, 87 (15.5%) are described as family homes of 3 and 4 bedrooms. The reality for many is that 2 bedrooms are also acting as family homes. The Local Plan currently out for consultation identifies a need of 65% for 3 and 4 bedroom for market housing and 40% for affordable housing. The 15% therefore indicated seems too low. The preferred housing mix as set out in the Plan should be applied. The Local Plan shows a particular need for 2, 3 and 4 bedroom dwellings set across all tenures. The final mix of homes will determine the number of people, adults and children, who are living there and in turn therefore the amount of play space and supporting infrastructure that will need to be provided.
- 3.4** A provision of 40% affordable homes is welcome but ideally would be seen as a minimum. If there is any possibility of including social housing in addition to provide for those who cannot afford even the London Living rent then that would be welcome. The affordable housing needs to be spread across all tenures and evenly throughout the scheme, in all blocks and terraces.
- 3.5** Space standards in all homes need to accommodate change in circumstances through life, thus supporting the stability of the community, and the Lifetime Homes standards are a useful guide. Living in these dense urban situations is only tolerable if space standards are good, and amenity spaces for each home are usable and enjoyable.

***Public transport - Does the development have easy access to public transport?***

***The transport system tube and bus***

- 4.1** As this development is on land adjacent to the tube station then the simple answer should be yes, and it is this simple answer that is supporting the proposal of a car free development and densification at a transport hub. However for this to work there will need to be a big shift in focus from the current norm in the suburbs. Residents here might also be travelling elsewhere other than by tube, so proximity to the tube is only one aspect.
- 4.2** The Local Plan, currently being consulted on, recognises that Barnet does not benefit from the levels of public transport investment seen elsewhere in the Capital. The Council however does have to meet challenging housing demands. Therefore the aim to reduce car use and dependency is more challenging in these suburban areas. TFL must work with the Borough to improve capacity both on the Underground and the local bus network to more closely and efficiently match demand and capacity. There is very real concern that the current capacity of the Northern Line will not be able to cope and anecdotally it is already impossible to travel safely and comfortably at peak times. This applies equally to the buses.
- 4.3** Assessment of use needs to be carried out taking into account all the proposed developments at other stations along the Northern Line and in close proximity. Frankly the claim made at the workshop that the increase is only 'one person per carriage' and therefore acceptable is not believed.

- 4.4** Similarly an assessment of bus provision and frequency is needed to encourage and enable people to take a bus rather than drive to the station. For those that do drive more clarity is needed on where drop off points are.
- 4.5** Pedestrian access to bus and tube will need serious public realm improvements. The bridge is to be increased in width and the proposal shows a very much improved access to the tube station which is welcomed. The position of bus stops in relation to tube needs careful consideration.
- 4.6** The footbridge access currently from Station Road would benefit from being widened to improve pedestrian access and also to accommodate cyclists coming north along station road to get to the tube station and avoiding Regents park Road.
- 4.7** As there is no proposal to build a new station within this present scheme we are concerned that this does not compromise the future possibility of providing an up to date station accessed from the new square with significantly improved access to the platforms. The existing station building could be used as a community asset.
- 4.8** TFL have maintained a smaller car park to the eastern end of the site which is counter intuitive to the ethos of cutting car use. We understand from the workshop that this car park gives access to TFL land beyond, which is needed for operational work. For this project to be successful long into the future it would be useful to know what that access might mean.

***Environmental impact - Does the development have a low environmental impact?***

- 5.1** All the professional bodies have now declared a climate emergency and the UK Green Building Council has a mission to radically improve the sustainability of the built environment by transforming the way that it is planned, designed, constructed, maintained and built.
- 5.2** The stated aim for this development of meeting the highest environmental standards does not seem to be backed up with how this will be achieved other than a fabric first approach (ie. Well insulated against both heat loss and heat gain) with use of air source heat pumps for heating. This must be zero carbon development, which is the aim for London by 2050, and should be an exemplar of how this can be done. We were surprised to see no reference to SUDS (sustainable urban drainage systems), rainwater harvesting, green roofs, solar collection, use of green materials which we would expect to see.
- 5.3** The Local Plan states that all major development will be required through an energy statement to demonstrate compliance with the mayor's zero carbon targets
- 5.4** Discussions at the workshop revealed no intention of exploring the use of the tube track to transport goods in and out during the construction. This was achieved on the Elizabeth Line, why not here? With High Barnet, and East Finchley all earmarked for trackside development it would be worth looking at moving goods along by rail.
- 5.6** Within the homes there should be good quality fresh air without the need to open the window, protection from noise of the 24 hour underground (triple glazing as standard) and acoustic barriers along the railway line.

- 5.7 Studies must be prepared to show how the built form will impact on wind, daylight, shadows cast and other factors that could adversely affect neighbours and the surrounding public realm.

#### PLACE CHARACTER

***The locality – Is the design specific to the scheme?***

***Character of the development - Does the scheme feel like a place with a distinctive character? Does the new fit into the character of the existing?***

- 6.1 The site, which is long and thin and runs alongside the railway, is bisected by the high street at the point where Regents Park Road becomes Ballards Lane. At this point the vista opens out along the tracks with the high-street activity (shops with residential over and a cluster of offices) either side with streets of low rise housing running off. To the south is the conservation area of Church End which has a distinct character.
- 6.2 The Finchley Central Town Centre Strategy 2017 suggested that ‘innovative typologies to negotiate the dimensional constraints of the site’ and indicated a new station development of 9 storeys at the Ballards Lane end with 5-6 storeys dropping to 3-4 storeys behind. The TFL proposal is for 4 tall blocks clustered around the main road 7, 9, 14 and 20 storeys high. This is significantly taller than the current tallest of 9 storeys. There are 2 blocks behind Hervey close, 7 storeys but with the change of level they are 2 storeys below. New 4 storey blocks along station road and houses along-side the tracks to the west beyond the pocket park and an additional 9 storey block on Nether street. This is certainly different from the existing character of the area and is using taller single block typology rather than the medium rise linear suggested.
- 6.3 Such a different scale and typology will have a very significant visual impact and it essential to see this both in visualisations at street level and a model that shows the surrounding buildings and the topography of the site, including as it does some very significant level changes. How these tall buildings integrate into the urban fabric, respect the Heritage asset and related setting all needs to be further considered. Most importantly the experience at street level is key and essential to understanding how this is creating a good place. A visual impact assessment therefore should be carried out. Additionally it should be demonstrated that the potential microclimatic impact does not adversely affect levels of comfort in the surrounding public realm, including wind, daylight, sunlight, temperature and pollution.
- 6.4 The Local Plan is proposing a tall buildings (8-14 storeys) strategy for the Borough and has indicated that these may be appropriate at Finchley Central but that they will need to demonstrate how they meet the criteria set out plus Historic England guidance on tall buildings. Buildings that exceed these limits, very tall (15-28 storeys) will not be permitted unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. Therefore we would need to see and understand what these exceptional circumstances were that might permit the 20 storey tower.

***Existing and new landscape – Does the scheme exploit existing landscape or topography and create a new bio-diverse landscape?***

- 7.1 The bridge and road leading to the site is at a high point in the area, but the sites are sloping down to track level and there are some significant banks with trees and vegetation on them. It would be worth asking the London Wildlife Trust whether the banks along the line provide a natural wildlife corridor at present and how the proposal might impact that.

- 7.2 The site is considerably lower than Hervey Close. The proposal appears to make use of the change in level, but the absence of any drawn sections through the site, or models showing the topography, makes it difficult to judge.
- 7.3 There will be a number of existing trees lost as a consequence of the development and we would expect to see tree planting and greening generally to improve and enhance the bio diversity. We would like to see green roofs providing opportunity to improve the bio-diversity.
- Street legibility - Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?  
Street definition - Are streets defined by a well-structured building layout?***
- 8.1 There is insufficient detail at this stage to properly assess but the blocks all appear to front onto public space or road. It is important that the blocks have an active street frontage and entrances to homes are clearly visible with no entrances hidden up side alleys, for example. Clear definition between public and private space is essential.
- 8.2 Finding the station is currently problematic for visitors to the area, tucked away as it is, so the improved access and therefore visibility is welcomed.

#### STREETS, PARKING AND PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

- Highway design - Does the building layout take priority over the road, so that highways do not dominate?***
- Car parking - Is the car parking well integrated and situated, so it supports the street scene?***
- 9.1 The widening of the bridge to remove the pinch point and create improved access from the high street into the station is welcomed. Ease of pedestrian movement across the road is key to the success of this new place at Station Road and the new Dollis Mews, Chaville Way and Nether Street.
- 9.2 More information is needed to understand how the Ballards Lane/ Nether street junction will work in practicality, for all of pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles and we would expect to see vehicle tracking exercises demonstrating that the new junction arrangements will work. Improving the junction to make it more pedestrian friendly is welcomed.
- 9.3 The Planning Application must include the phasing proposals and the impact of construction vehicles, and proposals to minimise this impact, during the construction phase must also be included.
- 9.4 Resident parking  
With the reduction of car spaces for the 560 residential units to the absolute minimum the reality of this in day to day life needs to be demonstrated. How the 33 spaces and 3 car club spaces are distributed and integrated into the street scene needs to be illustrated. Where the blue badge holders will park needs to be identified. Could parking for residential blocks be beneath the blocks? Where will personal bicycles be kept?
- 9.5 Provision for the delivery vans, of which there will be many, taxis, visitor drop off, and how these are satisfactorily accommodated near each housing entrance, without destroying the pedestrian environment, needs to be demonstrated.  
Electric charging points must be incorporated.

- 9.6** Commuter parking  
TFL have reviewed the car use and journeys around. They show that only a very small proportion (4%) drive and park, and 5% drive and drop off and drive away again. Of the drivers 72% are from the Borough and 28% from without.
- 9.7** Some car parking is being retained, about 120 spaces, at the far end of the current car park, and to retain essential access to TFL land beyond needed for trackside evacuation of carriages. To understand this better we need to see the operational requirements of TFL for the land beyond, how the use of this might impact on the new development, and how many years this will be for and the potential use of that land.
- 9.8** Strategically if the aim is to promote healthy living and a car free environment then there is no logic to retaining a park and ride facility at the end of a residential cul-de-sac. This land could be better used to support the housing development and we would like to see options on this. If TFL feel that they can justify 120 car parking spaces for commuters, when their prevailing justification is to remove it, then we would suggest either putting it underground or providing a podium over to enable other uses, such as much needed play space, green spaces or even family housing.
- Pedestrian friendly - Are the streets pedestrian and cycle friendly?  
Connectivity within and with the surroundings developments - Does the street layout connect up internally and integrate with existing streets, paths and surrounding development?***
- 10.1** Much more detail is needed to be able to evaluate this properly, see comments above.. The pavement on both sides of the bridge needs to be widened and views opened up along the line, especially on the west side.
- 10.2** Clarification is needed on whether the cycle route between Crescent Road and Regents Park Road is a shared cycle and pedestrian route, or a dedicated route through the pocket park. Optimal lighting of pedestrian / cycle route through Pocket Park is essential. The crossing of Regents Park Road should be a dual pedestrian/cycle crossing linking to the new dedicated cycle route. The pedestrian/vehicular pavement level table to the crossing of Regents Park Road over the length of the proposed square should extend to include the Nether Street junction. Priority for pedestrians and cyclists are required at Nether Street and all junctions. We support the provision of a cycle hub but TFL need to work with the Council to provide suitable cycle route connections to Finchley Central for the hub and cycle provision to be relevant. Cycle spaces at the Station Road entrance and station forecourt should be covered provision, overlooked and with CCTV Confirmation and details of enhancement of public transport is required to provide a satisfactory interchange. 20mph zone to encompass wide area of Finchley Central should be considered.
- 10.3** A study of air flow /wind conditions should be carried out on the environment around tall blocks. An air quality monitoring station should be provided

***Safety and security - Are open spaces, play areas and streets overlooked and do they feel safe?***

- 11.1 The new pocket park is away from the bulk of the housing and more detail is needed about how amenity space and play areas are provided for the residents across the whole development. There is real concern about the pocket park located between Dollis Mews and the rail track. The feeling is that there is a high risk that it will not be used, become a refuge for public drinkers, smokers and drug users, and provide a dangerously isolated location in the evenings. It could be beneficial to include a staffed café/kiosk/first aid provision in the park that could provide 'eyes' on the park
- 11.2 How the proposed homes might overlook the park needs to be understood. The balustrade to the bridge on the western side should provide good overlooking. How the park links to Regents Park Road needs to be considered carefully. Equally the link at Crescent Road needs careful consideration.
- 11.3 What happens at street level, in particular entry to blocks, will be key to making the feel area safe and secure. Streets and open spaces and parks should feel overlooked. For large blocks with a single point of entry a concierge system will help to make the entrance secure and additionally provide a place where packages delivered during the day can be dropped off.

DETAILED DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

***Public, open and play spaces – Is public, open and play spaces well designed and does it have suitable management arrangements in place?***

- 12.1 Much more information is needed to be able to comment properly in this. Play spaces must be overlooked, appropriately sized for the numbers of children anticipated and located appropriately for each of the blocks of housing. Areas of green space, street trees, landscaped areas are all essential. So far there is only the pocket park shown which is isolated from the majority of the development. How these are maintained and managed need to be clear at application stage. The Council currently is unable to maintain the parks that they have and there must be provision for this to ensure their success. Therefore whether this is public provision or private space needs to be clarified and an undertaking that these green areas are delivered and not scaled back as 'non material amendments' as happens so often with the green infrastructure.
- 12.2 Plan of new pocket park indicates vehicular parking at eastern end, please clarify

***Architectural quality - Do the buildings exhibit architectural quality?***

- 13.1 More detail is needed to be able to assess this but the indications are positive. The concerns are that the scheme as illustrated at design and application stage, illustrated as it is to look attractive, is the one which is ultimately delivered.

***Storage and bins - Are storage spaces well designed and do they integrate well within the development***

- 14.1 The proposal suggested at the workshop is for traditional Eurobins for rubbish at the base of the blocks with the bin lorry calling. Big bins can be difficult for residents to use properly, and all too often get left outside on bin day. Really important that this issue is properly detailed and managed. Could more innovative solutions be considered?