

20/3823/FUL

Homebase site, 679 High Road, London N12 0DA

The Finchley Society strongly objects to this proposal.

### **Urban design and strategic planning**

To quote the National Design Guide 'well designed new development is integrated into its wider surroundings, physically, socially and visually'. The 2020 Draft Local Plan states that Barnet will not approve designs for new development that is inappropriate to the local context. The 2012 Local Plan and related SPD's place emphasis on good urban design that is in context and delivers homes that are good to live in. The stated aim of both the Mayor of London and the Council's policies is to reach carbon neutral by 2050 which is only 30 years away, less than the lifetime of these proposed new buildings. The developers have stated in their consultation with us that they are not building a carbon neutral development and have no intention of aiming for that. This scheme fails on all these policies, and more.

The site is within the North Finchley Town Centre SPD area but crucially outside the designated Town Centre boundary. This site is identified as a southern gateway to the town centre and is seen as important as a mixed-use hub. Item 5.8 of the SPD states 'residential proposals will be expected to accommodate a sustainable mix and choice of apartments complementing the terraced housing stock'. Item 7.5 of the NFTC SPD identifies sites within the town centre as being suitable for tall buildings. Therefore, by definition, being outside the town centre means tall buildings are excluded. The design choice of large blocks spanning across the site raised up onto a podium is alien to the existing urban grain and character of the area and is certainly neither respecting nor complementing the terraced housing stock as required by the SPD.

Barnet Housing SPD items 7.11 and 9.10 requires active frontages that will give a positive contribution to the street scene and provide natural surveillance. Looking at the 'proposed street elevations' drawing, and in particular the new through route, and considering the uses of spaces at pavement level this is not an example of a street frontage that will make residents feel safe and secure as they walk through particularly at night.

### **Housing design, amenity, privacy, and safety.**

Of the 307 units the majority are 1 and 2 bed units. There are only 38 no. 3-bed 5 person units. There is no social housing and only 33% identified as 'affordable'. The mix therefore does not meet the requirements as set out in the Draft Local Plan Policy HOU01 and HOU02 nor does it comply with DM08 and DM10 of the 2012 Local Plan

The space standards are minimal National Space standards. As recent events have shown these are insufficient for reasonable living. There are units which are single aspect and of these some are unacceptably facing north, so contravene policy requiring dual aspect to give daylight, sunlight, and good natural ventilation. Housing SPD 7.7 and 7.9

The standards of the Housing SPD 7.3 have not been met. The blocks running across the site are 18m apart which is in contravention to Barnet policy which requires 21m between facing habitable rooms.

The site is not near a local park and therefore the lack of usable green space within the site is shocking. Play space is remote from the homes, particularly the larger family units, and we

suspect is not sufficient for the number of homes. The whole of the Housing SPD Section 8 seems to have been ignored.

All Flats at ground level around the edge of the podium are single aspect contravening Housing SPD 7.7, with no private amenity space and in some instances space at the front would be described as defensible space only in 'secure by design terms' and not private amenity space.

The amenity spaces provided at second floor and above are all small balconies. The dwellings at podium level have no balconies and thus no private outside space.

Insufficient thought has been given to the practicalities of day to day living as reinforced by the National Design Guide items H1 – H3. There appears to be only one concierge – will they be taking in all the parcels and deliveries and post for the whole site? How do residents store their refuse and access the bins? Where do the delivery vans park and how do they deliver to the top floor flats?

### **Travel**

The Design and Access statement refers to 'a number of dedicated cycle routes surrounding the site'. This indicates to us that the team are unfamiliar with the area, the fact that there are no cycle routes in existence surrounding the site and that the Hornsey to North Finchley quiet way is only at consultation stage and a long way from being a reality if ever. The bicycle parking located in the car park under the podium is remote from the majority of the homes in the blocks above and therefore more than likely will mean residents having to take their bike in the lift and store safely on their balcony. The new route through, labelled for service and emergency access only, does not look like a safe place to walk as highlighted earlier. This scheme is doing nothing to promote active travel.

### **Conclusion**

Both from an Architectural and Urban design point of view this scheme has nothing to commend it. There is too much here for lay people to be able to comprehensively identify what is wrong with the application other than the obvious that it is too dense and out of character for the area. It is regrettable that the Applicant has chosen not to make a physical model that would show this clearly. Computer Generated Images can be extremely misleading. It is hoped that Council officers will have sufficient time and expertise to go through this scheme with a forensic toothcomb which should reveal the full extent of contravention to policy and then feel confident to refuse this application.

Mary Hogben  
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